

CSS - 2023 Gender Studies Part - II

Write a note on the terms masculinity and femininity. In your opinion where do traditional gender roles come from?

"There is no wholly masculine man,
no purely feminine woman."
Margaret Fuller

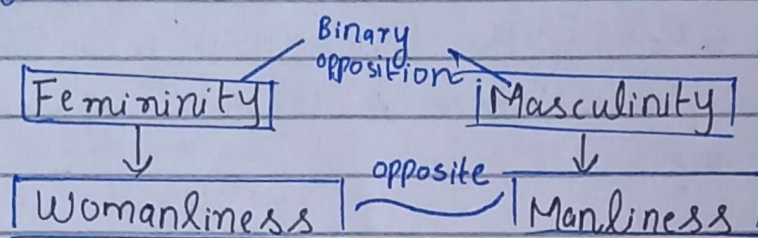
Introduction:

The society is comprised of different gender roles and on the basis of tradition and patriarchy, there are two distinctive divisions of gender roles known as masculinity and femininity. These gender roles are deeply embedded in the religious doctrines, cultural setup, patriarchal hegemony and social behaviour of males and females. Therefore, masculinity and femininity draw differences between the characteristics and attributes of men and women. These differences are evident within the walls of the house and in the societal machinery.

Definitions of Masculinity and Femininity:

Femininity is defined as a "a set of attributes, behavior, and roles generally associated with girls and women."

Femininity stands opposite to masculinity. The binary opposition of femininity i.e. masculinity is defined as, "a set of attributes, behaviors, and roles generally linked with males, boys or men".



Attributes of Femininity and Masculinity:

Masculinity and femininity stands poles apart from each other as each represent its own idiosyncratic traits.

a) Traits of Femininity

The patriarchal tradition of society enlists the following roles linked with females,

i) Physical Feminine Traits:

Females are linked to the physical traits of inferiority, long, flowing hair, light skin, a narrow waist and little or no body hair and facial hair.

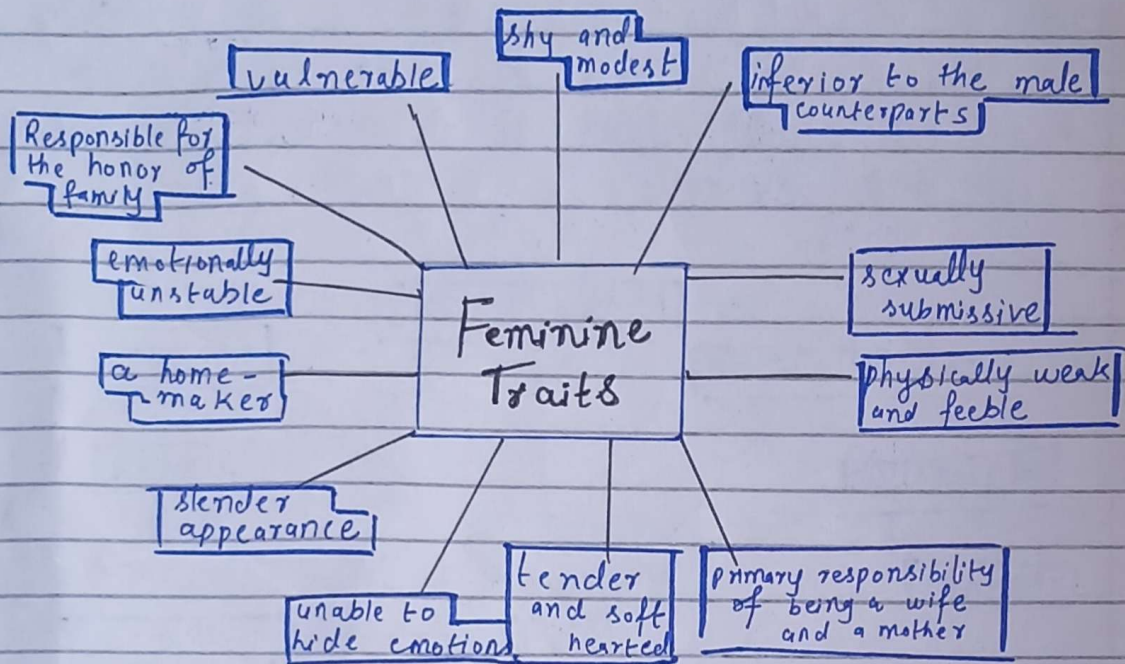
ii) Social Feminine Traits:

Socially, females are expected to submissive and inferior roles like housework or cleaning.

A 'good woman' is the one who is a good homemaker. Also, females are considered to stay sexually submissive.

iii) Marital Feminine Traits:

The fundamental role of woman is to act as 'nurturer' of the family. It is expected that every woman's ultimate goal is to be a wife and mother.



b) Traits of Masculinity:

The patriarchal hegemony, religious doctrines and traditional makeup of the society associate the following traits to 'men'.

i) Physical Masculine Traits

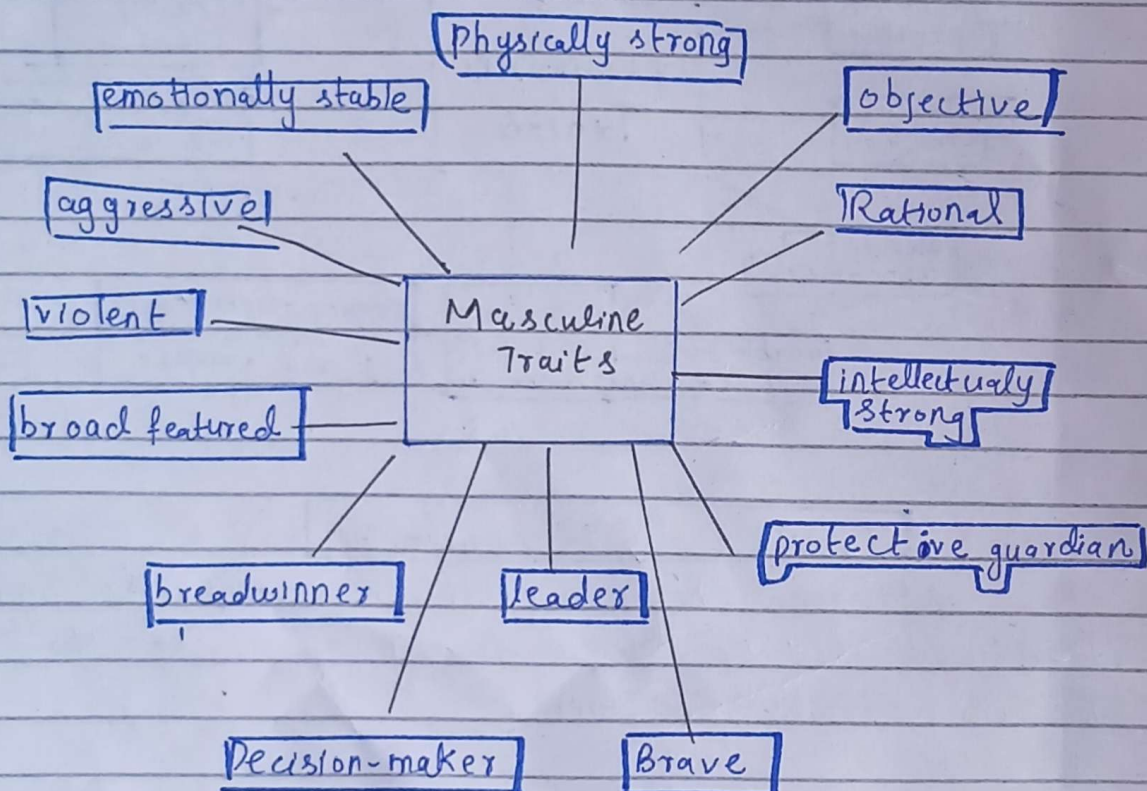
There is a general observation that 'real men' are considered to be tall, having strong muscles, broad shoulders, body hair and physically strong.

ii) Social Masculine Traits:

Socially, a male is labelled as the 'breadwinner' of the house and the responsibility of financial affairs rests solely on his shoulder. In addition to this, a male is socially free as he is not expected to stay within the 'boundaries of the house.'

iii) Marital Masculine Traits:

In a marital bond, males exercise an authority on their female partners. This authority gives them several undue rights like abuse, violence and in most extreme case marital rape.



Traditional Gender Roles:

Traditionally, gender roles are based on numerous factors. There are two distinctive divisions of roles performed by genders, known as masculine roles associated with masculinity and feminine roles linked with femininity. These traditional gender roles are reflected in the performativity of the gender.

"Gender is real only to the extent that it is performed."

Judith Butler.

The Sources of Gender Roles:

The gender roles are divided into masculinity and femininity. They are initiated from various sources.

a) Men as Maintainers - Religious Masculine Notion.

Men are denoted as the maintainers of women and their family in many religion. The gender roles of Pakistan are derived primarily from the religious notion of superiority of males over females.

As Holy Quran says,

"Men are the guardians of women, because God has given the one more preference over the other, and because they support them."

[Al Quran 4:34]

Similarly, a male is more superior to

the female in the marital bond as Allah Almighty says,

"And the husbands hold a degree of superiority over them."

[Al Quran 2:228]

Hence, religiously males are considered as protectors, maintainers and leaders of the household while females are expected to obey males and promote the well being of the household.

b) Men as Career-Oriented and Female as House-Oriented:

The gender roles in the society are constructed on the basis of economic construct of the society. In the economic domain, men are considered as the "breadwinners" while females are considered as "homemakers". Males are offered highly competent jobs like engineering, accounting, finance etc. while females usually work in fields of education and medicine.

Also, there is a pay-disparity between the genders as men are paid highly as compared to the females.

Traditionally, a woman is considered to stay at home consequently the working women are not appreciated as much as a working male.

c) Gender Roles in the Eyes of Patriarchy

The patriarchal hegemony is responsible for the division of gender roles in the society. A woman is the who one "unites a family and who makes a house a home." Another significant role of a female is to "attract men by their beauty and their looks". On the other hand, males are aggressive, emotionally stable and act as the head of the house. The superior outlook of masculinity makes ^{men} the leaders and females as objects.

Critical Analysis:

Presently, it is evident that the gender division of the society lacks harmony and stability. Women are uniting for their rights equal to men while in some regions the male hegemony is still being exercised without any check. There is a desperate need to logically exercise the gender roles and respect the dignity of both males and females.

Conclusion:

In the end, it is concluded that the masculinity is an amalgam of all traits displayed by a male and femininity is a mixture of all characteristics possessed by a female. These division of gender roles are based on religious teachings, economic practices, marital bond, career-opportunities and patriarchal hegemony. Both genders hold their idiosyncratic identity which should be respected so that the chaos on the basis of ^{unbiased} gender roles should be abated.