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TOPIC - CONCEPT OF MASCULINITY AND FEMININITY

MASCULINITY AND FEMININITY : CONCEPT, MEANING AND FEATURES

Masculinity and femininity refer to the differing feelings and behaviour expected of males and females at a particular time and place and is largely a product of sex-role socialization. Such socialization has been accomplished in many ways, many of which are unintended and unconscious. In many societies, men are being rewarded for being aggressive, competitive and career-oriented. Girls are required to be gentle and homely. Men have been trained to direct and command, women have been trained to obey and serve and to get their way through manipulation. Men are rated according to their career advancement, while women are evaluated by their domestic skills. In many ways, the sexes have been socialized to feel differently about themselves and to act differently. There is ample evidence to prove that sex-role stereotypes are very much alive today. In almost every work activity, men are judged to be more competent than women.

The concepts of masculinity and femininity as used in feminist discourses and writing to explain the differences between men and women. Some argue that these differences are based in their biology, while others reject this argument and emphasize that the differences are socially constructed. Therefore, the construction of men and masculinity will accrue exclusively to the bodies of males. The construction of women and femininity will accrue exclusively to the bodies of females.

Masculinity and femininity are concepts which signify the social outcomes of being male or female the traits and characteristics, which describe men and women give men advantage over women.

Moira Gatens points that masculinity is not valued unless performed by biological male. Hence, the male body is imbued in our culture with certain traits that characterize maleness or masculinity. Hence, the human norm of male supremacy. Similarly femininity is performed by the biological female. The female body is, in our culture, imbued with certain traits that characterize female or femininity. According to Judith Butler, any theorization about gender introduces the notion or idea of performance of gender in terms of masculinity and femininity. Thus, performance of gender becomes involuntary, as gender gets internalized through the socialization process within the dominant discourses of patriarchy gender is performed at different levels within the family and in the society. We socially enter into our gendered categories of masculine and feminine right from birth.

Femininity (femininity, girlishness, womanliness or womanhood) is a set of attributes, behaviours, and roles generally associated with girls and women. Femininity is made up of both, socially-defined and biologically-created factors. This makes it distinct from the definition of the biological female sex, as both, males and females can exhibit feminine traits.

Traits, traditionally cited as feminine, include gentleness, empathy and sensitivity though traits associated with femininity vary depending on location and context, and are influenced by a variety of social and cultural factors. In some non-English speaking cultures, certain concepts or inanimate objects are considered feminine or masculine (the counterpart to feminine).

Masculinity (also called **boyhood**, **manliness** or **manhood**) is a set of attributes, behaviours and roles generally associated with boys and men. Masculinity is socially constructed, but made up of both, socially-defined and biologically-created factors, distinct from the definition of the male biological sex. Both, men and women can exhibit masculine traits and behaviour. Masculine traits include courage, independence and assertiveness. These traits are also vary by location and context, and are influenced by social and cultural factors. An overemphasis on masculinity and power, often associated with a disregard for consequences and responsibility, is known as machismo.