

Time for a change of attitude towards women

Non-stereotypical perception of gender can usher in a much-needed change

It is worrisome to hear, almost everyday, about rapes, murders and suicide in our country. Does it not force us to reflect within to find the reason for this mayhem? Where are we going wrong as a parent, as a teacher, as a society, as a community and as a nation?

The world economic forum ranked India 105th out of 135 countries in its 2012 Global gender gap index. Any nation's future lies in the hands of our younger generation. Are we preparing them rightly, to be responsible moral citizen? In India, gender equality is deep rooted in societal norms which give rise to discrimination against women. One of the studies on women's perception and attitude towards male dominance and controlling behaviour reveals that it is evident from social learning theory in male dominated society that women adopt and accept male dominance in their lives through learned social behaviour that they observed since childhood by looking at the same behaviour by their mother and other elder women at home.

For instance, the mother-in-law transfers the trait of fear to the daughter-in-law who ultimately uses these tools to instil fear in the female children. Boys are allowed to show their aggression and play with guns but girls are not encouraged to do the same. Girls are supposed to play with dolls. Girls can cry but it is not manly to shed tears for boys so more chances for boys to repress, which in turn make them displace their anger and frustration on safer, softer targets. Girls are told, "Why are you laughing so loudly? Don't you know how to sit? But boys are never told that man spreading is also not acceptable. Deep rooted changes in social attitude are needed to make our society safe and secure for women.

It's not only about upbringing but education system too has role to play in massive way. Educational institutions convey a gender stereotypical attitude in subtle, if not obvious, ways. One reputed school in Secunderabad writes the name of only the father in the fee card, admit card, to name few. What are we teaching our children? When women are achieving great heights in all the fields — from driving to sports to being president of India — their name is not worth being written! What an irony! At one end, we talk about equality but on the other end; we don't even recognise the other sex.

If girls go to other countries, they don't feel threatened because of the positive attitude towards girls, who are not seen as mere objects. TrustLaw, a service run by Thomas Reuters has ranked India as the worst G20 country in which to be a woman.

Parental non-biased, non-stereotypical perception of gender can bring change in the way woman are perceived. Schools should teach children especially in higher classes, about life skill, as risk taking behaviour is high and adolescents go through phase of identity crisis. The only disability in life is bad attitude. Change in attitude can change the world.

(With inputs from Pallavi Sahu; Dr G Krishna is a Clinical Psychologist)

Lifestyle-related risk factors are being cited, compounded by an inadequate number of treatment centres in the region

Without policies to stop the worrying spread of antimicrobial resistance, the mortality rate could be disturbing

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