

Revision Notes

Class – 7 Social Science

Chapter 4 - Growing Up As Boys & Girls

- Gender is a very important part of our identity and as we grow up, society around us teach what we as boys and girls can or cannot do. Over the years, we also tend to believe that these gender roles are same all around the world. But is it really same? Understanding the different roles is very important in shaping young girls and boys for their future roles as men & women. Often, the work of women is valued less than that of a men.

- Growing Up in Samoa in the 1920s
 - ❖ The Samoan Islands is among the big group of small islands in the southern part of the Pacific Ocean.
 - ❖ In the 1920s, there were some research reports that brought to light that children in the Samoan society do not go to school. Instead, they tend to learn how to take care of younger children and doing household chores from other children as well as grown-ups.
 - ❖ Fishing was also an important activity in Samoan society. So, they were first taught how to undertake long fishing expeditions. They also learnt a variety of skills at different points in their childhood.
 - ❖ As soon as babies had started walking, older children, as young as five years old, took care of the little ones. Both boys & girls were responsible for taking care of their younger siblings.
 - ❖ By nine years of age, boys joined older ones for outdoor jobs such as fishing and planting coconuts.

- ❖ Girls were also expected to look after children and do small tasks for adults until they reach their teens.
- ❖ Once, they were teenagers, they were given lot more freedom. Around fourteen years of age, they accompanied their families for fishing trips, worked in plantations and learnt how to weave baskets.
- ❖ Boys did most of cooking work while girls helped in preparations.

- Observation of Growing up males in Madhya Pradesh in the 1960s

- ❖ The following observations are from a account of the experience of being in a small town in Madhya Pradesh in the 1960s.
- ❖ From Class VI onwards, boys and girls also used to go to different schools, and their schools were also designed differently. The girls' school had central courtyard where they played in total isolation from outside world. The boys' school had no such courtyard. Their playground, on the other hand, was big and open space attached to the school.
- ❖ After school was over, as girls crowded the narrow streets to get home, they looked so purposeful unlike other boys, who were mostly idling and playing on the streets.
- ❖ Girls went in groups, as they feared being teased or attacked.
- ❖ Above examples show that there is no single way of growing up. Our experiences could be very different from the experiences of our parents. The childhood of our elders was different from ours.

- The examples also show that there were clear distinctions between girls and boys, which start from a very young age. E.g. boys are gifted toy cars while girls get dolls and kitchen sets.

- While both toys can be equally enjoyable for both genders, such distinction becomes a way of telling children that they will have different futures as men and women.
 - These differences can also be seen in the smallest and most everyday things. How girls must dress, talk and walk, or what games should boys play – all these are ways of telling young minds what roles they are expected to play as grown-ups.
 - These gender ideas are also deep-rooted and also affect the subjects and careers chosen by most boys and girls. ● In most societies, roles men and women play in society and the work they do is not valued equally. There is often a difference in their status as well.
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- Valuing housework
- ❖ Across the world, the main responsibility for housework & care-giving generally lie with women. They are often expected to look after the children, the elderly and sick members. However, it is mostly taken for granted & not recognized as real work. Society thinks caretaking comes naturally to women and therefore they need not be paid for it.
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- Lives of domestic workers
- ❖ In towns and cities, many of the households have domestic workers. They also do several chores in the house, like sweeping, mopping, dusting, laundry, dishes, cooking, and looking after young children and the elderly. Mostly, these domestic-helpers are women but sometimes young boys and girls are also employed.
 - ❖ Wages for the domestic workers are low as their work is not valued much. In many houses, they are not respected even after working fourteen to fifteen hours a day.

- ❖ When Melani, a domestic worker in Delhi, shared her past experiences, she revealed that memsahib would often shout at house helps, gave them two dry rotis and a cup of tea in breakfast, and two rotis in dinner. She also never gave them the third roti or allowed them to wear slippers – even in freezing cold winters of Delhi.
 - ❖ Housework involves various tasks that require great strength and heavy physical work, like in both rural and urban women and girls have to fetch water.
 - ❖ In the village, women & girls used to carry heavy head loads of firewood in order to do everyday chores like washing clothes, cleaning utensils, sweeping, and picking up the loads. All the tasks require bending, lifting and carrying. Also, cooking involves standing for long hours in front of hot stoves.
 - ❖ All above-mentioned chores require great strength, they are physically demanding but we still associate all of them adjectives with men.
 - ❖ Most people do not recognise that housework is very time-consuming. In fact, the work that women do inside and outside home adds up to much more working hours than men.
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- Women also get little time as rest or leisure.
 - The table below shows of a study by the Central Statistical Organization of India, 1998-99. It compares paid & unpaid working hours per week for men and women in the states of Haryana and Tamil Nadu.
 - The study revealed that women were paid for 23 hours/week in the state of Haryana and 19 hours/week in Tamil Nadu. The same numbers for men were 38 hours/week and 40 hours/week respectively.
 - Unpaid work also accounted for 30 hours/week and 35/week for women in Haryana and Tamil Nadu respectively. For men, these numbers were 2 hours/week and 4 hours/week, respectively.

- In total, women worked for 53 hours/week and men worked for 40 hours/week in Haryana. The same data for Tamil Nadu was 54 hours/week and 44 hours/week.

- Women's work and equality

- ❖ The above data and accounts clearly show that women's household and care-giving work is highly undervalued. It is a part of a widespread system of inequality between the two genders.

- ❖ Even our Constitution mentions equality as an important principle. It says that there should be zero discrimination because of gender but in reality, sexism is quite common in the workplace and in society in general. ● Therefore the Government is committed to understanding the reason for prevalent sexism and also to stop it from happening.

- ❖ One obvious reason for the discrimination is that the burden of childcare and housework has fallen on girls and women.

- ❖ This impacts if they could attend a school or go out for jobs. It also impacts the choice of career and the kind of jobs they can do.

- ❖ To change the situation, the Government has set up Anganwadi or child-care centres in villages and passed laws that make it mandatory for organisations that have more than 30 women employees to provide crèche facilities.

- ❖ The crèche facility allows young girls to attend school and helps women to get jobs outside the home