**GENDER AND THE MEDIA**

Before we begin to analyse the representation of genders in media, we also need to be fully aware of the impact of media.

We spend 31 hours a week watching TV, 17 hours a week listening to music, 3 hours a week watching movies, 4 hours a week reading magazines, and more than 10 hours online. This is an average of 10 hours and 45 minutes of media consumption. Per day.

The Media is delivering content that is shaping our lives. It is making sure that we are impacted 23x7, in the form of Ads, Films, TV, Videos, and Music. On an average, we are exposed to 400-600 ads per day.

The influence of advertising is quick, cumulative, and for the most part, sub conscious. Ads themselves, sell more than products.

The following points will be covered in this topic-

**1). Woman is Objectified**

We all grow up in a culture in which women’s bodies are constantly turned into things and objects. Women’s bodies are dismembered in ads, hacked apart – just one part of the body is focused upon, which of course is the most dehumanising thing you could do to someone. Everywhere we look, women’s bodies have been turned into things and often just parts of things. Now of course this affects female self-esteem. It also does something even more insidious – it creates a climate of widespread violence against women. An ad does not directly cause violence, it’s not that simple. But turning a human being in to a thing is almost always the first step towards justifying violence against that person. The person is dehumanised and violence becomes inevitable. And that step is already and constantly taken against women.

**2) Beauty is idealised**

Well what does advertising tell us about women? It tells us, as it always has, that’s what’s most important is how we look. So the first thing the advertisers do is surround us with images of ideal female beauty. How important it is, and what it takes. Women learn from a very early age that we must spend enormous amounts of time, energy and above all money, striving to achieve this look of being skinny and beautiful, and feeling ashamed and guilty when we fail. And failure is inevitable because the ideal is based on absolute flawlessness. A model never has any lines or wrinkles, she certainly has no scars or blemishes, indeed she has no pores. Hence- the ideal look is one that’s based on computer retouching.

**3) Subliminal effect**

The subliminal effect is something that is not tangible. It is an effect felt below the threshold of sensation or consciousness; perceived by or affecting someone's mind without their being aware of it. For example, from a young age, boys are told that crying is weak, and ‘girlish’, and that is emasculates them. Subliminally, this causes them to perceive all women as weak, because they cry.

**4) Gender Stereotypes**

Gender stereotypes are simplistic generalizations about the gender attributes, differences, and roles of individuals and/or groups. Stereotypes can be positive or negative, but they rarely communicate accurate information about others. When people automatically apply gender assumptions to others regardless of evidence to the contrary, they are perpetuating gender stereotyping. Many people recognize the dangers of gender stereotyping, yet continue to make these types of generalizations.

Traditionally, the female stereotypic role is to marry and have children. She is also to put her family's welfare before her own; be loving, compassionate, caring, nurturing, and sympathetic; and find time to be beautiful. The male stereotypic role is to be the financial provider. He is also to be assertive, competitive, independent, courageous, and career‐focused; and holds his emotions in check; and always initiate sex. These sorts of stereotypes can prove harmful; they can stifle individual expression and creativity, as well as hinder personal and professional growth.

**5) Masculinity vs Femininity**

Gender is our social and legal status as girls and boys, women and men. Gender identity is how you feel about and express your gender. Culture determines gender roles and what is masculine and feminine.

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| WORDS COMMONLY USED TO DESCRIBE FEMININITY | WORDS COMMONLY USED TO DESCRIBE MASCULINITY |
| * Dependent
* emotional
* passive
* sensitive
* quiet
* graceful
* innocent
* weak
* flirtatious
* nurturing
* self-critical
* soft
* sexually submissive
* accepting
 | * independent
* non-emotional
* aggressive
* tough-skinned
* competitive
* clumsy
* experienced
* strong
* active
* self-confident
* hard
* sexually aggressive
* rebellious
 |

Clearly, society’s categories for what is masculine and feminine are unrealistic. They may not capture how we truly feel, how we behave, or how we define ourselves. All men have some so-called feminine traits, and all women have some so-called masculine traits. And we may show different traits at different times. Our cultures teach women and men to be the opposite of each other in many ways. The truth is that we are more alike than different.

**6) Identity and Identity crisis**

In psychology, the term identity crisis (coined by psychologist Erik Erikson) means the failure to achieve ego identity during adolescence.

Adolescence is a difficult stage for an individual. Over and above grappling with physical changes and physiological changes, the adolescent can be very easily influenced by the media. Both female and male adolescents will get the impression that their life must revolve around how they look. Indirectly, they get the message that they must conform to gender roles, while in reality, most gender roles are built on stereotypes. Hence, they are easily susceptible to facing identity crises.