



GENERAL ENGLISH II SEMESTER

DEFINITIONS OF FEMINITY AND MASCULINITY

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KEY POINTS

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DEFINITIONS OF FEMINITY AND MASCULINITY

- Discrimination against women depends on the constructions of femininity and masculinity.
- This is prevailing from ages.
- Femininity : Natural, woman should be delicate, attractive physically, sensitive psychologically, and inferior to men.
- Masculinity : should not cry, work/help in kitchen, dashing, ambitious, successful, and experimenting with life.
- This kind of explanation is fortified through various social process.



SOCIAL PROCESSES

- Family
- Media
- Social Stratification
- Religion
- Education
- Work culture
- Sex and Gender



FAMILY

- Olden times women were confined to the four walls of kitchen.
- Should take care of household chores, look after husband and children, catering to all their needs and necessities.
- She was also the repository of all the male stress and tension.
- She had no legal or social rights, familial or domestic abuse both physical and /or emotional was rampant.
- As the family structure has started to change across the globe from 'joint' to 'nuclear' to 'single parent' the role of the women also changed.



GENDER SOCIALIZATION

- It starts from birth
- Baby is welcomed to this world with a declaration of his/her maleness or femaleness.
- Use blue blankets for male child and pink blankets for female child in the hospitals.
- As infants grow up, their sex, family members through their own roles mould the characteristic more predominantly.
- Books, Cinema and television programmes enforce this stereotype gender roles on the respective sex.
- Girls were given kitchen sets, dolls to play with.
- Boys were given toys like gun tanks, tracks to play with.
- Words used to in everyday use for girls are 'cute', 'tiny', 'soft', and 'delicate'.
- Words used to in everyday use for boys are 'strong', 'hardy'.



MEDIA

- It has a major impact on defining femininity and masculinity, the process of socialization and the learning of gender identities.
- Mass media victimize women because they represent women in a very patriarchal mould.
- Media give women a body image :slim actresses and slimmer models are the order of the day.
- Media reduce femininity into body parts.
- These fantasies away from reality has defines women into male – dependent and family oriented entities.
- But in the present context ,this image has undergone a subtle change.
- Media portrays, women as more confident, independent and decision makers.



SOCIAL STRATIFICATION

- Media help accentuate social stratification.
- This representation is for male entertainment and possession.
- It pushes the women into become male property, domestic roles and family oriented lives.
- This results in women of middle class, lower class of not to have an active life of her own.
- In fact, a poor woman from lower caste has to fight not only males from her family but also males and female from other castes classes.
- Thus, any woman who wants to achieve something in life should be 'superwoman'.
- Such a superwoman should balance career, home, familial, relationships, and social roles.



RELIGION

- Feminism argues that most institutionalized modern religion are patriarchal.
- It's been pointed out that God is usually a man, and agents of his wisdom are often men.
- Women are passive carriers of this divine wisdom.
- Feminists argue that a gendered religion oppresses women.
- It is maintained within religious text(s) that a woman is impure and a temptress.
- Religious texts assign particular roles to each gender.
- Women are wives and daughters, homemakers and should look to it that husband and children are not found wanting for anything.



EDUCATION

- Education is another process that defines femininity and masculinity.
- Physically males and females are different.
- But intellectual, cognitive or behavioural differences between the genders are debatable.
- It is believed that girls/women are not good at math or science but are excellent at languages, social sciences and art.



WORK CULTURE

- Past few decades have witnessed an increase in the number of working women.
- Their role in agricultural and unorganized sector has been acknowledged.
- Education and empowerment of women has opened up many avenues for work and employment for women.
- But in organized sector their number is concentrated in clerical and non-managerial positions.
- Women dominate in very few industries and few women hold top managerial positions.
- It is very difficult for women to break through 'glass ceiling' of higher promotions and vertical movement.



SEX AND GENDER

- Feminism points out to major differences between 'sex' and 'gender'.
- Gender refers to practices that society, culture and ideologies propagate because of sexual difference.
- The biological factor linked to social position is that woman has the capacity to bear child.
- However, these biological factor do not and should not disadvantage women or determine their social status.
- Gender is a cultural term and refers to the roles that are ascribed to women and men by society.
- Feminism strives to achieve a 'genderless personhood'.