



Gender Sensitization

Sex Vs. Gender

Sex

- Biological
- Born with

Therefore:

Cannot be changed

Gender

- Socially constructed
- Not born with

Therefore:

Can be changed

Do you agree ?

WOMEN

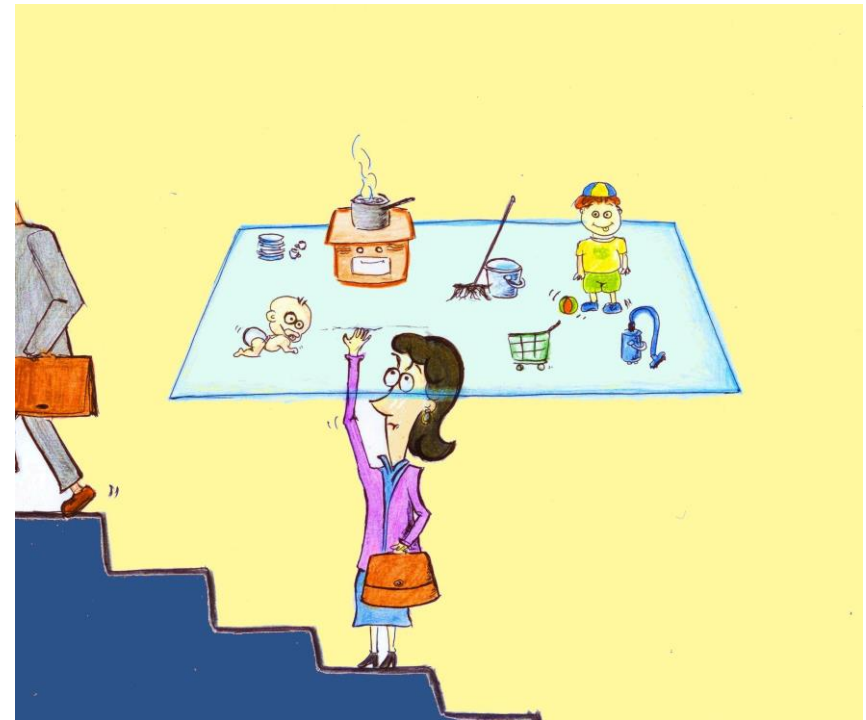
- Weak
- Cries easily
- Mother
- Homemaker
- Affectionate
- Gossiper

MEN

- Muscular
- Smart
- Father
- Earns money
- Strong
- Hard working

Discussion

In our society men and women perform different roles and are assigned different responsibilities. Why is it so? Is this natural or has society made these rules?



‘My mom’s a housewife, she does not work’

Think of the activities that take place in an average household during the course of a day. Food is cooked; cleaning is done – sweeping, mopping, and dusting. Groceries and other household items are purchased. Clothes are washed, dried, ironed. Sometimes household repairs are carried out. Garbage is discarded. Also, the people who live in the house need to be looked after.

These are some of the things that are required to be done to keep homes functioning. These activities take a lot of time, and many are to be done on a daily basis. The people who do them expend a lot of energy and may be exhausted when they are finished. Most of the time, women perform these tasks. Put together, these tasks are called housework. Given this name, it may be surprising to learn that housework is not considered to be work in economic or social terms. It is seen as a set of tasks that is naturally performed by the women of a household. It is **not, for example, calculated as part of the country’s Gross Domestic Product** (the sum of all goods and services produced in a country in a given period). This is in spite of the fact that if the women of the house are unable or unwilling to do these tasks, other people will do them – but only if they are paid to do so.

Socio-Cultural Norms

- The socio-cultural norms of a society are instrumental in demarcating the gender relations. They indicate the way men and women relate to each other in a socio-cultural setting and subsequently lead to the display of gender-based power. This develops from the expected and gendered roles assumed by men and women and the impact of their interactions.
- A good example for this can be 'The family'. In this setting man assumes the provider and decision maker's roles and woman takes-up the familial and childcare roles. These power relations are biased because the male has more power in making financially, legally and socially influential decisions.
- Gender roles are societal, cultural and personal. They regulate how males and females should think, speak, dress, and interact within the context of society. Learning reinforced through various societal institutions and plays a role in this process of shaping gender roles.
- While various **socializing agents**- parents, teachers, peers, movies, television, music, religion- teach and strengthen gender roles throughout the lifespan, parents probably exert the greatest influence. The way in which gender roles are absorbed and assimilated by a group of people describes the influence of society.

Where can the correction start?

Existing approaches to gender, equality and empowerment

- For three decades gender has been accepted as a category in the formulation of policy and curricula frameworks in India. “Gender”, “Equality” and “Empowerment” of girls have also been used as key words in educational documents for long as it is evident from the policy review section.

- An important question to be raised is – what have been the limitations of our approach and efforts in formulating curricula policy, textbook rewriting and practices in the classroom teaching.

“Gender” has primarily
been viewed:

- As concerning only girls
and women (a biological
category)
- As an isolated category
not related to issues.

**Gender is not just a
women's issue
..... It's a
people's issue**

“Equality” as a goal, strategies adopted have focussed on:

- Increasing representation of these notions of gender in educational material
- “Sensitive” portrayals of discrimination that girls/ women face
- Portraying positive role models and enacting role reversals of stereotypes.

Parity as a concept

- Parity has been the major objective, not just in terms of enrolment or retention of girls, but also in terms of the curriculum and content.
- Parity is a concept that deals with boys and girls being offered equal access to school, equal facilities, and even equal representation in the curriculum and textbooks, but all in numerical and formal terms.
- Such identical treatment dictates that all practices be gender neutral and of “single standard” which is usually the dominant standard, based on male experiences and interests. As a result there is an additional burden on girls to achieve male standards, when in fact the social reality and financial support available to them is not similar to that of boys

At Home

- Avoid distributing household tasks along gender lines.
- Give children **gender neutral** toys. Currently, Parents often give children toys that teach and reinforce gender roles.
- Boys' toys encourage invention, exploration, competition, and aggression, activity, mobility, problem solving, competition, and following strict rules.
- While girls' toys encourage creativity, nurturance, and physical attractiveness, passivity, domestic skills, imaginative play, and emotional expressiveness.
- Check your child's Xbox / Play station Games: of the Top 25 games in April'13 all are aggression and speed based.

Curriculum

Curriculum

- A gender-just and empowering curriculum should have the potential to enable students to critically engage with and challenge received knowledge about fixed gender identities.
- Themes that become important in such a context will have to relate to work, body, sexuality, marriage, parenthood, family, caste, community, state, modernity, economy, violence, conflict, heterogeneity and hierarchy. These cross cut into language, social science and science.