

# Gender and development

Literature, Russian Literature



The disparity in gender generally starts with this accepted norm of delegating various roles according to sex. Even though it has been stated earlier that sex and gender are different, they are very much co-related. There are a set of rules accorded to women and likewise different ones for men. Women are usually seen as the care-givers while men, as the bread-winners. This process starts as soon as a person is born. Right from childhood, a boy is expected to be inclined towards "manly" things that require exertion of strength that is derived from masculinity. On the contrary, girls are supposed to be drawn towards activities and interests like cooking and dolls. If this distinction was somehow crossed, the wrong-doer would surely be chastised or at the very least warned like David is in "Go, Carolina", when he is told, "You don't want to be doing that, that's a girl thing." 1. Therefore gender represses a person's natural reflexes. It makes one do something not because one wants to but because one has to. Gender has always been the main factor that has created inequalities between men and women. It is prevalent everywhere regardless of country, region, class, race, or creed. The South Asian Country of Bhutan is an interesting example. There, women and men hold equal status in the eyes of the law. In fact, it is a dominantly matriarchal society. Women are said to be the decision-makers of their household with the right to inherit any parental property. One would think that there would be no gender discrimination but it is not so. According to a pilot study<sup>2</sup> conducted by the Royal Government of Bhutan with assistance from the UN System, present socio-cultural perceptions of both men and women see women as being less competent and less confident than their male counterparts in matters of governance

and interaction with external agencies. This absence or lack of confidence in women can be largely attributed to the social environment that girls usually grow up in. The notion that girls are expected to be meek and subservient towards their male counterparts is widespread. The brunt of the consequences of the difference in gender is mostly borne by the females be it in the private or even the workspace. It has to be accepted that men are physically more sturdily built than women. But in this modern world, thanks to mechanical enhancements, there are now almost no jobs men do that women cannot do just as efficiently if not better. But because of gender differences, the amount that they earn is different as is in the case in Bhutan. Both men and women also take up jobs in road construction but for unskilled labor, men are paid higher wages than women. 3

The difference in gender can sometimes be unbelievably hypocritical. Again this is from personal experience in Bhutan. One classic example is the act of smoking. If a man does it, then it might as well be as natural as breathing. But if a woman were to be seen doing it, then all hell breaks loose, so to speak. This act is not acceptable if committed by a woman simply because she is a woman. It is like only women have lungs! So, what do the die-hard woman smokers do They commit this supposedly "shameful misdemeanor" (for only women, that is) unseen from any prying eyes. So do not wonder if you rarely or never see any women smoking in public if you are ever in Bhutan.

In conclusion, it is important to state again that the dissimilarities in gender are formed basically by the way people are taught to think. It is ironic that even though we are said to be the most advanced amongst all living

organisms, we still cannot make up our minds on what is right and what is wrong. We shy away from learning to adopt new ideas. If we would just consider ourselves to be equals regardless of sex, the world would be a much better place to be in, at least as far as our individual homes are concerned.