

Q Define the term masculinity and femininity. In your opinion where do traditional gender roles come from?

1) Introduction :

Masculinity, femininity, and gender roles are essential concepts within the realm of gender studies. Understanding these concepts is essential for examining how gender influences experiences, expectations, and opportunities in society.

"Strength knows no gender, and compassion knows no bounds, Embrace the full spectrum of your humanity."

2) Definition of Masculinity :

"Masculinity is not about being the biggest, the fittest, the strongest, or the toughest. It's about being the best version of yourself."

Jason Evert

Masculinity is a socially and culturally constructed concept that is associated with being a man in a given society. The traits of masculinity can include: Assertiveness, Stoicism, Independence, Strong, dominant, courageous, and many more.

3) Definition of femininity:

"Embrace the Power of femininity; it is a force that can move mountains and change the world."

Femininity is a socially and culturally constructed qualities, behaviours, and roles traditionally associated with being a woman. Qualities of femininity include: emotional, expressive, dependent, shy, empathetic, sensitive, caring among others.

4) Critical analysis of both terms

In general, people tend to perceive women to have feminine traits and men to have masculine traits but in fact any person, regardless of sex, can show any of these two attributes. There is no fixed criteria of being masculine or feminine in world. Even a person can exhibit both qualities. For instance a CEO with masculine traits tend to be competitive and believe in direct communication while a CEO with feminine qualities tend to be collaborative and believe in relationship building. But there can be a CEO who will exhibit a mixture of both masculine and feminine qualities in their leadership approach.

5) What are traditional gender roles?

Gender roles refer to the culturally and socially defined expectations, norms,

and behaviours that dictate specific roles and responsibilities for individuals based on their perceived gender. These roles have historically been ingrained in many societies and have influenced how people are expected to act, participate, and interact in various settings of life including family, work, and community gatherings.

5) Example of traditional gender roles

- men are often expected to fulfill roles such as breadwinners, protectors, and providers.
- women are typically expected to fulfill roles as homemakers, caregivers, and nurturers.

6) Sources and Development of Gender Roles

Gender roles are not inherently tied to biological differences but are rather expectations and norms that societies have developed over time. Here are some key sources and factors contributing to the development of gender roles.

6.1) Historical Traditions: Historical practices and traditions have shaped gender roles. For example, in many ancient agricultural societies, men often worked in the fields, while women were responsible for domestic tasks. These historical roles laid the foundation for future gender expectations.

6.2) Socialization: From young age, children are socialized into the gender

roles through interactions with peers, media, family, and educational systems. They learn what is considered appropriate gender behaviour for their gender. For instance, from the very young age individuals can play and what toys are considered appropriate for girls. Boys are told to become a police officer, pilot, or engineer while girls are taught to become lady doctor, teacher, or fashion designer.

6.3) Cultural Beliefs: Cultural values and beliefs can strongly influence gender roles. Different cultures may have varying expectations from men and women, affecting their roles in family, work, and society. For instance, in some Middle Eastern cultures, there are strong cultural beliefs and values surrounding modesty and dress codes. These norms dictate that women should dress modestly by covering their heads and bodies, while men have less strict dress requirements.

6.4) Economic factors: Economic factors also contribute to the reinforcement of gender stereotypes in societies. For instance, in many societies, nursing and healthcare roles have traditionally been associated with women. Economic factor plays a role into this as nursing jobs have been historically low-paying as compared to other other professions. This association between women and

nursing career illustrates how economic conditions can reinforce gender roles in modern times.

6.5) Media and Popular Culture: Media representations of gender can reinforce stereotypes and expectations. These portrayals can shape how people perceive and adopt gender roles. For instance, advertisements of household products and beauty products producers and directors mostly target women and in advertisements related to automotive industry they mostly target men, thereby perpetrating gender roles in society.

6.6) Religion: Religious institutions play a pivotal role in shaping gender roles. Different religions have different set rules about gender roles. The roles of women in Islam are different from the roles of women in Christianity. According to Dhami and Shaikh gender roles in muslim families are centered on the importance of family units.

6.7) Legal and Political systems: Laws and policies can either challenge gender roles or reinforce them. For instance, historically, many legal and political systems restricted women's voting rights, reinforcing traditional gender roles that placed men in positions of political power. These restrictions were often based on the notion that women were primarily within the homes and not in the public sphere so their contribution was not necessary. These types of

laws not only limited women's participation in public life but also reinforced the mindset that women should not be involved in decision-making process.

7) NATURE VS. NURTURE debate / Theoretical Perspectives

The nature vs. Nurture debate regarding gender revolves around the question whether gender identity and differences in gender roles are determined by biological factors (nature) or by social and environmental factors (nurture). There are many theories of gender which helps us to understand how society constructs and enforces gender related expectations.

7.1) Queer Theory: Queer theory challenges conventional notions of gender and sexuality. It explores how societal norms construct and limit our understanding of gender roles and seeks to deconstruct these norms. This theory emphasizes that individuals may not conform to traditional gender roles and may have diverse gender identities. Queer theory draws from Judith Butler's concept of "gender performativity," which suggests that gender is not something innate but is performed and constructed through actions and behaviours.

7.2) Cognitive Development theory;

Proposed by Jean Piaget, this theory focuses on how children actively construct their understanding of gender. It suggests that

as individuals' children mature cognitively, they develop gender schemas that influence their perceptions and behaviours. For instance, a young child may perceive gender in a simplistic way, associating certain clothing or toys with boys or girls. After being mature cognitively, they may find out that their mother takes care of the household chores, leading them to develop a schema that associates caregiving with being a woman.

"The principle goal of education in the schools should be creating men and women who are capable of doing new things, not simply repeating what other generations have done."

Jean Piaget

Critical Analysis

Examining the question whether gender roles are socially constructed or not, one will go through many theories defending both nurture debate and nature debate. But one can not deny the fact that our social institutions play a pivotal role in shaping gender roles. Why our society do not accept male chiefs, or why men are not allowed in kitchens? When one

See around their surroundings they will
comp up with many stereotypes such
as:

"You are a boy, you are
not supposed to help your
wife in kitchen."

"Why? Why you want to
become a beautician when
there are many jobs
like engineering, CA, or
Police sector."

"Do not iron your clothes
get your sister do it
for you."

"Why are you playing
with your sister's doll,
go and bring your car."

"Women are not allowed
to laugh loudly in
public spaces."

"You are fit for being a
teacher as CA requires
lot of mental activities."

"What will you do by
studying more at least you
have to take care of your
children."

many of us are being taught these things
daily, perpetuating the vicious cycle of
gender roles.

Conclusion

In conclusion, femininity, masculinity, and gender roles are complex and multi-faceted concepts deeply intertwined with culture, history, and societal norms. femininity encompasses a wide range of behaviors associated with being a woman, but it is a dynamic and evolving construct that varies across culture and time. The same is with masculinity there are no fixed criteria for it, every society has its own set of ^{rules} of being a man. Besides, gender roles, rooted in historical, traditional, and societal expectations dictate specific behaviours, responsibilities, and attributes based on their gender. Recognizing the fluidity of diversity within femininity, masculinity, and gender roles is crucial in challenging stereotypes and promoting greater gender equality.

"the mind of a child is a blank slate (tabula rasa) at birth and knowledge and personality are formed through experiences and education."

John Locke