



RESEARCH ARTICLE

GENDER IDENTITIES AND GENDER ROLE DIFFERENTIATION  
AMONG PRIMARY SCHOOL CHILDREN

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ABSTRACT

Social institutions such as family and schools have a leading role in gender role socialization of boys and girls. Observation of role plays of children was undertaken to analyse the patterns of gender identities and extent of role differentiation among primary school children. The sample consisted of boys and girls in the third standards of six primary schools each in Malappuram and Thrissur districts of Kerala State. Role plays were done by 12 boys' groups and 12 girls' groups, each with 4 to 6 members. An inventory on gender attributes was also used to collect data regarding the extent of gender identity formation among 120 girls and 120 boys. The results of the study reveal that girls and boys show behavioral patterns appropriate for the concerned gender with regard to responsibilities; styles of communication and adherence to the gender hierarchy implying the formulation of gender identities in the early childhood itself. Both boys and girls were ready to take up the roles appropriate for their gender and while the boys showed reluctance to take up opposite gender roles, girls expressed more interest and happiness to do the roles of boys and men. The role of family rather than the school in developing gendered identities and role differentiation in primary school children is highlighted by the findings of the study.

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INTRODUCTION

Every society has a clear vision of culture specific behaviors, attributes, roles and responsibilities of men and women and these are key factors in societal relations and development of the individuals. Gender is a significant factor that defines one's masculinity and femininity, and the life options at the farther end. Gender inequality is a major threat that affects human development as women and girls face unequal treatment or perceptions because of their gender. As per the Human Development Report 2015, India has been placed at 130<sup>th</sup> position among the 188 countries assessed. The HDI value of females in India was 0.525 in contrast with males, 0.660 and this in turn has resulted in the Gender Development Index of 0.795 in the year 2014. India has performed poorly in removing gender-based disparities, ranking 114 out of 142 countries in the World Economic Forum's 2014 gender gap index (UNDP Human Development Report, 2015). Gendering or the gender socialization aspects of Indian culture requires a revisiting in this context. All socialization agencies play their specific roles in shaping the gender identities at the individual level and formation of gender stereotypes at the larger community

levels. Gender identity refers to that sense of identification of a person as either the male or female and manifested in appearances, behavior and other aspects of personal life. Children express their gender identity through their clothing, hairstyle, behavior, manners, styles, gestures etc. It is shaped and reinforced by the influence of family, peer, school, community, society and the media (Marmion-Lundberg-Love, 2014) and it remains almost constant as the children grow older through teenage. Socialization is an important factor responsible for an individual's collective life and for identity formation. It covers practices, attitudes, beliefs, roles and responsibilities of the society. From the social institutions, children learn gender identity at first and it has the strongest influence on reinforcing gender role development among them. As part of gender socialization, men and women learn roles and responsibilities appropriate for them and acquire different gender identities in early childhood. According to Kingburg and Coplan (2012) gender role attitudes are the beliefs about appropriate roles for males and females, which are considered pervasive in human society and begin to develop early in childhood. Children learn about gender norms and what it means to be male and female from the culture that they live in (Martin and Halverson, 1983). When children grow up from childhood to older age, they are exposed to many factors which influence their attitudes and behaviors regarding gender roles

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(Witt, 1997). The gender role formation affects boys' and girls' behavior, interactions, selection of toys, activities, plays etc. According to Goble, Martin, Hanish and Fabes (2012), in 12 to 24 months they begin to show gender typed preferences of toys and activities and when become older these preferences get widened. Between the age of 3 and 5, boys show preference for cars, balls, trucks and riding toys while girls prefer dolls, domestic based toys, artistic activities etc. Studies observe that at the age of 7 or 8, children gain definite ideas about what is appropriate and good for boys and girls (Trautner et al., 2005). Hartley (cited in Bhasin, 2000) highlight how such preferences develop as a consequence of the type of toys and activities they are exposed to by the family.

Literature reveals the key role played by social institutions like family, school, media and religion in the development of gender role identities among children and how they affect their perceptions, roles, character formation and behaviors at an early childhood. The relative influence of each of this agency varies with the age, nature of exposure and individual perceptions of the clues received from the socialization agencies. Family, especially parents are the first and foremost source for the formulation of gender identity. The gender schema theory (Bem, 1981) proposes that children form gender schemas appropriate for men and women based on family clues. Based on this theory, children develop the belief that certain activities are appropriate either for girls or for boys (Carter and McCloskey, 1984) and adopt the same. A child's earliest exposure to what it means to be male or female comes from parents and children internalize their parents' messages regarding gender at an early age (Witt, 1997). The schools and the teachers also play an important role in moulding or reinforcing gender identities in children. Children spend most of their time in the school and with teachers. Because of this teachers have an influential role in transmitting and transforming gendered identities to children through their own attitudes and perceptions. According to Bhuiyan (2007) from the school a child begins to understand her/his identity beyond the family, through friends, teachers, and books as well as classroom practices. Through curriculum, classroom practices and interactions, teachers transform gendered identities based on their experiences in the society. But Kuruvilla and George (2015) highlight the role of family in gender socialization stating that, in the Indian context, by the time children reach school at the age of five years they might have imbibed all the patriarchal values from the family itself whereas in developed countries children learn values of gender equality from their families that lack any gender division of labour or gender stereotypism. It was in this context that the present study was taken up to analyse the extent of family socialisation in the formulation of gender identity and gender role differentiation among boys and girls in primary school classrooms.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

### Sample

The sample consisted of 240 primary school children (120 boys and 120 girls), taking 10 boys and 10 girls each from the third standard of six mixed primary schools of Thrissur and Malappuram districts of Kerala State. Role play was conducted

among 12 groups of girls and boys studying in these classrooms. Each group consisted of 4 to 6 members of same sex. The opinion of Aydt and Corsaro (2003) that boys and girls are often observed to play in distinct same sex groups and gender segregation becomes apparent around the age of five and reaches its peak in elementary school was found to be applicable in the case of Keralite children also. Boys and girls showed reluctance to have mixed group participation and hence the role plays were focused only on same sex groupings.

### Tool

Data regarding gendered identities and perceptions on gender role differentiation were collected using two tools, namely an inventory on gender attributes and observation of role plays. The inventory consists of 15 gendered statements on the various characteristics, qualities and roles of men and women which in turn provide a clear understanding on the formulation of gender identities among the sample. It was administered by the researcher among 240 primary school children at their schools. The researcher read out and clarified each statement of their inventory to the children individually and documented the responses as Agree, Not sure or disagree then and there. Observation of role plays was another tool used to analyse the gender role differentiation among children in primary school classrooms.

Role play is acting or performance of a particular role as per the expectations and behaviours either consciously or unconsciously experienced or perceived from the society. Through this girls and boys are acting real social situations, roles, behaviours, identities etc that are appropriate for each gender. Role plays were carried out during the PT/ drill time. In the present study the role play was based on the theme 'A Day at Home'. The theme was specifically selected so as to understand the relative impact that family socialization has had on the formation of gendered identities and gender role differentiation in children. A check list was prepared to note down the specific gendered behaviours of children. The mixed groups of students were taken to the school playground where they seemed to be more free and flexible. The context of the play, number of group members and the roles required of the different group members were explained. Characters such as father, mother, daughter and son were suggested to be compulsory in each of the play and other characters were optional. The groups were given the freedom to select the situation or contexts of play. No indication was given regarding the role behaviours and character dispositions. Each group was given 15 minutes for preparation and 10 minutes for presentation. While one group presents the play, others were expected to watch them and motivate their presentation with clapping. The role disposition presented by each member was observed using non-participant observation. The following aspects were specifically noted in each play.

1. Readiness to take up roles in same and opposite sex roles.
2. Behavioural patterns in roles of same and opposite sex roles with regard to
  - a. Responsibilities taken
  - b. Language, politeness, command and control used and
  - c. Adherence to hierarchical order

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Perceptions of Primary School Children on Gender Attributes

Percentage of children having specific perceptions regarding the various gender attributes was calculated based on their responses to the statements in the inventory. As per the responses to the inventory, 80 per cent of boys and 59 per cent of girls agreed with the statement that girls are generally shy. Along with this 89 per cent of boys and 95 per cent of girls opined that character attributes such as forgiveness and obedience are essential for girls. Majority of boys (81.6%) and girls (76.6%) agreed that boys are more strong and courageous than girls with 16.6 per cent of boys and 21.6 percent of girls disagreeing with this statement. Most of the boys (55%) and girls (48%) agree with the idea of boys roaming around the school surroundings while in the case of girls, 69 per cent of boys and 64 per cent of girls perceived it as not applicable to girls. While 76% boys perceive boys as more intelligent than girls, 25.8 per cent of girls disagree with this. These opinions reveal the extent to which girls and boys have perceived certain attributes as appropriate for women and others for men only. The various gendered attributes as perceived by the children are given in Table 1. Qualitative analysis of the role plays was attempted to understand the readiness to take up the gendered roles and the behavioural patterns of boys and girls in different roles. The findings are presented below:

### Readiness to Take up Gender Roles in Same Sex Roles and in Opposite Sex Roles

The observation of role plays showed that there are differences between boys and girls in the readiness to take up roles. Majority of the role plays included the characters like father, mother, daughter and son; and a few of them included grandfather and grandmother. Girls groups were willing to play actively and smartly, while boys groups were less confident and less serious to do the role play. Because of their reluctance more time was given to boys groups to prepare for the role play. Much convincing and encouragement was also needed for boys' participation in the play. During the play, girls and boys seemed very confident while taking and playing same sex roles than opposite sex roles and majority of the boys were not interested in acting opposite sex roles. While girls seemed to compete for taking up the role of fathers and sons, boys showed a reluctance to take the roles of mother and daughter. They were very shy and other boys were found to be laughing and teasing on the actors. This might be mainly because of the societal notions imbibed by children that women are inferior, less powerful, obedient and less valued individuals but men are superior, more powerful and having higher status than women in the society. Hence it is natural that girls come up to enact the higher status roles and boys show reluctance to play the secondary status roles. It was also found that while boys were enacting the roles of daughters and mothers, other boys were teasing and making fun of them, indicative of their doing something derogatory and shameful. But such a humiliation was not seen while girls were doing the roles of sons and fathers.

### Behavioural Patterns in Same Sex and Opposite Sex Roles

The analysis reveals that the behavioural patterns of boys and girls in same sex roles and opposite sex roles are highly varied based on their gender role perceptions. While explaining the details of role play, the researcher tried to explain the role of each character in a non-stereotypic style, for example, father preparing food and cleaning the house whereas mother going for job outside the home. Immediately both boys and girls responded, 'no, no, it is wrong, mother is doing household works and father is going outside for job'. When the sex roles were interchanged, the girls and boys displayed gender appropriate behavioural patterns of each sex in responsibilities taken up, styles of communication used and adherence to hierarchical order displayed as detailed below.

### Responsibilities Taken

In all the role plays, both of girls and boys groups, the day starts with the father character waking up in the morning, moving to the sitout for reading newspaper and calling up the wife to bring tea. The son character who comes out to the sit out also asks for tea just like the father. But in none of the plays the daughters were showing similar behaviours. In the entire role plays, after the breakfast mother figure was shown as handing over the lunch box to the father who goes out for job. Before this the preparations like ironing and bringing the shirt and bath towel to the father etc are shown to be done by the mother in between the other household duties and caring of children. In all the role plays from morning to night mother characters were shown as preoccupied in the kitchen by preparing food or cleaning and doing household duties, whereas father and son characters were spending most of their time outside the home. In one girls' groups, the mother was seemed to wake up early morning and enter the kitchen for preparing breakfast. In between she calls her daughter and asks to clean the surroundings.

The daughter at first refuses to do it, and when the mother scolds her for a while she wakes up and does the work assigned by the mother. Later when the baby cries the mother is asking the daughter to take care of the baby. Now the son wakes up and comes to kitchen asking for tea. Here the mother directs the daughter to serve breakfast for son. In one of the boys' groups, the situation was shown as lunch time with mother busy in the kitchen preparing lunch. Mother calls the daughter to take up the food items to the dining table and invites father and son to have the lunch. After lunch the father goes to bed room and son goes to watch TV. Here the mother asks the daughter to wash the dishes and clean up the table and kitchen. Responsibilities of breadwinner, going outside the home and buying things, decision making as well as overall controlling were done by the father. The son characters were depicted as reading newspaper, watching television, playing outside and so on while daughter characters were shown helping the mother and engaged in household chores. All the groups followed similar behavioural patterns regarding the responsibilities taken up. The responsibilities of each character in the role plays were in gender stereotypical ways. Preparing and serving the food, cleaning the house, nurturing and caring of children and the age old were the responsibilities taken up by mother characters.

**Table 1. Perceptions of Boys and Girls on Gender Attributes**

Statements	Agree		Not Sure		Disagree	
	Boys (%)	Girls (%)	Boys (%)	Girls (%)	Boys (%)	Girls (%)
Boys can roam around the school	55	48	11.6	9	33	42.5
Girls shouldn't roam around the school	69	64	7.5	4	23	31.6
Boys are more courageous than girls	81.6	76.6	1.6	1.6	33	42.5
Girls are generally shy	80	59	8	10	11.6	30.8
Boys are good at problem solving than girls	75.8	48	8	11.6	15.8	40.8
Boys are more intelligent than girls	76	25.8	9	10.8	14	55.8
Forgiveness and obedience are essential for girls	89	95	9	1.6	16.6	3
Boys are good at decision-making than girls	82.5	51.6	8	10	10.8	38
Girls should be docile and respectful	82.5	87.5	7.5	1.6	10	10.8
Boys need not be docile and respectful	30.8	21.6	5.8	9	63.3	69
Boys need to be obedient	36.6	70	10.8	3	35.8	9

**Table 2. The perceptions of Boys and Girls on Gender Roles**

Statements	Agree		Not Sure		Disagree	
	Boys (%)	Girls (%)	Boys (%)	Girls (%)	Boys (%)	Girls (%)
A woman's place is the home	76.6	70.8	7.5	6.6	15.8	22.5
Marriage is a necessity for girls	66.6	68	12.5	7.5	20.8	24
Higher education and employment is not necessary for girls	43	19	10	3	46.6	77.5
Boys need higher education and employment	91.6	90	2.5	5.8	5.8	4

The responsibilities of daughter included caring the siblings, helping the mother in kitchen and in household works. In some groups the mother was found going outside for buying groceries from the market in the absence of father. The stereotypic images of controlling husband and obedient wife were common in all role plays. The role plays reveal the extent to which primary school children have imbibed the popular notions that women are responsible for doing the household duties, caring and nurturing of family members and men are to go outside for job and fulfill the bread winner role. It was found that in the mindsets of primary school children the gender stereotypes have become deep rooted and children have internalized the traditional notion that a woman's place is the home and the public place is for man. As per the data collected using the inventory, while 77.5 per cent of girls argued for higher education and employment of women, only 46.6 per cent of boys agreed with the same. On the contrary, 91.6 per cent of boys and 90 percent of girls agreed with the statement that boys need to have higher education and employment. These observations reveal the extent to which boys and girls have internalized the role of men as breadwinners and hence attach more importance for the education and employment of men than that of women. Along with this 66.6 per cent of boys and 68 per cent of girls agree with the overwhelming significance attached to marriage in a woman's life. The perceptions of primary school children in this regard as obtained from the inventory are presented in Table 2. It was also found that in the mindsets of primary school children the gender stereotypes have become deep rooted and children have internalized the traditional notion that a woman's place is the home and the public place is for men. The girls and women in almost all role plays were found to be confined within the homes while boys and men were found going out for play or for work. This is further endorsed by the responses of children to the statement in the inventory that a woman's place is the home. 76.6 per cent of boys and 70.8 per cent of girls agreed with this and only 15.8 per cent of boys and 22.5 per cent of girls disagreed.

### Styles of Communication

The present analysis revealed that the communications of the actors are varied in accordance with the roles of each character in the role plays. Male characters such as grandfather, father and son have a great power for command and control and at times it extends to threatening when compared to the female characters. They use the words such as 'take the food/ bring the tea', 'take my shirts', 'bring the lunch box', 'where is my shirt?', 'come here' etc. Female characters are always calm and quiet and engaging politely with the male characters. They are always obeying the commands of the male counterparts, saying 'yes, I will bring...., I will do it, please wait for some time' etc. In another play the father calls the mother over phone and tells her "evening we have to go for a marriage function, so you and the daughter be ready at five o'clock....ok?...I will pick the son from the school". Then mother replies, "ok, we will be ready". She is not even asking about the place where they are going or whose marriage it is. Wives as per the children are not supposed to ask anything back to the husband but simply obey what they are told to do.

In one play the son gets angry with the mother by saying "why do you prepare the dishes that father only likes?...why don't you make what I like?..." Now the sister consoles the brother "...today you have this, tomorrow we will prepare the food that you like..... please...". In this regard, the likes of the mother or daughter are not mentioned in any of the role plays. At the same time the father and the son's likes are catered to by the mother and daughter. It also implies how primary school children believe that women are supposed to serve and please their men rather than satisfying their own likes and needs. Only in one play out of the fourteen, a different type of communication was shown by the participant children. Here it was shown that the mother gives a list of groceries to the father and he goes to the market. When he returns late night she questions and gets angry with him for the late coming. The communication styles of men and women in the role play show

that male characters are always commanding, ordering and controlling. The female characters are shown to be more supportive, conveying solidarity and being sympathetic when compared to males. They are cooperative and respectful to the males at home whether it be the husband, father or son. These types of communication styles affect the character formation of children in the future. Findings from the inventory are in agreement with the communication styles exhibited by girls and boys during the role plays. 82.5 per cent of boys and 87.5 per cent of girls responded that girls need to be docile and respectful of others whereas 63 per cent of boys and 69 per cent of girls demanded such attributes from boys also. It is a significant fact that children have imbibed the gendered communication styles. Through observational learning of the family dynamics, girls learn to become calm, quiet, helpful, respecting others, especially men and this will lead to passive and less assertive attitudes in them while boys learn more powerful, uncontrollable, commanding and aggressive attributes to live as a man in the society. This will also lead to an imbalance in the respect exchanged between the two genders in the society. According to Tannen's (1990) the communication styles of men and women were in different ways and for different reasons. The communication style of men is to maintain independence and superiority so as to gain an upper hand in the context and demand respect from others, while women's communication styles were to maintain intimacy and to express feelings, emotions and to build rapport.

#### **Adherence to Hierarchical Order**

The entire role play showed that roles taken by males and female characters are based on the adherence to the existing hierarchical order. Male characters are all depicted as superior, dominant, decision-makers with power of controlling others and females are shown as inferior, obedient decision takers having lesser power. The patriarchal notion that men are superior and dominant than women is found to be imbibed by the children from their families. There is specific gender difference in the directions given by mother to the son and daughter. Mother characters give directions to daughters to help with household works. In one of the role plays, a son and a daughter were shown as coming from the school and asking for tea. This time mother asks the daughter to give tea to the son, and not vice versa. In another play mother is shown to give tea to the son while the daughter without being told is seen going directly to the kitchen for tea. The notion that boys and men are to be served and girls and women are to serve is being conveyed to children from the family itself. It was surprising to see how domestic violence was also included as part of routine life by some of the groups. The father is seen beating, scolding and torturing the mother and in one group the mother in-law was also seen included in the violence. This shows the extent to which young children are aware of domestic violence and how much exposure to the unpleasant realities they get from the family itself. The sad part of the story is even the little hearts and minds take it up as a usual issue within the family. Internalizing such notions that the father has the right to beat the wife and the wife is to suffer it in silence can have far reaching consequences in the lives of children when they get older.

In one girl's group, mother is shown heating the milk for her husband. In between the phone is ringing and she goes to take the phone. This time the mother-in-law comes to the kitchen and put some chili powder in the milk. The mother hand over the milk to the husband. The father tastes the milk and shouts up at the wife "why did you mix chili powder in the milk? ...you want to kill me?" Without trying to hear the excuses of his wife, the father beats the mother's face and the mother-in-law who witnesses everything seems happy. Such an act by the children conveys how they also have accepted the patriarchal notion that a woman is a woman's enemy. In one boys' group mother scolded the children because they are playing during the study time. The son cries out by calling father 'father, father...Mother is beating me...'. This time father comes and asks mother 'why do you beat my children?...allow them to play...' then mother though gets angry with the father walks out of the scene and children continue with their play. Such an act shows that the children believe that the father has more power and authority to control the mother and the mother is to obey whatever the father said in the family.

Female characters are always concerned with the familial matters than males. The role plays also revealed how children imbibe minute details like mothers watch serials in TV while fathers watch sports and news. Observational learning can have far reaching impacts on the mindsets of growing children. Without being told they learn many things related to gender socialization by observing the family dynamics. Boys tend to accept their fathers and girls their mothers as role models. As suggested by Kuruvilla and George (2015) when the turn of the children comes to become a husband / wife, whatever they have learned from their role models through observation will be repeated and perpetuated. When children grow up the sons demand strict obedience from their wives just like their role model fathers and daughters naturally imbibe the mental dispositions of their mothers to be passive and submissive whereby the unequal power relations get transmitted from generation to generation. All the role plays show male characters as always superior and decision makers while females as inferior and decision takers. This again is assured by the findings from the inventory that 82.5 per cent of boys and 51.6 per cent of girls opined that boys are good in decision making than girls. Only 10.8 per cent of boys and 38 per cent of girls disagreed with this statement. 48% girls and 75.85% boys agree that boys are good at problem solving than girls. The present study reveals that children while being in the primary school level itself have accepted the hierarchical order between the genders. Children assume that females have lesser value and status than males and that they should be subordinate and obedient to menfolk.

#### **DISCUSSION**

The analysis of the data collected with the inventory and observation of role plays revealed the perceptions of primary school children regarding gendered attributes and gender role differentiation. All the characters included in the role play acted in accordance with the gender role perceptions of boys and girls. All the groups whether of boys or girls exhibited similar gender role perceptions of each character in the role play. It is to be noted that the data collected using the

inventory was in full agreement with the findings from the role plays. Students were more confident and ready for playing gender appropriate sex roles than opposite sex roles. Francis (2002) argues that social constructs of masculinity and femininity among young people restrict the choices that do not match pre-conceived ideas of what is a male or female role. They replicate the real life contexts. The observations from the present study is in agreement with the opinion of Martin and Haiverson (1983), i.e, children learn about the gendered norms, behavioural patterns and appropriate gender roles from the culture that they live in. The behavioural patterns and the interaction styles of students in each role play reveal that, family has great influence on gender role stereotyping. All the groups whether it is boys or girls exhibited similar role perceptions for father, mother, son and daughter. In the entire role play mothers and daughters were doing the same duties. The findings are in full agreement with Kuruvilla and George (2015) that in the Indian context, by the time children reach school at the age of five years they might have imbibed all the patriarchal values from the family itself. In developed countries with high indices of gender equality, children learn lessons of egalitarian relations from their parents itself. But in a highly patriarchal society like that of India, children rarely get opportunities to be witnesses of egalitarian family relationships especially between husband and wife. There was not even a single working woman character in any of the twelve role plays. Warin (2000) observes that children who develop a strong gender identity at age five are more likely to exhibit stronger gender stereotypical behavior as what they have developed in the future. Accordingly the primary school children with traditional gender identities and gender role perceptions cannot be expected to think in progressive lines and break away from the stereotypic notions until and unless there are strong interventions taken up by the schools. The NPE 1986 has envisaged the national education system to play a positive interventionist role in bringing about a change in the status of women and attaining empowerment of women through development of values of gender equality and gender justice. The strategies suggested included redesigned curricula, text books, training and orientation of teachers and administrator etc. But even after thirty years, the effectiveness of the education system in developing these values is meagre either due to the gender bias existing in the education system or due to the overwhelming influence of other gender socialization agencies like family, media and religion that serve to sustain the secondary status of girls and women.

### Conclusion

Learning gendered identities is part of socialization and every socialization agency will contribute to their formulation in youngsters. The findings of the present study have revealed the overwhelming role of family in the formulation of gendered identities in children. Parents, teachers and policy makers must take initiatives for developing values of gender justice in children. Gender sensitivity training must become part of PTA activities and pre service and in service teacher training. Gender sensitive education through gender sensitive teaching and learning materials and practices are needed to develop proper respect and acceptance of all genders and to reduce gender segregated notions in the minds of children whereby

they could be enabled to break the gender stereotypes. At a time when gender equality is accepted as a precondition for sustainable development, notions of egalitarian relationships between men and women are to be nurtured among children. All socialization agencies need to take up the responsibility and augment their respective efforts to wipe away the unequal gender relations and gender division of labour that still persist in the Indian society and sustain the secondary status of women. The family, school, media and religion must undergo timely modifications in their approaches and policies in tune with the gender mainstreaming efforts of the state. A change in mindsets of men and women to dispense with the wrong traditions in our age old culture is to be fostered and the newer generations must be enabled to live and grow in a gender just environment.

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