

# CBS-2023

## Gender Studies

### PART - II

Question no. 7:

**Answer: Introduction:** The terms masculinity and femininity refers to traits or characteristics typically associated with being male or female, respectively. These terms are directly related to traditional gender roles. Gender roles are social expectations for how men and women should behave. Generally, most communities agree that the traditional gender roles definition states that women are more nurturing and men are more dominant.

### **Definition of Masculinity and**

**Femininity:**

**\* Masculinity:** "Masculinity is defined as possession of attributes or features associated with men."

Masculinity is usually associated with:

1. Blunt
2. Rational
3. Assertive
4. Independent
5. Dominant

**\* Femininity:** "Femininity is a set of attributes, behaviors, and roles generally

associated with women and girls."

Femininity is a force of energy that encompasses life with love, compassion, and the inherent desire to nurture and protect what is precious, holy, and beautiful. Femininity is associated with

1. Shy
2. Irrational
3. Emotional
4. Dependent
5. Oppressive

**Different Gender Roles:** "Gender roles are stereotypes regarding attitudes, attributes, and actions imposed on men and women based on gender."

**Modern Examples of Gender Roles:** Gender roles vary greatly depending on where you live, as stereotypes differ among countries and cultures.

**★ Women in the Kitchen:** One of the most common and harmful stereotypes is that women should be the ones taking care of the cooking. For example, while men are expected to leave the house to work, women are expected to welcome them back

with <sup>prepared</sup> meals. **\*Domestic Chores:** In the same vein, some societies also expect women to take care of the chores related to the household. Because they should be the ones staying at home, things like cleaning, taking care of the kids, and similar tasks fall to them.

**\*Masculinity:** The idea of masculinity is a stereotype imposed on men, as they are expected to be strong, muscular, and tall. Personality-wise, the stereotype dictates that men should be dominant, and aggressive, never leaving room for more measured or sensible thoughts.

**\*Work and Aspirations:** Men are often expected to occupy hard and public jobs, while women are thought of being more suited for nurturing jobs. For example, one might think of men as pilots or doctors, while women may be expected to be nurses or teachers.

# Nature versus Nurture Debate:

To better understand the nature vs. nurture argument, it is imperative to know what each of these terms means.

Nature refers largely to our genetics. It includes the genes we are born with and other hereditary factors that can impact how our personality is formed and influence the way we develop from childhood through adulthood.

**\* Genetic Factor:** Biological sex is often confused with gender in our society. The two sexes are differentiated as females, who have ovaries and produce eggs, and males, who have testes and produce sperm. In mammals, females typically have XX chromosomes, and males typically have XY chromosomes.

**\* Hormonal Differences:** Researchers have long known that the sex hormones, such as estrogen and testosterone, drive certain differences in behavior between men and women. For example, estrogen prompts maternal behavior, while testosterone drives aggressive, territorial behavior in males.

**\*Brain Difference between Men and Women:** On average, male brains are about  $\pm 10\%$  larger than female brains.

Nurture encompasses the environmental factors that influence who we are. This includes our early childhood experiences, the way we were raised, our social relationships, and the surrounding culture.

**The Social Construction of Traditional Gender Roles:**

"The meaning of the word 'gender' has evolved and differentiated from the word 'sex' to express the reality that women's and men's roles and status are socially constructed and subject to change."

— (Judith Butler)

**\*Structural Functionalism:** The functionalist perspective sees society as a complex system. This approach looks at society through a macro-level orientation, which is a broad focus on the social structure that shape society as a whole and looks at both social structure and social functions. The functionalist perspective

of gender inequality was most robustly articulated in the 1940s and 1950s, and largely developed by Talcott Parsons' of the nuclear family (husband, wife and their children). A structural functionalist view of gender inequality applies the division of labor to view predefined gender roles: women take care of the home while men provide for the family.

**★ Conflict Theory:** According to conflict theory, society is defined by a struggle for dominance among social groups that compete for scarce resources. In the context of gender, conflict theory argues that gender is best understood as men attempting to maintain power and privilege to the detriment of women. Therefore, men can be seen as the dominant group and women as the subordinate group. While certain gender roles may have been appropriate in a hunter-gatherer society, conflict theorists argue that the only reason these exist and persist is that the dominant group naturally work to maintain their power and status. According to conflict theory, social problems

are created when dominant groups exploit or oppress subordinate groups. The conflict between the two groups caused things like the Women's Suffrage Movement and was responsible for social change.

**Feminist Theory:** Feminist theory is the extension of feminism into theoretical or philosophical discourse. It aims to understand the nature of gender inequality, and examines women's social roles, experiences, and interests. While generally providing a critique of social relations, much of feminist theory also focuses on analyzing gender inequality and the promotion of women's interests. Radical feminism, in particular, evaluates the role of the patriarchy in perpetuating male dominance. In patriarchal societies, the male's perspective and contributions are considered more valuable, resulting in the silencing and marginalization of the women. Feminism focuses on the theory of patriarchy as a system of power that organizes society into a complex of relationships based on the assertion of male supremacy.

## \*Gender Performative Theory:

Influenced by Austin, philosopher and gender theorist, Judith Butler argued that gender is socially constructed. Gender performativity is a term first used by Judith Butler in her 1990 book Gender Trouble. She argues that being born male or female does not determine behavior. Instead, people learn to behave in particular ways to fit into society. The idea of gender is an act, or performance.

## \*Social Learning Theory:

Social learning theory (SLT) explains behaviour through observation and copying. A child may exhibit gender-specific behaviours, due to copying role models of the same sex, such as their older siblings.

Albert Bandura went on and described five processes that took part when gender was developed through social learning.

**1. Observations:** For social learning to occur, the behavior must be observed.

**2. Attention:** Then, the individual needs to pay attention to his/her role model's behavior.



**3. Retention:** Then, the individual would need to encode and retain the gender-appropriate behavior.

**4. Reproduction:** The individual would need to replicate the gender-appropriate behavior.

**5. Motivation:** Lastly, some kind of reinforcement would be needed to take place for the individual to be motivated to continue the behavior.

**Conclusion:** Masculinity, is seen to be the trait that emphasizes ambition, acquisition of wealth, and differentiated gender roles, while femininity is seen to be the trait that stresses caring and nurturing behaviors, sexual equality, environmental awareness, and more fluid gender roles. Both of these are socially acquired phenomenon. Men are considered more assertive in nature while women are assumed to be fragile. Masculinity and femininity carry different meanings in society. As a result, different gender roles are associated with each gender. Contemporarily, there is debate in gender studies that whether these roles are the result of nature or culture. According to many cultural theorists, gender construction begins at a very young age.

through a process called socialization, Gender roles are the result of this socialization. For instance, a father who disallows his son from coddling dolls or, worse, berates him from it, will push his son towards the internalization of masculinity from an early age. At the same time, the encouragement of a girl for playing mother and pushing her doll around in a stroller demonstrates how girls from a very young age are pushed towards idealizing a domestic and feminized lifestyle. Hence, these traditional roles are the outcome of socialization.