

Should Gender Roles Be Discarded?

GENDER ROLES are expectations or norms created by our society to act, speak, dress, groom, and conduct ourselves, based on our gender.

The minute a boy is born, we think of the colour blue, toys like cars, balls and action heroes. In the case of a girl, the colour is pink with toys like dolls, fairies and kitchen sets.

Action, boldness, and aggression are acceptable behaviour from boys, and softness, femininity, and a nurturing outlook from girls. This mindset unconsciously drives society divisively, and unless challenged, we are all biased towards participating in gender roles. There is no harm in sharing responsibilities in a household or community, as long as it does not cost human rights and freedom.

As a woman, I grew up thinking men have it easy as they do not have to deal with suppressions and emotions. It is not true. A typical man is perceived to be stoic, ambitious, and a go-getter. There is a stigma attached to men who demonstrate compassion and emotions, leading to severe mental health issues, with the rate of suicide being twice as much amongst men compared to women. It proves the pressures and restraints men feel in seeking help. Suppressed emotions create anger, resent-



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ment, and imbalance in power, leading to violence, harassment, and attacks. As men outnumber women in the corporate world, business is perceived to be ruthless, cut-throat and harsh – a myth that can be dissolved by practising business with compassion.

Similarly, a woman suffers in silence passively. The belief around a woman's beauty is her ability to tolerate, nurture,

and happily accommodate everyone's wishes. If she wishes to work outside the home, her housework obligations do not diminish, and she is judged for failings at home.

This universal belief system creates unconscious inner programming amongst us from childhood to adulthood. Our cultural, societal, and family traditions play a huge role in our belief system, and that is how we write our inner software and life operating system.

'You unconsciously believe you are a product of people's projection.' Why can't a man cry, and why can't a woman support a man without judgments? Are we helping humanity to be more accepting of one another, or are we polarising and disempowering ourselves by the division of roles?

When a daughter looks after her parents or supports them, people comment, 'she is a son to them!' It is not a compliment for a woman to be compared to a man if she does well for herself and her family. Likewise, men can cry and express their vulnerability, for that makes them human. As a wife and mother of a son and daughter, I know that men and women have similar wishes of acceptance, compassion, and understanding. Behind the veil of gender, we are all humans.

Judgments and shame will only dissolve when we upgrade our focus to humanity over gender division. Let us consider our

choices based on our aptitude, desire, and dreams rather than the gender we are born into.

As we end this historic year 2020, let us look at the silent mental pandemic we are harnessing that is silently eating away our essence of humanity – the ability to accept, love, and live with neutrality. **BW**

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