

Growing up as Boys and Girls

Gender is a social construction through which the social and cultural roles of males and females are defined.

Most of the societies value men and women differently. The role women play and the work they do are usually valued less than the roles men play and the work they do. This clears the fact that men and women do not have the same status.

Gender justice is an important issue to be highlighted.

Samoa Islands

- The Samoa islands are one of the large groups of small islands in the southern part of the Pacific Ocean. Till the 1920s, children in this island did not go to school. When the babies started walking on own, they were left under the care of their older brothers and sisters. Children as old as five years looked after their younger siblings.
- After attaining nine years of age, boys joined the older boys for outdoor activities like fishing and planting coconuts. However, girls continued looking after the younger ones.
- When girls became teenagers, i.e., 14 years of age, they were allowed more freedom as they could then go for fishing and plantation activities or help their mothers in cooking, etc.

Madhya Pradesh

- In Madhya Pradesh, India, boys and girls had a different outlook. The school for boys was open while the one for girls was closed.
- Men and women do equal work, but it is not valued equally.

Valuing Housework

- Many women work in offices and many do only household work.
- Valuing housework is an important element which needs to be propagated in society.
- If we look at the lives of domestic workers, they are involved in activities like sweeping, cleaning, cooking, washing clothes and dishes or looking after children. Most of these are women.
- A number of housework actually involves many different tasks. The work requires strenuous and physically demanding situation.

Women'S Work and Equality

- Equality is an important principle of our constitution which says that being male or female should not become a reason for discrimination.
- While the constitution does not discriminate between male and female, in reality, discrimination still carries on.
- Government has introduced measures like Anganwadis or Child Care Centres to improve the status of women in society.
- The government has also started creche facilities to help women to take up employment outside the home.

We find distinctions between boys and girls in our societies. This begins at a very young age.

Boys are often taught to be tough and serious while girls are taught to be soft and mild.

Boys are given toys like cars and guns to play with while girls are seen playing with dolls. These toys become a way of telling children what they will have different futures when they become men and women.

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If a woman is a housewife, it is often said that she does not work. But the reality is that it is always the woman who bears the main responsibility for housework and caregiving tasks like looking after the family. As she does not earn money by doing these tasks, her work is not recognized.

The term houseworks involves many different tasks which require heavy physical work.

In both rural and urban areas women and girls carry heavy headloads of firewood. Housework also involves washing clothes, cleaning, sweeping and cooking foods, etc. for the family. All these works are very tough, still, women do them every day. They do not complain or show any anguish on their face.

The work of women is time-consuming too. They do not have much time for leisure.

Many women nowadays work both inside and outside the home. This is often referred to as the double burden. Women bear this double burden very skilfully and efficiently.

Equality is an important principle of our constitution which says that being male or female should not become a reason for discrimination. But what we see in reality is

that inequality still exists between both the sexes. The government is, therefore, very much keen to take some positive measures to improve the situation.

The government has set up Anganwadis or Child-care Centres in several villages in the country.

The government has also started creche facilities to help women to take up employment outside the home.

Caregiving: Looking after the family with great sincerity.

Devalue: When we do not give due recognition for work, it means we devalue it. In our society, women's work is easily devalued.

Double-burden: There are several women who work both inside and outside the home. This is known as a double burden.

Identity: It is a sense of awareness of who one is. For example, a person can be a brother, a pilot, an engineer, etc.

Physically demanding: It refers to the household tasks which are very tough and demand great physical strength.

Time-consuming: It refers to the various household tasks which take much time.

Strenuous: Very tough and difficult.