



1.11 Femininity

Case 1: Saira is getting married in a few days. Her grandmother is instructing her on how to behave during the wedding - she has to be calm and quiet in front of her relatives, and look shy whenever someone mentions her fiancé. Saira wonders why she should act shy when she does not feel shy.

Case 2: Neetu's cousin, Aman, has joined the merchant navy. His job sounds interesting and fun - he travels all around the world, visiting so many different places. Neetu is also thinking of the merchant navy as a career option after she finishes school. However, her uncle discourages her. "How will you manage your family life?" he asks. "You would be sailing for months at a time. Who would look after your children?"

What does it mean to be a girl? What is the difference between boys and girls? What differences do you see between yourself and your friends, classmates, siblings and cousins of the opposite sex, and what similarities do you see between yourself and people of the same sex?

As stated earlier 'gender' refers to the characteristics that are culturally and socially imparted on the basis of a person's biological sex. 'Femininity' refers to those characteristics that are associated with being female - with being a girl or woman. 'Masculinity' refers to those characteristics that are associated with being male - a boy or man.



Why cannot Men cry?

It can be noticed that when feminine features are described, two things are talked about at the same time - traits and behaviour. In other words, what people are like, and how they should behave. Thus if it is said that boys are rational and practical, they are expected to be rational and practical, and to act rational and practical in concrete situations.



Females can be physically strong

There is also a third facet of masculinity and femininity - it is expected that they will fit the social roles that girls or boys are expected to perform later as adults in their lives. Those traits are inculcated in girls and boys which are thought to be required by them as adults.

What does this last point mean? It means that there are certain expectations of what a person is going to do in his or her life, expectations that are based on whether that person is male or female.

1.11.1 Dimensions of Femininity

What are some of the traits of femininity? Girls are seen as gentle, caring and nurturing, and as having a capacity for self-sacrifice (or of being a martyr) that men do not have. Girls are also supposed to be very concerned about their physical appearance - clothes, makeup, and hair - and spend time making themselves look beautiful. It is also assumed that girls will grow up to marry and have children - that they will at some stage of their lives be wives and mothers.

Of course, these features do not tally entirely with the traits and personalities of actual girls. There





Fig. 1.5: A gendered advertisement

are girls who are forceful and self-assured; who do not care about how they look; who excel at various sports. There are girls who do not want to get married, and women who have never married and/or had children. There are many types of women, all saying, doing and being a variety of things - how then does the idea of femininity persist?

This question may be answered by recalling that, femininity is a construct based on expectations, both a person's own and those of the people around her. Femininity is a set of traits and behaviour that girls and women are expected to possess. It is in some sense an ideal of behaviour. At times girls are admonished or scolded for behaving in certain ways. An assertive and opinionated girl may be told that her behaviour is unacceptable, and she may be disciplined for behaving thus. In this situation, her behaviour is being compared to an ideal of feminine behaviour.

Models of femininity are associated with certain roles - those of wifedom and motherhood. It is assumed that all women will be wives and mothers. Parents may begin to prepare for the eventual marriages of their daughters when those daughters are still young - collecting clothes and jewellery, for example. Mothers may tell stubborn daughters that they should be more adjusting and acquiescent, as obstinacy will not be tolerated in their husbands' homes. Employers may be reluctant to hire a young woman to work for them, assuming that she will not be able to devote enough time to work once she (inevitably) gets married and starts a family. Those working in an office may have to attend a seminar or counselling session on achieving a '*work-life balance*' - i.e., on how to manage both work and home life. But these seminars are often only for women - it is assumed that men do not need them as they have a lesser, or no, responsibility for housework.

This last point leads to an important dimension of femininity. Women perform many different activities in their daily lives. They may be married, have children, look after their households, and also have jobs, participate in voluntary work, and/or have hobbies to which they are dedicated. In other words, women perform multiple tasks. Yet the roles of wife and mother are given primacy. Certain jobs are seen as 'good' for women as they leave women with enough time to devote to their households. School teaching is a good example of this. Also, the characteristics women possess, which are associated with being a wife and mother, affect which career options are deemed suitable for women. Nursing for example is seen as an extension of the caring, nurturing role of women, from the home, into the workplace. Domestic work is similarly seen as something which women are naturally inclined towards.

And yet, this ideal of femininity is actually only available to very few women. For working-class women, staying at home and devoting themselves to housework is not an option. Their earnings are crucial for the survival of their families. They, therefore, have very different ideas of adequate housework and a well-run home from those women who do not work outside their homes. They may also have different expectations of the assistance that they will get from other members of their households, including men, in performing household tasks. The men of their households may be aware that some amount of housework will be required of them. Thus there will be a different division of labour within their households. Nonetheless, should they be able to afford it, these women may also stop working outside their homes; they may take pride in the fact that the men from their households are in a position to support them. Femininity and masculinity are based upon,



among other things, the social roles that women and men are expected to perform in their lives. In the case of women, the role of full-time wife and mother is something that few women will actually perform. For many women such a role is not possible. (Of course, there are women who may not find such a role desirable.) Nonetheless, as an ideal, it is widespread in our society. It is a model of femininity that is only available to a small section of women, but which is made to seem universally applicable and desirable.



Fig. 1.6: Femininity Dimensions

1.12 Masculinity

Case 1: Abdul has been looking at the images in his history textbook. There are many pictures of ancient and medieval kings, Indian and foreign, wearing colourful clothes, jewellery, and even high heels. Abdul thinks of the clothes his father wears to office - shirts and trousers in plain colours like white and grey and black. He wonders, what would happen if his father went to work wearing colourful silks and pearl necklaces?

Case 2: John and Meena have met in university and want to get married. However John is apprehensive about discussing their plans with Meena's parents until he gets a good job. He wants to be able to reassure them that he will be able to support Meena.

The above section spoke of how femininity refers to the social and cultural meanings attached to being a girl or woman, and masculinity to those attached to being a boy or man. It also mentioned some of the dimensions of femininity - that the concept includes traits and behaviours, and that the form that femininity takes is based closely upon the kinds of roles that women are thought to occupy in their lives. Many of the characteristics whose development and inculcation is sought in girls are based upon the ideals of wifehood and motherhood.

The section also explored some of the dimensions of masculinity, and looked at some traits which are considered to be masculine. These are quite different from those that are considered feminine. Yet there are many parallels between masculinity and femininity, some of which will be examined below.

1.12.1 Understanding Masculinity

What are the features associated with masculinity? Boys are seen as physically strong and powerful, even a little rough, and as being capable of greater physical feats than women. They are also seen as mentally tough, self-confident, outgoing, and even aggressive. In contrast to girls, who are often seen as irrational and impractical, boys are considered to be rational and practical.

As with girls, these are characteristics that are not to be found in all boys or men. All men are not physically stronger than all women. Many physical differences between men and women are not due to innate biological reasons. Men can be introverts and reticent, under-confident and withdrawn. They may not display rationality and practicality in their daily lives. They may be emotional and sensitive. And yet, as is the case with girls, their behaviour will be guided towards that which is considered masculine. These are in turn based upon certain expectations, based upon certain ideals of masculine traits and behaviour. Boys may be teased for liking things which are considered 'girly' - for example, hobbies (for example, cooking) and toys (for example, dolls) that are associated with





girls. Outdoor hobbies and sports may be encouraged. They may be scolded if they display weakness - for example, being afraid of the dark - and be reminded that they should be strong and brave.

What are the roles that such features are expected to complement? What are the expectations that people have from boys, the fulfilment of which will be aided by these characteristics?

These features reflect the idea of a boy or man who has to go out into the world, earn a living, and support him and his family. He then has to be outgoing and capable, not shy and apprehensive. He will have to be focussed on a productive career, and will not be able to afford wasting time on futile, unproductive pursuits. He will have to take the fact that he is a provider, very seriously. It is in this way that manliness is measured in a boy or man's ability to provide for his family.

Masculinity has other dimensions as well. It also includes a certain attitude towards women, particularly women from a boy's own household. Manliness depends also upon a man exercising control over the women members of his household. This control may be exercised in various ways. Brothers may question sisters about where they go, whom they meet; if companions are considered unsuitable, they may be prevented from meeting them. Fathers may make decisions about the kind of education their daughters will have, and decide till what level they will study. Major decisions, like if and when to marry, the choice of marriage partner, decisions related to children and their future may not be in the hands of the women concerned. They are kept out of financial matters related to savings, investments, expenditure associated with major commodities. In these ways, men exercise control over women - over their actions, decisions, finances, as well as over their bodies, sexuality, and reproductive capacities. The ability to exercise these forms of control is an important part of the ideal of masculinity.

The above section spoke of how the ideal of femininity does not play out in the lives of many actually existing women. Similarly, many men do not have the considerable resources that are needed to be able to maintain the ideal of masculine behaviour and masculine roles. (This is apart from the fact that many men may not want to live according to these roles and ideals.)

One of the hallmarks of masculinity is the idea of a man as a provider, being able to meet his own and his family's requirements. However, many men are not in situations where they can support their families without contributions from other family members. Illness and old age may force men to stop working, and look to other members of their families for financial support. In many working-class families, women - mothers, wives, and daughters - work outside their homes. Their families cannot afford to have them stop working. In some cases, long-term advantages like the education of children may have to be sacrificed in the interests of the income which those children will be able to earn if they leave school and start working immediately. This will impact the future earning potential of those children - yet families have no choice in this regard. In situations such as these, there is no way in which a man can be the sole earner and sole provider in his household.

Read and Respond

List out some cliché/ proverbs/sayings from different languages that underpin 'Masculinity' eg: 'Boys don't cry!'

All men are also not able to control access over the women of their households. Physically restricting women to their homes is not an option when those women are employed outside those homes. Men from more powerful communities will be able to get away with physical assaults on women of less powerful communities; in these cases, there is often very little that men from less powerful communities can do to either control access to the women of their communities - or indeed, seek justice when assaults have taken place.

In such circumstances, the '*manliness*' of a man is threatened. He lacks something in relation to 'real' men - those men who are able to both provide for and control their families. Yet, very few men would fall into this category - those who have financial and social advantages that most people lack.



For others, 'manliness' becomes expressed in relationships with those who have even less power. These may be wives and daughters at home, who have little recourse against a violent or abusive father or husband. These may be unknown women, simply walking down the street, faced with men and boys who are eager to show off their masculinity by harassing them.

Therefore, like femininity, masculinity is also an ideal, one that is not, and cannot, be followed by all men in society. Nonetheless, like femininity, the features of such stereotypical notions of masculinity are made to appear to be what being a man is all about. This is because the experience of a limited group of people is generalised and made to seem appropriate to an entire society. The pressure on individual boys and men to conform to this ideal is immense. To be thought of as something less than a man is humiliating. In fact, that may be where much of the desirability of the masculine ideal lies. Thus, boys must display the features of masculinity, endlessly, until it becomes a second nature to them.

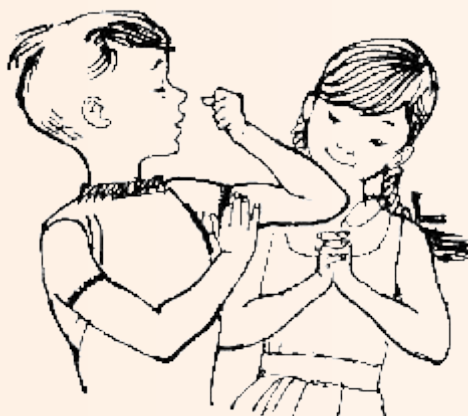


Fig. 1.7: Gender Stereotypes

1.13 Gender Discrimination

Discrimination faced by a person because of their gender can be termed as 'gender discrimination'.

The unequal treatment of children in society contributes hierarchies that exist at all levels. These biases not only exist inside the homes and families but also in public institutions and other parts of the social structure. The means of these biases can be based on physical, economical, cultural, psychological etc. factors. These differences are not natural but they are socially constructed in a patriarchal society which legitimizes these practices and makes them acceptable; also, those who deviate from them are subjected to tremendous social pressure to conform.

Read and Respond

There are certain questions that need to be answered:

Should biological difference matter while defining social roles and responsibilities?

If girls fair better than boys in academics, then why do we have lower literacy rate of girls?

Why should the boys be given "masculine" tasks and girls "feminine"?

If the women around the world constitute approximately half of the population and their participation in all spheres including work force is more than that, why do they own less than one tenth of the total wealth?

The discrimination has become part of the life cycle of a woman. It starts right at the time of conception, where the chance of being born is taken away from many. This has lead to a female-male ratio of approximately 0.93 in India. Food and nutrition is a major concern in India, with many women receiving inadequate food and nutrition. Getting proper health care is also a luxury for many. Many women are, from a young age, conditioned to surrender to the will of their parents in all aspects. May it be kind of education they would get or other basic facilities, may get a secondary treatment. Early marriage and dowry have been issues that are yet to be uprooted from our sociological context.

Read and Respond

Suman was 13 year old when her parents told her that now she would not be going to the private school her brother is attending. They told her that it would be difficult for them to pay high fees for both of them. Suman could not understand why even after performing much better than her brother in academics she would not be continuing with her studies in the same school. She had already conceded to her parent's instruction not to play in the evening and help her mother





Discrimination against women may manifest itself in both overt and covert forms. But the source of majority can be traced to lack of awareness, cultural, social and religious beliefs, practices etc.

This life long discrimination may be openly practised and easily recognized in most situations but sometimes a closer look is needed to observe it. Nevertheless, the consequences always remain lethal for not only the individual, but also for society at large.

The negative treatment met by an individual or a section/group of the society is something that may also lead to deprivation of their basic rights. This discrimination may not just be in the overt form but also in covert form at different levels. It may not be only females that face this gender-based discrimination, but men also in some cases. Whenever one category is treated superior and the other as inferior it becomes a source for discrimination. Discrimination based on gender may differ in different situations but the root lies in the ideology and how people think. The economic dependence of some women on men encourages men to exercise control over women. At some places the cultural values glorify subservience of women and are considered to be mandatory.

The forms in which the women face the bias in rural and urban areas may have some differences but most of the time they have similar causes. But it is important to consider some of the examples that are observed at various places.

- ❑ Lower salaries are paid to female workers as compared to males for the same job.
- ❑ Women may work for the whole day in the fields to raise crop, but are not allowed to sell it. And ultimately it is the male who would be called the breadwinner of the family.
- ❑ The distribution of assets in family is between the men.

Pre-natal selection, female foeticide, dowry and physical harassment are some examples of violent manifestations of discrimination that are found across the cultures.

The worst-case scenario is when social and economic discrimination both are practised together. It is important to recognize such cases in society and come up with solutions.

1.13.1 Gender Discrimination in the Context of Power

The degree of control exercised by certain people/institutions/organizations over material, human, intellectual and financial resources can be defined as Power. The control of these resources becomes the source of power.

According to *Williams et al*, 1994, Power can be understood as operating in a number of different ways:

- ❑ **power over:** This power involves an either/or relationship of domination/ subordination. Ultimately, it is based on socially sanctioned threats of violence and intimidation, it requires constant vigilance, and invites active and passive resistance;

with household work, whereas her brother was admitted to a football coaching academy.

In this case, recognize the areas where a female is likely to face discrimination in the society. Recognize similar practices and list the possible reasons behind them.

Read and Respond

Suhana and her husband were working in the same multi-national organization where she was paid a lesser wage than her husband for the same profile. Still she always wanted to continue her job after marriage as she was reasonably happy with it. But after few months, her mother-in-law started pressurizing her to stop going to work. She also forced her to bring more money from her parents for the renovation of their house.

Analyse the given case and come up with possible reasons behind the series of events depicted here and the best possible solutions. Debate the issue in the class.



- ❑ **power to:** This power relates to having decision-making authority, power to solve problems and can be creative and enabling;
- ❑ **power with:** This power involves people organising with a common purpose or common understanding to achieve collective goals;
- ❑ **power within:** This power refers to self-confidence, self-awareness and assertiveness. It relates to how individuals can recognise, through analysing their experience of, how power operates in their lives, and gain the confidence to act, to influence and change this.

1.14 What is Empowerment?

It was in the mid 1980s, when empowerment of women in the field of development became more prominent. It focused on the redistribution of power in the existing areas where male dominance was prevalent. Increase in economical, political, social, educational, gender or spiritual strength leads to the pathway of empowerment challenging over the patriarchal ideologies and perceptions, empowerment of women can create different era. This process of gaining control in different areas start with equality at family level. Empowerment can not be achieved until it addresses inequalities at all levels.

The concept of women's empowerment throughout the world has its roots in the women's movement. It implies struggle, that is, learning to deal with the forces of oppression. With a vision of a new society, it involves a conscious and deliberate intervention and efforts to enhance the quality of life.

The process of empowerment is both individual and collective. It is through the involvement in groups that people most often begin to develop awareness and the ability to organise, to take action and bring change. Thus, empowerment is a process of awareness and capacity building leading to greater participation in the decision-making (power and control) and transformative action.

The most conspicuous feature of the term empowerment is that it contains the word 'power'. It implies control over material assets, intellectual resources and ideology. The material assets over which control can be established may be of any type-physical, financial such as land, water, forests, labour, money. Intellectual resources include knowledge, information and ideas. Gaining control has direct implications to decision making.

The power of making decisions would only come when there is control over beliefs, principles, attitude and set of ideological principals governing them.

However, power is not likely to be handed to the "have not" group in the society as a charity. Power must be developed or taken by the powerless themselves, as well as being generated. Power has to be acquired and once acquired, has to be exercised, sustained and preserved.

Empowerment as a process helps in gaining higher share of control over different possessions and ability to make decisions. Although empowerment as a concept has been associated with anybody

Read and Respond

Manpreet was married for eight years and was afraid that her children would suffer if she got a divorce from her husband who never allowed her to go out of her home. She wanted to earn by working as she felt it was becoming very difficult to manage her house with irregular income, her husband was earning as a factory worker. When her 6-year-old daughter was also subjected to physical abuse by him, she ultimately decided to stay in a separate home with her three children. She got a loan from the government to buy a second hand car. Today, she is one of the few women taxi drivers who are independently taking care of their families.

How do you view the above case in light of the steps taken by Manpreet and scaffoldings that helped her to become empowered in the situation?





who has been deprived or marginalized but when it comes to women the need is more impinging due to the various forms of discriminations they faces. The gender relations that are unequal at most of the places can be addressed by empowerment. For the development of a nation it is important that social equity is at the core of its national objectives.

As discrimination is not only outside, but also inside the home, it is imperative that empowerment takes place at both the places. Autonomy and ability to take decisions on your own is first step towards women empowerment at household to challenge the patriarchal ideology. Education of the girl child without discriminating has been supported by policies at different levels. When at the work place, the possibilities of discrimination are at both the micro and macro levels that may be addressed not only by balancing the economics, but also by reservation.

The women's rights movement across the country has shaped the concept of women's empowerment that challenges oppression. It is not possible that the shift of power that has been practiced for so long would take place swiftly for equalization to be possible. The power has to be developed inside those who are deprived. The strengthening can be done through different ways that have an important function in sustainable development.

1.14.1 Equality and Equity in Gender Relations in terms of Women Empowerment

"Gender equality matters for development - it is a core development objective in its own right. It is also smart economics. Greater gender equality can enhance productivity, improve development outcomes for the next generation, and make institutions more representative." (Source-"Gender Equality and Development" (2012), World Development Report)

Gender inequality is a universal fact of life. Women are systematically discriminated against the backdrop of patriarchal ideologies and values. Inequalities exist in all the fields and systems human being has created for its benefit. Women are vulnerable and marginalised in areas from politics to education, from health care to economy. Rural women have always been far behind in their direct participation at all level. The myth of irrelevance of their contribution has continued since long. Excessive workload, lack of proper nutrition and health care, repeated pregnancies, poor education, lack of access to economic resources, deep-rooted social biases against them, mark the lives of the majority of women, particularly the women belonging to economically weaker sections. The process of empowerment will imply transformation of gender relations within the family and the society that is equality of status and of opportunities of sexes need to be accepted and implemented in its entirety.

Gender equity: Actions providing opportunities for creating expectations about an individual. Gender equity sets same achievements for male and female in all sectors of the society. Keeping the balance of opportunities equal at both the sides brings sense of equality. It creates a platform for both the genders to seek equal actions and choices, which leads to raising their own level of expectations. Treatment when equitably given can grace out the best outcomes at each front.

Read and Reflect

What are the areas in which empowerment can bring change in the present social scenario? Discuss.

Read and Respond

List out at least ten ways in which you can practice gender equality in your class/ family/ community?

1.14.2 Modes of Empowerment

Empowerment can be done in different ways and different areas. Although most of these areas are interdependent, the efforts are required in specific fields for practical implementation. Economic support and social empowerment cannot be seen devoid of participation and intervention of



political avenues. Similarly education and health can be clearly seen as interdependent while seen as a tool for women empowerment and capacity building. Constitutional and legal provisions are present in all areas for giving opportunities to overcome the barriers. The integrated approach to empowerment is required for balancing gender relations in a society.

Read and Reflect

The following statements that deal with ways of empowering women. Develop a list of your own:

1. Training of women in vocational skills should be mandatory from secondary level education.
2. Mobilization of female workers should be done to equip women to be independent.
3. Development of a positive self-concept is critical for moving away from social smisconceptions.
4. Women should get additional benefits of health care and nutrition at all stages.
5. Village level efforts are equally important for the empowerment of women at the national level.

The sex ratio and increase in literacy rates are some of the statistical indicators that would reflect the change in the society as a result of empowerment efforts.

Read and Reflect

The National Mission for Empowerment of Women (NMEW) launched on 8th March 2010 aims to strengthen the overall processes that promote all-round development of women, who constitute 48% of the population of the country. It is widely acknowledged that despite affirmative actions taken by the Government of India and various State Governments, indices depicting the status of women show that more needs to be done. It has also been realized that the necessary tool to achieve the desired outcome is to develop effective mechanisms for convergence on systemic issues and incentivize convergence in flagship programmes of the Government, to begin with and has been emphasized in the 12th FYP approach paper.

The NMEW is therefore, positioned to play a critical role in creating an enabling social, institutional and policy environment for taking women's empowerment issues to a level of scale necessary for India's next stages of development.

Source: www.dotcue.net/images/file/guidelines%20for%20technical%20sessions-regional%20conference-karnataka-pdf

1.14.4 Participation of Women in Panchayati Raj

They are members of India's first girls' 'samras' (unanimously elected) 'gram panchayat' at Siswa in Gujarat's Anand district. Eleven of them, aged between 19 and 26, make lives better for the 5,000 residents, setting an example in 'gram swaraj' which would have made the Mahatma smile. Ever since they came to power last year, they have completed projects worth Rs. 1 crore that include toilets, roads and computers for schools. Siswa has





elected a woman sarpanch for the last 15 years. Says Shailesh Patel, a former sarpanch, "Women convince better. So, we decided to appoint young, educated girls with fresh ideas".

Source: Times of India

73rd Amendment of the Constitution of India has given lot of provisions and these have very important implications for women's empowerment. Reservation of one-third of the seats for women in panchayats that were given constitutional stature is one of them. At present there are more than 1 million women panchayat members in India and many of them are young members. This increase in participation has not only helped individual transformation but also collective transformation. Although there are positive instances of such transformation but at numerous places it has faced lot of resistance. The example of Panchayati Raj is an example of a positive step towards the empowerment of women.

1.15 Gender Mainstreaming

Gender mainstreaming is the public policy concept of assessing the different implications for women and men of any planned policy action, including legislation and programmes, in all areas and levels.

The United Nations has defined Gender Mainstreaming as- *the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in all areas and at all levels.* (<http://www.karr.net/gender-mainstreaming>)

The concept of gender mainstreaming was first proposed at the 1985 Third World Conference on Women in Nairobi. The idea has been developed in the United Nations development community. The idea was formally featured in 1995 at the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing. Most definitions conform to the concept formally defined by UN Economic and Social Council.

Mainstreaming a gender perspective is the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in all areas and at all levels. It is a strategy for making women's as well as men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and social spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality.

Gender mainstreaming is not only a question of social justice, but is necessary for ensuring equitable sustainable human development by the most effective and efficient means.

Unit End Reflections

Comprehension Questions

1. Is gender socially constructed? Substantiate your view with suitable examples.
2. Explain why gender stereotyping are a product of society and culture.
3. What do you understand by a 'patriarchal society'?
4. What is 'masculinity' and can all men in the society follow it? Give reasons.
5. Define the idea of feminism and describe its strands.
6. What is 'femininity'? What are its various dimensions.
7. How is gender discrimination practised in society? How is the idea of power related to it?
8. What do you understand by 'women's empowerment'? Find about different movements in India that could be termed as examples of women empowerment movements in the recent past.



9. Highlight the significance of women's autonomy in promoting gender equity and equality in the context of social development and human welfare.
10. Why is gender mainstreaming required for economic development?

Activity based question

1. According to you, how different are boys and girls? Write your views.
2. Tick the statements that show gender bias.
 - a) "Sit properly; you are a girl." _____
 - b) "Being a boy doesn't mean you can talk loudly." _____
 - c) "Boys can stay out late, not girls". _____
 - d) "Both boys and girls must help clear the table." _____
 - e) "Boys should hide their emotions." _____
 - f) "Both boys and girls must fight against injustice." _____
3. Are there some jobs that only boys/men can do or only girls/women can do? List them with reasons for opinion.

Things only boys/men can do	Reasons
Things only girls/women can do	Reasons

4. Has someone ever stopped you from trying something you really wanted to do because you are a boy/girl? How did you feel? What was your reaction?
5. Name a famous personality that you admire because he/she had the courage to break free from traditional roles based on gender. Would you consider this person a role model? Why?
6. Write five things that you can do to end gender bias.
7. Tick (✓) the answer based on your understanding.
 - a) Gender is:





- ☐ An ideology
 - ☐ A branch of feminism
 - ☐ A way of looking at things
- b) Women are oppressed because of:
- ☐ Male dominance
 - ☐ Historical reasons
 - ☐ Women who are struggling for women's rights
- c) Gender awareness:
- ☐ Leads to conflict between men and women
 - ☐ Brings the current conflicts between men and women to the fore
 - ☐ Helps find solutions to the conflicts between men and women
- d) Gender is an urban concept and is not relevant to the rural context:
- ☐ Totally agree
 - ☐ Somewhat agree
 - ☐ Do not agree

Research and Portfolio

1. You have read 'The Squirrel' by Ambai in the chapter. Ambai (C. S. Lakshmi) is a Tamil feminist writer and independent researcher in the field of Gender Studies. Some of her famous titles are:
 - ☐ The Face behind the mask : Women in Tamil literature, StosiusInc/Advent Books Division (1984)
 - ☐ A Purple Sea (Translated by Lakshmi Holmstorm), Affiliated East-West Press (1992)
 - ☐ Body blows: women, violence, and survival: three plays, Seagull Books (2000)
 - ☐ In A Forest, A Deer: Stories By Ambai (Translated by Lakshmi Holmstorm), Katha (2006)
 Read other story written by her and write a review.
2. Collect folk-tales with the underlying theme of women empowerment/equality/leadership as a whole-class project. Share them.
3. Create an anthology of poems written by female/feminist writers in 19th century. Share them with the class.





CHAPTER 2: GENDER-RELATED ISSUES

There are certain topics which have become very significant within gender studies. These are topics whose gender dimensions have become quite apparent and have been highlighted in gender studies within the area of development and/or through governmental attention. These are also major areas of on-going debate within gender studies. The gender issues do not pertain to women alone because it neither exclusively belongs to the domain of women nor is it totally an outcome of injustices apportioned upon women by men. In our society, we find several instances, which relegate women to an inferior status in comparison to men. However, we cannot simplify women's issue as a conflict between men and women, or the women's movements as a crusade against men.

Indeed, these issues are an outcome of the prevailing social system. The norms, values, customs and old socialisation processes govern each member of society, over generations to form his/her attitudes and behavioural patterns. Similarly, these also formulate role, responsibilities and expectations of each member of the society. When we talk about gender-related issues in terms of women, we describe women as a social category and analyse the nature of their issues. The basis of this category is not just biological but also the prevalent socio-cultural construct. Women as a social category cut across the boundary of status, class, race, and property etc. They do not form a homogeneous category and belong to diversified socio-economic and location groups (like rural and urban). However, there cannot be a denial that they are more or less an oppressed group within each unit of socio-economic stratification. The structural arrangement of the society relegates women to a second position in comparison to their male counterparts. Women are more likely to be exploited, discriminated against and subjugated in the society. Women's issues are thus perceived to be linked to social issues. These issues are especially focussed on women's unequal access to health care facilities, decision-making bodies, education, employment opportunities and social justice. In this respect, the concept of gender issues needs to be incorporated within the discussion of wider social issues, concerning the rights of underprivileged sections of society.



Fig. 2.1: Are women treated equally in our society?

Somewhere the desire to change the position of women has been manifested through women's movements in various parts of the country in the last few decades. Issues pertaining to women's health and legal status have emerged as crucial in the contemporary women's movement.

2.1 Issues related to the Girl Child

Read and Reflect

In 2011, the General Assembly of the United Nations designated the 11th of October as the International Day of the Girl Child. The first International Day of the Girl Child was observed on the 11th of October 2012, around the theme of Ending Child Marriage. The following is an extract of the message of the Secretary-General of the UN, Ban Ki-moon, on that occasion:

Globally, around 1 in 3 young women aged 20 to 24 - approximately 70 million - were married before the age of 18. Despite a decline in the overall proportion of child brides in the last 30 years, the challenge persists, particularly in rural areas and among the poorest....

Child marriage divorces girls from opportunity. It jeopardizes health, increases exposure to violence and abuse, and results in early and unwanted pregnancies - an often life-threatening





risk. If a mother is under the age of 18, her infant's risk of dying in its first year of life is 60 per cent greater than that of an infant born to a mother older than 19.

Table 1: Child population in the age-group 0-6 years by sex, India

Census	Total	Male	Female	Decadal decline in child population		
				Total	Male	Female
2001	163837395	85008267	78829128			
2011	158789287	82952135	75837152	5048108 (3.1%)	2056132 (2.4%)	2991976 (3.8%)

Source: Census, India, Office of Registrar General of India

In the table above statistical data is given regarding the sex ratio in India for the age group 0-6 years. The sex ratio is calculated as the number of females per 1000 males. The decadal decline in population as indicated in the table above is more for female children (3.8%) than male children (2.4%) in the age group 0-6 years.

Scholars have suggested that this data indicates the widespread use of techniques of pre-natal sex determination and sex selection. It indicates that girls are not given a chance to live, either before they are born or shortly afterwards. This is one of the significant indicators of discrimination against girls.

2.1.1 The Care and Protection of Children

Many countries (including India) and international organisations have recognised that childhood is a period in a person's life when he or she is dependent upon others for survival and is therefore in a vulnerable position. In India, many laws have been enacted to protect the rights of children and to prevent various types of exploitation of children. These include the Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act, 1986 which regulates the conditions in which children work and prohibits them from doing certain types of work; the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection) Act, 2000 which relates to children who are involved with the legal or judicial systems. This Act has been further amended in year 2006 and 2010 and the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009 (which states that all children between the ages of 6 to 14 have a right to go to school). All these laws exist to protect the rights of children and to make illegal various types of exploitation which children face.

These laws extend to all children - both boys and girls. In certain situations, both boys and girls face similar problems and need similar types of protection. However, there are also situations in which girls face particular types of discrimination and violence that boys do not. The realisation of this fact has led to a focus on the particular status of the girl child.

2.1.2 Understanding the Situation of the Girl Child

Read and Reflect

The following is an extract from the report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing in 1995:

In many countries available indicators show that the girl child is discriminated against from the earliest stages of life, through her childhood and into adulthood. In some areas of the world, men outnumber women by 5 in every 100. The reasons for the discrepancy include, among other things, harmful attitudes and practices, such as female genital mutilation, son



preference - which results in female infanticide and prenatal sex selection - early marriage, including child marriage, violence against women, sexual exploitation, sexual abuse, discrimination against girls in food allocation and other practices related to health and well-being. As a result, fewer girls than boys survive into adulthood.

Girls are often treated as inferior and are socialized to put themselves last, thus undermining their self-esteem. Discrimination and neglect in childhood can initiate a lifelong downward spiral of deprivation and exclusion from the social mainstream.

(Source: Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women. UN: New York, 1996.)

The term 'girl child' indicates the gendered nature of childhood and childhood experiences. Section 1.1, the introduction to the first chapter on Gender Studies, described the gendered nature of the social world. The term 'girl child' indicates how the experience of childhood is also gendered: how it differs in certain ways for girls and boys. It refers in particular to certain forms of exploitation and violence which girls face, which can cause physical and mental damage, as well as causing long-term harm.



Fig. 2.2: Girl Child

Besides the statistical data given for the age group 0-6, there is other data which also indicates the discrimination faced by girls. The report titled "Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in India" gives data for the sex ratio at last birth, and for all births except the last birth. (This refers to the sex ratio for the last child born to a woman, and the sex ratio for all children born to her excluding the last child.) As per the data from the National Family Health Survey (NFHS) 2005-06, the sex ratio for the last birth only is 756 girls to 1000 boys; for all births except the last it is 1016 girls to 1000 boys. This implies a strong son preference: people are more likely to stop having children after the birth of a son than after the birth of a daughter.

According to data from the NFHS 2005-06, 58% of the women surveyed, were married before the age of 18 (the minimum age for marriage for women). Of these, 27% were married by the age of 15. Additionally, 16% of girls in the age group 15-19 had begun childbearing: that is, they either had a child or were expecting one. 2.5% girls at the age of 15 had begun childbearing.

Read and Respond

Many state governments have also created schemes to help in safeguarding the girl child. Find out about such schemes in your state or neighbouring states. How do they function? What benefits do they offer? What impact have they had?

2.1.3 Addressing the Issues

The realisation of the vulnerable position of the girl child has led to action on the part of both the Indian government and various international agencies. Therefore, the UN has declared that the International Day of the Girl Child will be celebrated every year on the 11th of October.

The Government of India released the National Plan of Action for 2005 (*available at www.wed.nic.in/NAP_Avg16A.pdf*) which contained a section on the right of the girl child. The following are listed as the goals of the plan:





- ❑ Assurance of equality of status for the girl child as an individual and a citizen in her own right through promotion of special opportunities for her growth and development.
- ❑ To ensure survival, development and protection of the girl child and to create an environment wherein she lives a life of dignity with full opportunity for choice and development.
- ❑ To stop sex selection, female foeticide and infanticide.
- ❑ To eliminate child marriages.
- ❑ To ensure the girl child's security and protect her from abuse, exploitation, victimization and all other forms of violence.
- ❑ To protect the girl child from deprivation and neglect and to ensure for the girl child equal share of care and resources in the home and the community and equal access to services.
- ❑ To take measures to protect girl children from any treatment which undermines their self esteem and causes their exclusion from social mainstream and also to break down persistent gender stereotype.
- ❑ To eliminate all obstacles that prevent girls from full enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedom including equal rights in succession and inheritance.
- ❑ To ensure equal opportunity for free and compulsory elementary education for all girls.

What do these goals reflect? They indicate that girl children need to have the same opportunities as anyone else, and enjoy the same rights and privileges. Violent practices which harm girls need to be done away with. As mentioned in the section on Women and Violence, violence also includes neglect and mistreatment; thus deprivation must be prevented. Also, girls must have the resources that will allow them to make a bright future for themselves.

Some of the strategies to achieve this are as follows:

- ❑ Advocacy through social, political and religious leaders and through all government programmes to change attitudes and practices discriminatory towards girls.
- ❑ Enforce laws that protect the equal rights of the girl child, like Child Marriage Restraint Act, PCPNDT Act, ITPA, Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Child) Act, Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act etc. by generating social support and through other necessary action.
- ❑ Take affirmative action for the removal of gender discrimination against the girl child and inform and sensitize society about the traditional and customary practices which are harmful to the girl child.
- ❑ Promote gender sensitization among all those in authority, including the judiciary, police and local authorities and members of the general public.
- ❑ Develop and promote day care services in order to relieve the girl child from sibling care responsibilities. This will enable her to access opportunities for her own development.
- ❑ Address nutrition discrimination against the girl child through sensitization, awareness and outreach programmes to ensure that she has equal access to food allocation within the home.
- ❑ Take preventive, protective and rehabilitative measures to address the greater vulnerability of the girl child to economic and sexual exploitation.

It may be seen that these strategies reflect certain actions that can be taken to ameliorate the situation of girl children (ensuring adequate nutrition, addressing violence and exploitation). In some cases laws have been enacted. For example the Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques (Prohibition of Sex-selection) Act, 1994, seeks to prevent sex selection by making it illegal for any doctor or technician to communicate the sex of an unborn child. However, attention is also paid to the need to



change mind-sets. This is reflected in the attempt to use advocacy to change attitudes towards girls.

Read and Reflect

Read the following news report:

Indian teenager annuls her child 'marriage'

A young woman has had her child "marriage" legally annulled in northern Rajasthan state, in what is thought to be the first case of its kind in India.

Laxmi Sargara, 18, wed Rakesh when she was just one and he was three. She grew up with her own family, only finding out she was married when her in-laws came to claim her.

Child marriages are illegal in India but are still common in many parts of the country, especially in rural and poorer communities.

"I was unhappy about the marriage. I told my parents who did not agree with me, then I sought help," Laxmi told Agence France Presse (AFP) news agency.

She knew nothing of her future life until a few days ago when her groom's family came to take her home with them to start her new life as Rakesh's wife.

After appealing to her parents, Laxmi sought help from a local non-governmental organisation, the Sarathi Trust in Jodhpur city.

"She got depressed. She did not like the boy and was not ready to go ahead with her parents' decision," Sarathi Trust worker Kriti Bharti told AFP.

"It is the first example we know of a couple wed in childhood wanting the marriage to be annulled and we hope others take inspiration," Kriti Bharti added.

At first Rakesh wanted to go ahead with the marriage. But he relented after counselling from the NGO.

Since child marriages are not legal under India's Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, both Laxmi and Rakesh signed an affidavit declaring the marriage null and void in the presence of a notary public in Jodhpur.

(accessed on 24.05.13 from <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-india-17838022>)

2.2 Women and Health

Read and Reflect

Anita was 18 years old when she was expecting her first child. She only visited a hospital twice during her pregnancy and was not provided with the prescribed medicines at home. She was very weak at the time of delivery and in spite of the advice of the doctor whom she visited three months ago, her family members insisted on her delivering the child at home in the absence of medical help. The situation became complicated and the mother and child could only be saved after an emergency operation in a hospital.

Anita's case is not very different from that of a lot of women in India. It is one of the cases that present the issues in health care for women in India. Women are always at greater risk in terms of health due to lack of access to resources. Consider the following case:

Read and Reflect

Asha was staying in a one-room house without a window where she was taking care of her three children, one boy and two girls. Her husband used to go to work early in the morning after





dropping their son to school. Her girls used to stay at home with her and help with the household work, including cooking, in the poorly ventilated house. Sometimes they could eat less in the afternoon as food had to be saved for the evening.

It is important to understand and address some of the questions that arise from the above case. What are the possible health concerns that may be faced by females at home? What are the possible reasons behind such condition of females here.

2.2.1 Access to Health Care

Read and Respond

Getting access to health care and gaining facilities are not easy for women at any stage. Make a flow chart of issues women can face before and while getting health care.

Access to health care has social influence attached to it. Women's access to health care in a home has strong influence derived from the social status of women, although health as a concept is multifaceted and dependent on social and environmental factors. Factors that limit women's access to health care at the household level can be gender-related, purely economic, or supply driven. \

When you talk about healthcare for women it's not only the lack of health care provider which creates a barrier, but also the attitude of her family and lack of support.

Table 2: Percentage of women age 15-49 who say that the specified hurdle is a big problem for them in accessing health care for themselves, by wealth quintile, NFHS-3, India

Hurdles to health care	Wealth quintile					All women
	Lowest	Second	Middle	Fourth	Highest	
Getting permission to go	10.9	8.6	7.5	5.5	2.3	6.7
Getting money needed for treatment	34.8	24.3	18.5	10.4	3.0	17.3
Distance to the health facility	47.4	36.1	26.3	16.6	5.9	25.3
Having to take transport	45.4	33.1	23.3	13.9	4.5	22.9
Finding someone to go with you	21.4	15.9	12.2	8.2	3.3	11.7
Concern that there may not be a female health provider	30.1	24.0	19.4	14.9	8.2	18.7
Concern that there may not be any health provider	35.4	28.7	23.8	18.6	10.8	22.7
Concern that there may be no drugs available	36.8	29.7	23.5	18.3	9.9	22.9

The table above shows that women face a number of hurdles in accessing health care for themselves. The most common hurdle among the eight questions asked about is the distance to a health facility and the least common is getting permission to go. Notably, almost one-fifth of women report that not having a female provider is a concern and for one-tenth of women, finding someone to go with them is a problem. Each potential hurdle is much more common among low income group women than among the high income group women ones.



2.2.2 Women and Poor Health

Maternal Mortality

"Every day in 2010, about 800 women died due to complications in pregnancy and child birth, including severe bleeding after childbirth, infections, hypertensive disorders, and unsafe abortions. Out of the 800, 440 deaths occurred in sub-Saharan Africa and 230 in Southern Asia, compared to five in high-income countries. The risk of a woman in a developing country dying from a pregnancy-related cause during her lifetime is about 25 times higher compared to a woman living in a developed country. Maternal mortality is a health indicator that shows very wide gaps between the rich and poor, both between countries and within them." (UN)

Malnutrition in Women

Nutrition has a direct influence on an individual's health. From birth onwards, the kind of nutrition an individual gets has a long-lasting implication for physical development. Nutritional deficiency can lead to disorders in an individual. When it comes to women in India, the majority suffer from one or other deficiency disease. Anemia, low body mass index, hypertension etc are some of the health issues that influence women in India. According to *National Health Survey* (round 3) more than one-third (36 percent) of women aged 15-49 have a BMI below 18.5, indicating chronic nutritional deficiency.

Much of the poor health of women is related to the long reproductive span of their lives. Due to malnutrition, along with unfavourable, socio-economic conditions, pregnant women are prone to miscarriages, stillbirths, excessive bleeding and infection. In other words, a woman suffering from malnutrition has to go through about eight pregnancies to have five births (of which only three or four may see adulthood), exposing herself to potentially grave consequences each time.

Read and Respond

Interview a few women and ask them to tell you how many times have they availed health service facilities in the past one year as against the number of times they have fallen sick. Compare your notes, with your classmates.

Early Marriage

Early marriage has been a serious concern in India since long for more than one reason. One of the negative impact has been on health status of women. According to the 1991 census among currently married women 53.3% are married before 18 years of age, which is not only illegal but also has other serious implications. According to the National Family Health Survey (1993-94) almost 33% women were married by the age of 15. The situation has improved in last two decades due to the intervention of Government and NGOs. But still it is a reality that the percentages are significant. Being introduced to reproductive functions at young age and malnutrition, these girls remain at higher risk. Problems like delivering underweight babies to high mortality rate is also there.

2.3 Women and Media

The media of mass communication always influence people and it is considered by many that the media is a reflection of society. From trends to opinions, media touches every aspect of human life in this digital age. The construction of gender roles in society has a correlation with how men and women are portrayed in different forms of media. It can help in an empowered role for women in society although this is still a distant vision.

In Indian society, there are common stereotypes of women as primarily homemakers who mainly stay within the private sphere of the home with men going out to work in the public world. These stereotypical models of male and female and the public-private division gain credence in the mass media. These cultural stereotypes are used to reinforce subservient roles for women. These





become major obstacles to changing social prejudices and practices affecting women. An important media in the diffusion and reinforcement of cultural values and norms in India are audio-visual. Television in India provides a rich source of information, education and entertainment for a large part of the population. Many narratives on television are still implicitly designed to be interpreted from a man's perspective. Advertising through various media channels such as newspapers, magazines, television, the Internet and various outdoor media, reach and influence the people. By and large, stereotypical portrayals of women are prevalent almost everywhere. The media draws from a ready reservoir of gender stereotypes, myths, legends and symbols.

Media can be seen in two major perspectives, one is actual content and other is advertisement. For example, on television, programmes run for approximately 20 minutes and advertisements take 10 minutes of the 30 minute time-slot. Programmes have mainly informative and entertainment purposes, where revenue is generated from the advertisements.

Advertisements are generally used to sell products to an audience. Different television channels have different types of audiences and thus advertisers target them differently.

Read and Reflect

A television programme shows women to be working only at home, dressed always in traditional heavy jewellery throughout the series. They always stand and give water to their respective husbands as they return home from outside. They are considered to be the best daughters-in-law and wives. Some of the women in the same series get a chance to work and are dressed in western dresses and are generally portrayed in a negative light.

Read and Respond

Watch television programmes, television advertisement, print media advertisements and any other media that you can think of and answer the following question as:

1. How are women portrayed in the media?
2. Should there be a censorship of programmes / advertisements that represent women negativity in media? Give reasons with appropriate examples.
3. How cultural and traditional stereotypes influence the representation of women in media and vice versa? Give suitable examples.
4. Analyse an advertisement which you think, is gendered and give reasons.

2.3.1 Advertisements

Portrayal of gender roles in media is influenced largely by what kind of programmes get popularity in the society. These programmes show women in different light. The majority of these programmes and advertisements portray women as younger than their age, glamorous and playing a supportive role to men. In some of the advertisements, women are shown just as an object of attraction and portraying them as an object of desire, whereas, men are portrayed as adventurous, risk taking, and performing beyond reality. There are certain types of advertisement dominated by male models as lead and women are kept in background and vice versa.



Fig. 2.3: Women are portrayed in stereotypical roles



Read and Respond

Consider advertisements of the following products and see who plays the lead and who is given a supporting role and what kind of role is given to whom. Does it strengthen gender stereotypes or address them by going beyond them

Product	Role played	Gender stereotype/going beyond Gender stereotypes
Cooking oil
Bikes
Perfumes
Banking
Washing Powder
Antiseptic cream
Insurance

Add at least five advertisements of where you recognize stereotypes being promoted:

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.

Read and Respond

Consider following two situations:

1. *In a few advertisements, it is shown that ideally, girls or boys should look a particular way and use particular types of products to achieve that look. These beauty products may be quite expensive and adolescent boys and girls are highly influenced by the advertisements and want to buy them as they star their idols from the cinema.*
2. *Advertisement of bikes above 110 cc and below 110 cc depict women and men differently. Only men are shown riding heavy bikes, women are impressed by those who are riding them.*

What are your observations about these situations and similar advertisements? How can we address such stereotyping?

The stereotypical representations of men and women in advertisements can have serious implications. Some girls following a strict diet to achieve a 'size zero figure' can be as fatal as a boy trying to be 'macho' and jumping from the second floor with a rope. Being dissatisfied with your own self is something that makes individual anxious and distracted. It influences their self esteem and self confidence negatively. Obsession among a lot of them towards being young, fair etc. can never be satisfied by using products. The reality does not change in such situations and apart from the lack of self esteem, it is the social rejection which is emerging.

It also slowly builds an opinion that how men and women should behave in their lives, to be closer to the leading stars. This again leads to wrong image formation where the girls/boys try to associate with a personality type that does not match their own. Even the society starts demanding from women/men to behave in a particular manner or look in a particular way.





Fig. 2.4: Advertisement usually objectify women

In advertisements of financial sector especially insurance, women are shown as completely dependent on men where men are supposed to be the ones who should not run away from the responsibility of protecting their family's future. These advertisements majorly focus on saving the women and women are shown as helpless.

The issue is not just recognizing these portrayals and their reasons; it is also to address them. The question arises how the civil system and the citizens can deal with them.

Read and Respond

Take five advertisements each of matrimonial advertisement for bride and groom from a newspaper. Discuss the following questions:

1. Are these advertisements fostering gender stereotypes? Give examples.
2. Do you think these advertisements can be framed differently? If yes how?

2.3.2 Moving towards equal representation

There has been a steady change that has been observed in last few years about how women are portrayed in advertisements. The modernity and globalised image has somewhere made its mark. Working women have a space in these advertisements and they do assert their choices in some of the advertisements. Independent women are also shown in some of them myths.

The question that emerges is, how should women be portrayed in the advertisements? Should they be shown as aggressive and assertive individuals breaking all barriers? Should there be a balance between the family and professional role women are playing?

The advertising strategy in some of the advertisements beyond just presenting women as endorsing a western image. A distinct image is being presented where women are contributing to the financial growth of the nation as well and they are equally independent, assertive and confident. But what we need to be careful about is that, India being such a diverse country, does not just have an urban population to cater to. Advertisements in private channels are targeting urban audience and thus the image transition of such kind appeal to them. This makeover should necessarily cut across various cultures and localities, throughout challenging the stereotypes and empowering women.

Read and Respond

Study the following examples from an advertisement and reflect on how they are moving away from the stereotypical image of women. Add at least 3 of your owns and justify. Design an advertisement that depicts women the way it should be.

1. A sports shoe brand shows a female athlete overtaking her male counterpart.
2. showing a woman buying a car for her father from savings from her salary.

2.3.3 Television programmes

The programmes shown in television these days have huge diversity. As the number of television channels (from entertainment to information) is increasing, so is the diversity in programmes. Programmes range from soap operas to information based interactive shows. The television serials have caught the imagination of majority of Indian audience. They are telecasted repeatedly for years after getting popular.



Most of the soap operas are targeted to attract the women audience. The storyline and behaviour shown by characters is in such way that it gets attention from them. Earlier there were slots given for such serials at such a time when women in urban cities are considered to be 'free' from their household work which gradually changed with time due to various reasons. The types of subjects on which serials are made have also changed in recent time. There are a lot of stereotypes that are still being practised in these serials. Norms are set for women in them and they are always expected to be a 'good' wife, 'good' mother etc. It can be observed that the women in such serials are expected to follow dress code and behaviour that is considered '*traditional and cultural*'. Physical beauty is imperative for the characters. Central characters always have a particular type of body type and if they do not have it they are shown as object of humiliation and later on their makeover is done with lot of expectations from the audience. It is important to consider following points while discussing television serials:

1. What kind of roles are played by women?
2. How are relationships depicted?
3. How is marriages and motherhood/fatherhood depicted?
4. What stereotypes are reinforced or challenged?

2.3.4 Films

Films are considered to be a huge influence on the audience. The kinds of films that are considered to be '*mainstream*' have a huge audience and it perpetuates lot of ideas that exist in our society. The position of women in films need to be studied from the time titles emerge in the film to the ending, from the roles they play to items songs they perform. The kind of portrayal of women that has been done in the past and present has strong influence on the society. Women are generally given much lesser screen time as compared to male 'lead'. They play a supporting wife, girl friend, daughter, sister, friend who is going to behave in a particular way. If not playing these roles she would be playing a victim who is vulnerable and should be protected by the 'hero'. Songs are the only time when the female lead becomes outgoing and is dressed in different ways. The control practised in television serials over language is not present in lot of movies where words that are used for women are negative.

The trend in some of the movies have changed where the women is shown to be much more liberal and autonomous. There are films that show women making choices for themselves and breaking stereotypes. Although a lot of these films are considered to be controversial and are questioned, though some of them have been praised immensely for positive portrayal.

The portrayal of women in the Indian film industry has seen lot of change during decades. It is interesting to observe the social factors influencing the role played by women at that time.

Read and Respond

Analyse the role played by women in movies from 1950's to the recent and trace what kind of changes have emerged and similarities in some of them. Find one film in every decade that has shown women as the protagonist challenging the social biases of that time.

Films	type of roles portrayed by women	possible factors influencing portrayal
1950's

Read and Respond

There are different ways in which these TV serials influence the audience. Watch five prime time TV serials running on private channels and answer following questions:

1. How are women being portrayed as a character?
2. What kind of image of women is being portrayed in terms of their behaviour with others (male and female characters), clothing etc?





1960's .....	.....	.....
1970's.....	.....	.....
1980's .....	.....	.....
1990's .....	.....	.....
2000's.....	.....	.....
2010's .....	.....	.....

Discuss the influence of these movies on the society in your class.

2.4 Women and Violence

Violence has been one of the most significant issues taken up by both gender studies and feminist movements. In India, a lot of feminist activism has been prompted by acts of violence against women. Attempts have been made to understand how and why violence happens, and to curtail violence as well.

Break the silence. When you witness violence against women and girls, do not sit back. Act.

Ban Ki-Moon
Secretary-
General, United Nations
from
<http://endviolence.un.org/>

Why is violence against women such an important issue? Violence is both a problem in itself, and also an indication of a deeper problem that affects women. It is probably the most visible sign of the power differences between men and women. Reports of violence against women are widespread. Newspapers are full of stories of kidnapping, various degrees of assault, acid throwing, sex selective abortions, trafficking, dowry deaths and many more. Such acts cause serious physical and mental harm to the women. Sometimes they may even result in death.

Read and Respond

The United Nations, in the 1993 Declaration of the Elimination of Violence Against Women, defined violence against women as follows:

Any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life.

The definition of violence given above, derived from the UN Declaration of the Elimination of Violence Against Women, refers to violence against women as 'gender-based violence'. What does this mean?

2.4.1 Violence Against Women

'Gender-based violence' refers to the violence that is done to someone because of their gender. In the context of violence against women, it refers to the violence that is done to a woman or girl because she is a woman or girl. It highlights that certain types of violence are used against women and girls much more than they are to men and boys. It also indicates that certain types of violence are done to women and girls because of the particular social messages which they carry.

Read the following extract from the report 'Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in India', based on data from the National Family Health Survey, 2005-06.

"A fundamental indicator of gender inequality in India, and arguably, one of the most powerful, is a preference for sons so strong that it is manifested as limiting the birth and survival of girls. The 2001 census data for India revealed a sharp decline in the sex ratio for the population age 0-6, from 945 females in 1991 to 927 females per 1000 males. The trend in the sex ratio of the under-seven population based on National Family Health Survey data for the period 1992-93 to 2005-06 also provides evidence of continued decline and shows that in 2005-06 the under-seven sex ratio had fallen further to 918 females per 1,000 males."



The 2011 census showed that India's sex ratio for the age group 0-6 years was 914; that is, there were 914 girls per 1000 boys. According to these reports, there ought to be greater parity in the numbers of girls and boys in these age groups. Why then do we see such a skewed sex ratio?

The authors of these reports state that it is commonly accepted that the sex ratio is skewed in this manner because people selectively dispose off female children. The reason for this is what is called 'son preference' a desire to have sons and a desire not to have daughters. There are various socio-economic and cultural reasons for this. However it represents some of the most violent behaviour towards girls - denying them their very right to life.

The UN definition uses the phrase 'any act of gender-based violence'. The word 'any' is important here. Acts of violence are not always overt - they do not always involve, for example, hitting, shoving, or similar acts of physical aggression. They may even include mistreatment and neglect - for example, failing to look after an infant and therefore causing her to suffer some kind of physical harm.

Women face other types of violence in their lives as well. For example, women may suffer various types of physical assaults, which vary in the amount of physical and psychological harm they may cause. They may be subject to various types of harassment: on the streets, for example, or in their places of work. Violence may also take place within the home: this is called 'domestic violence'. This refers to violence done to a woman by a member of her household. This may include various types of physical assaults, as well as psychological and emotional violence.

Violence against women is perhaps the most shameful human rights violation. And it is perhaps the most pervasive. It knows no boundaries of geography, culture or wealth. As long as it continues, we cannot claim to be making real progress towards equality, development and peace.

Kofi Annan
Former Secretary-General,
United Nations
Quoted in *Not a Minute More:
Ending Violence
Against Women* (a
UNIFEM publication)

Read & Reflect 10 Tears

As the first tear crawls down my face
I feel so out of place
As the second tear makes its way down
I hate how the women are treated in town
The third is on its way
I'll never be okay
With the violence at the bay
The fourth makes me frown
Because of the bruises on the women
that go black and brown
The fifth
If only violence was a myth
The sixth is coming
But the pain is not numbing.
There's not much to say
I just wish the seventh tear and the
pain would just go away
For the eight, I just wish I had a friend
Then all the fighting could end
For the ninth I just wonder why?
Why do you make me cry?
It makes me feel so timid and shy.
For the tenth, If we stop the silence
We could stop the violence.

-Anonymous

What are some of the consequences of this violence? In some cases, it may even result in death. There are other physical consequences also. These may range from temporary or permanent injuries like fractures, bruises, lacerations, etc. to temporary or permanent disfigurement for example, acid attacks, scarring. There may be psychological consequences also, for example, depression.

There are other consequences of violence as well. For example, the person suffering violence may be unable to work, resulting in a loss of earnings. She may have to bear the cost of medical treatment for physical injuries or mental trauma.

Violence also has consequences beyond its immediate impact. The UN Declaration of the Elimination of Violence Against Women states that violence against women is a violation of the rights and freedoms of women. It goes on to say that violence limits the opportunities for women to achieve legal, social, political and economic equality.

It is important to note that every person does not have to suffer an act of violence himself or herself, to face the consequences of living in a violent society. Instead, every person must live with a constant





threat of violence - with the fear that he or she may fall victim to violence. This has an effect on every person's life. It may cause women to restrict their movements, avoiding those areas considered to be unsafe; it may make them anxious and uneasy in the presence of people considered threatening. It may make men constantly worried about the safety of the women they care about - family members, colleagues, partners. The threat of violence is enough to modify people's behaviour, and to cause them to be fearful.

2.4.2 Understanding Violence Against Women

Read and Reflect

The following statement about violence against women is from the report on PARIVARTAN, an initiative of the Delhi Police and various other organisations and individuals to curb violence against women in Delhi.

It is ingrained in the structure of power relations between women and men and it is bound in traditional gendered roles and expectations. As a group, women often lack access to the power structures, law, resources and education that would equip them to put an end to this violence. And even when they do have the capacities to stop individual cases of violence, these instances are exceptions and not the norm.

(accessed on 20.05.13 from <http://www.delhipolice.nic.in/parivartan/parivartan.htm>)

The central point in an understanding of violence against women, from the perspective of gender studies, is that violence must be understood not only at the level of individual perpetrators and victims, but in terms of social structures and practices. The widespread and gendered nature of violence against women cannot be understood as only an aggregate of individual acts. It cannot be understood by saying, for example, that some men are violent because they are mentally disturbed or unusually aggressive. On the other hand, it must be understood by looking at the distribution of power between men and women in society.

When looked at from this perspective, it can be seen that what makes violence against women possible is their relative powerlessness. This makes women particularly vulnerable. Women may be unable to remove themselves from violent situations (for example, a violent household) due to a lack of options and resources: for example, a lack of financial resources. Sometimes violence may be committed by someone from a socially dominant community, and there are threats of further violence if justice is sought by the victim. Such violence may even be committed against not a lone woman but against a group of women, none of whom may be able to approach the legal and judicial systems. Sometimes law enforcement agencies, which are supposed to ensure the safety of citizens, may be unwilling to investigate and pursue cases of violence against women.

Violence may also be used as a tool to keep women in a subordinate position. The threat of violence, as mentioned above, often prevents women from doing things they wish to do: this may range from being outside one's home after dark, to travelling for one's education or career. All these cases represent lost opportunities and experiences.

One of the most significant aspects of gendered violence is the shame and stigma that is attached to such violence. Strangely, the shame and stigma is attached not to the person who has committed the crime, but to the victim of the crime. Many types of violence are construed as attacks upon a woman's honour, instead of upon her person or bodily integrity. In such a situation, women become scared and hesitant to seek justice, or to even inform people close to them that they have suffered violence. Any indication that one has suffered such violence becomes a slur on her own character. Additionally, a woman who has experienced certain types of harassment or assault may be treated in a manner that implies that she is to blame for the violence, she has been subjected to. When such



acts of violence occur it is common for questions to be asked of the victim: what she was wearing, who she was with, why she was in the area where the assault took place. Imagine such questions being asked of a person who has fallen victim to any other crime. If a person's car or scooter is stolen, for example, he or she is not asked "Why did you buy it? Why did you leave it in a parking lot? Did you not realise that by seeing such an expensive vehicle people will be tempted to steal it? Don't buy such a vehicle again!"

Read, Reflect and Respond

The report of the National Crime Records Bureau indicates that in 2011, of the 24206 cases filed under section 376 of the Indian Penal Code that were reported across India, in 22549 cases, the perpetrator was known to the victim. This implies that in many cases, violence is committed by someone known to the victim. Keep this in mind as you read the following extract, taken from the website of the Karnataka Police:

Personal Safety tips for Women at Home

Women who live alone should list only their last names and initials on their mailboxes and in the telephone directory.

Always keep the door locked, even if you are at home and even if you leave the house for just a few minutes.

Never open the door automatically after a knock, ensure that strangers have identified themselves properly before allowing them to enter, utilize a peep-hole to verify identification.

Never admit over the phone or to strangers that you will be alone at home.

Lifts: If you live in an apartment building where you know most of the residents and find yourself in the lobby with a stranger, let him take the lift first and wait for it to return for you. If you are on the lift and someone's presence makes you uneasy, get the control panel. If someone attacks, hit the alarm button and press as many buttons as you can so that lift will stop at any of the several floors.

If a stranger requests the use of your phone, do not let him enter your apartment. Place the call for him instead.

(accessed on 20.05.13 from <http://www.ksp.gov.in/home/gallery/safetytips.php>)

Do think these tips focus strongly on violence that is done to women by strangers? Formulate some tips to prevent violence from known persons?

Ban Ki-Moon, the Secretary-General of the United Nations, has spoken of the need to 'break the silence' surrounding violence against women. This refers to the need to do away with the sense of shame that attaches to violence where women are concerned, which prevents women from coming forward to seek justice when violence has been done to them, and which cause violence to recur. It refers to the need to see violence as something which is neither normal nor inevitable, but as something which is harmful and must be addressed.

2.5 Women and Law

How are issues surrounding women and law understood from a gender studies' perspective? What are the kinds of questions that such a perspective brings to the field of law?

Many things are included within the field of law. Firstly, 'law' has to do with professions. There are a set of people who are professionally concerned with law. There are legislators who draft and enact laws, judges who interpret laws and lawyers who advise people on the law. There are clerks who work for judges. There are teachers who teach law in colleges and universities. The study of law





Read and Reflect

Cornelia Sorabjee, born in 1866, was the first woman in India to become a barrister. She passed the exams for a Bachelor of Civil Law degree in 1892 from Oxford University, but could not collect the degree till 1922, as the University did not permit women to collect degrees till 1920.

Despite her qualifications, she was not allowed to plead in Indian courts, as she was a woman. It was not until 1921 that she was admitted to the Bar at the Allahabad High Court.

from the perspective of gender studies examines the role of gender in the manner in which the professions surrounding law - judge, lawyer, teacher, clerk, etc. - are organised.

Law has also been used as a means of changing social practices that are considered undesirable and harmful. One way of doing this is to make those practices illegal, and/or by making certain acts punishable. For example, the practice of bonded labour was abolished in India through the Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act, 1976. The Act also declared certain specific activities to be punishable offences for example, forcing any person to perform bonded labour, or abetting any activity that was considered a punishable offence under the Act.

The law is used as a means of bringing about social change with regard to women (and many other social groups). The study of law from a perspective of gender studies then must examine how laws impact women. How effective are legal changes in bringing about differences in women's lives? What are the advantages of using this approach to bring change? What are the disadvantages? What impacts have specific laws had on the lives of women? How do changing laws impact women when these laws have been written, implemented, and interpreted by people who may be patriarchal themselves?

2.5.1 Women in the Legal Professions

The section on feminism (section 2.10) describes how access to education is one of the fundamental issues for feminism. It was noted that access did not mean simply enrolment in schools, but also included various other features - the proximity of the school to the student's residence and the availability of various facilities.

Similar patterns can be recognised into while studying the access that women have the various professions surrounding law. For example, if a woman wishes to be a lawyer, teach law, or become a judge, she first has to gain the necessary educational qualifications. Secondly, she has to be admitted to the professional associations which control the entry of persons into a profession. The example of Cornelia Sorabjee refers to the setback that she suffered as a result of not being able to practice in law courts. The ability to be enrolled at a Bar opened up new career paths for women.

However, not all obstacles are formal. For example, some jobs may be considered unsuitable for women. Long work hours may prevent women from opting for certain jobs. Some may take breaks from careers to have and raise children, and find that their career advancement is hampered when they try to return to their jobs. Others may find it difficult to devote the required amount of time to both work and housework. Some may find working in certain places unmanageable due to harassment. Thus, even when there are no formal measures that would prevent women from doing certain jobs, there are still factors which may prevent women from pursuing their preferred career paths, which may make it difficult to succeed in their careers, and which may prevent them from getting as far in their careers as men.



Justice Anna Chandy

The first woman Judge of India



Thus, though there are a number of women in the lower rungs of various professional hierarchies, there are fewer on the upper levels of those hierarchies.

Read and Respond

Delhi High Court to get crèche for lawyers' tiny tots

By Kanu Sarda

New Delhi, July 20 2008 (IANS)

The Delhi High Court will soon get a crèche for the day-care of women lawyers' and employees' children aged up to three years.

This emerged at a recent hearing of a petition filed in 2002 seeking a direction to the government to provide land for the crèches. The petition has been filed on behalf of women lawyers practising in the Delhi High Court and the four district courts at Tis Hazari, Karkardooma, Rohini and Patiala House.

Appearing for the petitioners, advocate Ashok Agarwal told the court that there were no day-care facilities for the children of women lawyers and employees in the court complexes. "Because of this, a large number of women lawyers are compelled to leave their practice and stay at home to take care of their children," Agarwal told IANS.

The petition said the lack of crèches had resulted in a skewed male-female ratio in the legal profession. "There are several cases where women lawyers who have taken a break after giving birth to a child have never returned to the profession. Those who return after a gap of several years find it difficult to cope with the workload," Aggarwal said.

According to him, a break in service not only affects a woman lawyer's career but also leads to economic hardship.

(accessed on 02.04.13 from http://www.thaindian.com/newsportal/uncategorized/73675_10073675.html)

1. How does this report make a link between the lack of childcare facilities and the problems faced by women lawyers and court employees?
2. Compare what this extract says about women lawyers with what was discussed in the section on femininity.
3. Imagine a group of male lawyers making a demand for childcare facilities in a court complex. What kinds of problems do you think they would face in having their demand met?

2.5.2 Laws Pertaining to Women

In India, there is a long history of the use of law as a means of changing society. Social practices which are considered undesirable are made illegal, and people following them can be punished. Conversely, practices that are considered desirable and beneficial can be made possible through legislation.

Some of the earliest legislation regarding women was enacted during the colonial period of India's history. For example, the Sati Abolition Act, 1829, abolished the practice of sati (the practice of a Hindu widow immolating herself on her husband's funeral pyre). The Widow Remarriage Act of 1856 made it legal for widows to remarry. The Child Marriage Restraint Act of 1928 sought to do away with the practice of child marriage by setting a minimum age for marriage.

These laws, arising out of what has come to be called the social reform movement, were not easily accepted by the general public. In many cases, there were longstanding campaigns for these laws,





lasting many years. There were various objections to such laws: that they contravened the religion of those subjected to them, for example, or that they represented an interference of the colonial government with the culture of the indigenous subjects. Sometimes the law that would finally be enacted would be a milder version of that which its proponents had desired.

Since 1947, various other legal measures have been taken to give women certain rights, to remove disadvantages they face, and to make certain practices which hurt women, illegal.

For example, *the Hindu Succession Act, 1956*, gave to Hindu women an absolute right over property. *The Hindu Succession (Amendment) Act, 2005*, gave to Hindu women in joint Hindu families the same rights as sons, in the common property.

The Equal Remuneration Act, 1976, stated that men and women doing the same work were to be paid equally, and that there was to be no discrimination between men and women at the time of recruitment. In this way it ensured a woman's right to equal pay for equal work. *The Maternity Benefit Act, 1961*, ensured that women would be given leave from work upon the birth of a child, and had the right to be paid a maternity benefit for a certain period of time after the birth of a child.

Other legislation has been introduced to do away with social practices that are seen as being harmful for women. *The Commission of Sati (Prevention) Act, 1986*, made committing or abetting sati, a crime. This was a harsher law in comparison to the anti-sati legislation which had been created in 1829, which was still in force. *The Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961*, made both giving and taking dowry illegal. *The Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005*, sought to protect women who were undergoing violence within their families. *The Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, 2013*, made changes in various existing laws and codes of procedures to bring various harmful actions under the ambit of the law, or change the manner in which they had previously been addressed by law. Acid-throwing, trafficking, stalking, voyeurism, various types of assault, etc., were included within this Act.

Thus, over the last few decades, many people have turned to the law in order to improve the condition of women. How is this to be understood from the point of view of gender studies?

2.5.3 Looking Beyond Laws

From a perspective of gender studies, it is noted that laws are made by people living and working within a particular society, at a particular point of history. The kinds of laws that are made are influenced by this. However, the success with which laws are implemented also depends on various legal and judicial systems, as well as the law-enforcement machinery.

The law is an important mechanism for creating, protecting and ensuring women's rights. Thus many people interested in protecting and expanding women's rights have turned to the law. Many



Fig. 2.5: IPC has distinct laws favouring women

Read and Respond

Many different pieces of legislation have been mentioned in this section. Select one and find out more about it. By whom was it introduced? What was the need for this legislation? Was it opposed by anyone, and if so why? Has it ever been amended?



campaigns on violence against women have resulted in new or amended legislation - for instance, in the case of physical assault and dowry.

However, the existence of a law itself is not sufficient to ensure that a woman will be able to exercise her rights, or that justice will be done to her if her rights are violated. For this, the law must be well drafted and not contain loopholes - omissions and contradictions that allow people to circumvent it. Women must be aware of their rights and entitlements. Various state agencies - the courts, for example, or the police - must also be accessible and responsive. However, often this is not the case. Women are often not aware of their rights, and when they are, are often powerless to take up long, usually expensive legal battles.

From a perspective of gender studies, one would also point out that in a patriarchal society, law and the mechanisms to apply the law are also themselves patriarchal. Laws that are drafted may be informed by patriarchal values. Policemen may refuse to file First Information Reports (FIR), which are necessary for the investigation of the breach of a law. Even in courts, law may be interpreted in ways that are patriarchal and deny women their rights.

Law is an important means by which women can safeguard and enhance their rights. However, it is by itself not sufficient to guarantee an improvement in the status and rights of women, or that justice will be done to women.

Unit End Reflections

Comprehension Questions

1. What are the various issues related to the girl child? How can they be addressed?
2. Why do women often have poor health status and lack of access to health care facilities?
3. How does violence affect women's lives?
4. Women keep silent about the violence being faced because they know that they will not be heard. Do you think this is the right approach? Detail in the light of domestic violence.
5. What are the stereotypes generated by media? Discuss in detail with respect to any one medium advertisement, film, television.
6. Is there shift in the media's representation of gender roles? Illustrate.
7. What are the various laws pertaining to women? How far do they actually benefit them?
8. Is legal intervention enough to strengthen the status of women? Discuss.
9. Write notes on:
 - a. Women facing violence
 - b. Women and the legal profession
 - c. Malnutrition in women and its effects.

Case Study

1. Groups of four investigate how men and women are portrayed by the media, how they behave and how they relate to each other. Each group chooses to research on anyone:
 - a. 5 fairy tales
 - b. 5 TV serial story lines
 - c. 5 song lyrics e.g. Indian and western
 - d. 5 films or current releases
 - e. 5 newspaper reports



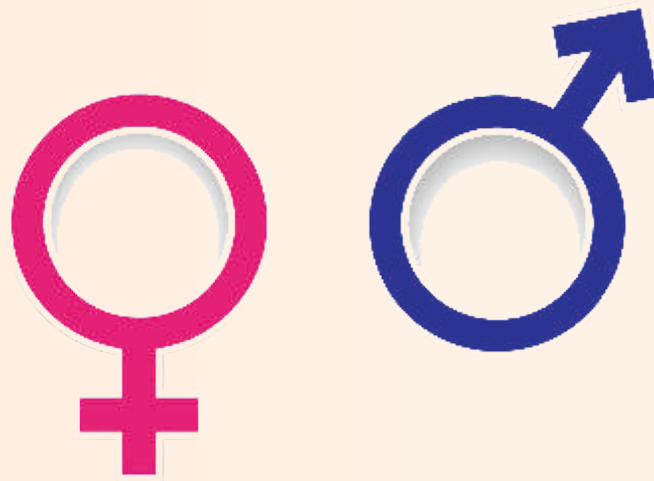


Groups report their finding to the class and explain how people of different gender were being portrayed in their area of investigation. How were men and women shown to be relating to each other? Were these images realistic? Students discuss the evidence and draw conclusions.

2. From 1947 to 2013, five woman judges have been appointed to the Supreme Court of India. These are Justices Fatima Beevi, Sujata Manohar, Ruma Pal, Gyan Sudha Mishra, and Ranjana Desai.

Find out more about these judges. What have their careers been prior to their appointment as judges? When were they appointed to the Supreme Court? What significant judgements have they given?





GENDER STUDIES

UNIT-2

Challenging Gender Stereotyping





CHAPTER 3: CHALLENGING GENDER STEREOTYPING

In today's scenario, the term 'gender stereotyping' is given lot of attention due to awareness about disparities existing everywhere in the society.

From the play ground to the classroom, at home or at work, this disparity has become a major concern and barrier to sustainable growth.

Read and Reflect

How many times do we make assessments about people - their personalities, tastes, family backgrounds, interests, choices - based on minimal information that we have about them? Often we make these judgements based upon just a few facts - where someone is from, their regional and/or community background, their age, their clothes, their accents.

When we make quick judgements, we are fitting people into categories that exist in our minds. We thus make statements like 'he is a typical teenager' or 'all girls from that city are like that'. We get an idea of what a 'typical' person from that category is like, and we fit the actually existing person into it.

Stereotypes have always been there in our society as well as in the family structures since long. It has influenced individual growth and development as well as policy perspectives. The stereotypical perception has influenced the under utilization of potentials as well as stopped individuals and society as a whole from exploring new dimensions of growth and development.

Gender stereotypes are the stereotypes people have about persons from different genders. They refer to the generalisations that are made about men and women, boys and girls, on the basis of their being men and women, or boys and girls.

These may be generalisations made about all men and women, or about smaller groups of men and women. For example, women are often considered to be emotional - this is a stereotype that applies to all women. On the other hand, some stereotypes are applied only to a group of women. For example, the stereotypes that exist about urban women are different from those of rural women. Different sorts of stereotypes exist about women of different ages - young women and elderly women, for example. Men also have to face such generalisations emerging from stereotypes for example men are expected to be physically and emotionally strong.

They are thus expected not to display their agony and pain in the form of tears if they undergo any physical or emotional hurt/trauma.

3.1 Types of Stereotypes

Stereotypes may be descriptive or prescriptive. Descriptive stereotypes indicate the characteristics that a group is believed to have; prescriptive stereotypes indicate the characteristics that it is believed to ought to have. For example, it may be believed that all women have a maternal instinct; it may also be believed that all women ought to have a maternal instinct. In both the cases, the possibility of women being discriminated is much higher. For example, if a woman is performing well in a male gender typed environment, she is breaking away from prescriptive gender stereotype and thus chances of resistance are higher. This may create a negative environment for growth of women.

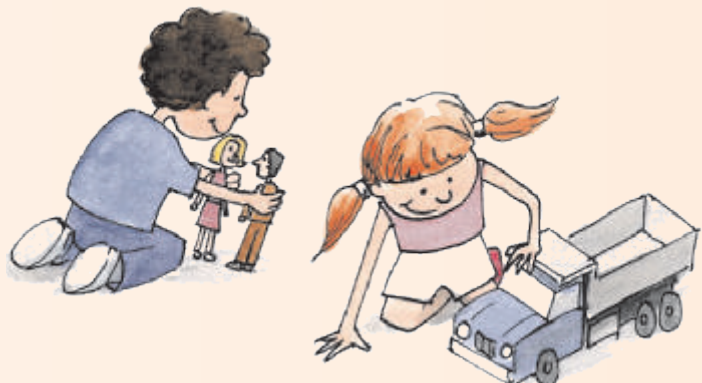


Fig. 3.1: Gender roles re-examined



Read and Respond

Recently, Asma started to travel by car to her work place. She used to like driving and always followed traffic rules. Once she was approaching a red light she had to stop the car suddenly because of an animal coming in front. The male driver who had to stop suddenly due to this, came closer and said to his friend, "I told you it's a woman who is driving the car".

After reading the case, answer the following:

1. Do you agree with the comment by the male driver? Give reasons.
2. What kind of stereotype is presented in this case?

A stereotype can describe features which are considered positive, as well as features that are considered negative. For example, to say that men are on the whole more violent than women is to express something negative about men; to say that they are more rational and reasonable than women is an expression of something positive about men as compared to women.

Stereotypes are also persistent - they are often resistant to change even in the face of evidence. So for example, a physically strong girl is not seen as evidence for the fact that girls can be physically strong and that ideas of girls being physically weak may be unjustified. She is simply seen as an unusual girl.

Men and women are often judged on the basis of various stereotypes. Stereotypes may set up ideal standards of behaviour, to which people are pressured to conform. For example, a boy who is emotional and cries easily may be told that he should not act this way, but that he should be tough and strong. A girl who is very pragmatic and unsentimental may be seen as being unwomanly.

Read and Reflect

Anita was happy to get a job in school after her education. Her husband was working in a company, earning bit higher than her. After few months, her son had board examinations. Her husband wanted that she should get home before her son comes home as he needs extra care. When she insisted on carrying on with teaching, her husband said, "It is not necessary for women to work and she should devote full time to her family".

3.1.1 Linking Stereotypes

Read the following news report, of a bus driver who claimed that he was discriminated against by his employer when he was found to be HIV-positive. The driver indicates that the prejudice against persons who are HIV-positive resulted in an act of discrimination.

Thanks to court order, HIV-positive bus driver back at the wheel

A year after a HIV-positive bus-driver was sacked by the Maharashtra State Road Transport Corporation, the Bombay High Court has given him his job back. Reacting to the verdict, 43-year-old Ramesh Bhamre (name changed) said, "I am happy that I can get my job back now. I wish others don't have to go through the trauma that I did to get my basic rights."

Ramesh Bhamre was sacked by the MSRTC in May 2012 on the grounds that he was "unfit to work". Bhamre, who had been working as a driver since 1999, had told the MSRTC that owing to the treatment he was receiving, he was physically weak. He had requested "light work" rather than being asked to drive heavy vehicles. Stating that there was no legal provision for changing the job profile of HIV-positive employees, the transport authority had removed him from service. But, Bhamre decided to fight the stigma, accusing the MSRTC of discriminating against him because he was HIV-positive.

Declaring that every citizen had the right to work and could not be discriminated against, a Bombay High Court Bench consisting of Justice Abhay Oak and Revati Mohite-Dhere stated that Bhamre should be reinstated within a week Bhamre discovered he was HIV-positive in 2008 and it had been, he said, one long struggle since. Dealing with the stigma had, he said, worn him out.





Human rights lawyer Asim Sarode, who represented Bhamre, said, "This case will act as a positive precedent for many others in the State, who face similar struggles." Bhamre's case was fought on the basic premise of the rights given by the Constitution, Mr. Sarode stated. "The Constitution provides us with the right to work, to live and the right against discrimination on any grounds. It was this simple argument that the High Court accepted," he said. The MSRTC, which has denied having discriminated against Bhamre, has maintained that there was "a lack of policy" defining employment options for HIV-positive patients....

accessed from <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/other-states/thanks-to-court-order-hivpositive-bus-driver-back-at-the-wheel/article5097809.ece> on 07.09.13)

Stereotypes are linked to social prejudices. A prejudice is a negative, unfavourable, and sometimes hostile perception, feeling or attitude about various groups and members of groups. It is a negative attitude towards a person or group of people, based simply on their membership in that group. For example, the idea that all women are less rational than men is a prejudice.

Stereotypes are also linked to discrimination. Discrimination means, to distinguish between people on the basis of the groups to which those people belong. This can result in differential treatment of people on the basis of group membership. For example, if an employer is interviewing candidates for a job, rejecting a candidate because of his/her religion or caste background is a clear case of discrimination.

Stereotypes also have to do with social roles. People occupy certain positions in society, positions that are socially recognised. 'Mother' and 'father' are examples of such social positions. Corresponding to these positions are certain expectations in terms of the behaviour and the attributes of the person occupying that position. Thus, when a person occupies a given social position, there are certain expectations from that person in terms of the way he or she will behave, expectations that are considered appropriate for that position. The term '*social role*' refers to these common expectations.

Read and Respond

Analyse the following statements and discuss inherent stereotypes associated with them:

1. Men don't cry and women are always shy.
2. Use of the latest technology for women should not be encouraged, as it corrupts them.

Read and Respond Mapping Stereotypes

This is an activity for your class as a whole, or in groups.

Take a political map of India, and mark the location of your school on it. Then mark out other regions on the map and make a list of stereotypes you have about men and women from that region. For example, you might mark out stereotypes about people from entire regions: the northern states, north-eastern states, etc. Or you may focus on particular states.

Make a list of these stereotypes. Then write down where you have learned about this stereotype. Was it in a film or a book, or on television? Have you learned it from the conversation of the people around you - parents, friends, teachers? Have you seen it in newspapers or magazines?

As a class, discuss these stereotypes. What is said about men and women from different regions? Where did you learn about it? Do the men and women you have met, who are from that region, correspond to the stereotype? What kinds of stereotype do they have about men and women from your region? Have you ever changed your opinion about a stereotype? In what circumstances?



This activity can be repeated with a political map of the world. One group of students can examine the stereotypes they have about men and women from different parts of the world, while another can examine the stereotypes that exist about Indian men and women.

3.2 Stereotypes in a Gendered Social World

In this section, we are going to examine the institutions and organisations which also make up our social world, and the manner in which gender stereotypes interact with these institutions and organisations.

The example shows how gender stereotypes can operate within the social institution of the family. A social institution is a pattern of behaviour that is regulated by social norms. It is a set of social roles that interact with each other in specific ways. For example, family and marriage are social institutions.

People are socialised to fill the social roles that they are expected to

Read and Reflect

A continuation of traditional gender roles

In an essay on women in the Indian IT sector, authors Reena Patel and Mary Parmentier state that, though it is believed that the entry of women into professional fields will result in the breakdown of traditional gender stereotypes, what is instead seen is the reinforcement of stereotypes. This has a negative impact on women's careers.

Patel and Parmentier write that, "women are more often associated with domestic roles, and it is assumed that women employees will prioritise domestic responsibilities over their careers. Conversely, it is assumed that men will prioritise their work over their domestic responsibilities. The result of these beliefs is that women are not given leadership roles, and thus do not get an opportunity to develop leadership skills. This hurts their chances of reaching the top positions of organisational hierarchies".

Patel and Parmentier: 2005

occupy. The expectation of the role that the person is expected to fill can be based on highly stereotypical criteria. In the example above, it can be seen that the reason for keeping young girls out of school has to do with the stereotypical association of women with housework. It also has to do with another stereotype that adult daughters are not able to take care of their elderly parents, and that sons look after parents when the parents are old. This idea leads to discrimination between male and female children, with male children being given more resources and opportunities.

Organisations are social units that are set up for the pursuit of a particular goal. They have distinct boundaries, clear

relations of authority, rules and procedures, and a division of labour. For example, a corporation is an organisation.

The gendered nature of organisations can be seen in authority relations, ideas and beliefs, and functioning of the organisation. For example, there may persist in an organisation the idea that for a particular job to be carried out properly, the person performing that job should have various stereotypically masculine characteristics. Or the converse may be felt: that a person having

Read and Reflect

Girls are transient members of families

In an essay on girl child labour in India, author Neera Burra states that, policies and cultural attitudes regarding children's domestic labour in India discriminate against girl children. The author says that the work that children do at home does not fall under the ambit of child labour, even if they perform this labour at the expense of getting an education. Girls are more likely to perform this labour than boys.

Burra writes: "Parental and social attitudes in most Indian cultural contexts tend to perpetuate the stereotypes of girls being transient members of families on their journey to marriage and boys being the mainstay of support to ageing parents. The subordination of the adult woman in the household runs parallel to the subordination of the girl child, socialising the latter into the pre-ordained role that she will assume as an adult."

Burra: 2001





stereotypically feminine characteristics will not allow the work to be carried out properly. This reveals that the organisation is gendered in its ideas of the appropriate qualities of employees. These ideas will carry over into the organisation's treatment of its actual male and female employees.

Other stereotypes may come into play in organisations. For example, the idea that women's primary responsibilities lie with their homes and families may make people reluctant to hire and promote women employees. Other stereotypes may come into play: for example, the idea that women are less willing or able to travel on work assignments, or to relocate to other cities when given the opportunity, may affect the kinds of promotions women are offered and how high they rise on organisations' hierarchies.

These examples show how deeply entrenched gender stereotypes can be. They do not exist only as ideas that people hold about men and women, but also influence other areas of social life. Thus, ideas of leadership may correspond with ideas of masculinity, making it difficult for those who are not 'masculine' to be taken seriously as leaders.

3.3 Challenging Gender Stereotypes

Why is it necessary to challenge gender stereotypes? Individuals face certain pressures to conform to positive stereotypes, and to avoid conforming to negative stereotypes. For example, a working mother may feel guilty about the time she spends away from her children, and may be made to feel that she is a bad mother.

People also feel the pressure to not exhibit behaviour that is deemed inappropriate for someone of their gender. Both men and women risk facing ridicule and disciplining if they do not conform to stereotypical notions of masculinity and femininity.



Fig. 3.2: It is important to challenge stereotypes

Stereotypes lead us towards over simplified and generalised pictures of social reality. In doing so, they obscure the complexities of the social world. For example, stereotypical representations of men as providers hide the many ways by which women contribute economically to their households and to the wider economy. Thus stereotypes prevent us from forming clear pictures of the social world. This has two consequences: firstly, it hinders a clear and precise understanding of the social world. Secondly, if policies and plans are made (by a government, an organisation, an agency for social change, or any other) using an understanding of the social world that is uninformed, distorted, or inaccurate, they may have unforeseen and perhaps even unwanted consequences.

Challenging gender stereotypes involves changing common perceptions about what men and women can or cannot do, and what men and women should and should not do (i.e. both descriptive and prescriptive stereotypes). The result is a change in widespread ideas and expectations about appropriate behaviour, careers, and roles for men and women. This allows both men and women to engage in activities that they would not have been able to previously - for example, careers or hobbies. It allows people to behave in ways that would previously have invited ridicule and reproach.

Challenges to gender stereotypes arise when people are seen being and acting in ways which are contrary to stereotypes. This may happen for various reasons. They may be based on conscious



decisions, deliberate attempts by people to confront and change stereotypes which are thought to be harmful and unjust. Alternately, challenges may arise when social structures and practices change, bringing men and women into roles and fields with which they are not usually associated. Stereotypical ideas of masculinity and femininity can be redefined through this process.

The interviews that follow are of two persons who may be seen as being in unconventional fields. *Navtej Johar* is a male Bharatnatyam dancer, and *Sharda Ugra* is a female sports journalist. In entering and working in these fields, they have challenged common perceptions about appropriate roles for men and women.

In these interviews, Navtej and Sharda discuss their experiences of entering and working in the careers and fields that they chose for themselves. Various themes can be seen in these interviews - what it was that caused the field to be associated with men or women; the sorts of problems they faced in entering these fields; the strategies that they adopted to make themselves more acceptable to their peers and colleagues. What sorts of masculine and feminine traits did they try to display? Which traits did they try to downplay?

There is also a focus on how these fields have changed over time, and the effects that changes have had on men and women. How have stereotypes changed in changing social scenarios? How have they persisted?

Gender sensitisation, as a process, requires that people become aware of how certain groups of people may face prejudice and may be discriminated against on the basis of gender. However, it also requires an awareness of the ways in which gender impacts various aspects of our lives, sometimes in ways which are not very obvious but are instead quite subtle. Through the interviews it becomes clear that gender does not always work in simple ways, but may be quite complicated in its impact on people's lives. Dealing with the complexity of gender as a phenomenon is a part of the field of gender studies.

In earlier section on women and law, we saw how many people have turned to the law to address unfair social practices and discrimination. However in this section we will see the challenges that people pose to social conventions and prejudices through their everyday acts. This may not, as the interviews show, be easy or quick paths, but are integral to ideas of gender equality and justice.

Read and Respond

'With the advent of latest technology in the company, one of the leading brands wanted somebody who could bring changes in the whole structure of the company and lead the already existing team of technologist who were not well prepared to deal with their existing knowledge.'

Does the above case present a better scenario for a knowledge-based recruitment rather than a gender-skewed one? Give reasons.

Tête-à-tête with Mr. Navtej Johar

Navtej Johar is a renowned Bharatnatyam dancer, choreographer, yoga practitioner and teacher. He has trained at Kalakshetra, Chennai, at the Shriram Bharatiya Kala Kendra, New Delhi, and at the Department of Performance Studies, New York University.

In the following interview, he discusses the factors that drew him to dance, dance as a feminine field, and his family's anxieties about his career as a dancer. He also speaks of how he understood gender as a young boy, and how this understanding contributed to the choices he made later in his life.

You've mentioned elsewhere that you saw a performance by Padma Subrahmanyam which made you want to be a dancer. What was it about that performance which interested you so much? What were you thinking of doing prior to that and how did that change?

I was 18-19, and at that point there's a lot of pressure on every young person to choose a profession or vocation for life. The minute I saw this performance, I knew that this was something that I wanted to do and that I could do it, and do it well. These three registrations

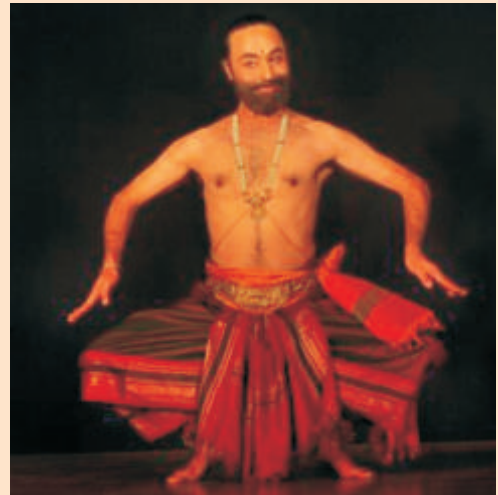




were very clear. What I saw deeply inspired me and directly corresponded to my love of music, drama, poetry, particularly spiritual poetry; basically it struck a chord with the performer in me. I realised that there was something in Bharatanatyam that could fulfil me all too completely.

You've said that you knew you'd have to do a lot of explaining to family and friends. What needed to be explained and how did you go about explaining it?

I grew up in Chandigarh and this was in 1978, before television had reached us. There was absolutely no exposure to dance. I knew it would shock everybody that a boy would want to dance, as nobody had ever heard of or done it. And my intention was not to shock. I wasn't a rebellious kid, I was a very 'good and sensible boy,' but I felt very strongly about dance. So I took it upon myself to really explain how I felt and what I wanted to do. I had to accept that initially my wish would be met with sheer shock and horror. It took me two years to convince my father in particular that I was not being stupid, or whimsical, or reacting to anything, but that I was following a deep instinct, and that I'd made a very considered and solid decision. And he realised that it was a valid decision, based on some aptitude that I thought I had, plus my love for it. Certain things are radically different today. Today people want their kids to dance - this was when 'shadiyon main bhi dance nahi hote' the [when people did not even dance at weddings].



Were there any specific questions in terms of where were you going to be trained, where were you going to work?

The major concern that parents had was, how will you make a living? The other concern was that this would lead to an immoral lifestyle. Pata nahi kya banega tumhara. Tum kahan jaoge, phisal jaoge. *[What will become of you? Where will you go, you'll go astray].*

You have to remember that my parent's generation had lived through the very charged devadasi (traditional temple dancer) debate, and been privy to the anti-nautch movement that called for the abolition of the devadasi system. Just a few decades ago, people like themselves had fought so hard to close down these establishments, and now their own boy, from out of nowhere, wanted to go back to learn the dance that the devadasis once did - it must have been shocking and totally unacceptable, it must have felt horrendous to them. So a number of anxieties were at play: a) financial, b) that dance seemed like a slippery enterprise, morally, and c) that dance was a woman's thing. I would say that the moral and gender anxieties were stronger than the financial.

As for myself, the first question was what style to do. After much deliberation I decided on Bharatanatyam. Questions arose about which school of Bharatanatyam, at that point I did not know that there were many styles of Bharatanatyam; and then finally where would I go, Delhi or Madras. These were the three main things. And I really researched. I spoke to people, read about it, and finally decided on Kalakshetra.

You've said that dance is predominantly a female domain, what do you mean by this?

It can be seen as a female domain for two reasons, a) because it is based on spiritual poetry, which in India is in the feminine voice. 'Aap North se South le lo' *[from the north to the south]*,



it's always in the feminine voice. It's the voicing of the experience of human-incompleteness, which is seen as feminine. 'Feminine' here is not to be confused with female gender or sex; it is referring to 'femininity' that is part of each of us, as is masculinity. b) Because dancers traditionally were women, particularly in the case of Bharatanatyam.

In the case of Bharatanatyam, traditionally, the teachers could be male but the performers were always female. It was definitely a female prerogative to perform dance in public. The men of the families could become teachers, musicians, accompanists, managers; in a way at that time nobody came into dance from outside this world, it remained within the family or the community. Things were slightly different in the North, because in Kathak we have had male dancers: Birju Maharaj, Lacchu Maharaj and so on.

Were you trained by female dancers?

In 1980, I joined Kalakshetra, which to date is the most notable institute for the training of Bharatanatyam in the country. It was found by Rukmini Devi Arundale, a pioneer in the field, who took it upon herself to revive the dance form as it was dying in the beginning of the 20th century due to the anti-naught movement. She built Kalakshetra on the model of Rabindra Nath Tagore's school, Shantiniketan-where education takes place under the trees. At Kalakshetra, the doors of dance are open to all who wish to dance, both women and men. Thus, my teachers there were both women and men, and a few of them became my role models. Role models, who you can look up to, talk to, trust and aspire to become like, are very important in all fields of learning and particularly in the arts.

You've mentioned that you've had to struggle, but there's been a difference between what you had to go through and what other women in the field had to go through. What were these struggles, and how did your being a man make a difference?



Dance is not only competitive, it is also difficult because initially you have to just keep going on without much support or visibility. There is a long dry period when you are putting in so much hard work, to what seems like no avail, and this is after years of training. Therefore, very few are able to pursue and sustain it. People think that it would be difficult being a male in a female domain. Yes, that has its own challenges, I have had to break through notions, conditioning, even prejudice, because I am not only male, I am a bearded Sikh at that, a Punjabi doing a classical Southern Indian dance.

But I think the actual struggle on the ground is similar for men and women. I struggled as much as the women in the field, and ironically, I guess I can say that I could stick it out because of being a man, but because of being a single man; being single gave me independence, because '*mere aage peeche koi nahi tha*'. [there was no one around me]. I could keep at it and take risks because I was alone. Many aspiring dancers, especially women, I feel, have to give up due to family pressure, marriage, children etc, or just because they get discouraged and also because they are one among so many female dancers.

In what ways has the field changed since you started? What kinds of changes have you seen?

It's become more acceptable to dance now, for everybody. '*Us samye to north mei kisi ko bhi ijjazat nahi thi, ladka, ladki, koi bhi*'. [At that time in the north, no one had permission to dance, girls, boys, anyone]. It's become more acceptable, more mainstream; it's not a big deal





anymore. Plus there are more forums: there's TV, film, the diaspora has opened up. The world has opened up, so to speak. And dance is accepted and recognised, but this also has the danger of making dance more commercial, trivial and less meaningful as I understand it.

What kind of advice would you give to young girls and boys who are looking to enter this field?

See I made a very radical choice. And I'm delighted that I made it. It's made me a free human being. I made an independent, autonomous choice as a child, and nothing is more satisfying than to be autonomous. But it is not easy, because it deprives you of the comfort of middle class cushiness.

Since childhood, I was aware of the imbalance in the gender equation. I knew '*ki ladkiyon ko is tarah se behave karna chahiye, and ladkon ko is tarah se behave karna chahiye*'. [that girls should behave like this, and boys should behave like this]. And I could clearly see that the boy had more licence. But I never bought it. I saw that my brother could make demands that my sister could not, and I found it completely wrong.

So I decided to side-step out of this male privilege. I did not buy into all the licenses that a boy had, because I found them wrong. And thus I gained for myself a freedom which lasts till today. If I had bought into any of those things, if I had felt special, had thrown tantrums as I have often seen boys do, I would have traded off autonomy. But luckily I did not do any of that, and it was a very conscious choice. A child sees very clearly, a child is highly sensitive and very aware, and can and does make choices. A child knows what is just and what is not. And if you decide not to participate in what you see is not right, don't buy into the system at a very basic level, don't trade off the clarity with which you see things, for the comfort, privilege and security of what is "done and acceptable" around you, then you retain a very firm, autonomous ground and stand a much better chance of claiming freedom and autonomy for yourself for the rest of your life.

I feel that I could finally make a very convincing case for my wish to dance because I had kept my boundaries very clear. I had a very clean record of being a very just boy, sensible and not given to tantrums or rebelliousness without a cause. I had simply not bought into the system and thus was free in my mind to carve a life of my own. And it was because of the choices I made as child.

Is there anything that you would like to add to this?

Basically, that we can live un-complicated lives, where we don't buy into social systems, even as children, especially as children. And this is possible if we rely on our intuition, sensitivity and awareness more than we think we can or have the right to. Because we are fully conscious beings: *sab ko pata hota hai, ki ghalat kya hai, theek kya hai, kab vo najayaz baat kar rahe hain, kab vo jayaz kar rahe hain*. [Everyone knows, what's wrong, what's right, when they are saying things that are fair, when they are saying things that are unfair].

Questions for discussion:

1. What were the various reasons that have been given for looking at dance as a feminine field? How has it changed over a period of time?
2. What kinds of anxieties were expressed about a boy taking up dance? Do you think that boys taking up dance today face the same challenges, or are the challenges different now?
3. In what ways have the struggles of men and women been similar and different in this field?
4. What kinds of consequences have been described of not subscribing to stereotypical gender roles?



The next interview presented here again paints an inspiring and interesting picture of grit and determination. This story is all about challenging the social conventions and emerging as an example that leads the way.

Rendezvous with Sharda Ugra

Sharda Ugra has been a sports journalist since 1989. She has worked at various newspapers and magazines including Mid-Day, The Hindu, India Today, and the website ESPNcricinfo. In 2012, she received an award from the National Commission for Women for her contribution towards women's empowerment.

In the following interview she describes her experience as a woman in the field of sports journalism. She talks about what the field was like when she entered it, how it has changed and how it has remained the same. In particular she describes how she went about establishing herself as a serious journalist in a male-dominated field.



What was the field of sports journalism like when you entered it? Why did you choose this as your career?

I was always interested in sports, and in writing. I was very interested in sports journalism because I liked reading a lot about it. You didn't find really good writing everywhere, and you knew it could be done. But no one advertised for sports reporters anywhere, so I didn't think that I was ever going to be a sports reporter. It was just a chance and a fluke. I was doing a journalism course, and one of my friend's mother called me and said "Mid-Day has advertised for a sports reporter, why don't you apply?"

What was that experience like?

It was a largely welcoming and happy environment. It was fun, and very exciting. The sports environment wasn't as severely controlled as it is now. Short of walking into the dressing room, where only men could go, it was good. You got used to being the odd person out. I went to England in 2011, after I had been working for a long time. In the entire press box, I was the only woman, again. I thought, "What is this rubbish, again. After all these years, come on, one!"

You've said that sports was 'guyspace', although there were women in the political news, the financial news.

There were no women. In Bombay there were definitely no women in sports. I was a complete oddity.

But what was it about sports? What was the difference between cricket and badminton and say, Parliament?

Why didn't women go into it? I think women in journalism started in politics and then moved to development issues. Women's issues, discrimination, poverty, etcetera. Maybe sport was also thought of as an unserious subject. *Khel-kood [playing]*.

Women were often thought of as the lighter, colour writers. "Okay, you are in sport, but you can only do features". Maybe there was a little bit of that also. You had to tell people that you were serious about the sport, that you were watching to appreciate what was happening on the field, and you understood what was going on. You wanted to indicate that that you were not trying to show off to your peers, that you were actually writing for the reader.

But was it a welcoming field for women when they finally started to enter it?

I was very lucky that I grew up in Bombay, where the environment towards women is completely





different. In Bombay a lot of the sports journalists were a cool bunch of guys.

They were really curious, that what is a girl doing here? Then they got used to it. The real attitude problem you got was from senior colleagues. I spent about 6 ½ years in the Hindu and I must have spoken to my colleague about four or five times: basic, rudimentary conversation. Okay, maybe four-five is a bit less, but there were days that went without conversation. And there was one man from another organisation who never spoke to me at all. Not even *"hello, good morning, what is the score?"* Not once.

Did he behave the same way with other women?

There were no other women. For a long time, I was the only woman. There was no other frame of reference for him. At press conferences, I was the only one in a room full of men. But a lot of them were perfectly fine. Once I was sitting in a press conference and eating my lunch by myself, and one of the journalists came and sat with me, because he noticed that I was sitting by myself. I always remember those people...they were trying to be as courteous as they could. There were one or two bad cases, but my big advantage was that I was living in Bombay. Now that I think about it, starting a career in sports journalism in Bombay was lucky.

And with sports people, if they read what you wrote and said *"well, this is quite nice"*, then you had one foot in the door.

Being judged for your work.

Yes, for what you did. We used to be paranoid as being thought of as groupies, supposedly in the job because we liked the stars.

How much did you need to know about the sport?

I knew enough to watch it and you learn as you go along. You can't be a sports journalist unless you love sport in any way. And you learn so much of the sport while you watch or as you play.

But that was always used as an obstacle, an explanation for why women can't write about cricket - because they won't understand it, that it is this great complicated game that cannot be understood.

You've said elsewhere that you had to conduct yourself professionally at all times. What did that entail?

Clothes, shoes....don't ask stupid questions. *'Don't ask stupid questions'* was a big thing. Behave like a professional. Project yourself in a way that you're here not for the stardom, particularly with reference to cricket and cricketers. You're here on work. And people understood it fairly quickly. There was no 'use your feminine wiles to get a story'. You just did not do it, that was not how you were wired to do it.

How has 'conducting oneself professionally' changed?

Now girls are much more confident. And particularly because of television, their presence is also expected. Sports officials have come to terms with the fact that they will always be there, it's not just a *'male only'* thing. It's not going to be a male preserve anymore. We may not be that many, but we will always be a decent number. I don't think there's a single English newspaper that hasn't got a female sports reporter in their staff. It's as though girls have just said *"it's fine for us to write about sport. And for us not to dress up like men"*. You can go to work looking nice and beautiful and your professionalism need not be questioned. Whereas at that time, it helped that I was not some sweet demure young person. It helped that I was taller than many other women. It gives you a certain confidence that you can go to a space where there are a lot of men.

So it was not a lot of girly clothes and jewellery.

Yeah. Now I do it. Now I don't think about it because I'm older and things have changed. But yes,



back then, nothing that called attention to yourself other than when you were asking someone "can you please give me a quote." I used to wear the most boring clothes. I was usually in jeans and a shirt or T-shirt; dressed like a man, now that I think about it. But you had almost internalised it. You didn't have to do it but maybe it just looked more businesslike.

You wore loose clothes, to disguise the fact that you're a female. I did that, a lot. I used to travel to several places and just didn't want to call attention to myself. You just wanted to be completely invisible in the press box. *"I'm here but please don't notice me"*.

But do you still see that?

No, that's gone, ten years ago. Everybody wears whatever they want. And because a lot of girls on television have to look presentable, everyone dresses very well. All the men are sort of 'jhalla' [casual], but we dress up properly when we go to work. It's a much more comfortable environment, it's a much more competitive environment than there was.

I suppose 'notice' only in a professional capacity, no other drawing of attention to oneself.

Yes. I barely talked. It took me four years to ask a question at a press conference. Because you didn't want to ask 'stupid questions'. And people ask stupid questions all the time.

But it's not just about stupid questions. You've said elsewhere that you didn't want to be seen as a stupid woman asking 'stupid questions'.

Because you're not supposed to be in sport. What are you doing reporting sport? You kept waiting for someone to pull you out and say, *"what are you doing here, get out. You don't belong here"*. Because it was such a male thing. May be that was just for the first few years...no, it took longer than that. The moment I actually had female company in the press box, we had a great time. But when I was alone it was *"you are going to get caught out and you are going to get thrown out. Because you did not deserve to be here"*. I don't think anyone conveyed it to you...maybe you got some kind of vibe from the senior journalists in the press box. But the younger guys were cool. It was good fun.

How long did it take for that feeling to go away?

About four-five years. I joined the *Hindu*, and I was doing reporting. I had female company. You started noticing more and more girls coming in, you started reading bylines in papers. *'Being caught out'* took me more time.

Till you heard other people asking 'stupid questions'.

Till someone else came and asked stupid questions! So then, it didn't matter.

How much has the field changed for women since you started out?

There are a lot more women. The numbers have really increased. A big invasion came through television. They were there, they were completely unafraid to do anything. They didn't care about what people thought of them. There is no self-effacement anymore. And I am very happy to see that there are a lot of girls in the print media.

It's a normal thing. Sport and women is not some strange thing. How many women champions has India produced? Our most celebrated athlete after Milkha Singh was PT Usha. Our best badminton player, our best tennis player at one time or the other, have all been women. You can see them on the field, so why should there not be girls writing off the field? Editors of my generation are open to the idea of women reporters. It's a normal thing for them. They've grown up with it.

What about for the women themselves, in terms of things like work hours, travel, etc?

I think a lot of girls struggle once they marry and have kids. They worry more about timings and tours, they do a lot of desk work which is more structured and is in one location.





But I know a lot of girls also who are not single and who travel, who go and cover games. They are thought of as being number one in their fields and that is why newspapers have hired them. And they go. The good thing about sports journalism for women is that things are scheduled, and you can order your life around them. That's not so much of a problem. In a way it's worked for girls. Because of the internet you have all sorts of women writing lots of things about sport. I think they find it hard to break into journalism because of the small number of jobs available and the requirements being different.

Journalism is not a field for the timid. I think I have changed in terms of who I am, because I am a journalist. One fast bowler from Bombay was talking to me, and he said *"you have changed so much, you used to talk so less. Now I see you on television and you're fighting every day"*. But what hasn't changed is that no matter what you wear or how you write, you still have to convey professionalism to the athlete and to the official.

So what do you have to convey?

Young girls have a really tough time. They go through the same thing all over again. Everyone will remember the mistakes that they make. Also I think the relations between men and women have also changed in the last twenty years. So if you're starting out as a journalist at 21 and the athlete is 24, how do you convey a certain seriousness to him? You have to do homework, do research, go there with your facts ready. The moment that is established they are fine.

So 'professional' is knowing your stuff and being business-like?

Knowing your stuff and being business-like...just being professional. I think it's unfair because a lot of guys might be able to get away with just being sloppy. But I don't think women can get away with being sloppy.

During the 2011 World Cup final, Peter Roebuck, a former county cricketer who went on to become a great writer, looked around in the press box. I was there with two or three other girls. He said *"There should always be more women in the press box."* I was going to argue with him but said *"Why do you say that?"* and he said *"Because they see more clearly."*

What is it that attracts women to sports journalism and what dissuades them from taking it up?

I think what will always attract women to sports journalism is if they love sports itself. You cannot do it if you don't love it. You have to be curious about it. You don't have to know everything, because if you're curious as a journalist, it goes a long way. And you need to understand that you're writing for people to read, to tell them something they don't know. It's difficult in the age of television. But if you love sport you'll always find a way to describe what it means to you.

What will hold you back - maybe competition? It's very tough. So you have to be tough. But if you like sport and you love words, then you can work for the best. Now that the business of it has expanded so much, you'll find a niche into which you fit. If you love sport, everything about it, and you're curious about it, you'll find a way to fit yourself into it that makes you happy. You have to love sport. It has to interest you every single day.

Questions for discussion:

1. How did people react to women in the field of sports journalism?
2. The interview describes certain ways in which this field has changed. What are the effects of these changes on women?
3. What did women do to project an attitude of seriousness and professionalism? What specific tactics were used? How has that changed as the field changed?
4. What are the new challenges that women face in this field?



Unit End Reflections

1. You may be female or male. Look into your self; it may be made up of different identities - identity as a student, sister or brother so on. Share your ideas.
 - ☐ Find out all the identities you have and analyse the behavioural attributes attached to each of those identities.
 - ☐ How did you internalize those behavioural attributes?
 - ☐ List the stereotypes found in these identities.
2. List the stereotypical behavioural attributes representing today's generation for males and females. Now, talk to someone of the older generation, and check how far they agree with your list. Is there any difference of opinion?

Comprehension Questions

1. Is gender socially constructed? Substantiate your arguments with suitable examples.
2. Explain, why gender is a product of society and culture.
3. How do division of labour and sex segregation explain the notion of femininity and masculinity?





CHAPTER 4: CHALLENGING GENDER STEREOTYPING IN MEDIA, LITERATURE AND LANGUAGE

In earlier chapters we have developed concepts related to gender and how stereotypes emerge in different areas of the society. In fact gender stereotypes have permeated deep into our cultural and social system in one way or the other. Areas like media, literature and language are also deeply impacted by this and they further influence those who come in touch. These areas are agents of social change in the society so it is even more important to understand that how and to what extent gender stereotyping influences them. Specifically, media and literature have always been considered to be instrumental in influencing the mind-set of people.



The reach of media and literature has drastically increased in last few years due to lot of factors. Development of information and communication technology has been one of the factors that have made accessibility so high that there would be rarely anybody who would not have come in touch with latest developments in media. In recent times, literature has become more popular with the younger generation. It is not just the western literature that became popular, but also, the Indian authors have made their significant presence felt. The young minds being much more impressionable are influenced more by what the popular literature is

propagating. There are many who agree that no matter what we say these works are not worthy enough to be called literature, they are popular among the readers and selling in millions.

The influence of media, especially the electronic media in recent times is immense where, viewers relate with the programmes they watch so much that they start following what they see on screen, in their real life. In terms of gender related issues, it is evident that these powerful instruments are making strong impact, both negative and positive in the lives of their viewers.

Thus, there is a need to understand how gender stereotyping is eminent in the media, literature and language and also about how to challenge it.

Read and Reflect

The media portrays or reflects the gender-based roles that creates stereotypes. Conduct Host a class debate on the motion.

4.1 Mass Media

The term mass media is defined as a means of communication that operates on a large scale, reaching and involving virtually everyone in the society to a greater or lesser degree. Mass media has been influencing the social, cultural, economic, spiritual, political and religious aspects of society as well as personal level thinking, feeling and acting. Media feed the people with the latest information and creates the need for change in contemporary society. Mass media plays both a positive and negative role in the society. Media is all pervasive; its functioning is very subtle. It performs a vital role in dissemination of information. The media carries out an important role as the Fourth Estate of democracy, as the watchdog of society, as defender of the public interest, even more so, because of its strong presence and positioning. Radio,





television, films and the printed word reach all of us in this age of information and each strives to perfect its modes of communications to become more effective as a medium. By gradually shaping public opinion on personal beliefs, and even people's self-perceptions, media influences the process of socialization and shapes ideology and thinking. The term 'mass media' denotes various forms of entertainment; television, films, music, newspaper, magazines, internet information, advertising, etc disseminating information and it is used by media organization to target and impact all generations- young or old.

4.1.1 Gender Stereotyping and Mass Media

With the developments in Information and Communication technology, media has not only reached majority of houses but also it is now readily available in our hands in the form of mobile devices. Every type of information is now available on the click of a single button. It has hugely impacted not only the socialization process of an individual but also the structures of our families in lot of ways, directly and indirectly. It was not long ago that there used to be a single television or radio set available with the whole family where programmes were viewed through one channel. The limited programmes were watched and listened together by the family and sometimes with neighbours also joining in. But now the unlimited information through rapidly growing number of channels and media is shaping the views of the individuals. The acceptability of content has somewhere emerged from inability to control what is being telecasted. The content available 'on air' and through 'wires' is less filtered and widely available. Although when you talk about print media, things are not drastically out of hand. Also the access of print media has by far been deep and influential.

The media thus encompassing the lives of the public also generates images that lead to gender stereotyping. In every form that the media is presented from advertising, television programs, newspaper reports and magazines articles, to comic books, music, film and video/internet games, it is quite likely to see women and girls in the home performing domestic chores such as laundry or cooking; as objects who exist primarily to service and support men; as victims who can't protect themselves and are the natural receivers of beating, harassment, assault and other gruesome acts.

Read and Reflect

Discuss with your parents and elders about the serials they watch and what do they like and dislike about the central characters. List any two positive and any two negative depictions about men and women according to them.

The media stereotypes not just women and girls but even men and boys. From WWE fighters to Rambo, machismo, antagonism, independence, pragmatism, aggression and violence are often associated with masculinity. Though it is true that men have relatively more economic and political power in society as compared to women, these trends even though are different from those which affect women and girls create strong stereotypes for boys and men to conform to.

Research indicate that the amount of television viewing done by children is directly proportional to the notions that they will develop about traditional male and female roles and it is even more likely for boys to demonstrate aggressive behaviour.

The media images are polarised to a great extent in the way they portray growing up girls and boys. In advertising, for example, girls are shown as being endlessly concerned by their appearance, and fascinated primarily by cosmetics, dresses, dolls and jewellery, while boys are seen playing sports and engrossed in war play and technology.

Furthermore, children are blatantly being exposed to such messages even more so in context of

Read and Respond

Pick up the newspapers of last week, both Hindi and English and analyse the news items under the following:

- Headings of news related to men and women
- Advertisements
- Focus area of photographs published





gender, which should be restricted only for adults. These images also influence the notions young girls and boys have about their future aspirations and achievements.

4.2 Advertisements

The advertisements shown or printed are continuously repeated and the message is presented sometimes in such a way that strong stereotypes are reflected in them. Those who get influenced directly by the way it is presented make a particular type of image in their minds that gets translated in their real life also. The availability and frequency of content that reinforces the stereotypes is much more than those which challenge them. This is present in programmes and advertisements that target children as well as elders.



Siddhant used to love his pink coloured cap with little hearts when he was 3 year old. But next winters, when his parents gave him the same cap to wear, he refused by saying, "I will not wear this cap as it's pink in colour and has hearts made on it, and its only girls who wear such things". When his parents asked "who told this to you?" he said. "I have seen it on television".

These observations may look small and insignificant to many but with time these stereotypes become so strong that they are bound to create biases that strongly

influence the society negatively. Children learn the concept of colour at a very early age where their preferences to particular colours are being shaped by the selection of elders who are around them. With the exposure to different programmes, where colours like pink and blue are trademarked as colours of girls and boys respectively, the influence becomes much stronger. It is not just about choice of items or colours but also inculcating the gender roles that are depicted which ultimately lead to stereotypes. As young children cannot critically distinguish between the fantasy and reality they are furthermore vulnerable to the teachings of media, they cannot identify the hidden persuasive intent, or understand irony and disregard stereotypes in the media. The cumulative and unconscious impact of these media messages can even act as a delimiting factor to the development of a child's potential.

What can be the reasons behind it? If we know that certain things are creating differences, then why don't we stop such things?

There are so many other questions that emerge from such observations but there are statements that counter them like:

These small things don't make much difference.

We need to sell things and create a market for our products.

Advertisements not only sell products they also create images and actions that influence lifestyle of viewers. Majority of them create images that motivate viewers to become buyers of their product. In this process the commercials also propagate gender stereotypes among them. Beauty products generate an image that reinforces the concept of looking slim and fair among women. Diversity among individuals is rarely 'celebrated' in advertisements. Those who do not fit the norms on which

Read and Respond

Analyse advertisements of following products and write about how women and men are projected in them:

1. Beauty products
2. Motor bikes
3. Kitchen Products
4. Health drinks

You can add other products also which you want to discuss.



these commercials are based upon feel insecure. The male is shown as powerful and always present there to protect women or show their dominance. An ideal image of a male is also portrayed in the commercials and they are expected to follow different type of norms.

The domestic roles in the advertisements are majorly played by women in commercials. Commercials showing them as decision makers at a larger stage or showing them as influential members of the society is a rarity. The supportive role of women to men is most repeated form of depiction in commercials. Men are shown to take up responsibility of their family and main decision makers. If a commercial has to do something with adventure, finance, business etc. more often than not it would be a male who would be the main lead. Constantly biased gender depictions in media have profound anti-social effects.

Advertisements depicting '*ideal body*' and '*ideal action*' create a myth that creates anxiety among male and female equally. These anxieties and insecurities are manifested in different forms as biases among each other in reality. Every small aspect right from natural process of aging to pimples is dealt differently by different commercials, some are sensitive to gender issues and some not. One of the most objectionable advertisements is the one where women are shown in characters to be desired or impressed to give mileage to the product. This objectification has lead to stereotypes in the society which demean the identity of the women as an independent individual.

Read and Reflect

Consider yourself as an advertisement maker and create an advertisement for product of your choice where you would like to break away from gender stereotypes.

Consider the following example where a woman is shown as helpless and vulnerable as her husband did pick insurance policy. As depicted in the advertisements of almost all major companies, Insurance is purely considered to be responsibility of man and must for the woman's survival after the sudden demise of the man. The idea of selling insurance can be presented differently where this helplessness and dependence on man is not the main idea.

"By and large, the scholars have pointed out four stereotypes of women that are prevalent in advertising:

- ☐ Objects of desire
- ☐ Homemakers
- ☐ Dependant on men
- ☐ Shown as ornamental or decorative objects and seldom as making important decisions or doing important things." (Das, 2000).

With the increasing sensitization among the media gender images are also changing in the society. Women are shown in strong roles and playing characters away from the stereotypical image of women in the society. The increase in working women has been one of the reasons for some advertisement makers to portray women as decision makers and ambitious. But still the non-stereotypical images are limited to women from urban areas. There is a need to curb advertisements that are encouraging stereotypes that would negatively influence the empowerment of women. Infact a more positive depiction of women in roles that is professional, liberal and independent would be helpful in many ways.

One of the few, non-stereotypical commercial was the Dove campaign that aimed at women at every age and with different kinds of body shapes. It emphasized natural beauty instead of perfect shapes. The female viewers prefer to watch women, with whom they can identify, thus the campaign proved to be a great success.





4.3 Gendered images in Television Shows and Serials

Television as a medium of entertainment and information has surpassed all other mediums in recent times. From urban cities to rural villages all have access to channels that are aired primarily for the purpose of generating revenue for the producers. The programmes in these channels have a rainbow of programmes focusing on different types of viewers. There are programmes that are said to be based on women empowerment but in reality the picture is very different. There has always been a gap in the programmes presented on television as compared to the reality and with the increased competition among the channels the disparity among the real life and characters on television has equally increased. Reality of female entrepreneurs, working women and women working in agricultural fields are equally neglected in most of the programmes.

Television programmes in the name of creative freedom depict unrealistic images of characters that do not come close to real life in any form. How an 'ideal woman' is shown in these soap operas make an impact on those who watch it. Attributes associated with them in the roles of mother, sister and wife are generally typecast. Those who deviate from these attributes are shown as negative characters. A woman here is always shown as a person who is sacrificing, devoted and supporting apart from always being dressed to look charming. Women who deviate from the humble, meek, dutiful, docile spectrum of characteristics are not portrayed in good light.

Approval and disapproval to the actions of characters in these television series become deterrent to the audience also. The clear demarcation shown in the different worlds of men and women constantly propagates the idea among viewers. Motherhood and child rearing are emphasised very differently in the soap operas and those who do not live upto the

expectation of others are labelled as guilty.

Read and Reflect

The ideal daughter-in-law portrayal on television is of one who is well-dressed (all the time decked up with heavy jewellery and smudge-free make-up), obedient, efficient homemaker and bestowed with righteousness. How has this image affected the perceptions of a daughter-in-law in our country?

Another aspect of misrepresentation of women from the rural area is prevalent among the television series. Although participation of women in the field of agriculture is much higher and there are places where the main workforce is women, the depiction of women in the popular television programmes is somebody who is preparing food and bringing it to the field. The male dominance in the agriculture is visible on most of the programmes.

The experts who come in the panel for agriculture based programmes are generally males.

Read and Respond

*Analyse a few television serials shown in different channels and list down characteristics of the female and male leads. Also, discuss how these characters are stereotyped.

*Analyse the following scene from a television series:

In an episode of one of the most watched cartoon series for children, when the main characters go to an island for an adventure trip the male lead brings electronic instruments with him and the female lead is shown as somebody fascinated with beauty products even at a very young age. The female character is required to be well mannered and male characters as more adventurous and risk taking.

List down some scenes where such stereotypes are being promoted or challenged in television serials or shows.

4.3.1 Children's Programs

Various children's programs either with real or animated characters can be seen reinforcing strong gender stereotypes. An analysis of different programs clearly shows that the male characters are represented by strong and muscular build and the female characters are represented by petite and slender figures. When it comes to action, it's the male that appears victorious and the female emerges as a weakling or always saved by the male because it's strong. This is a way of emphasizing and instilling in the young ones watching these animated shows that men are stronger and women



are a weaker sex. This can corrupt the viewer's thinking as the regular message that is circulated conveys that the boys are to be seen as fighters and the girls are there to be protected always because they can't defend themselves.

4.3.2 The Changing and Challenging Trends

The image projected by media has strong influence on the perception of those who watch it. In recent times there has been conscious effort to project an image that is sensitive towards gender related issues. Showing women as progressive, independent, responsible and confident is an idea that has emerged in some of the serials. Women as achievers in different fields can set a positive example in the society. To challenge gender stereotypes in the society, media can be used extensively and effectively. It has been years since these stereotypes are being propagated in media thus it would need a much more conscious effort from media to deal with these stereotypes. The bias and discrimination against women can be dealt effectively by passing a strong message directly or indirectly through televisions. There have been some effective television serials that challenged the stereotypical image and were successful. Serials like 'Udaan' and 'Rajni' were telecasted decades ago and had motivated lot of women to dream and achieve. There are times when serials start on positive note and use the concept of women empowerment to gain initial popularity but in the process to keep it going the idea gets lost. The need is to be more sensitive and progressive.

Read and Respond

Form two groups - one of boys, the other of girls. From various media, have the boys list female traits and interests that are most commonly featured, while the girls do the same for male characteristics and concerns. Form new mixed groupings and discuss how boys and girls feel about the stereotypes by which their gender has come to be represented. What is artificial about these stereotypes?

4.4 Films

Popular cinema has a deep connection with the society. There are numerous examples where the stories as well as artists who play the characters in these movies have influenced audience. The global recognition has also been received by the Indian cinema due to work of people like Satyajit Ray and A.R. Rahman who earned a niche in their respective genres. Depiction of women in cinema has seen a vast variety that ranges from an image that objectifies women to an image where women are shown in a non-stereotypical way. There have been examples where objections were raised against lot of movies based on how women are depicted in them but these voices are few. The depiction of women in present day cinema influences young minds in similar ways as in television. The influence ranges from the way the artists dress to the way they perform their roles. It can be clearly seen that Indian cinema has come a long way in its journey and so has the portrayal of women characters. In its many shades and hues, the depiction of women in our cinema not only touches the lives of the audiences but also showcases the strength, beauty and complexity that defines a woman.

Cinema has always been one of the biggest industries in India and continues so in the post-globalisation era, when the Indian economy has entered a new phase of liberalisation, expansion and global participation. But if we try to check the storylines of commercial or popular cinema issues of gender, society, socio-economic justice, community, secular nationhood and plurality are not explored extensively. The Indian cinema has evolved in a big way, from the black and white films to multidimensional colour movies, yet it continues to focus only on entertainment. In this era of internet downloads and television the theatrical revenues of Indian films have received a great setback yet the lure of the 35 mm has always been fascinating and so is its impact on the masses. Indian cinema has indeed come a long way and concurrently, has witnessed a great change in the portrayal of the female protagonist. From the very first film, Raja Harish Chandra - which had no





female actors - to the modern day where women oriented movies equally enthrall the audience as does a multi-starrer, it has indeed come a long way in its characterisation of female leads.

4.4.1 Straight-jacketed Approach of Indian Cinema

Thematically Indian cinema has largely been male dominated. Themes used are generally from the male audience's point of view and actresses are in roles that are used to support the male protagonist. Their roles are charted out in the context of male characters that are central to the script-hero, villain, father, boss or any other such male figure. She is not given the liberty of independent existence. This kind of straight jacketing approach limits the female's roles to offer only glamour, support and entertainment. Quite a few films institutionalized the patriarchal values depicting women as submissive, docile, suppressed but ideal girl and martyrs for their own families like *Dahej* (1950), *Gauri* (1968), *Devi* (1970), *Biwi ho to Aisi* (1988), *Pati Parmeshwar* (1988), *Hum Saath Saath Hain* (1999), *Vivaah* (2006) to name a few. *Abhimaan* the movie that was released in 1973 had the story with the premise of the wife being more talented than the husband. This indeed presented a defiance of the societal stereotype. However, the film crumbled when the wife decided to give up her thriving musical career for satisfying the husband's ego and ultimately becoming a martyr by culminating to a established closure that calls observance to conventional values of marriage, motherhood and family.

4.4.2 Larger than life characterisation

The stardom on screen is built based on the characters which are portrayed larger than life. Instead of their depiction as normal human beings they are elevated to a higher position of being ideal who are the mightiest and can commit no wrong. Their injustices, cravings, ambitions, feelings, biases, prejudices and perspectives that may show their weaker side are completely missing from the scene. They are generally not the people we find around us in this real and worldly life. Whereas in such a scenario the female characters are also not like the ones with grey shades. Thus be it male or female, they are all righteous and virtuous without dark shades and even if there are some streaks they will ultimately emerge as the perfect men and women conforming to societal norms.

4.4.3 Women as decorative fillers

The most common positioning of female characters in the cinema is more like decorative objects. They are presented to gladden the screen with their presence with almost no authority in their hands. The representation of women in various eras of cinemas may offer some variation, but they are confined largely to the traditional, patriarchal framework of the Indian society. The action-packed movies are more male-oriented where the actress is shortly placed in the romantic track as a distraction for the viewer, from repetitive stretches of violence. Things are not very different today where female protagonists are also some times seen participating in the action sequences, but here also they are more in supporting casts without the deceived lead in the climax. So the realism in the portrayal of the female characters needs a serious debate. The woman with strong individuality, aspirations and achievements in a positive light are just a few out of many to be seen on the silver screen.

The most common portrayal is of a character casted as male protagonist's love interest, taking care of the family and rearing children. Such characters, even after getting Doctorate Degree in Science, are considered to be ideal only when they succumb to observance of the rituals like the fasting for the longevity and good health their of husband. The girls, who are shown in the barest possible outfits until they are married, are denied to have 'say' while choosing their life partners. The parents, the custodian of traditions, do that job for them. After getting married these women are mindlessly loaded with the weight of bangles, ornaments, and conventional clothes. Such a



turnaround, while artistically displayed on screen, somehow brings down the morale of the girls who have their career aspirations and want to create their own independent identity.

4.4.4 The emerging trends

Recently there have been some positive changes emerging in the scripts of otherwise essentially male-centric cinema. The common visible trend has generally been that the lead and the larger screen space was reserved for the male characters, leaving little space for the female counterparts to evolve and grow as versatile performers. Though we have been now seeing increasing numbers of movies creating bold and distinct female characterisation in quite non-stereotypical manner, in the past also, we've had actresses portraying strong characters who fight the shackles of their social milieu and the very first film is *Mother India* released in 1957. Considered as one of the finest classics of Indian cinema, the movie looks at the struggle of a rural woman in India, who fights all odds to raise her two sons. The portrayal of the late actress Nargis Dutt is of a loving and brave mother, who struggles to raise her family alone and in the end, staying true to her cause, she kills her evil son to save a woman's honour.

Women in Indian cinema are type casted to honour-fixed notions ranging from cult movies to celluloid blockbusters. They are



portrayed either as damsels in distress or frantic feminists or just glamour dolls whose sole aim is to attract the attention of the males. In many Indian films it is a common trend to insert 'item numbers' which bear no rational connection to the film but with an assumption that the film is easily associated. Sometimes the one song ends up making a mark for the film; numerous such examples can be seen in recent releases.

The misconstrued

idea of freedom and modernity among women as being presented on screen is the display of girls in 'minimum' clothes in order to defy the norms.

The stereotypical portrayal of women, which ruled Indian films till a very recent time, has been witnessing a remarkable change -independent, liberated, progressive, with a clear direction in the roles of journalists, entrepreneurs, businesswomen, activists, sports persons, politicians and all such characters that stand apart from conventional women. There are few actresses who can be credited for having led this change of direction, who have appeared in strong and independent roles which for the time being shifted the camera's focus from the women's body to her identity as an individual.

The portrayal of women in cinema is slowly becoming real, no longer a figment of imagination. The characters are getting closer to reality, if not the reality itself. Today it is more likely to see a woman who can win her way through the

Read and Reflect

Make a list of ten movies that show the leading female and male artist breaking stereotypical image and are not shown in bad light.

How do you think women should be depicted in movies?

Should there be strict norms on presenting stereotypical image of man and women in movies? Give reasons

What are the reasons behind stereotypical presentation of characters in cinema with respect to gender?

Read and Respond

Select pictures from newspapers and magazines that show the difference between posed and natural photographs of girls and boys, and men and women. Describe what is emphasized in each.

Does body language differ by gender? Make your own collection of pictures or TV clips for each gender and explain the message perceived.



crowd instead of witnessing a village girl who is afraid to speak her mind. Rather, most often now we are sometimes able to identify ourselves with the characters onscreen and the reflection of reality is nonetheless a perk in transformed film making. Thus there are very strong roles played by female artists that are shown in cinema where they have crossed the barrier of stereotypes. Predictable patriarchal framework on which the roles were based upon is conquered. Shift from showing women as victims, as an object for the gratification of men, to someone who has her own ambitions and aspirations is visible. Role of strong, confident character who is ready to take up any challenges is appreciated among the audience also.

4.4.5 Media Misrepresentation of Men

When it comes to media it is not just women who are stereotypically misinterpreted. The television shows, movies and commercials targeting men have them more often presented as '*flirters*', '*metrosexuals*' and '*macho-men*' who are inept at parenting and relationships. There are not enough characters depicting the kind of guys they really are in real life. Not many men are portrayed as good-hearted, open minded, friendly, gender sensitive, respectful, hard-working and self-sacrificing men who are just trying to take care of their friends and families, reflecting the behaviour and aspirations of today's men.

Today men aspire to be different kinds of people than they were a decade ago, and a lot of them spending more time at home sharing family responsibilities and are re-evaluating their priorities. Men have begun to see the "softer side" of domestic life, they're seeing there's really something to all of that family togetherness and child-rearing that their wives have been asking them to take an interest in for generations. Whether they're spending more time with family by using technology to work from home or having flexible working hours which they utilise by participating in familial chores, today's man is becoming increasingly involved in the former "women's world" of home and family.

As gender roles have begun to blur, young couples are becoming increasingly comfortable sharing responsibilities-earning the money, cooking, raising kids, doing household work-but societal expectations are yet to change. Women, even if they're the top earner, are judged as not so good mothers if they're not home by story time. Men, even if they're the packing the lunch, attending PTMs, domestic god of the pair, are ridiculed for not supporting their family's financial needs.

These societal norms get hammered into our heads from a lot of places, but largely from the media, which actually gives more weight to the stereotypical roles.

Read and Reflect

Media portrayals of male characters falls within a range of stereotypes. The report *Boys to Men: Media Messages About Masculinity*, identifies the most popular stereotypes of male characters as the Joker, the Jock, the Strong Silent Type, the Big Shot and the Action Hero.

The Joker is a very popular character with boys, perhaps because laughter is part of their own "mask of masculinity." A potential negative consequence of this stereotype is the assumption that boys and men should not be serious or emotional. However, researchers have also argued that humorous roles can be used to expand definitions of masculinity.

The Martyr is always willing to "compromise his own long-term health; he must fight other men when necessary; he must avoid being soft; and he must be aggressive." By demonstrating his power and strength, the martyr wins the approval of other men and the adoration of women.

The Strong Silent Type focuses on "being in charge, acting decisively, containing emotion, and succeeding with women." This stereotype reinforces the assumption that men and boys should always be in control, and that talking about one's feelings is a sign of weakness.



The Big Shot is defined by his professional status. He is the "epitome of success, embodying the characteristics and acquiring the possessions that society deems valuable." This stereotype suggests that a real man must be economically powerful and socially successful.

The Action Hero is "strong, but not necessarily silent. He is often angry. Above all, he is aggressive in the extreme and, increasingly over the past several decades, he engages in violent behaviour."

Another common stereotype...

The Buffoon commonly appears as a bungling father figure in TV ads and sitcoms. Usually well-intentioned and light-hearted, these characters range from slightly inept to completely hopeless when it comes to parenting their children or dealing with domestic (or workplace) issues.

Source: Boys to Men: Media Messages About Masculinity. Children Now, 1999.

4.5 Print Media and Gender Issues

Print media, as mentioned earlier, has always been a medium that has wide reach. National and local newspapers have their own set of readers. These newspapers have always raised critical issues related to gender. Reports and stories printed have huge impact on the readers. With the entry of news channels the impact of print media has not gone down. But reporting is not always sensitive in the print media. Many times, stereotypes are reinforced by the newspapers also. Sometimes news items are presented in such a way with headlines that can be easily said to be frivolous. Being a medium where different views are presented about an issue, it becomes more balanced than some of the other mediums. The gender divide is quite clear in the magazine's segment. The men can be seen holding magazines those are about cars and computers whereas females can be seen picking up those with features on family, housekeeping, child-rearing, personal care and other such areas.

The empowerment print media can do needs to be understood with sensitivity and stereotypes should be challenged head on by the print media both overtly and covertly.

Read and Respond

Collect any newspaper for a period of fifteen days. Look out for the news items relating to women. What do the majority of the news items deal with? Are they about the constructive roles of the women or objectified images of women are projected more? Based on your findings write a note on 'women and print media'.

4.6 Influences affecting Media

Media are for sure not transparent technologies; they do not offer a window on the real world. In mediating events and issues, television, film, and other media are involved in selecting, constructing and representing reality the way they want. In so doing, the media generally tends to emphasize and reinforce the values and images of those people who create these messages (script writers, directors, creative writers) to some extent and largely of those own the means of dissemination (Television Channels/Media Houses). In addition, these values and images are often influenced by commercial considerations (TRPs and Advertisements). As a result, the viewpoints and experiences of other people or masses are often left out, or shown in negative ways.

4.7 Media and education

Mass media uses stereotypical characters to make it easy for the audience to identify the good guys or girls and the bad guys or girls. It is easier to create programs around regular characters than to develop varied personalities. These stereotypes limit our views of others and ourselves and of the reality of the world. The media construct their own version of reality. The point of view of the





message presented is driven by ethical, political, economic and social standards and experiences of those who produce them. Characters often reflect a narrow range of roles. The elderly are under represented. Women and girls are both under represented and portrayed in a very limited set of roles. Victims of violence are usually portrayed as young and beautiful women. People depicted as intelligent (especially children and adolescents) are often portrayed as unattractive. These characterizations of a person or a group of persons are based upon narrow and frequently incorrect assumptions.

Media can play a crucial role in counteracting the impact of these messages. It can educate people and help them to understand that media construct - as opposed to reflect - reality. It is important to understand that media communicates implicit and explicit values; and that it can influence the way people feel and think about themselves and the world, are vitally important lessons towards achieving a society in which women and girls are seen and treated as equal to men and boys.

4.8 Women in Media jobs

There are studies and researches that suggest that the number of women in media jobs is not very high. This under representation of women in media jobs is not very different from other professions. Most of the editorial and managerial jobs do not have equal participation from women. In recent times there has been an increased participation from women in these jobs. Although lot of news presenters are women, the number of women doing other work is much lesser.

Read and Reflect

Women participation in Indian news media 2.7%

Whenever Women Reservation Bill goes to Indian Parliament there is a high decibel debate in media on empowerment and representation of women in high institutions but an inside look shows that situation of women in media is far worse than the institutions it dissects.

The nationwide massive study undertaken on representation of women in media by Media Studies Group reveals shocking outcome of gender disproportion. The study on district level reveals a token representation of female journalists as low as 2.7 percent. There are six states and two union territories which have zero percent of women at the district level while Andhra Pradesh tops the list with 107 women journalists at districts. This survey is published in the May issue of communication journals Jan Media and Mass Media.

Source: http://mediastudiesgroup.org.in/research/survey/survey_detail.aspx?TID=1#sthash.VixNhSwK.dpuf

4.9 Gender and Literature

The Girl who Brought Rainseed

-A Kannada Folktale

ONCE upon a time there was a poor mother who had two children, Girish and Girija. Both children were very active and intelligent. When Girish and Girija grew into youths, one year there was so little rain that a drought struck the land. The people went to the king to request him to do something. The king called the pandits and astrologers to find out the reason and the solution for the dry spell. At last they came to know that, outside the boundaries of the state there was a rakshas (monster) who had rain seed; if someone could bring that seed and plant it in front of the king's palace, then rain would come. But whoever went there ran the risk of never returning. Therefore, the king and his subjects considered it out of the question for anyone but the bravest young men to attempt this task. The king asked: "Who is ready to go?" No one came forward. Then the king announced that he would give half his kingdom to the one who brought



the rainseed. Lured by this reward, some men went, but never returned.

Girish, who was a very courageous, adventurous, and intelligent boy, asked his mother's permission to go to the rakshas and bring back the rainseed. His mother granted him permission. Girish then went to the king and asked him for permission to go. The king laughed at him and said, "So many courageous men much older than you have tried, and they couldn't bring it. Some did not come back at all. You are so small, how do you hope to get it? Don't take the risk, go and play with your friends." Girish told the king that when he was a small child he put his hand into a snakes' pit and had also fought with tigers. He pleaded with the king to give him permission and to bless him so that he could be successful in his mission. Finally, the king granted him permission. Girish went to the rakshas but did not return. Girija and her mother became very worried about Girish. Though Girija was also very active and intelligent, her mother used to scold her all the time. Since she was a girl she was made to live under numerous restrictions: "Don't play with friends...", "Don't go outside...", "Help in the housework, that is enough for you." But when Girish didn't return home for so many days, Girija asked her mother if she could go and rescue her brother and bring back the rainseed. Her mother snubbed her: "How can you, being a girl, do the work which a boy could not do? Don't talk rubbish, just go and bring water from the pond outside the village." Girija felt very bad, but she quietly took the pot and went to fetch water.

On the way she met three women. Since she looked dull and sad, the women asked her what was the matter. Girija expressed her desire to go and bring the rainseed and her brother home. The three women laughed at her and said, "You are a girl! How can you win over that rakshas and bring back rainseed? Besides, girls cannot go to that place, so don't even think about such things, just fill your water pot and go back home."

Girija went home, delicately balancing the water pot on her head. When she reached her house, she stood outside the door and called her mother to come and help her with the pot. But her mother did not come. When Girija tried to take it down herself, her little hands could not manage its weight and the water pot crashed to the ground and broke. Girija became very scared that her mother would beat her for breaking the pot, so she ran right out of the village. There she met the three women again. They again asked her why she was looking so panicky. Girija told them the story and she again expressed her wish to bring the rainseed to save the village from drought and disaster. The women told her that if she had been a boy, she could have gone to find that seed. But since she was a girl, she should not even think of undertaking such a risky job. Girija felt very demoralised and wished she could become a boy. On seeing her so forlorn, the women said that they could transform her into a boy. Girija was thrilled. By covering her head with a cloth, putting a shirt and pyjamas on her, and a stick in her hand - they made her look like a little boy.

Girija felt very happy. She began to climb the hill where the rakshas lived. She climbed and climbed and finally came face to face with the rakshas. The rakshas bellowed at her: "Hey, little boy, why have you come here? What do you want?" Girija was afraid but she didn't show it. She replied calmly, "I've come to take the rainseed." The rakshas laughed at her impertinence. "You can't get it so easily. You have to solve two puzzles before I will let you have the rainseed."

Girija told the rakshas that she was ready to face any test. The rakshas said, "What is it that has a head but is not a human being?" And holding the hair on the top of his head, he said, "What is it that has ajata but is not a rishi, and has three eyes?" Girija didn't take a minute to reply: "Coconut." As soon as she answered the cloth on her head disappeared. Then the rakshas presented her with the second puzzle: "What is it that walks on three legs in the morning, on two legs in the afternoon, and three legs in the evening?" Thinking for a second, Girija said, "Human





being." Suddenly, her clothes changed into that of a girl. When the rakshas saw that a girl had emerged out of the boy's disguise, he was amused. At that very spot, a seed sprouted. Along with the seed appeared her brother, Girish. Girija was very happy. She gathered the seed and gave it to Girish, so he could be rewarded by the king. Then they both went back to the palace.

The king and the people were surprised and very happy. The king asked Girish to plant the rain seed in front of the palace. He dug up some earth and planted the seed. All the people waited for some time but the rain did not come. The three women who were also there said the rain would come only if the person who got the seed planted it. So Girija took the seed out of the ground and replanted it herself. Suddenly, the sky was covered with clouds and it began to rain. The king was so happy that he asked Girija to take half his kingdom. Little Girija's reply humbled the king: "What will I do with half your kingdom? I don't want such a headache. It is enough if we have plenty of food, clothes and a house to live in." The king ordered the minister to give Girija's family whatever they asked for. So from then onwards, Girija and her family lived happily ever after.

This indeed is a folk tale written on a positive note. Identify two more stories either folktales or from contemporary literature and share them with your peers.

The society around us is male dominated not only because males perceive it in this way, but because women also believe it. Probably the underlying reason behind this perception is deeply rooted in our upbringing and the environmental factors constantly working around us which formulate our perceptions and viewpoints. One of the most common instances of gender inequality is in salary of males and females for the same job. There could be no reason of paying differential salary for same work only on the basis of gender except the perception. The perception of male dominance is so deeply rooted in our society that sometimes humanity is viewed as masculine.

Our perceptions are largely responsible for gender inequality highly prevailing in our traditional society. Today, with spread of education, increased exposure to women and increased interaction with other economies; traditional roles of men and women are changing fast. More and more women are joining the workforce and contributing to economic growth. However, she is juggling to manage both her traditional role as caretaker and new role as breadwinner. Our cognisance towards roles of male and female are largely affected by the literature produced in the society. Other way around, literature written in the society reflects the thinking pattern, societal roles of males and females. It mirrors the attitude of society.

An interesting observation which can be made from literature is the diversity and volatility in male roles and steadiness that is reflected in female characters. Since the literature mirrors the reality of the society, women are changing role in all the fields: social, political should not be ignored. Another interesting observation is that stereotypical role of women have been noted in writings of female authors also. Any diversion from the typical roles of women is not taken in good spirit in both society and literature.

Another deplorable fact is that our literature subconsciously promotes the gendered myths and stereotypical roles for men and women prevalent in our society. The literature available perpetuates the traditional illusion of male superiority. Although text with non-gendered viewpoint are also available but on one hand they are not well accepted by the audience and further they are less accessible than the gendered text.

Read and Respond

1. What kind of books do you like to read?
2. How are the girl characters treated in these books? The boy characters?
3. What jobs/ professions can a man choose that a woman cannot choose in these books? Why?
4. What three qualities do you most admire in a woman presented in any book you have read recently? Write the same for man also.



The stereotyping of genders begins with the first level of interaction with books and images where students are presented with the gendered images on their textbooks and primers. The roles defined for women are restraining in terms of things females do and things they cannot do. For example in our stories, poor old father is always seen saving money for his son's education and daughter's marriage. We still belong to a society where, role of women is still confined to what is desired by her family and our media and literature is perpetuating it.

From textbooks to other literature all have traces of showing men with traits like being brave, creative, decision maker etc. Whereas, women as supportive character, more often than not are shown as meek and submissive. Although, there has been efforts from some writers to break the image and give a different image. In recent years there have been conscious efforts from national agencies to review the gender representation in the textbook so that any stereotype is addressed.

Even in rhymes the characterisation of female and male character is heavily loaded with showing girls as very good characters or very bad characters.

Read and Respond

View literature-based films. Compare the films with the books for the handling of gender roles. Does one media form rely more on stereotypes? Why? Generate more examples.

Characterisation in the literature has always been clichéd. Women are rarely shown as strong characters. How an idea is presented to the readers, shapes their minds towards the characters. The actions of character are presented in a stereotypical manner where deviance from the norms is always shown very negatively.

The woman who comes to life in the kitchen is symbolic of the narrowness of women's roles. This association with kitchen has been very difficult to disassociate with. Those men who help in some kitchen work are at the most appreciated loudly by the author, if not criticised by other characters.

There are different ways in which the literature present gender stereotypes. The gendered themes presented in literature can be recognised by exposure to real literature. Literature is a strong tool for awakening mind of individuals. It helps in widening the horizons by reflecting upon the ideas presented. The characters presented stay with readers and helps in relating better with reality as well as think beyond what is being presented as reality. If images created in literature can be presented in a better way, as done by few writers, gender stereotypes can be challenged.

4.10 Gender in Language

One of the most important tools of socialization is language. As soon children are able to acquire language, they interact with elders to gain information and knowledge. They absorb the ideas and concepts of those who are around through language which is laced with gendered connotations. Language of people around and through media and textbooks is influential in constructing the ideas of an individual and acquiring the gender roles. Use of simple day-to-day words that are taken for granted reinforces a particular idea among the individuals and more often than not it becomes difficult to break away from it and form a different concept.

Read and Respond

Analyse the following statements loosely used in day-to-day language and in media and discuss if they are stereotypical or not? :

Men don't cry

Women are soft and men are tough

Why are you acting like a woman?

Behave like a man.





List similar words used in your everyday life that you feel are gender stereotypical.

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.

4.10.1 Tracing back to the usage of Gender in language

It is a proven fact that acquisition of language is critical to become a social being. The values, beliefs and ideas learned in a patriarchal society are perpetuated through the kind of language used. The favour of men is inherent in the language still prevalent in our society. From fairy tales to rhymes all have a strong influence of male dominance in them. The images of women presented in these tools of learning are showing them to be in roles that are stereotyped. The pressure of being close to the image presented in them is created since childhood among the girls. The inadequacy of expression about women is visible in the language use. The absence of female centric language influences the compositions at all scales. There is a constant effort by female authors also to use male centric language for being approved in the society.

Feminist scholars have found lot of example of the use of gendered language. There are lot of researches and writings that assert language as a tool of oppression of women in the society. Misrepresentation of women in the writings and use of biased language creates stereotypes that are difficult to break.

Proverbs have always been used in all cultures.

Some of the following examples can be considered here (some of which have fallen out of use):

- ☐ 'A woman's tongue wags like a lamb's tail' (England).
- ☐ 'The North Sea will be found wanting in water than a woman at a loss for a word' (Jutland).
- ☐ 'Many women, many words, many geese, many turds' (England).

To these we can add:

- ☐ 'Three women make a market' (Sudan).
- ☐ 'Three women together make a theatrical performance' (China).
- ☐ 'Women are nine times more talkative than men' (Hebrew).
- ☐ 'A woman's tongue spreads gossip fast' (China).
- ☐ 'The word of a woman is a bundle of water' (India)
- ☐ 'Men talk like books, women lose themselves in details' (China).
- ☐ 'The tongue is babbling, but the head knows nothing about it' (Russia).
- ☐ 'Three inches of a woman's tongue can slay a man six feet tall' (Japan).

If the analysis of English is done, it can be clearly seen that all people are represented as male until proven female. It is visible from an example:

Read and Respond

Think of and note down your own examples (in any language) of the following which focus explicitly on the way women and men do and should talk:

proverbs
works of fiction,
films, plays or songs
religious texts



- While writing a letter to CEO of an organisation or administrator more often than not people write Mr.....
- while discussing about voters and citizens, reference is made to 'common man'
- a nurse is female and doctor is male

If man is supposed to refer to woman, then he is also supposed to mean she. Because English does not have a neutral singular pronoun, he is seen as the generic norm, with she as the exception. A doctor is he and a nurse is she. Most neutral designations are also 'he' words.

Encyclopaedia states that *"man is the highest form of life on earth"* and that *"his superior intelligence has enabled man to achieve things impossible for other animals,"* These type of statements create imbalance in the society in terms of creating gender stereotypes. A child perceives these words in a gendered manner. Similar examples are available in our national and regional language also. The question arises, is there any other way out?

4.10.2 Inclusive Language

To encourage inclusiveness and avoid bigotry, several suggestions are offered in dealing with the generic issue. Many writers use he/she, she/he, or s/he, or they explicitly note that both males and females are being discussed, using forms you will find throughout this book. Of these options, *"they"* is the most accepted. However, when the *"he and she"* or *"she and he"* alternative is used, people overestimate the rate of female pronouns-regardless of which pronoun comes first-and say the language is biased in favour of women (Madson and Hessling, 2001). Another suggestion is to offer inclusive replacements for outmoded terms. For instance, some colleges use *"first-year student"* to replace the archaic and non-inclusive use of the word freshman. These examples offer the least cumbersome and most accurate solutions to the generic problem, but they are also the least accepted. People tend to oppose what they perceive as invented language.

Language change does not come easily. Usage of word "Ms." In place of "Mrs." was ridiculed by many as a radical, feminist invention used by women trying to cover up the shame of a divorce or not being married. Editors bemoaned its style while ignoring its precision. These objections have largely disappeared. Although married women and homemakers prefer "Mrs.," single women and professional women prefer "Ms." As a form of address, Miss is moving into linguistic oblivion for adult women; it is reserved today for younger girls. In written Business English " Ms." Is used almost 10 times more than "Mrs" and "Miss". Today "Ms." is a normative, standard form of address with a high level of acceptance (Wiser, 2007).

As part of a campaign for non-gendered language in English, the following alternative items thus came into use:

Alternative item	Intended to replace	Give a reason, why it should be done
Ms	Miss/Mrs	
Chairperson, spokesperson	Chairman, spokesman	
S/he, 'singular they'	Generic 'he'	
Doctor	Lady doctor	
Usher	Usherette	
Flight attendant	Air hostess	





4.11.3 Usage of Gender Sensitive Language

English speakers and writers have traditionally been taught to use masculine nouns and pronouns in situations where the gender of their subject(s) is unclear or variable, or when a group to which they are referring contains members of both sexes. In recent decades, however, as women have become increasingly involved in the various spheres of public life, work and science, writers, speakers and researchers have reconsidered the way they express gender identities and relationships. Because most readers and listeners no longer understand the word "*man*" to be synonymous with "*people*", one must think more carefully about the ways one expresses gender in order to convey ideas clearly and accurately. Moreover, there is a connection between our language use and our social reality. If we "*erase*" the word women from language, this makes it easier to maintain gender inequality.

Our language choices have consequences. If we believe that females and males deserve social equality, we should think seriously about how to reflect that belief in our language use. Thankfully, there are a number of different strategies that one can use to express gender relationships with accuracy.

Suggestions for using gender-sensitive language

- ❑ Use the plural form for both nouns and pronouns.

Example:

Each student should come to class with his assignments completed.

All students should come to class with their assignments completed.

- ❑ Omit the pronoun altogether.

Example:

Each professor should send one of his assistants to the conference.

Each professor should send one assistant to the conference.

- ❑ Use "his or her", "he/she" or "s/he" when you occasionally need to stress the action of an individual. Such references won't be awkward unless they are used frequently.

Example:

If you must use a technical term he may not understand, explain it.

If you must use a technical term he or she may not understand, explain it.

- ❑ Vary your choice of pronouns when you want to give examples that emphasize the action of an individual. Ideally, choose pronouns that work counter to prevailing stereotypes.

Examples:

Gradually, a child will see the resemblance between block creations and objects in his world, and he will begin to name some structures, like "house" and "door".

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The kitchen can serve as a center for new experiences, an interesting place where important things happen, and where she has a chance to learn about the way adult things are done.

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- ❑ Switch from the third person (he) to the second person (you) when this shift is appropriate.

Example:

Each employee should report his progress to the supervisor by June 1.

You should report your progress to the supervisor by June 1.

- ❑ Use "they".

This option is much debated by grammar experts, but most agree that it works well in several kinds of situations. "They" is traditionally used only to refer to a plural noun. In speech, however, early 21st century English speakers commonly use "they" to refer to a singular person. According to many grammar experts, that usage is incorrect, but here is an example of how it sounds in our everyday speech:

If a student wants to learn more about gender inequality, they should take a look at the university's equal opportunities website.

In this example, "a student" is singular, but "they", a plural pronoun, replaces it in the second sentence. In speech, we often don't notice such substitutions of the plural for the singular. In writing, however, some will find such substitutions awkward or incorrect. As such, it is best to use "they" mainly in plural situations. Here is one way this can work:

A student's beliefs about gender equality may be based on what he has heard in the popular media.

Students' beliefs about gender equality may be based on what they have heard in the popular media.

- ❑ Practice using gender-neutral nouns.

Examples:

Traditional/Biased	Alternative/ Bias-free
Miss, Mrs	Ms (female equivalent to Mr - does not indicate marital status, which is often irrelevant)
Business man or business woman	Business executive, entrepreneur, business person
Career girl, career woman	Executive, manager or professional
Mankind	Humanity, humankind, human beings
Man	Individual
Policeman	Police officer
Chairman	Chair or chairperson
Repairman	Technician
Fireman	Firefighter
Spokesman	Spokesperson
Frenchmen	The French
Man-made	Artificial, synthetic or manufactured
Manpower	Staff, workforce or personnel
Alumni	Graduates





Dear Sir	Dear Sir or Madam, Dear Editor, Dear Service Representative, To Whom it May Concern
The common man	The average (or ordinary) person
Steward, stewardess	Flight attendant
Brotherhood	Kinship, community
Countryman	Compatriot
Motherland	Native land
Forefathers	Ancestors, forebears
Mother tongue	Native Language
King-size	Jumbo, gigantic
Ladylike	Courteous, cultured
Maiden name	Birth name
Manhood	Adulthood
Master (noun)	Owner, expert, chief
Master (verb)	Learn, succeed at, overcome
Master (adj)	Expert, gifted, accomplished
Masterpiece	Work of genius
Mastermind (noun)	Genius, creator
Man of letters	Scholar, writer, literary figure
Man-hour	Staff hours, hours of work

4.11 Emerging Promises

There is a hope to change the current situation, though. The media and literature evolves along with the development of a society and are the answer to many social and political changes, such as emancipation of women, growing role of individualism, globalization and revaluation of patterns and social roles. Changes are occurring slowly, but a society constantly nourished by the stereotypical images of women cannot break out of it easily. The challenge is enormous. Yet it is heartening to see many women making feminist films, publishing magazines, writing songs, children's poems, to express themselves and to initiate a dialogue with other women to challenge stereotypes and myths. Several men have entered this foray with them. An increase in these numbers and an attitudinal change will go a long way in creating a positive and respectable image of women in the media.

Unit End Reflections

Comprehension Questions

1. What do you understand by Mass Media? How does Mass Media reinforce the prevalent gender stereotypes?
2. Using TV or video clips and magazine or newspaper pictures, chart similarities and differences in appearance and body size for the good and bad characters. Look again at the clips and make note of



- the type of camera shots used for the good and bad guys or gals. Compare the characters with self and peers and family members. Write an analysis based on your findings.
3. List the jobs that TV mothers have such as teacher, doctor. Do we ever see them working at their jobs? Write a shot note on the portrayal of working women on television.
 4. Examine the media to determine how certain occupations are portrayed, and then interview people in those occupations to ascertain how realistic portrayals are. Count the number of women or men portrayed in jobs. List the types of jobs for women and men portrayed. How do these findings compare to the jobs held by the parents of other students in your class? Present your findings in the form of a paper.
 5. How do advisements create a pressure on both male and females to conform on various societal norms? Discuss.

Case Studies/Activities

Activity 1

Pick up any piece of fiction from your school or personal library. Review it based on the following questions to determine what stereotype the woman character may fit:

1. Is the main character a man or a woman?
2. Is the author a man or a woman? Can you tell from an initial reading? How?
3. How is the woman character described?
4. What is the range of activity allowed the female character? the male character? Is the woman active or passive?
5. What are some of the characteristics of this character? Is she warm, dependent, seductive, nasty, etc.?
6. What symbols or images are used to describe her?
7. How do these images correspond to her personality? to the message of the text?
8. Is she rebelling from or adhering to the stereotype?

Activity 2

Having realised the importance of catering to their women readers, most newspaper now carry an exclusive page every week, devoted to women's issues and interests. One finds articles on beauty aid, recipes, interior decoration, fashion trends, household tips, "advice" columns, answers to questions on health even romantic fiction. Take about a month's clippings of the "women's page" in your newspaper. Then answer the two questions given below, in the space provided.

- a) Is the subservient status of women discussed in any of the articles that you have obtained?
- b) Why is it that there is an abundance of household tips and no information at all on a topic like investing money in profitable ventures? Find out if this is because of any newspaper policy.

Activity 3

Alfonsina Storni was an early 20th century Latin American poet. Early in her work, she strongly criticized masculine attitudes towards women. Feminist themes continued to play a strong role in her poetry, which eventually settled into a dramatic, lyrical style. Although she died relatively young, she produced a pretty impressive body of work. Here is the translation of "Tu me quieres blanca". This poem provides a very clear example in literature of what a woman feels her role should be, imposed by a male dominated society. She describes how she should be, how he would have her be; pure, chaste, ignorant of the real world. Through the use of lily-white images, we understand the impossibility of such a constricting role.





Man is described as partaking of all life's experiences, of action, of tasting the bitter and the sweet. The true feelings of the poet concerning these restrictions on her total being are revealed when she declares that men, for all the life they have tasted, will never have the soul of a woman, can never confine the soul of a woman to such smallness. Men have lost their soul in all their activity.

You Would Have Me White

By Alfonsina Storni

You want me as the dawn;
You want me to be of foam;
you want me to be of mother-of-pearl.
That I would be lily,
above all, chaste.
Of kept perfume.
A closed blossom.

Neither moonbeam
filters through me,
nor a daisy
calls me sister.
You want me white;
you want me snowy;
you want me chaste.

You, that had all
the cups in hand,
of fruit and honey
the purple lips.
You, that in the banquet
covered with vines,

You let your flesh
celebrate with Bacchus.
You, that in the black
gardens of Deception,
dressed in red
you ran to The Ruins.

You, the skeleton
you preserve intact,
I don't know yet
by what miracles
(God pardon you for it),
You pretend I am chaste
(God pardon you for it),
you pretend I am the dawn.

Flee to the forests;
go to the mountain.
Clean your mouth;
live in the cabins;
touch with your hands
the wet earth;

nourish your body
with bitter roots;
drink from the rocks;
sleep in the frost;
renew your tissue
with salt and water;
Talk with the birds
and get up at dawn.
And when your flesh

is returned to you,
and when you put
in it your soul,
that by the bedrooms
you left it,
then, good man,
pretend I am white,
pretend I am snowy,
pretend I am chaste.

Read the poem aloud several times in the classroom. The first readings should be for totality and sound. Thereafter, it may be read for meaning. Thinking in terms of the details given in the chapter and discussion of how women are portrayed in literature and what characteristics the stereotypes entail, discuss the following questions designed to focus on the details of this poem.

1. What do the words white, foam, pearl, lily all have in common? What do they bring to mind in terms of color, form, strength and purity? Change the words foam, pearl and lily and see if the poem changes. Come up with a list of symbolically similar adjectives and nouns for this stanza (i.e. angels, snow).
2. Why does the poet describe the perfume as subdued? How does this change the very nature of perfume?
3. What does the poet evoke with the use of closed for corolla? Take out subdued and closed and read the poem again. Does the meaning of this stanza change? How?
4. How does spotless make you feel? What other words could you put in place of spotless?
5. Again, the 'you want me . . .' structure, this time pure. What must one do to remain pure? (i.e. remain ignorant, innocent, hidden, helpless). Make a list of words you could put in for pure (i.e. untouched, clean, etc.)



6. What does the contrast between the whiteness and colorlessness of the woman in the previous stanzas and the use of stained purple, fruits, red, black describing man's life tell us about the difference between men's and women's lives? Why the use of red/black?
7. What does Storni mean by all goblets here? Does she imply that man has partaken of all of life?
8. What is the overwhelming tone implicit in the use of 'God forgive you'? (i.e. cynicism, anger, irony)
9. What does this last stanza tell us about how the poet regards men and women? With all of man's full life, does he have the soul that a woman has? What does the author mean with this last stanza? Where has he left his soul?
10. Does this poem reflect today's men and women/girls and boys? Give reasons.





CHAPTER 5 : TOWARDS A GENDER SENSITISED AND GENDER RESPONSIVE SOCIETY

In the previous chapters, we have tried to understand the difference between the two very conflicting words, Sex and Gender. Sex refers to the biological differences between males and females, whereas gender refers to the characteristics framed for men and women by the society. The word 'Gender' emphasizes what men and women do, and what is expected from them. We are born as males and females (sex), but we learn to be boys and girls (gender) and later man and women to be an acceptable part of society.

Read and Respond

Observe the kind of instructions given by your parent's to you and your sibling (brother /sister). Try to list reasons behind giving such instructions. List atleast five instructions that were different from each other.

Is there any reason based on gender that has been behind giving such instructions? Try to find reason behind giving such instructions.

Read and Respond

Study following places around you and try to take notes of the situations/ events that occur in these places where you can see difference in treatment due to gender.

Write possible reasons for this and discuss in the classroom.

Places to be observed	Situations observed	Specific provisions	Possible reasons
1. Transport (local buses/trains or any other mode)			
2. Dispensary/ Health Centres			
3. Any work place			
4. Your classroom			
5. Shopping mall			

The gender perspective recalls that inequalities between men and women are the result of a different socialisation process, based on gender and thus that they do not arise from innate biological differences.

5.1 Gender Stereotyping

As we are born, we are surrounded by the societal expectations i.e, an appropriate behavior that is expected from us as an individual living in a society. As a baby is born, he/she is said to enter "the World of the Child" which is full of fun, happiness, carefree laughter, innocence; but such days do not last long and are short lived because of the parents and family expectations of high level of maturity from the child to act either "like a boy" or "like a girl". A mother is often the first socializing agent of the child. She is the one who teaches a child either to behave "like a girl or a boy". Girls are often taught by the mother to talk softly and slowly, walk with poise, etc. on the other hand, boys are taught to be fast and active. Willingly or unwillingly, parents and adults communicate cues to children which are considered defining as attributes or distinctiveness of males and females, which leads to the formation of "appropriate sex roles" for males and females like women are considered



to stay at home and do the household work. On the other hand, men are considered as the 'bread winners' and the producing members of the family.

Defining the "appropriate gender roles" for males and females is termed as Gender Stereotyping which knowingly or unknowingly leads to discrimination or Gender Inequality. Gender Stereotyping goes beyond 'appropriate gender roles'. There is a negative idea attached to females and males due to things beyond gender roles. For example, there are misconceptions about women in urban and rural areas.

5.2 Gender discrimination at birth

The discrimination against women begins even before life begins. The sex ratio in most of the states of the country is in decline and is going critically low in many states.

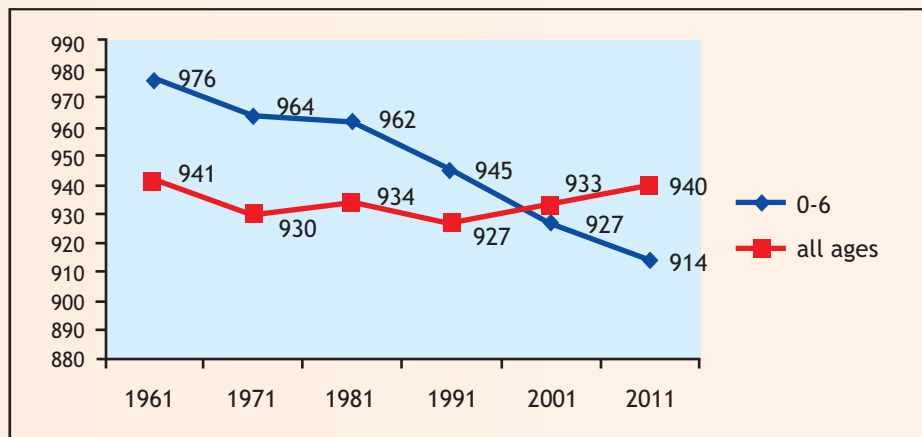


Fig. 2.1: Trends in Child and overall sex ratio-India

Source: Census, India, Office of Registrar General of India

The above figure shows that there has been a slight increase in sex ratio when we consider all ages in recent census of India. The sex ratio among 0 to 6 year old children has seen a steep decline from 2001 to 2011 which is a cause of concern for all.

Read and Respond

Complete the given table using the latest census and analyse the connection between the three variables given, if any. Give your comments about the relationship.

States	Sex Ratio	Literacy rate	Per capita income
Delhi			
Punjab			
Uttar Pradesh			
Kerala			
Tamilnadu			
Gujrat			
West Bengal			
Sikkim			
Orissa			





Starting from the stage of birth, women are discriminated in areas like access to nutrition, healthcare, childcare, education and work etc. Women have so far widely faced discrimination in every aspect of life. The very survival of a girl child in India is has been a fight in itself against all negative probabilities. It is due to the preference of male child over the female child, that the female child has to undergo elimination in the pre birth stage due to the easy availability of intra uterine foetal sex examination in our country. The law permits tests such as amniocentesis, chronic villi biopsy and ultrasound scanning for only determining abnormalities in the foetus carried by the women above the age of 35 years. But these tests are often known as 'male-female tests' to most of the people, due to lack of information about the tests and using these tests illegally for determining the sex of the child before the birth.

<http://de.slideshare.net/priyanka12priyanka/worsening-of-female-to-male-ratio-in-india>

5.2.1 Health

Much of women's status in traditional societies is derived from mothering. They fail to meet their nutritional requirements, consciously limiting their food intake during pregnancy to facilitate childbirth. In the face of high pregnancy-associated mortality risk and an absence of adequate obstetric care, this is viewed as a rational response on the part of women, despite concomitant low birth weight. Clearly, one programme implication is that the nutritional supplementation of pregnant women must be accompanied by better facilities to diagnose and deal with obstetric difficulties.

The 2011 census estimates the population of children below 6 years at 158.8 million. Nearly 40 % of these children are undernourished that is more than 63 million children are suffering from malnutrition. Nutritional problems are substantial in every State in India. (Source: Ministry of statistics and Programme Implementation Government of India, 2011)

There are researches related to malnutrition that indicates that the probability of finding a girl child with malnutrition is more than boys. This is indicative of some practices in our society where there is sensitivity towards nutritional needs of girls is missing.

There are various reasons that can be held responsible for malnutrition among children that may have some economic roots to it but if we trace the immediate reasons for it then it can clearly be said that lack of food, health services, awareness and other environmental factors are major cause for it. Malnutrition directly influences growth and development of children and makes them prone to diseases.

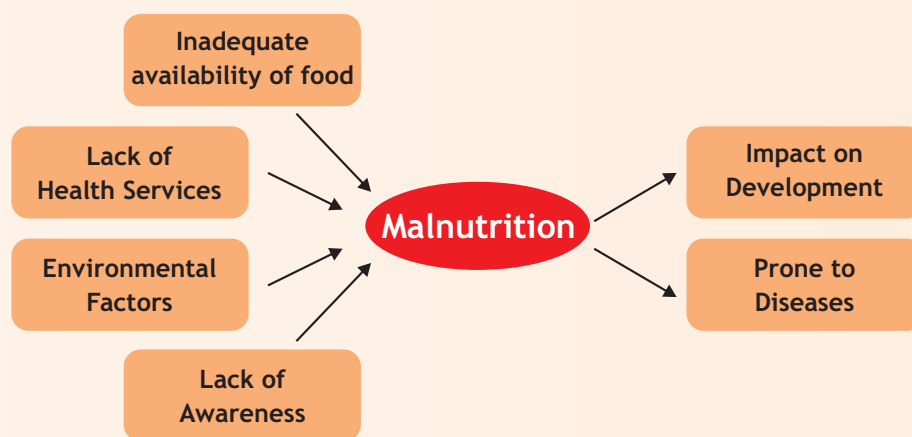


Fig. 5.1: Reasons and Effects of Malnutrition



When it comes to women and girl child in particular these reasons also have some gendered connotation to it. At many places women is the last one to sit for meals as compared to other male members of the family. Also, male members are offered more food as compared to the female members of the family as they are the 'bread winners' of the family. There are lot of questions that arise. Is it true that women require lesser food to complete their nutritional needs? Does the nutritional need of women remain same throughout their life time and is always less than their male counterparts?

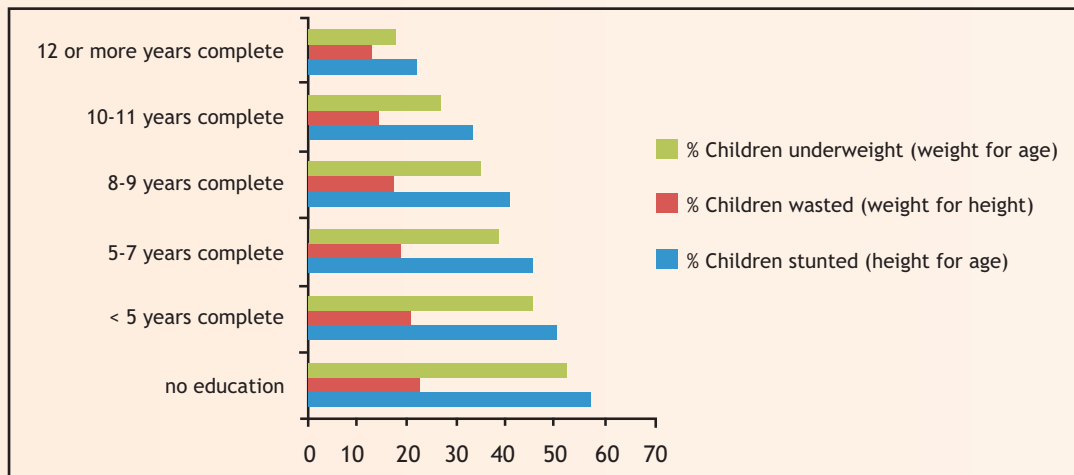


Figure 4.5 Malnutrition in Children and Mother's education

Source: National Family Health Survey, 2005-06, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare

Analyse the above graph and discuss the impact of mother's education on malnutrition in children.

5.2.2 Education

Education has always been considered important for every person's growth and development. It becomes critical for girls to be educated and develop their potential.

Census Year	Persons	Males	Females	Male-Female gap in literacy rate
1951	18.33	27.16	8.86	18.30
1961	28.3	40.4	15.35	25.05
1971	34.45	45.96	21.97	23.98
1981	43.57	56.38	29.76	26.62
1991	52.21	64.13	39.29	24.84
2001	64.83	75.26	53.67	21.59
2011	74.04	82.14	65.46	16.68

Source: Census 2011

The status of education of girls is still not very encouraging in India although it has seen increase in recent times in terms of enrolment. But the situation in higher education needs a greater push from all sectors. Out of 100 girls enrolled in grade 1 only one in rural areas and 14 in urban areas reach grade XII. The drop out of girls with respect to boys is much more.

Girl child is also discriminated at many places when it comes to 'education'. Despite huge efforts being put by the Government of India to promote the education of girl child through various schemes and policies, the enrolment rates of girls in the school is lower than boys. There are lot of





provisions related to education of girls in the society that would be discussed in detail in other chapters. The issue does not end just with respect to enrolment and drop out of girls and the reasons associated with it. At micro level also there are lot of issues that goes without being addressed. Consider the following case:

Read and Respond

Anita took science stream in XI grade although her parents wanted her to take arts. Most of her friends took arts but she insisted and took Science with Mathematics. She got disappointed due to two instances on the first day.

First it was mathematics class where everyone was asked to solve a problem. She solved it quickly and was waiting for others to finish. The teacher asked from the class about who has solved the problem and in the same breath he said, "Anita, You will find it too difficult to solve. Why don't you take some other subject?" She could not raise her hand to tell that she has already solved it.

Second it was her biology teacher who said to whole class, "This year things are going to be uncomfortable for all of you as we have a girl in biology class." Everyone in the class apart from her was laughing after listening to this.

Do you think Anita took correct decision by taking the subjects she selected?

What according to you can be possible solution for Anita in such situation?

What are the embedded reasons for such issues and what are possible ways to address them?

5.2.3 At Work

Women have also faced gender stereotyping and discrimination in the workplace also. One tends to identify professions like nursing, teaching, typing with females and surgery, engineering, management with males.

Development Indicators	Women	Men	Total	Women	Men	Total
* Work and Employment						
- Work Participation Rate (1971 & 2001) (%)	14.2	52.8	34.3	25.68	51.93	39.26
- Organised Sector (No. in lakhs in 1971 & 2006)	19.3 (11%)	155.6	174.9	51.21 (91%)	218.72	269.93
- Public Sector (No. in lakhs in 1971 & 2006)	8.8 (8%)	98.7	107.3	30.3 (18.51%)	151.85	181.88
* Decision Making						
- Administrative						
IAS (2002 & 2006)	535 (10.4%)	4624	5159	571 (11.9%)	4219	4790
IAS (2005 & 2006)	142 (4.4%)	3056	3198	150 (4.7%)	3059	3209
- Political						
PRIs (No. in lakhs in 1997 & 2009)	8.14 (31.3%)	17.84	25.98	10.38 (36.83)	17.79	28.18
Legislative Assemblies (No. in 1985 & 2000)	141 (5.1%)	26.32	2773	229 (5.6%)	3838	4067
Parliament (No. in 1989 & 2009)	47 (61%)	721	768	80 (10.12%)	710	790

Source: <http://nipccd.nic.in/reports/ehndbk10.pdf>

Having a safe environment for work is an important factor for increasing employment opportunity of women. There are many cases registered by women working at different work places about abuse faced there. The number of cases that went unregistered is considered to be much more by many.

Crime against women in our country has seen a rise in recent times. A total of 2,13,585 incidents of crime against women (both under IPC and SLL) were reported in the country during 2010 as compared to 2,03,804 during 2009 recording an increase of 4.8% during 2010. These crimes have continuously increased during 2006 - 2010 with 1,64,765 cases in 2006, 1,85,312 cases in 2007, 1,95,856 cases in 2008, 2,03,804 cases in 2009 and 2,13,585 cases in 2010.

INCIDENCE OF CRIME AGAINST WOMEN DURING 2012

(All India 2,44,270)

State/Union Territory	Incidence (No. of Cases)
Jammu & Kashmir	3,128
Uttar Pradesh	23,549
Bihar	11,220
Madhya Pradesh	16,832
Maharashtra	16,353
Andhra Pradesh	28,171
Karnataka	10,346
Tamil Nadu	15,522
Gujarat	16,000
Jharkhand	4,556
Odisha	11,988
West Bengal	30,942
Delhi	59,000
Punjab	3,238
Haryana	3,238
Uttaranchal	3,128
Himachal Pradesh	3,128
Arunachal Pradesh	3,128
Nagaland	3,128
Manipur	3,128
Tripura	1,550
Mizoram	3,128
Meghalaya	3,128
Lakshadweep	2
Andaman & Nicobar Islands	49
Dadra & Nagar Haveli	16

Incidence (No. of Cases)

- Upto 100
- 101 - 1,000
- 1,001 - 5,000
- Above 10,000





**Crime head-wise incidents of crime against women during 2008-2012
and Percentage variation in 2012 over 2011**

Sl. No.	Crime head	Year					Percentage variation in 2012 over 2011
		2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	
1	Rape (Sec. 376 IPC)	21,467	21,397	22,172	24,206	24,923	3.0
2	Kidnapping & abduction (Sec. 363 to 373 IPC)	22,939	25,741	29,795	35,565	38,262	7.6
3	Dowry death (Sec. 302/304 IPC)	8,172	8,383	8,391	8,618	8,233	-4.5
4	Cruelty by husband and relatives (Sec. 498-A IPC)	81,344	89,546	94,041	99,135	106,527	7.5
5	Assault on women with intent to outrage her modesty (Sec. 354 IPC)	40,413	38,711	40,613	42,968	45,351	5.5
6	Insult to the modesty of women (Sec. 509 IPC)	12,214	11,009	9,961	8,570	9,173	7.0
7	Importation of girl from foreign country (Sec. 366-B IPC)	67	48	36	80	59	-26.3
A	Total IPC crime against women	186,616	194,835	205,009	219,142	232,528	6.1
8	Commission of Sati Prevention Act, 1987	1	0	0	1	-	-100.0
9	Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act, 1956	2,659	2,474	2,499	2,435	2,563	5.3
10	Indecent Representation of Women (Prohibition) Act, 1986	1,025	845	895	456	141	-68.9
11	Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961	5,555	5,650	5,182	6,619	9,038	36.5
B	Total SLL crime against women	9,240	8,969	8,576	9,508	11,742	23.5
	Total (A+B)	195,856	203,804	213,585	228,650	244,270	6.8

<http://ncrb.gov.in/>

Read and Respond

Neeti was 11th grade student and was considered to be one of the brightest student in her class. She was stalked by one of the neighbours from an influential family for few weeks. She could not gather courage to tell her parents about it. Things turned so bad that she was attacked by him physically and had to be admitted in hospital for long time. When everyone came to know about it there was lot of criticism faced by Neeti's parents. When they went to file an official complaint their neighbours warned them against it.

What do you think were the possible reasons that she could not tell her parent about the events of chasing?

What are the possible ways to prevent such incidents?

Why do you think Neeti's parents were warned by their neighbours?

There are lot of similar cases that are reported in our country and there are many other that are not due to reasons like societal pressures and other factors. When these cases get reported there are many ways in which the core issue is diverted.



5.4 Is our Society Gender Responsive?

The idea of a gender responsive society comes from how the members of society respond to the gender related issues. The media is full of news related to discrimination and bias against women and above all crime against them. Does it mean as a society we are not gender responsive? Or does it mean with the globalization and urbanization, women in the country have become more unsafe and their marginalization has increased? The cases of crime against women have made a strong impact on a section of society in recent time and media has played its role in communicating various dimensions. The government has taken lot of steps to counter these issues. The public has made strong statements at various forums. But does it mean we have been able to make our society responsive towards gender issues? Consider a report given in the newspaper and analyse the various issues and their impact. What do you recognise? What has happened that in place of positive impact the developments have been negative?

Haryana & Punjab fare worst on child sex ratio J&K sees steepest drop of 82 points; Mizoram, Meghalaya best

Aditi Tandon, Tribune News Service

New Delhi, March 31, India's obsession with the male child stood out in all its brazenness today, with the provisional data from Census 2011 scripting a shocking tale of missing daughters. The population in the age group 0-6 years stands at 158.8 million today - five million less than what we had in 2001. Clearly, the girl children are missing, with the country today posting a child sex ratio (defined as the number of girls per 1,000 boys in the 0-6 years group) of 914 as against 927 in 2001 - the lowest since 1961. The dip is visible even in the hitherto gender-neutral states and UTs, including Chhattisgarh, Meghalaya, Puducherry and Dadra and Nagar Haveli. All these states which led the child sex ratio table in 2001 have recorded declines this year.

158.8 million is the girl population in the 0-6-yr group, which is five million less than that in 2001

914 girls per 1,000 boys is the latest child sex ratio as against 927 in 2001. The figures are the lowest since 1961

971 per 1,000 boys is the ratio in Mizoram, the highest in country, followed by Meghalaya at 970

Shocking scenario

■ The dip in child sex ratio is visible even in the hitherto gender-neutral states and UTs, including Chhattisgarh, Meghalaya, Puducherry and Dadra and Nagar Haveli

■ **979** was the highest child sex ratio in Dadra and Nagar Haveli in 2001; it has now slipped down **55** points to **924**
■ **82** points decadal decline in the sex ratio for children

in J-K has shocked the entire nation. It is now down to **859** from **941**



Notorious North

■ The northern states continue to lead the pack with their low sex ratios and sex selective traditions

■ **830** is the child sex ratio in Haryana (**846**), which has overtaken Punjab as the worst state in the list



Some solace

■ Haryana's performance is better with **11** points plus since 2001, though the state still has bottom most districts in the country — Jhajjar (**774**), Mahendragarh (**778**)

■ **48** points increase in the ratio (**846** as against **798** in 2001) is the best national performance which has been recorded in Punjab

■ HP's Lahaul Spiti is the most girl child-friendly district in India with its ratio of **1,013**



There are so many questions that emerge even after more than 60 years of our independence. In a global age when India is considered to be the hub where service industry has grown many folds and agriculture has reached a new height, there are so many developments that suggest that there is lot to be done to be called a gender responsive society. It is not just the decreasing sex ratio that is a major concern. There are so many concerns, some existing since hundreds of years and some very recent. Issues like health and education facilities are impinging and needs immediate attention.

Although the concerns and issues have increased but does it also mean that we have been responding to the need that has always been there? The efforts for gender empowerment and providing opportunity for higher participation of women have also increased. There are many schemes and provisions started by governments, responding to the needs of women. There is provision of 5% rebate in the eligibility criteria for admissions in undergraduate courses in some colleges of University of Delhi and some other universities also other various such schemes and offers..

Even the judiciary has been active in taking note of the situation and intervening at various





places. In recent times the reach of media has increased manifold. The developments in the technology have given various platforms where diverse issues are discussed and debated.

5.5 Gender Sensitization

Gender sensitization is not something purely addressing sensitization of males in the society. The aim of achieving capacity development of both males and females cannot be achieved until the sensitivity of whole society is developed with flexibility to be open minded.

Sensitizing the society is an important way to combat all odds in the society related to the term 'gender'. Gender sensitization is the step towards reforming the society. Men and women, both are an integral part of this society. The foot prints of the men and women living in the society either make or break the society. Thus, Gender sensitivity is the consciousness and insight into the state and condition of the other sex, with reference to chronological roots of gender stereotyping, discrimination and violence.

Read and Reflect

Is sensitization of society necessary? Who will benefit from it?

Boys or Girls? Or both, Girls and Boys?

What does "sensitization" means? Is it preaching people what or what not to do?

Gender sensitization is the process of breaking the stereotypes related to men and women - changing the mindsets of people living in the society who think 'males' and 'females' as 'unequals' and hence, have different socio-economic functions and roles and spaces in this society.

As relatively more discrimination is faced by the women as compared to men, as discussed in the earlier section of this chapter, gender sensitization also helps in increasing the sensitivity of people towards women and the problems faced by them. The process of gender sensitization creates a class of responsive functionaries starting from the policy making level to the grass root level, who think and believe that terms like 'gender inequality', 'gender discrimination', 'gender stereotyping' pose an obstacle in the way of attaining 'gender equality' in both social and economic order and therefore, understand the importance and need to address gender related issues in such circumstances as a matter of priority.

Achieving 'Gender Sensitization' would not be possible without change in a man's as well as a woman's life. The change has to be brought in both the lives of a man and a woman. The degradation of women's life starts from the time at birth and discrimination is faced for nutrition, healthcare, childcare, education, work etc. For instance, women are usually responsible for both, the household work and child-care, even when they are employed full time outside the family. This 'double-day' as it is termed in many societies, means that women work more hours than men. But the definition of work does not include many activities of women like household work, care of the family and child, which are non-economic in nature. Most important among these are household activities like cooking, cleaning utensils, washing clothes, child-care, house-keeping performed by the women and also, taking care of elder persons in the house etc. Though most of these activities are performed by women of the family only but these are not considered as 'work' under the Census definition of 'work'. Thus it is analyzed that women work more than men, but most of their hours of work go 'unpaid' due to the inequality present in the society towards women.

But the formation of gender stereotypical roles was possible because of the following of the symmetry approved for both men and women, which led to the sub-ordination of women in the role script as women themselves have accepted the subordinating roles without realizing its negative



implications. Thus, Gender Sensitization not only seeks to challenge and transform the perception of men towards women, i.e., the way women should be treated and respected and given equal opportunity but also, outlook of women i.e., the way they think of men and of themselves and their behavior as an integral part of this society.

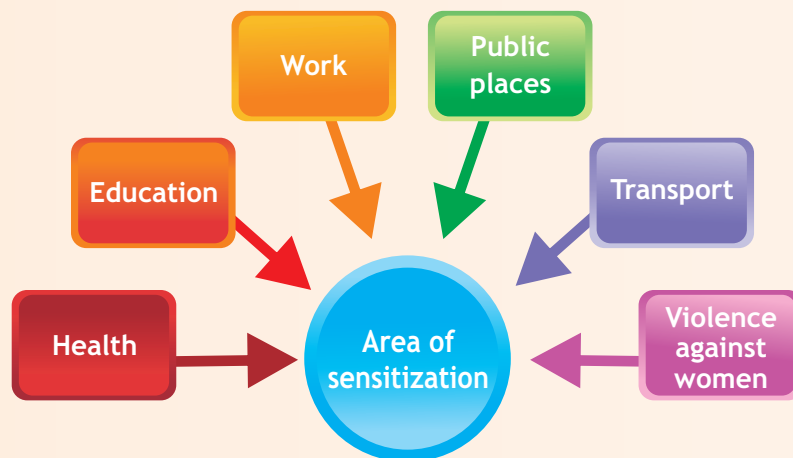
Gender sensitization conceptualizes gender equality, which includes:

- ❑ Men and women have equal opportunity to participate in the social, economic, cultural and political institutions to realize their potentials.
- ❑ It recognizes and accepts the similarities and differences with regard to specific needs and concerns of both men and women.
- ❑ Ensures both qualitative and quantitative participation of men and women in the process of development.

Gender Sensitization is not just only about pitting the status of the women in the society or talking about the male dominating society. On the other hand, Gender sensitization refers to educating the society which can help in the betterment of both the sexes. It will help the people living in the society to distinguish between assumptions related to gender that are valid from the stereotyped generalizations. To be gender sensitized, one needs to be open minded and put efforts to be able to expand the horizons of the limited thinking, values and perspectives, with the due presence of intellectual understanding. This would build up the capacities of both men and women to come together and be wholesome to work for the betterment of the society and humane and respectful towards each other. Gender Sensitization acknowledges the different roles and responsibilities of both men and women in the society.

5.6 Exploring Areas for Sensitization

It is important to understand the focus area of sensitization when it comes to make an effort towards developing a gender responsive society. Although most of the areas are correlated and somewhere interdependent on each other it is important to analyse these different areas separately.



5.6.1 Gender Sensitization and Policies

For the society to become gender responsive and sensitized it is important that there are substantive efforts done in the policy framework also to have a long term, sustained impact. It is considered by many that having reservation for women and making an effort to develop skills combined with capacity building has a major role in uplifting their place in society.





Read and Respond

Towards a Gender Responsive Society:

Consider yourself as a policy maker who is transferred to a setting (Village/ semi urban/urban) of your choice. Fill the following sheet considering the setting of your choice with respect to uplift the efforts towards a gender responsive society:

Focus Area	Scope of Access for Women	Scope of Access for Men	Possible s Barrier Recognized	Strategies to Overcome Respective Barrier
1. Employment				
2. Health services				
3. Financial allocations and schemes				
4. Transport				
5. Education				
6. Inheritance of family assets				
7. Legal Remedies				
8. Sports and Recreation				

Complete the above sheet and do a survey of your own city and recognise the above areas giving examples from there.

5.6.2 Gender Responsive Employment

Gender Responsive Employment is an important aspect that has emerged in the society in recent times. The employment opportunities in different areas can rarely be said to be gender responsive. Consider the following cases

Read and Respond

Case 1: Anita works in a call centre and has to go for night shifts also. The vehicle arranged by the company for them drops her at a distance from her home. She feels unsafe in travelling from the area and after lot of complaints there was no step taken by the company and she resigned from the job.

Case 2: Aysha and Deepak work in a factory where production of garments is being done. They were married and had a daughter of 6 month old. It was getting difficult for both of them to look after their daughter with the factory timings. There were approximately 40 similar cases in the factory where employees were finding it difficult to look after their young kids.

What do you think could have been possible solutions for the above situations? How do you think the possibilities can lead to a situation where participation of women is facilitated at work place?

Recently there have been many provisions government has given for facilitating the gender responsiveness of the employment possibilities. One of the most prominent one is provision of maternity and paternity leave at work place.



Another example is the Rajiv Gandhi Creche Scheme for the Children of Working Mothers by Department of Women and Child Development, Ministry of Human Resource Development, where need of child care services with regard to physical infrastructure, food services, crèche worker's training has been emphasised and provisions are also made for the same.

5.6.3 Gender Responsive Budgeting

Read and Respond

Deepa makes small bags with help of a small group of female workers from nearby village. She wanted to extend her small business and for this she approached a bank. The bank officials told her that there are special schemes for women entrepreneurs to facilitate their initiatives. These special provisions are initiated by the government in all the districts.

Is there any scheme like this you are aware of? Where does this financial help come from?

Gender Responsive Budgeting (GRB) is interplay of equal gender participation and financial policies of the state. GEB works at two levels i.e. micro level and macro level where the efforts to equalise the gender participation by financial inputs. Macro level essentially deals with policies and practices at larger issues in the economy. The direct influence of this reaches through micro level interventions. The budgeting at national and state level is the joint effort of officials and parliamentarians. The financial planning at the macro and micro level has significant influence on increase of participation of those who are marginalised since long. For example the participation of women at different level gets a boost by the increase in financial help given by the state in form of some policies. One of the significant examples is 'Ladli' scheme implemented by the government of Delhi. The scheme works at different levels to increase the participation of girls in education.

Read and Respond

Make a list of national and state level policies and provisions that have special provisions for increasing the participation of women in the society. Interact with 5 adults around you and ask how much they are aware about these provisions.

5.6.4 Gender Responsive Transport Facilities

One of the major challenges for participation of women in various spheres of life is transport facilities. The transport facilities in both rural and urban areas have seen a major uplift as it is considered as an important aspect of development. The situation is different in rural and urban areas and from city to city. It is important that provision of transport facility is there with sensitivity towards the security of those who are travelling. Look at the given picture and try to answer following questions.

Why do you think it has become necessary to provide ladies coaches in trains? Why seats are reserved in buses and trains for women? What are the circumstances due to which it has become important to provide security personnels in the transport facilities? What is required for addressing these challenges?



Special coaches for women

<http://www.deccanchronicle.com/130706/news-current-affairs/article/72-men-ladies-coach-held>





5.6.5 Gender Responsive Provision of Basic Amenities

When you look around yourself you will observe that there are basic amenities that are required by the citizens. The basic amenities like water, sanitation, health etc are basic requirements without which it is difficult to consider a civilized society. Provision of these basic amenities also needs to be gender responsive in nature.

Consider the following cases and suggest how the provision of better facilities in these aspect will influence gender responsive nature of society? In addition to these atleast add two more areas in the given table.

Area	Suggestions
1. Provision of drinking water	
2. Provision of toilet facilities	
3. Provision of health centres	
4.	
5.	

5.7 Gender Sensitization Process in a Locality: An Example

The process of gender sensitization can be differently approached by different people to address different issues. It may also depend on the nature of the issue recognized. It may be participative or non participative with respect to the involvement of the target group. Some efforts may be individual also and may be done by groups also. The way to address the whole process can use different types of medium available, maybe face to face workshops or using Information and Communication Technology Tools. For example there are many online gender sensitization efforts that are targeting the people who visit social networking sites.

It may also be possible that you can address a group or sensitize at individual level.

The process of gender sensitization can be influential only if the participation of the stakeholders is taken into account. There is no readymade solution for gender sensitization in a country as diverse as ours. There can be multiple ways in which gender sensitization can be done. We can divide it into two main ways according to centralized and decentralized efforts.

Centralized efforts may cater to the general issues that affect the population throughout. These efforts can be made in following ways:

1. Taking feedback from local agencies about the issues.
2. Using Information technology based means for communicating common message.
3. Implementing policies effectively without discrimination.

When coming to decentralized efforts for gender sensitization process following process can be followed at different levels





Figure: Gender Sensitization Process at Micro Level

Understanding Target Group:

The diversity of the group can be addressed by micro level planning. The first step is to understand the group dynamics and needs. The target group may be highly educated or may be illiterate. The target group may be from different socio economic background or from completely diverse social background. They may have different social rules, regulations and practices that may need to be addressed. It may not be always done in community, it may be the workplace that may be the target group. Different professions may have different requirements that should be understood first.

Recognizing Barriers:

Different groups may have different issues that need to be addressed. The barriers arising from the socio economic or social profile may need to be understood in greater depth. The barriers may be different arising from different root causes. There may be different types of barriers pertaining to the group. At workplace it may be the safety of women or at the local panchayats where getting access to the women can be a major concern.

Preparing Team Including Stakeholders:

Preparing a team to sensitize the society is very important as it difficult for an individual to address issues at all levels. The team needs to include the stakeholders as it is important that they bring up crucial areas that have indigenous characteristics. There may be issues that are specific to the group to be addressed.

Preparing Intervention Programme:

After recognising the issues the team can work towards preparing intervention programme for the group. The intervention programmes should be able to take into care all the aspects and should address the issues sensitively. The intervention programme can be designed differently for different groups.





Implementing Intervention Programme:

Implementation of the intervention programme with the group can vary from small group to large group interventions. There may be a possibility of use of different mediums for communication of the message and interactions. Time durations for which interventions are done with the group can be different depending on the need.

Taking Feedback and Making Changes:

After implementation of the programme it is important to take feedback from the stakeholder and address the barriers. It becomes critical as such programmes cannot be self sufficient and must be constantly analysed for improving. After changes being made in the intervention programmes it is important that these issues are re addressed.

Read and Respond

Consider an issue that needs immediate attention related to gender sensitization around you. After analysing the issue plan a specific gender sensitization programme with a group. List down how you attempted the following steps:

Understanding Target Group:

.....

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Recognizing Barriers:

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Preparing Team Including Stakeholders:

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Preparing Intervention Programme:

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Implementing Intervention Programme:

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Taking Feedback and Making Changes:

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Continuity in such interventions is a very important aspect. By just having small workshops it is not possible to address issues that have been ingrained in our society since ages. Thus such programmes cannot be standalone programmes that are devoid of other interventions in the society. Deliberate attempts to make interventions are just a small step towards sensitization of people and making a gender responsive society.



5.8 Organizations Working for Gender Responsive Society

The right based approach to address the issues of women has emerged in the society from various quarters. There are some organizations, both national and international, that have played a significant role in propagating the rights of women in the society. Several United Nations entities, including UNICEF, UNFPA and UNDP have been working towards individual human rights.

"UNDP focuses on gender equality and women's empowerment not only as human rights, but also because they are a pathway to achieving the Millennium Development Goals and sustainable development" (UNDP) This statement given by UNDP in their website reflects the focus of UN organisations towards the cause of gender empowerment. Gender empowerment has been a major step towards making a gender responsive society. There will always be a positive development in the society once the stakeholder's participation increases in all the fields. Thus empowerment done by the organizations through different efforts is a step forward.

Ministry of Women and Child Development, Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, National Mission for Empowerment of Women and National Commission of Human Rights etc are different ministries and government organisations working towards empowerment of women and gender sensitization issues also. For example Ministry of Women and Child Development work with following objectives:

- ❑ Poverty Alleviation and Economic Empowerment of Women
- ❑ Social Empowerment And Education
- ❑ Health and Nutrition
- ❑ Gender Rights, Gender Based Violence and Law Enforcement
- ❑ Gender Budgeting, Gender Mainstreaming and Gender Audit
- ❑ Empowerment of Vulnerable and Marginalized Groups and Women in Difficult Circumstances

Read and Respond

Analyse the aims and objectives of national and international organizations working towards gender equity and equality. Discuss the effectiveness of different programmes implemented by these organizations and come up with a plan to implement similar programme in the locality you stay.

Children and Women Related Schemes of Government of India

Important Schemes for well- being of Children

1. Integrated Child Development Service Scheme
2. Integrated Child Protection Scheme
3. National awards for Child Welfare.
4. National Child Awards for Exceptional Achievements.
5. Balika Samriddhi Yojna.
6. Nutrition Programme For Adolescent Girls
7. Early Childhood education for 3-6 age group children.
8. Welfare of working children in need of Care and Protection
9. Childline services
10. National Creche Scheme for children of working mothers.





11. UJJAWALA: A Comprehensive Scheme for Prevention of trafficking and Resue, Rehabilitation and Re-integration of Victims of Trafficking and Commercial Sexual Exploitation
12. Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan
13. National Rural Health Mission
14. Scheme for empowerment of Adolescent Girls - SABLA.
15. DhanaLakshami - Conditional Cash Transfer for Girl Child with insurance cover
16. National Commission for Protection of Child Right

Women related schemes of government of India have made significant impact on the women empowerment, Some of the schemes under Ministry of Women and Child Development are following:

- ☐ Swayam Siddha
- ☐ Scheme for Working Women Hostel
- ☐ Short Stay Home For Women and Girls (SSH)
- ☐ Swadhar
- ☐ STEP (Support to Training and Employment Programme for Women)
- ☐ Stree Shakti Puraskaar

For other schemes refer to <http://nipccd.nic.in/reports/ehndbk10.pdf>

Unit End Reflections

Comprehension Questions

1. What according to you are the major issues related to gender sensitization in India at present? How can these issues be addressed? Support your answers with examples.
2. How gender sensitization is possible through a deliberate attempt at micro and macro level?
3. Discuss the specific features of a Gender Responsive Society?
4. How can gender sensitization address the issues related to gender responsive society?
5. Assess the effectiveness of central level schemes for gender empowerment.

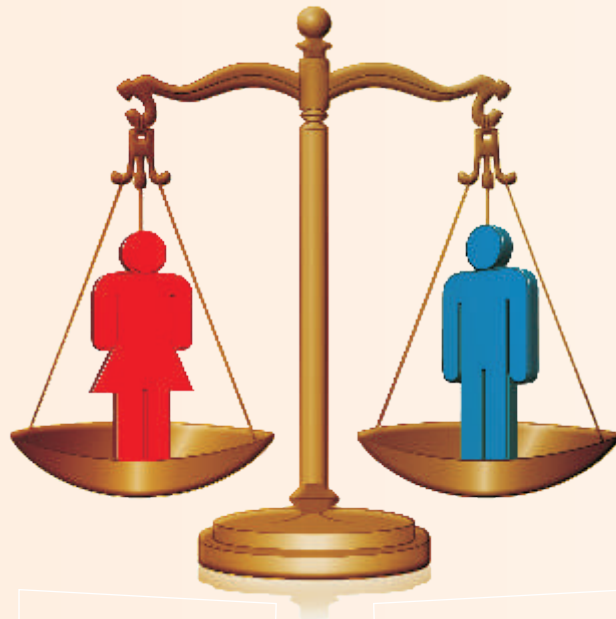
Case Study/Activities

Arrange 10 different news items related to abuse of women and discrimination faced by them at their workplace. Find out what are the provisions in law to prevent such incidents and suggest other measures that can be taken to prevent such events in future.

Organise following activities in your classroom:

1. Plan and present a small skit on addressing gender stereotypes around yourself. You can take any of the space you want and come up with solutions to address the issues raised.
2. Organise a wall debate/Poem and slogan writing in your school encouraging other members of your school to come up with ways to sensitize society about gender equality.





GENDER STUDIES

UNIT-3

Studying Redressal Mechanisms





CHAPTER 6: REDRESSAL MECHANISMS IN THE FIELDS OF EDUCATION, WORK AND HEALTH

In order to address inequalities and atrocities against women it is important to know that support is available and even more, to seek it when required. When there is lack of awareness about Redressal Mechanisms, it leads to vulnerability and fear. In the area of gender various support systems are available, there are laws, conventions, committees and commission's reports to regulate various judicial and non-judicial redressal mechanisms and law enforcement agencies (police) and NGOs that help in their implementation, it is thus required that one must approach them whenever support is sought. There are special units of law enforcement agencies willing to reach out to the people who seek their help in hour of crisis, many a times battered, low in confidence and unable to stand up for their rights. The effort is required to be informed, know what they can do for them and how they can access their services. To maintain a balance it is important that the wrong doings be redressed.

6.1 Studying Redressal Mechanisms: Education

Gender inequalities exist in education at every level, from pedagogical practices to choice of subject. The issue of access to education and retention is one of the most urgent concerns. We have already discussed the basic issues related to gender issues in education in our earlier chapters. In this section, we would discuss about how the gender issues are addressed in education through law and policies.

6.1.1 Issues Related To Girls' Education

There are various reports suggesting that the education of girls is behind boys at all levels. Enrolment of girls in schools is lesser in different parts of the country and drop out rate remains higher among them.

We have studied about various areas that affect girls' education in earlier chapters. Multiple reasons are there for different sections of the society. Reasons vary from individual to individual also. But the generic reasons like, lack of financial resources, lack of support from family, preference given to boys in the family, cultural practices, distance of school, lack of female teachers in school, lack of toilets in school, lack of transport, security issues, school timing, etc. remain the major hurdles. Gender discrimination in school and society remain a major reason for lack of motivation among girls to pursue education.

These differences need to be attended even after so many concerted efforts from the state. The most important support the policies and programmes require is, community participation and sensitized efforts from them.

6.1.2 Addressing Girls' Education

India is signatory to Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, 1966 and the (UDHR) Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), 1989. After more than 50 years of independence, India started working towards constitutional guarantee for free and compulsory education.

Article 21-A of the Indian Constitution says that the duty is upon the State to provide free and compulsory education to children in the age group of six to fourteen years, 'as the State may, by law, determine'. Other constitutional provisions that are directly and indirectly associated with girls and their education are given earlier in different chapters. Since education has been the main agenda



on the list of policy makers after independence there were various commissions and committees that were appointed to suggest changes in the system that would benefit the nation building and individual development. All of these commissions and committees recognized girls education as a major aim that needed immediate action.

6.1.3 Committees and Commissions on Girls' Education

After independence the most influential and important was Secondary **Education Commissions (1952-53)** which elaborated upon all the major aspects related to secondary education. After independence it was a major challenge to bring girls to educational institutions and increase the literacy. The Commission upheld the access of girls to every type of educational system.

In 1958-59, *National Commission on Women Education* gave its report which was instrumental in bringing up specific issues related to women education. The recommendation given by them highlighted important areas like:

- ☐ Having separate toilets for girls in schools.
- ☐ Providing help for books, uniform etc. for girls coming from low income group.
- ☐ Encouraging villages by announcing prizes for higher enrolment of girls.
- ☐ Increasing the number of women head of the institutions.
- ☐ Improving the transport facilities till secondary schools and giving free facilities to girls in them.
- ☐ Providing hostel facility in institutions.

Although there was an increase in the enrolment of girls in the schools, the dropout remained a major issue in schools for girls. The **Committee on the status of Women in India(1962-63)**, which came just before the **Kothari Commission(1964-66)**, suggested, giving incentive to parents for stopping dropout among the girls.

The **Education Commission** (Also known famously as Kothari Commission) is considered to be another milestone in the field of education. The report of the commission also recommended on lot of areas that were directly concerned with issues related to girls education. They recognized the bias towards girls education and emphasized on addressing them. Apart from other recommendations they also emphasized on appointment of women teachers in schools.

Approximately after 20 years and recommendations of other Committees, **National Policy on Education (1986)** again highlighted similar issues related to girls' education in India. One of the major issues that was highlighted was the provision of primary schools in the vicinity of the girls' homes. Having schools in the vicinity would be beneficial in increasing the educational opportunity for girls.

After National Policy on education, the efforts related to girls' education were promoted in different ways through a much more intense way.

Since the beginning of 21st century Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) has been a flagship programme that has provided education for children in the age of 6-14. The universal access opportunity provided by SSA has improved situation for girls. There has

Read and Respond

Make a report on the recommendations of the major commissions and committees in education highlighting the recommendations related to girls' education. Analyse how these recommendations are still valid around you. Make a group among yourself and prepare a report on improvement of girls' education in your area. These recommendations should take into consideration following things:

Issues related to your area/village/city.

Roadmap for improvement.

Specific suggestions for different areas of education.

You can prepare this report with help of your teacher.



been significant improvement in the enrolment of girls in recent times. But the situation is still far from expected aims.

Read and Respond

The table given here is of the literacy rate of male and female in India. Analyse the table given below:

Year	Total Literacy (in million)	Rate of Literacy			Male-Female Difference
		Male	Female	Total	
1951	60.1	27.2	8.9	16.7	18.3
1961	105.5	40.4	15.4	24.0	25.0
1971	161.5	46.6	22.0	29.5	24.0
1981	241.0	56.4	29.8	36.2	27.4
1991	362.2	63.1	39.3	43.3	23.8
2001	666.94	75.3	53.6	64.84	21.7

*Exclude J & K

Source: Selected Educational Statistics 2002-03, MHRD, Govt. of India.

1. What are the changes you observe in literacy rate from 1951 to 2001?
2. What do you think could have been the reasons for the male female difference in literacy rate during different decades?

Central government has taken lot of steps and started various schemes apart from SSA. These schemes have been influential in overall education and girls education also.

Some of the major Centrally Sponsored Schemes in School Education (CSS) are:

1. Operation Black Board
2. Teacher Education
3. Education Guarantee Scheme and Alternative and Innovative Education (EGS & AIE)
4. Mid-day Meal Scheme
5. Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA)
6. Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya (KGBV)
7. Shiksha Karmi
8. Mahila Samakhya
9. District Primary Education Programme (DPEP)
10. National Programme for Education of Girls at Elementary Level (NPEGEL)
11. Lok Jumbish
12. Janshala Programme

Read and Respond

Take two of the centrally sponsored schemes per student and list their achievements/focus in the improvement of girls' education.

These programmes have been pioneers and have succeeded at different levels. *Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya (KGBV)* and *Mahila Samakhya* have been critical in girls' education.



Read and Respond

Case 1: Anita's parents shifted to Delhi from a nearby state and they wanted her to be admitted in school.

She was 8 years old and was seeking admission in 1st grade. All the schools denied admission to her as she was over age according to them for admission.

Case 2: Ashna dropped out from the school after 6th grade as her parents thought that she is now old enough to help her mother at home. The teachers of the school approached her parents but they refused to send her to school.

Consider the above cases and answer following questions:

1. What are the possible reasons for teachers in first case and parents in second case to deny opportunity to the girls to get educated.
2. Do you think these reasons are justified?
3. What type of provision could have ensured possibility of further education in these two cases? Discuss.
4. List similar cases where girls are denied admissions or drop out.

In 2009, *Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act* was passed and implemented from 2010. With the implementation of RTE with the ongoing SSA, the loop holes could be plugged.

Under SSA, exemption of fees, provision of uniform and learning material etc. apart from mid day meal programme, were crucial for the improvement of education of all including girls. The issue of quality and retention of girls is intended to be addressed by RTE. There are multiple issues that present barrier to education of girls. The reasons range from distance of schools from home to non availability of toilets there. Secondary schools are not always in the vicinity of the villages and students have to travel long distance to attend school. The safety and security concern of parents of girls is considered to be a major reason for girls dropping out at secondary level.

6.1.4 Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act

After the World Education Forum held in Dakar, Senegal in 2000, the Right to Education was highly recommended through the *Education for All (EFA)* goals including expanding early childhood education, universal primary education, lifelong learning and skills, improving educational quality, increasing adult literacy and gender parity in education. The target devoted to primary education seeks to ensure that by 2015 all children, particularly girls.



Every child has right to education

The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act, implemented in 2009, is a historic moment in the history of Indian education. This national provision for free and compulsory education to everyone till the age of 14 is a landmark that would benefit all the individuals.

There are several provisions that influence gender parity in the schools as well as encourage girls' education. Although not written explicitly at many places but the provisions have a strong influence on issues that impact girls' education. Let us see how some of the recommendations influence girls' education in particular.

CHAPTER II

3. (1) Every child of the age of six to fourteen years shall have a right to free and compulsory education in a neighbourhood school till completion of elementary education.





One of the most crucial issues for girls' education has been the possibility of access and retention. One of the reasons for drop out of the girls has always been lack of financial support. With the availability of free education to all learners it would be a boon for those who cannot afford education in school and also to those who do not send the girls to school as it costs them.

CHAPTER II

4. Where a child above six years of age has not been admitted in any school or though admitted, could not complete his or her elementary education, then, he or she shall be admitted in a class appropriate to his or her age: Provided that where a child is directly admitted in a class appropriate to his or her age, then, he or she shall, in order to be at par with others, have a right to receive special training.

Another issue that became barrier to girls' education was refusal to admission due to being over age at entry level. In many places where individuals go for admission at a later age due to certain reasons, this act would ensure that they can get admission at age appropriate grade as well as support to cope up with whatever has been missed.

CHAPTER III

9. Ensure that the child belonging to weaker section and the child belonging to disadvantaged group are not discriminated against and prevented from pursuing and completing elementary education on any grounds;

10. It shall be the duty of every parent or guardian to admit or cause to be admitted his or her child or ward, as the case may be, to an elementary education in the neighbourhood school.

Apart from various responsibilities of the state, it has become a duty for the local body now to ensure that education of those who are disadvantaged is not left behind. In fact in recent times various state governments and local bodies has ensured that girls also get a reservation of seats in schools at the time of admission under disadvantaged category.

By making it a duty of parents and guardian to admit their ward in school, the act has made a positive effort to involve parents.

CHAPTER VII

Where admission of children is above one hundred....separate toilets for boys and girls;

Another factor that has influenced the girls, education is provision of separate toilets in schools. The act says that for a school having more than 100 students, should provide separate toilets for girls and boys. This provision makes it mandatory to have separate toilets in school which was a neglected area in many schools.

Apart from some of the highlights given above there are many more provisions that can be directly linked with the girls' education. For example provision of a primary school in the neighbourhood has become more specific which

Read and Respond

Girls will get preference in admission to schools under the Right to Education (RTE) Act. This will be done as part of the 25% reservation for economically weaker section(EWS) and socially disadvantaged group (SDG) students. (Times of India)

[http:// timesofindia.indiatimes.com/home/ education/news](http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/home/education/news)

This was one of the reports that suggest that girls would get preference in admission in schools under RTE. How do you think other provisions in RTE act can help in overcoming the barriers of girls' education? Apart from the highlights given above, try to list and discuss the provisions of RTE. Collect all the news items that you can relate with the girls' education and analyse them.



ultimately benefits girls also. The state is now bound to take these steps with their responsibilities being fixed at all the levels. The compulsion to act gives strength to already running programmes and prepares premise for future developments.

Media plays a crucial role in the implementation of these recommendations with time to time intervention to keep a vigil but the main players would be the community as it is the people of the country who would be required to take charge and participate.

6.2 Studying Redressal Mechanisms: Work

Read and Respond

"Amrita was working as an executive in a corporate company. She was expecting appraisal and promotion in her organization after 4 years of experience and also because she felt that she had the best credentials among her colleagues. But her senior manager told her that if she wanted to be promoted, she should be ready to compromise and give favours. Amrita was angry and upset."

What do you think Amrita should do? What are the legal possibilities for her to address this situation?

How have ideas of gender played into the issues and problems that arise in the workplace? What kinds of judicial means exist to counter these? In other words, how can the judiciary be approached to help address gendered problems that arise in the workplace?

Judicial redressal mechanisms are those redressal mechanisms that involve the judiciary - can be seen in two ways. These are, firstly, the laws that have been created to protect working persons and to ensure that they are given their rights; and secondly, the system of law courts which may be approached when these laws have been violated. Redressal, here, is through the judicial system in place in the country.

Approaching the judiciary for redressal has certain advantages and disadvantages. Judicial decisions are binding: it is mandatory for the groups involved to act in accordance with judicial decisions. People who fail to abide by these decisions can be held accountable and even penalised. These decisions also set precedents - i.e. they establish rules and norms which all people in similar situations have to abide by.

However, approaching the judiciary for redressal is often a time-consuming process - it may last upto several years. Additionally, it is an expensive process. Also, it is important to note that judicial redress implies that the problem which one seeks to resolve legally, is actually recognised as a problem by the law. One has to be able to show that the problem with which one has gone to court is defined in some legislation, is in violation of an Article of the Constitution, is in violation of some governmental guidelines etc.



How have such laws approached the issues of gender? In the Indian legal system, this has been done by creating certain laws that recognise the special requirements and problems that women may face in their working lives. These laws attempt to improve the conditions under which women work and accommodate any special requirements women may have.





6.2.1 Laws Pertaining to Working Women

Let us look at some of the areas where women may face various problems during their working lives.

1. Recognition of work
2. Obtaining educational qualifications that are necessary for a particular career; entry into professional associations that regulate entry into particular fields
3. Hiring and other conditions of service
4. Remuneration
5. Sexual harassment in the workplace
6. Maternity leave and maternity benefits
7. Childcare
8. Right to form a union



It is important to note that not all women will face problems in all these areas. For example, a woman performing paid domestic work does not need any formal educational qualifications for such work. The skills and training required are usually acquired informally and through experience. Instead she may face the problem of arbitrary termination of services: she may be removed from work without adequate notice or any compensation. A woman in public employment may be paid, like her male colleagues, based on her grade and rank; but she may lack childcare facilities in her workplace. The problems that women face differ with the nature of their work.

1. Recognition of Work

Why is it important that work be given recognition? It is only when work is recognised that people who have performed that work are able to claim the benefits of having performed it, and are able to approach the laws court for redressal of any grievances.

It is noted above that the law can only be used to address those problems that it recognises. Similarly, a working woman can only benefit from the law if the law recognises the work she does as 'work'.

Read and Respond

Do you think the list given above is comprehensive? Does it cover all areas of a woman's working life? Think of other spheres that might be covered:

Right to work

Termination of Services

Prevention of occupational diseases/addressing occupational hazards

What Constitutional provisions/legislation exist to address these areas? Choose one area listed above and find out more about it. What other aspects could be included?

Read and Reflect

The Case of Domestic Workers

In 2011, the 100th International Labour Conference of the International Labour Organisation adopted the Domestic Workers Convention. The Convention recognises that "...domestic work continues to be undervalued and invisible and is mainly carried out by women and girls, many of whom are migrants or members of disadvantaged communities..."

What does invisible mean? The use of this word indicates that domestic work is not seen - it is not given recognition as work, and is not adequately covered by laws. The invisible and undervalued nature of domestic work is closely linked to the fact that it is an extension of housework, which itself is not considered to be work.

In India, the Domestic Workers (Registration, social security and welfare) Act was enacted in



2008. This law recognises that domestic workers are vulnerable and subject to various forms of discrimination and exploitation, and seeks to create legal mechanisms which will reduce such exploitation and provide means for redressal. For example, the Act provides for the creation of district, state and central boards whose duty it is to ensure that the provisions of the Act are being complied with.

2. **Qualifications: Entry into Academic Institutions and Professional Associations**

What laws exist to protect the rights of women where qualifications are concerned? How is it ensured that women are not discriminated against by educational institutions and professional associations?

Read the following articles of the Indian Constitution:

"Article 14: Equality Before Law

The State shall not deny to any person equality before the law or the equal protection of the laws within the territory of India.

Article 15: Prohibition of discrimination on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth

(1) The State shall not discriminate against any citizen on grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex, place of birth or any of them.

(5) Nothing in this Article or in sub-clause (g) of clause (1) of Article 19 shall prevent the State from making any special provision, by law, for the advancement of any socially and educationally backward classes of citizens or for the Scheduled Castes or the Scheduled Tribes in so far as such special provisions relate to their admission to educational institutions including private educational institutions, whether aided or unaided by the State, other than the minority educational institutions referred to in clause (1) of Article 30."

The fundamental right against discrimination can be used to argue that women cannot be denied entry into educational institutions and professional associations. Any such discrimination can be challenged using these provisions.

3. **Hiring and Other Conditions of Service**

What laws exist to prevent women from being discriminated against at the time of hiring? How are women protected from discrimination in tenure, promotions, assignments etc after they have been hired?

The following is the text of Article 16 of the Constitution:

"Article 16: Equality of opportunity in matters of public employment:

(1) There shall be equality of opportunity for all citizens in matters relating to employment or appointment to any office under the State.

(2) No citizen shall, on grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex, descent, place of birth, residence or any of them, be ineligible for, or discriminated against in respect of, any employment or office under the State."

You will note that this Article refers only to



Equality of opportunity





public employment. The Equal Remuneration Act of 1976 states:

"No discrimination to be made while recruiting men and women workers: On and from the commencement of this Act, no employer shall, while making recruitment for the same work or work of a similar nature, [or in any condition of service subsequent to recruitment such as promotions, training or transfer], make any discrimination against women except where the employment of women in such work is prohibited or restricted by or under any law for the time being in force."

This Article makes illegal any discrimination against women at the time of hiring, and also at other times: during promotions, training and transfers. In this way, it ensures that women have equal opportunities for growth during their careers.

4. Remuneration

The following is taken from Article 39 of the Indian Constitution:

"Article 39: Certain principles of policy to be followed by the State

(d) that there is equal pay for equal work for both men and women"

Article 39 is part of the section of the Constitution that reflects Directive Principles of State Policy. These Articles are not enforceable by any court; instead, the principles they reflect are to guide the government during the formulation of policies. The principle of equal pay has been included in the Equal Remuneration Act, 1976:



Equal ways for work

"Duty of employer to pay equal remuneration to men and women workers for same work or work of a similar nature."

(1) No employer shall pay to any worker, employed by him in an establishment or employment, remuneration, whether payable in cash or in kind, at rates less favourable than those at which remuneration is paid by him to the workers of the opposite sex in such establishment or employment for performing the same work or work of a similar nature."

In this way, the right to equal pay for equal work has been protected by the law.

5. Sexual Harassment at the Workplace

Sexual harassment refers to any unwelcome advances of a sexual nature. Sexual harassment at the workplace can take many forms, and make it difficult or at times impossible for

Read and Respond

There are many factors which go into ensuring a healthy life for any person. Think of some of these: food, shelter, clothing, hygiene and sanitation, the availability, affordability, and quality of healthcare services, health education and knowledge, prevention of occupational diseases, adequate leisure, and so on. Many more things could be added to this list.

Pick one of these areas (or select any other area that interests you) and find out more about it. What sorts of legislation exists in this area? Has any legislation been planned, e.g. the preparation of a Bill to be placed before any legislative body? Are there any persons campaigning for laws in this area? What kinds of rights do people need, which are sought to be created?



women to continue to work in places where such harassment is prevalent.

The Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013 defines sexual harassment and declares that no woman shall be subject to sexual harassment at the workplace. It also sets out various measures for the redressal of complaints of such harassment within the concerned organisation itself.

6. Maternity Leave and Benefits

Article 42 of the Constitution states:

"The State shall make provision for securing just and humane conditions of work and for maternity relief."

The *Maternity Benefit Act* was enacted in 1961, and applied to women working in certain establishments, for example, mines and factories. The provisions of the Act include the following:

1. It sets out a period during the course of a woman's pregnancy when she may not work, and may not be required to work by her employer;
2. It establishes that a woman has a right to be paid a maternity benefit;
3. It establishes that a woman is also entitled to leave in case of a miscarriage, or in case the pregnancy results in illness;
4. It entitles her to not be dismissed from service as a result of her pregnancy.

These provisions are important because they allow women to challenge the discrimination they face when they have children. The attempt is to enable women to have healthy pregnancies, and to ensure that women's careers do not suffer as a result of their having children.



7. Childcare

What kinds of measures have been implemented that enable women to balance work and childcare? Various laws and acts have provisions that are aimed at allowing women to take care of their children, in different ways. Some of these are as follows:

- ❑ *The Factories Act, 1948*, specifies that in any factory where more than a certain number of women are employed, a crèche has to be maintained for their children. The features of the crèche have been specified, to ensure that it will have adequate and hygienic facilities.
- ❑ *The Maternity Benefit Act, 1961*, makes provisions for women to be given two breaks during the course of the workday to be able to nurse their children, till the children reach 15 months of age.
- ❑ *The Beedi and Cigar Workers (Conditions of Employment) Act, 1966*, also specifies that any facility for the manufacture of beedis (hand-rolled cigarettes) and cigars which employs more than 50 women should provide a crèche facility for their children. It also specifies the facilities that the crèche should provide.





- ❑ The Sixth Pay Commission of the Government of India introduced 'child care leave'. Under this provision, a woman could take leave for upto 730 days during the course of her career, to look after her children.

These provisions and the rights and entitlements which they extend to women are very significant. Yet some argue that as these provisions are granted only to women, the stereotypical roles of women are reinforced.

Read and Respond

Read the following report:

Child care leave sparks debate

Wednesday, Sep 17, 2008

Vineeta Pandey

NEW DELHI; The Centre may have seen it as a progressive move but not everyone agrees. The decision to give women in government service paid child care leave (CCL) for two years has set off a debate. Critics argue that it may lead to gender bias and negatively impact women's career prospects.

The government argues that the decision will help women balance home and office responsibilities. Critics, however, contend that it could trigger resentment among men who comprise more than 70% of the central government workforce.

More importantly, the move could harm the chances of women getting challenging responsibilities because of long absence from work.

Another view was that the decision would only burden women more with child care while the men would not get a chance to change from the traditional role of breadwinner to babysitter.

Men complain that nowadays they share equal responsibility and by giving all the benefits to the women the government is going against its own policy of challenging the mindset that child care is solely the woman's responsibility.

"Even men should be given some extra leave like this so that they can share the responsibility of childcare. Otherwise, you are simply dumping the responsibility of childcare on women. Why should she be the only person responsible for teaching, for examination or taking care during illness, if the father is also willing to perform similar duties? Fifteen days of paternity leave is not enough. A more gendered approach is required and CCL should be extended to both parents with either of them taking the leave to share childcare responsibilities," says women (sic) rights activist Ranjana Kumari, director, Centre for Social Research.

"The government forgot about the single fathers. With the numbers of divorce cases increasing and more and more fathers getting custody of their children, it is equally important for them to spend time with their little ones. There should be special provision for single fathers," says Kumar Jagirdhar, president of Bangalore-based Child Rights Initiative for Shared Parenting (CRISP).

Imagine that you are a man who has a young child who is ill. You want to take leave from your job so that you can look after your child. Write a letter to your superiors explaining why you think child care leave should be extended to you.

8. Unionisation

The right to form unions has been given in the Constitution, through Article 19:

- (1) All citizens shall have the right-



(c) to form associations or unions

This right extends to all citizens of India. Unionisation is an important way in which employees can gather to fight for their rights and entitlements, for improved working conditions, etc.

How does this right affect women? Many working women are concentrated in the unorganised sectors of the economy, which makes it difficult for them to form unions. Such unions may not easily be given recognition and may find it difficult to function. Nonetheless they are an important source of collective strength for working women, who can come together to improve their working conditions and fight for various benefits.

Read and Reflect

SEWA: Self-Employed Women's Association

The Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA) was formed in Ahmedabad in 1972 as a trade union of women who worked in various unorganised sector jobs, particularly in the textile industry. The impetus to form an organisation came when the women head-loaders working in the garment industry came forward with their grievances. SEWA found it very difficult to register as a trade union as its members did not work in a particular factory, nor did they work for a particular employer. These were conditions that were required to be met for registration under the Indian Trades Union Act.

This is how SEWA describes the working women whom it serves:

SEWA is a trade union registered in 1972. It is an organisation of poor, self-employed women workers. These are women who earn a living through their own labour or small businesses. They do not obtain regular salaried employment with welfare benefits like workers in the organised sector. They are the unprotected labour force of our country. Constituting 93% of the labour force, these are workers of the unorganised sector. Of the female labour force in India, more than 94% are in the unorganised sector. However their work is not counted and hence remains invisible. In fact, women workers themselves remain uncared, undercounted and invisible.

SEWA's main goals are to organise women workers for full employment. Full employment means employment whereby workers obtain work security, income security, food security and social security (at least health care, child care and shelter). SEWA organises women to ensure that every family obtains full employment. By self-reliance we mean that women should be autonomous and self-reliant, individually and collectively, both economically and in terms of their decision-making ability.

At SEWA we organise workers to achieve their goals of full employment and self reliance through the strategy of struggle and development.

accessed from http://www.sewa.org/About_Us.asp on 23.12.2013

6.3 Studying Redressal Mechanisms: Health

What are the judicial means for redressal that exist in the area of healthcare? What aspects of healthcare can women access through the judicial system?

The Right to Health as a Right to Life

Read the following provisions of the Constitution of India:

Article 39. *The State shall, in particular, direct its policy towards securing-*

(e) that the health and strength of workers, men and women, and the tender age of children are not abused and that citizens are not forced by economic necessity to enter vocations unsuited to their age or strength.





Article 47. *The State shall regard the raising of the level of nutrition and the standard of living of its people and the improvement of public health as among its primary duties and, in particular, the State shall endeavour to bring about prohibition of the consumption except for medicinal purposes of intoxicating drinks and of drugs which are injurious to health.*

These Articles are part of the section of the Indian Constitution that contains what are known as Directive Principles of State Policy. These are intended to guide the state in the formation of policy, but are in themselves not justiciable. No one can take any legal action against the government for failing to fulfil one of the Directive Principles of State Policy. Nonetheless it indicates that the state has a responsibility to ensure that it brings about an improvement in the health status of the wider public. This is the end to which governmental policies should be directed.

The Constitution does not specify a right to health as such. However various judgements of Indian law courts have indicated that other rights specified in the Constitution also incorporate a right to health. Some examples of these have been given below.

Bandhua Mukti Morcha etc vs. Union of India and Ors.

In this judgement, given by the Supreme Court of India in 1983, the right to life given in Article 21 was held to include the right to the "protection of health".

It is the fundamental right of every one in this country, to live with human dignity, free from exploitation. This right to live with human dignity enshrined in Article 21 derives its life breath from the Directive Principles of State Policy and particularly clauses (e) and (f) of Article 39 and Articles 41 and 42 and at the least, therefore, it must include protection of the health and strength of workers, men and women, and of the tender age of children against abuse, opportunities and facilities for children to develop in a healthy manner and in conditions of freedom and dignity, educational facilities, just and humane conditions of work and maternity relief. These are the minimum requirements which must exist in order to enable a person to live with human dignity and no State neither the Central Government nor any State Government has the right to take any action which will deprive a person of the enjoyment of these basic essentials.

(judgement accessed from <http://www.indiankanoon.org/doc/595099/> on 06.01.14)

Consumer Education and Research Centre and Others vs. Union of India and Others

In its judgement in 1995, the Supreme Court of India held that the meaning of the right to life included the right to health.

24. The expression 'life' assured in Art. 21 of the Constitution does not connote mere animal existence or continued drudgery through life. It has a much wider meaning which includes right to livelihood, better standard of life, hygienic conditions in work place and leisure.

26. The right to health to a worker is an integral facet of meaningful right to life to have not only a meaningful existence but also robust health and vigour without which worker would lead life of misery. Lack of health denudes his livelihood.

27. Therefore, we hold that right to health, medical aid to protect the health and vigour to a worker while in service or post retirement is a fundamental right under Article 21, read with Articles 39(e), 41, 43, 48A and all related Articles and fundamental human rights to make the life of the workman meaningful and purposeful with dignity of person.

(judgement accessed from <http://indiankanoon.org/doc/1657323/> on 06.01.14)



State Of Punjab and Others vs. Mohinder Singh Chawla etc.

In its judgement of 1996, the Supreme Court stated:

It is now settled law that right to health is an integral to right to life. Government has constitutional obligation to provide the health facilities.

(judgement accessed from <http://www.indiankanoon.org/doc/1569214/> on 06.01.14)

Thus though the right to health is not explicitly included in the Constitution, the right to life has been interpreted such as to include a right to health. The 'right to life' means, amongst other things, a right to live a life of health and dignity.

Similarly, the right to health is not limited only to the right to be free from disease, or the right to be treated for illness. It also means an improved standard of living, hygienic surroundings, adequate leisure, adequate nutrition etc. - in short, everything that is required for physical and mental well-being.



Fig.6.1: Health of both Mother and child are important

6.3.1 Legislation Pertaining to Women's Health

What sorts of laws have been enacted to enable women to fulfil the goals of mental and physical well-being?

The Maternity Benefit Act, 1961

The Maternity Benefit Act of 1961 contains certain provisions to protect the health of a pregnant woman, or a woman who has just had a child, or who has had a miscarriage.

4. Employment of, or work by, women prohibited during certain period. -

(1) No employer shall knowingly employ a woman in any establishment during the six weeks immediately following the day of her delivery or her miscarriage.

(2) No woman shall work in any establishment during the six weeks immediately following the day of her delivery or her miscarriage.

(3) ...no pregnant woman shall, on a request being made by her in this behalf, be required by her employer to do ... any work which is of an arduous nature or which involves long hours of standing or which in any way is likely to interfere with her pregnancy or the normal development of the foetus, or is likely to cause her miscarriage or otherwise to adversely affect her health.

10. Leave for illness arising out of pregnancy, delivery, premature birth of child, or miscarriage. -- A woman suffering illness arising out of pregnancy, delivery, premature birth of child or miscarriage shall, on production of such proof as may be prescribed, be entitled in addition to the period of absence allowed to her under Section 6, or, as the case may be, under Section 9, to leave with wages at the rate of maternity benefit for a maximum period of one month.



The Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act, 1971

The Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act of 1971 gives women the right to terminate unwanted pregnancies. This Act specifies the conditions under which a pregnancy may be terminated: for example, the period during which a pregnancy may be terminated, the health facility where such a termination may take place (i.e. a governmental hospital), that only registered medical practitioners may perform such procedures, etc. In this manner it ensures that such procedures will be regulated and will take place in adequately equipped surroundings.

The rationale given for the right to terminate a pregnancy is that in certain cases, the continuation of the pregnancy may endanger the mental or physical well-being of the woman concerned. Therefore it would be detrimental to her health.

The Pre-Conception and Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques Act, 1994

This Act, also called the PCPNDT Act, prohibits sex selection:

3A. Prohibition of sex-selection. - No person, including a specialist or a team of specialists in the field of infertility, shall conduct or cause to be conducted or aid in conducting by himself or by any other person, sex selection on a woman or a man or on both or on any tissue, embryo, conceptus, fluid or gametes derived from either or both of them.

It also prevents any person from communicating to any person, including the pregnant woman, the sex of the foetus:

5(2). No person including the person conducting pre-natal diagnostic procedures shall communicate to the pregnant woman concerned or her relatives or any other person the sex of the foetus by words, signs or in any other manner.

The PCPNDT Act also regulates the types of diagnostic tests that can be conducted on a pregnant woman, and the conditions that a pregnant woman must fulfil in order that the tests be performed.

Diagnostic tests may be carried out only if certain diseases/disorders are suspected.

This Act has come about in response to the wide use of diagnostic technology in the sex-selective abortion of female foetuses, and the resulting grave imbalance in the sex ratio.

Thus certain legislation has been enacted to protect the health of women in certain situations. Yet it is to be noted that this legislation pertains largely to women's reproductive health. There are a number of other aspects that are covered in healthcare, which are not reflected in legislation. Many serious health problems that women commonly face still need to be addressed through legislation.

Look at the table given below, which gives the prevalence of anaemia in children and adults across the country for the year 2005-6:

Children age 6-59 months who are anaemic (%)	Ever-married women age 15-49 who are anaemic (%)	Pregnant women age 15-49 who are anaemic (%)	Ever-married men age 15-49 who are anaemic (%)
69.53	55.3	57.8	24.2

Source: National Family Health Survey-III, quoted in the National Health Profile 2012, published by the Central Bureau of Health Intelligence, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, GOI.



The data shows that the prevalence of anaemia amongst ever-married women is over 55%, more than twice the prevalence amongst ever-married men. This indicates that the incidence of malnutrition is higher amongst women, as compared to men.

Read the following news reports:

Read and Reflect

September 29 is World Heart Day: Cardiac diseases affecting Indian women more, warn doctors

Sep 28, 2013 | Agency: IANS

The focus of the World Heart Day (marked Sep 29) this year is on women and children, as heart diseases have emerged as the number one killer for Indian women, according to doctors.

"Till recent times, it was believed that heart diseases are mostly confined to males, but statistics and reports from various medical studies have established that cardiac ailments are claiming more women (victims)," said LK Jha, senior cardiologist.

Indian women account for 15 % of the global burden of heart disease which kills about 15 million people every year.

"Heart disease is actually the number one killer of women, causing death to one in three women. Women who suffer the first heart attack run a greater risk of losing their lives as compared to men. Even if they survive, they are more vulnerable to suffer a second stroke," said Amar Singhal, senior cardiologist.

accessed from <http://www.dnaindia.com/health/report-september-29-is-world-heart-day-cardiac-diseases-affecting-indian-women-more-warn-doctors-1895217> on 08.01.14

Read and Reflect

'Women more prone to osteoporosis'

TNN Oct 21, 2013

HYDERABAD: Health experts said that elderly and post-menopausal women in Andhra Pradesh remain largely unaware about osteoporosis, a condition that is said to affect 200 million women worldwide. Describing the health effects of osteoporosis on the World Osteoporosis Day which was observed on Sunday (October 20), the international osteoporosis foundation estimated that one in three women over 50 years will break a bone due to osteoporosis.

Experts said that after 30, women start losing calcium from bones, rendering them vulnerable to the condition. They also said that two-thirds of all osteoporotic fractures evade medical attention. "Osteoporosis often goes undiagnosed prior to a fracture, and is hence called the silent epidemic," said Manas Panigrahi, consultant neurosurgeon....

Dr N Shobha, a geriatric specialist, said that "...Decline in estrogen, post-menopause, affects the bone mass and makes women susceptible to osteoporosis. Though it also affects men, osteoporosis tends to affect women at an earlier age," she said. Dr Panigrahi adds: "Sufficient calcium intake, moderating alcohol consumption, being physically active and avoiding smoking can prevent onset of osteoporosis."

accessed from http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2013-10-21/science/43249677_1_world-osteoporosis-day-bone-mass-international-osteoporosis-foundation on 08.01.14

These are some examples of the pressing health concerns which women have, which are not reflected in health-related legislation. What sorts of legislation do you think would be needed to address these problems?





6.3.2 Understanding Comprehensive Healthcare

What aspects of healthcare need to be covered by the law? We can identify three dimensions of healthcare: preventive, curative and rehabilitative.

Preventive care deals with the prevention of ill-health. There are many aspects of prevention of disease: vaccination, nutrition, health education, food supplementation and so on. Curative healthcare deals with the curing of illness and extends to all health services. Rehabilitative healthcare deals with the rehabilitation of a patient, and extends to physical, social and vocational rehabilitation.

There is some legislation in place to deal with certain aspects of healthcare as mentioned above. Thus for example, if any person is dissatisfied with the healthcare services she has received, she may file a complaint under the provisions of the Consumer Protection Act of 1986. However there are gaps in this legislation also: it only extends to cases where a person has herself paid for those services, and not where they were rendered free of charge (for example, in a governmental hospital or clinic). In those cases, the person concerned is not considered a consumer and is therefore not able to make use of the provisions of the Consumer Protection Act. This is a problem as government-sponsored healthcare, which is free of charge, is often the only form of healthcare which people can afford to access.

Thus there are many aspects of healthcare which are still outside the ambit of the law, and therefore not amenable to judicial redressal.



Fig.6.2: Human Healthcare to be taken seriously

Read and Respond

The precursor to the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act was what has been called the 'Vishaka Guidelines'. These guidelines to prevent and redress sexual harassment at the workplace were laid down by the Supreme Court of India in its judgement in the case of Vishaka and Others vs. The State of Rajasthan and Others, in 1997.

Find out more about the Vishaka Guidelines. What are the similarities and differences between these guidelines and the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act of 2013?

Unit End Reflections

Comprehension Questions

1. What is the role of redressal mechanisms in achieving equality for women?
2. Which are the major efforts in the field of education to improve educational opportunity for girls? What are the future possibilities for the same?
3. Critically analyse the recommendations of Right to Education for Women.
4. Which are the ways in which issues related to working women can be addressed by different acts and laws? Do you think they are sufficient in today's scenario?



5. Analyse the provisions given in acts and laws related to health of women.
6. Articles of the Constitution which are part of the Directive Principles of State Policy are not justiciable, i.e. one cannot approach the courts for their enforcement. They serve as guides for policy. The government may make laws based on these principles. In the absence of such a law, what recourse would an aggrieved person have?
7. The previous units of this textbook have discussed the concept of stereotypes. What kinds of stereotypes do you think are involved in the types of legislation that we have seen here - the MTP Act, the PCPNDT Act, and Maternity Benefit Act - which all revolve around women's reproductive capacities?

Case Study

1. Many articles of the Constitution refer to how the state should treat people equally, should protect the interests of the marginalised sections of society etc. This means that discrimination in a governmental agency/PublicSector Undertaking etc. can be challenged using these laws. Should they also apply to persons in private employment? Why or why not? Identify any two private organisations and analyse their Human Resource department rules in view of equal opportunities being provided and the redressal mechanisms available.





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