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ROLE OF WOMEN IN GENDER SENSITIZATION

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ABSTRACT

Gender sensitization has not been addressed properly. It focuses on the periphery of the subject and the core issue is left untouched. If the attention shifts to the proper direction, the whole problem will be nipped in the bud. Rather than taking training and discipline for counter socialization at a later stage, it must be infused from the childhood itself. A mother can do it properly by being impartial in nurturing her children and not assigning traditional gender roles to them. Mother can ask her children to do household jobs irrespective of their gender. This may lead to better understanding and respect for each other. This training at early stage will also be helpful in easing male chauvinism at a later stage. This will encourage equal participation in all jobs by both men and women, freeing them from traditional boundaries of gender roles. Mother who trained and disciplined her children to take household jobs in the primary stage of their life can act as a mentor after the marriage of her son, constantly reminding him to be better involved in all odd jobs along with his spouse. Hence the concept of 'my mother does not work' will be eroded. This may also reduce in looking at girls as mysterious sex objects. This will surely reduce insensitivity towards women, thereby curbing feticide, infanticide, acid attacks, dowry, sati system and rape cases. This will bring an egalitarian society where both men and women can live with respect and dignity.

Key Words: gender, sensitization, mother, role, woman.

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Social discriminations are ubiquitous on the grounds of caste, race, region, religion and sex. All these discernments are done by one social group to the other; except one, that is gender. This is quite interesting that gender discrimination is done against and within the same group. Here not only men discriminate against their own women but also women discriminate against each other.

The discrimination begins the day a woman conceives. She along with her relatives becomes eager to know sex of the fetus. This indicates that there is something devious. Once it is declared that the fetus is female, most likely they opt for its termination. Women cannot be held less responsible for this nefarious act.

Women are the rulers within the houses; may be in the form of mother or mother-in-law. Therefore, nothing untoward event can happen without their wishes. If they want they can stop the whole episode.

If a female child is born even against the wishes of her parents, then the chances of female infanticide is very much there; due to a long brainstorming and brain washing process. At this stage also senior female members of the house; gynecologist and nurse who are usually women cannot be held less responsible.

The escape from feticide and infanticide does not ensure her better upbringing. The discrimination in rearing a girl child is done by mother herself. When a male child is allowed to play outdoor games and do as per his wishes; a female child is asked to do household chores with a lot of instructions; how to behave in public and private. The whole socialization process of gender role begins with mother or grandmother themselves. The discrimination is done not only on the level of jobs assigned, but also on the level of food, clothing and education. This initial stage of socialization works a lot when they become adolescent. The shy, submissive behavior continues throughout their life and they give the same to the next generation what they take. Thus socialization process recurs. In an article 'Focusing on Prevention to Stop the Violence' on www.unwomen.org it has been mentioned that:

'.....the best way to end violence against women and girls is to prevent it from happening in the first place by addressing its root and structural causes. ... Prevention should start early in life, by educating and working with young boys and girls promoting respectful relationships and gender equality...'

Here the role of women needs to be identified. If they take a strong position in their 'stronghold', no one can do any wrong to them and they themselves can be agents of counter socialization rather than helping in recurring the gender socialization process. Women themselves can stop or help in abetting pre natal sex identification test, female feticide, female infanticide and thereby helping in improving Child Sex Ratio (CSR).

As far as law is concerned in improving CSR; the figure which comes out is quite amazing. The government of India brought PC & PNDT Act in 1994 and after this it was thought that the figure in sex ratio will improve but the fact was completely different. After the act, CSR continued decreasing rather than increasing. This suggests that only enactment cannot be sufficient; if does not get the support of the society. The data shown below gives the complete picture.

Overall sex ratio and child sex ratio(OSR and CSR):

	1951	1961	1971	1981	1991	2001	2011
OSR	946	941	930	934	927	933	943
CSR	938	976	964	962	945	927	918

The last three figures in both OSR and CSR are interesting because after PC & PNDT Act 1994 came into force, the steady decrease in CSR continued; while OSR increased.

But the main concern is counter socialization which can be done by woman herself; and it must depart from the concept of 'what they receive, they give'. Women can play a major role in abetting all the crimes and injustices committed against women. They can stop female feticide, female infanticide and grooming the children equally whether it is a male or a female.

When a mother gives instructions to her daughter about what to do and what not to do as in 'Girl' by a Caribbean writer Jamaica Kincaid '...wash the clothes on Monday and put them on the stone heap; wash the color clothes on Tuesday and put them on clothesline to dry; don't walk bare head in the hot sun; cook pumpkin fritters in very hot sweet oil; soak your little clothes right after you take them off; ... this is how you iron your father's khaki pants so that they don't have a crease; ...', she can also instruct her son the same way. Without differentiating she can groom her male child to do household chores the same way as she does to her daughter. The everyday job can be equally shared by both boys and girls or by turn. Both of them should be capable and participating in household jobs as well as outside jobs. By sharing traditionally assigned gender roles, they can have better understanding and respect for each other.

Gender sensitization should begin from the initial stage of life and should continue till end. A mother's role must transform after she marries her son. At this stage she should be a mentor of the son; instructing him to lend a helping hand to his wife in household work.

This grooming in the initial stage and mentoring at later stage will create a smooth transition towards egalitarian concept of men and women. When I say smooth transition I mean there will not be any jerk in the established social order. If we start the whole process of gender sensitization at an advanced stage of life, there may be chances of gender struggle or rift between the two sexes, thereby creating family tension and feud which will do no good to either of them. Counter socializing gender roles at a later stage, to some extent, looks like asking a tiger to be vegetarian. There will not only be resentment; but a misconception and hostility against the noble cause of gender sensitization.

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