

Gender Roles Representation and Portrayal: An Analysis of Primary level NCERT textbooks

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ABSTRACT:

School textbooks are the primary sources of information for children. When children enter the school environment, the images of females and males as portrayed in textbooks contribute in shaping their concepts about gender roles. These images also influence their expectations from themselves and others as well as their future aspirations. This paper discusses the representation and portrayal of gender in the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) English language textbooks for Classes I to V. It reveals that females have been under-represented in pictures as well as in text. The occupational roles assigned and the adjectives used for both females and males are gender stereotyped. Females are shown as engaged in popular and socially accepted occupations such as teacher, nurse, doctor or as cooking at home while males are shown in a much wider variety of economically productive occupations. In terms of games too, females are depicted less in outdoor sports than males. This kind of representation in textbooks reinforces the gender bias already existing in our society. The paper also attempts to put forth a few recommendations to remove stereotypes in language, visuals, depiction in occupation and overall representation of women and men.

Key Words: Gender representation, Gender roles, Gender socialisation, Gender stereotypes, Textbook bias.

Introduction:

Gender roles and socialisation-

Families act as the primary source in the process of socialization whereas the schools play the second major role in socializing young children. Socialization that occurs in schools can be instrumental in reinforcing or changing what has already been learnt at home. For socialization to be effective, schools must provide a gender neutral environment to students and the curriculum must try to generate gender sensitivity among them to build a better future free of stereotypes.

The curriculum followed in schools is a strong tool to transform and transmit the culture, values and beliefs of society to the learner. The formal curriculum is implemented through the textbooks and learning material. The gender bias and gender stereotypes portrayed in the textbooks used to impart the lessons of the curriculum cannot be ignored. Research has shown that “students spend as much as 80 to 95% of classroom time using textbooks and teachers make a majority of their instructional decision based on the textbook” (Sadker & Zittleman, 2007). The National Curriculum

Framework (2005) also emphasizes on using textbooks as one of the primary instruments of equality because they are the only accessible and affordable resources for education for majority of school going children and teachers. It emphasizes on addressing gender concerns in discussion of any historical event and contemporary concerns. It also throws light on the importance of gender sensitive language in curriculum. It recognizes that unequal gender relations not only perpetuate dominance but also create anxieties and stunt the freedom of both girls and boys to develop their human capacities to the fullest.

Since every society has its gender belief system and gender stereotypes, the same images of women and men are reflected and portrayed in their formal curriculum. When children enter the school environment, the images of females and males portrayed in books, shape their concept about gender and consequently their own self-image, their behaviour, their aspirations and their expectations. If any change in the gender stereotypes is needed, serious and concerted efforts are required, firstly to analyse the learning material and secondly, to present those desired modified images (Mirza, 2006).

The need for incorporating women's issues in the syllabus and textbook material was given emphasis at the first National Conference on Women's Studies (NCWS) in 1981. Review of curricula in different disciplines undertaken by the NCWS highlighted the absence of women/girls in the curricula. Since then there has been a serious concern for incorporating women's issues, experiences and contributions visibly in the curriculum. Studies conducted by the Department of Women's Studies, NCERT in the 1990's have revealed that a partial approach of inclusion of women in different disciplines was adopted. Stereotypes were visible in depicting women's contributions (NCERT, 2013-14).

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), serial number 4 (Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all) and serial number 5 (Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls), also focus on gender equality. These support the development of curriculum and textbooks free from stereotypes and discrimination since gender bias in textbooks can affect children's self-esteem, lower their engagement in schools and limit their expectations about their future opportunities, including career options. The present paper is an effort to document the gender representation and portrayal in primary level textbooks of NCERT followed in many schools of Delhi.

General Objective:

To identify the achievements and gaps in representation of gender in primary level NCERT textbooks used in the schools in Delhi in terms of visibility of females and males in visuals and text, as protagonists, the occupational roles assigned to them, their depiction in games, and gender specific expressions used in language.

Methodology

This paper discusses the materials analysed from English language textbooks (*Marigold – I to V*) for Classes I to V prepared by NCERT and published by Delhi Bureau of textbooks. The first edition of these textbooks was printed in 2009 and the books which are critiqued in the paper are the 2014 and 2015 reprints of the same. The language textbooks were chosen for this analysis as they offer a wider scope to portray characters and diverse situations in our lives and help students understand overtly and covertly about their roles and responsibilities in the society.

Findings

Gender stereotypes were clearly visible in all the five textbooks in some form or the other as discussed under various domains.

Visibility of females and males in visuals

The number of females and males in visuals and content were counted. It is to be noted that while counting the visuals and names mentioned in the content, the repetition was clearly avoided. The names of the same character mentioned more than once in the chapters were counted only once. Similarly, the visuals of girls and boys repeated in the same chapter were counted only once.

To begin with, women were found to be invisible in pictures as compared to men in four out of five textbooks. The percentage of women in visuals was between 27% and 34% in four of the textbooks and touched 49% in one of them (Table 1). The representation of males in visuals was between 51% and 73%. This included the visuals within the chapters, exercises after each chapter and teacher's page to facilitate discussion in the classroom. On an average, there was merely 34% female representation in the five textbooks in contrast to 66% representation of males.

Similar pattern was observed in the representation of females and males in the text. Female representation was low ranging between 28% and 44%. It was found to be as low as 28% in *Marigold – V*. In the five textbooks observed through a gender perspective, females were referred to in the text as low as making the average representation of females 35 % in text 202 out of 580 times (Table 2). The average representation of males in the text was 65% in all the five English language textbooks with 378 out of 580 mentions being those of males.

This under-representation of females in school textbooks seems to be a universal phenomenon from the available review of literature. Dipta Bhog (2002) looked at NCERT language textbooks for classes III, V and VIII. Out of 75 lessons that she reviewed, 34 i.e. nearly 50% had only male actors in text with no female characters in the narratives.

However, merely looking at the equality or inequality in representation and visibility of females and males in the text and pictures will be a very superficial way of looking at the problem. It does not provide a complete picture of the gender inequality which is deeply rooted in each of the textbooks in some form or the other. These have been elaborated using in depth parameters used for textbook analysis.

Protagonist-

All the five English language textbooks had ten units comprising of either two or three chapters.

Some chapters having female protagonists like 'My silly sister' in *Marigold – III* did not portray the protagonist in a positive manner. The girl was referred to as silly and childish. 'He is my

Textbook Level	Number of Females	Percentage (female)	Number of Males	Percentage (male)	Total
Marigold I	86	33%	175	67%	261
Marigold II	97	49%	101	51%	198
Marigold III	62	27%	170	73%	232
Marigold IV	62	34%	120	66%	182
Marigold V	96	30%	229	71%	325
Total	403	34%	795	66%	1198

Table 1: Presence of females and males in Pictures

Textbook Level	Number of females	Percentage (female)	Number of males	Percentage (male)	Total
Marigold I	19	34%	37	66%	56
Marigold II	61	44%	77	56%	138
Marigold III	30	36%	54	64%	84
Marigold IV	45	33%	90	67%	135
Marigold V	47	28%	120	72%	167
Total	202	35%	378	65%	580

Table 2: Presence of females and males in content

Textbook Level	Number of chapters with Female protagonist	Percentage (female)	Number of chapters with Male protagonist	Percentage (male)	Number of gender neutral chapters	Percentage (neutral)	Total
Marigold I	3	15%	9	45%	8	40%	20
Marigold II	4	20%	11	55%	5	25%	20
Marigold III	3	15%	7	35%	10	50%	20
Marigold IV	4	19%	11	52%	6	29%	21
Marigold V	3	14%	14	67%	4	19%	21
Total	17	17%	52	51%	33	32%	102

Table 3: Chapters with female and male leading actors/protagonist

Textbooks of class I to III had 20 chapters and those of Class IV and V had 21 chapters each.

In each of the textbooks, only three or four chapters out of 20 or 21 had female protagonists making female representation as low as 14%. Overall, out of a total of 103 chapters reviewed, merely 17 chapters had female protagonists making it 17%, and on the other hand, 51% had male protagonists while the rest 32% chapters were gender neutral. (Table 3)

brother' in the same book had a young girl Meena as the protagonist who was carrying her younger brother on her back up the hill. It was made very clear in the story that she did not feel any load of carrying her brother on her back. It very subtly reinforced that taking care of the younger brother is the responsibility of the elder sister which can go to the extent of carrying him over the hill top.

Textbook Level	Pictures Female	Male	Text Female	Male
Marigold I	Teacher, doctor	Artist, Astronaut, Dentist, Farmer, Pilot, sailor, postman, tailor, fruit seller, Balloon seller, shopkeeper	Nurse, wife wanting child,	Farmer
Marigold II	Teacher, milking cow, Musician, Granny oiling hair, cooking	Sailor, clown, musician, magician	Teacher, cooking	Sailor, musician
Marigold III	Teacher, nurse	Farmer, newspaper boy, vegetable man, Postman, clown, astronaut, musician, driver, librarian, cobbler, dramatist		Farmer, singing, balloon man/seller, newspaper boy, vegetable ma, postman, washer man, school master
Marigold IV	Teacher, fetching water, librarian	Magician, thieves, Milkman, policeman, grocer, wrestler, ice-cream man, Pundit, King, shopkeeper, Carpenter	Farmer, teacher, grocery shopping, librarian	Magician, thieves, King, hunter, Milkman, policeman, grocer, wrestler, ice-cream man, Farmer, thieves, principal, Pundit, King, Tailor, Singer, Gatekeeper/ Guard, Shopkeeper, Carpenter
Marigold V	Caretaker, cooking, teacher	Ice cream man, milkman, mason, chef, painter, carpenter, electrician, hunter, soldier, barber, sailor, magician, skier, bus driver, train driver, conductor, signalman	Cooking	Ice cream man, king, chef, hunter, barber, magician, farmer, shopkeeper

Table 4. Occupational roles of adults in pictures and text

Textbook Level	Female authors	Percentage (female)	Male authors	Percentage (male)	Total
Marigold I	8	89%	1	11%	9
Marigold II	16	94%	1	6%	17
Marigold III	8	89%	1	11%	9
Marigold IV	16	94%	1	6%	17
Marigold V	10	91%	1	9%	11
Total	58	92%	5	8%	63

Table 5: Textbook authors

Certain chapters which depicted young girls in active roles and made them constructively visible in the textbooks included ‘Helen Keller’, based on the achievements of a physically challenged girl who could not see or hear; ‘Going to buy a book’, in which a young girl was the narrator of the story who along with her brother was given money by her grandfather to buy books because she loved to read; ‘Malu Bhalu’, which is about a mother polar bear teaching her female baby to swim with the use of positive affirmative words for her daughter like

brave, fearless and special. Another chapter was a folk tale from Manipur, in which Sanatombi, a five year old daughter of a king and queen was made the ruler of their kingdom leaving behind their three sons in a competition. The strong female characters in these stories can provide good role models for young girls who are in their formative years and are vulnerable to gender impressions being made in their raw minds.

On a positive note, some chapters were gender neutral in approach in terms of the text and language but the pictures shown along with the

text were of males. The poem 'A Kite' in *Marigold – I* is a gender – neutral poem. However, the accompanying picture in the book depicted a boy with a kite, making it gender stereotyped and instilling the idea that kite flying as a sport or leisure is meant for boys. Also, there were chapters having animals as protagonists. However, these animals were assigned male gender. 'A Little Fish Story', 'Puppy and I', and 'The Ship of the Dessert' in *Marigold – III* had animals as protagonists which were assigned the male gender. 'Kang has a Dream' had a male Kangaroo, the chapter 'I want', had a male monkey as protagonist, 'Storm in the garden' in *Marigold – II* had a male snail as a protagonist playing with his friends who suddenly encountered a storm. Similarly in 'The Mumbai Musicians', in which a male donkey Goopu played the protagonist, 'Funny Bunny' in *Marigold – II* had a male rabbit as the protagonist, 'Strange Talk' in *Marigold – II*, a poem in which the frog, the duck, and the pig were assigned male gender, 'The Tiger and the Mosquito', parrot and crow in 'Mittu and the Yellow Mango' in *Marigold – I*, chicks in 'Lalu and Peelu' in *Marigold – I*, elephant in the 'The Tailor and his Friend' in *Marigold – I*, and pigs in 'Three Little Pigs' in *Marigold – I*. There was also a chapter 'The Bubble, the Straw and the Shoe' in *Marigold – I* in which these objects were assigned male gender. Some other chapters had geese, ant, lion, mouse, crab, cat, dog, wolf, donkey, horse that were all assigned male gender while only dove, dog, ant, crow, and tiger were assigned female gender.

52 out of 102 chapters (51%) had male protagonist portrayed in various roles like ice-cream man, chef, barber, king, bridegroom, elder brother, tailor, milkman, carpenter, famer and some other hypothetical characters in stories.

Review of the literature revealed that that women lacked visibility in the school curriculum and the lessons in the NCERT textbooks were found to be largely male centric. Karlekar (2002), drawing on a 1986 study of the Hindi textbooks published by the NCERT, Delhi, showed that the ratio of boy-centric stories to girl-centric stories was 21:1. Out of the 13 English language textbooks published by the Central Institute of English and Foreign Languages, Hyderabad, boy-centric stories outnumbered girl centric stories by 81:9. This huge difference in representation of men and women in textbooks can reinforce the beliefs of young girls and boys in the male dominated nature of society that we live in. Young girls

will see no or very few female role models whom they could look up to for building their careers in economically productive professions.

Occupational Roles associated with each gender-

Little effort had been made to depict women in contemporary occupations in both visuals as well as text. Women were largely shown as taking care of children, cooking, fetching water and milking cow. Women depicted outside their nurturing role at home were shown as teacher, nurse, doctor, librarian and farmer.

Males, however, were portrayed in a variety of economically productive roles and occupations including that of artist, astronaut, dentist, farmer, pilot, sailor, postman, tailor, fruit seller, balloon seller, shopkeeper, sailor, clown, musician, magician, newspaper boy, vegetable man, driver, librarian, cobbler, dramatist, hunter, milkman, policeman, grocer, wrestler, ice-cream man, principal, priest, singer, gatekeeper/guard, carpenter, mason, chef, painter, electrician, soldier, barber, conductor etc. (Table 4).

Another study in Pakistan investigated the representation of females in the textbooks of Urdu and English for secondary school classes. Men had been assigned a wide range of activities. The work associated with male images involved intellect, seeking knowledge, political and religious activities. On other side, female images were found to be associated with service-oriented work e.g., housewife, seeking knowledge, religious activities and very small proportion as working women (Khurshid, Gillani & Hashmi, 2010).

Apart from this, at the end of each unit in all the textbooks in the present study, on the page devoted for teachers to facilitate discussion in the classroom, picture of female teacher was given. Teaching was majorly the only economically productive occupation that women were shown in. This is not to devalue the role of women as nurturers but it has to be recognised that this is a socially constructed and accepted role of women. However, it is time that we start recognising the economically productive roles that women play in their everyday lives. The problem with the present way of representation is that the young girls and even boys internalise the stereotypical and socially acceptable roles that they are exposed to from the early years and may never believe that their capability is much beyond what is traditionally depicted in textbooks.

It is time that the young generation starts questioning these traditional occupations attached with a particular gender and choose the occupation according to their interest and not because of their belonging to a particular gender.

Games, Sports and Physical Mobility

In terms of games and physical mobility of females and males, females were shown in soft sports which did not require them to be physically strong like riding on a merry go round, swings, painting, playing in the rain, playing with dolls, watering the plants, dancing, walking, running, cycling, solving jigsaw puzzle, playing sitar. They were mostly depicted in such indoor sports which do not require them to possess leadership skills and competitive spirit. Swimming, skipping, mountain climbing, climbing tree, horse riding, basketball and relay race were some outdoor sports that they were shown to be engaged in at certain places in the textbooks.

Males were shown playing a variety of outdoor sports including playing tennis, flying kites, playing with balls, doing karate, climbing on a tree, cycling, digging the ground, playing cricket, hockey, boat racing, running/racing, long jump, tug of war, archery, horse riding, dumbbell, jogging, swimming, basketball, football, riding bicycle, swinging, boxing, guli danda (game played with two sticks), scuba diving, kabaddi, volleyball, relay race, mountain climbing, boating, running, skiing, shooting marbles.

There were efforts to represent both girls and boys playing together in games such as basketball, relay race, solving jigsaw puzzle and playing with a ball. Girls were shown swinging on swings and merry-go-round, as were boys. Both girls as well as boys were also shown engaged in certain activities like painting, making clay balls, playing in the rain and visiting a zoo. What needs to be highlighted is that girls need to be shown equally involved in those activities rather than taking a secondary position for instance, in *Marigold – I*, a girl was shown holding the thread while the boy was flying the kite.

However, male dominance was clearly visible in games which are associated with physical strength and are played outdoors.

The findings of this study are in line with the findings of another similar study conducted in Tamil Nadu in which English textbooks from Standard I to IV were analysed and it was seen that textbooks reinforced gender stereotypes not

only in occupations and language used but also in games. Boys were shown in outdoor games and activities that included more physical activity, team work and higher level of competition like football, cricket, hockey, etc. Team leadership, management, and tasks that involved physical strength were seen as men's domain, and these were reflected in these gender stereotyped games. Girls were shown in indoor games which were more sedentary or required less physical activities like blind folding, playing with pebbles, playing with sand and drawing. There were also gender stereotyped games and activities associated with girls like hopping, skipping, hop scotch etc., depicted in these textbooks. The books also reinforced gender specific teams where girls and boys played separately, instead of promoting healthy inter-gender interaction. Very few games like chess, carom, kite making and clay modelling were depicted wherein both girls and boys participated together (Amruthraj, 2012). By perpetuating gender stereotyped games and activities, these textbooks promote gender discrimination and gender inequality giving the message that girls and boys have different gender roles.

Personality Attributes used for females and males:

Grade I and II English textbook had short stories and poems, and most of them had animals as their characters. The adjectives used for both females and males were hence less in number. The adjectives associated with females included happy, beautiful, wise, nice, talkative and short woman and those associated with males included sad, brave, nervous, nice, tall, wise, funny and lazy.

Starting from grade III, stereotypes were seen in the adjectives used to describe personality traits of females as well as males. Some adjectives used to describe females included happy, sad, crying, fat, silly, childish, naughty, funny, thin, fair, delicate, kind, pretty, little girl in a skirt and crying. In the story of Helen Keller, some traits used to describe the protagonist included bright little girl, smart, wild and angry, which tried to break the traditional stereotypical image of women. There is a dire need to include such stories and poems depicting women and girls in strong roles and highlighting the strengths that they display while encountering challenging situations and everyday life.

Men and boys had also been ascribed traits traditionally associated with them which included wise, curious, happy, cruel, heavy, young, strong, rich, learned, naughty and clever.

It is important to mention here that the textbook included a song in one of the chapters titled 'The man in an Onion Bed' which depicted a man crying very hard which could help children normalise the belief that it is okay for men to cry. However, the man was crying while cutting an onion. On the contrary, wherever women and girls were shown crying, there was some emotional reason associated with it. For instance, a girl named Rita had been depicted as crying, in one of the exercises, when she lost her dog Sheero and could not find him when she reached home. An exercise for punctuation marks in another chapter included a sentence, 'Laxmi, why are you crying?'. It is imperative to substitute these kinds of pictures and sentences with more gender sensitive texts and visuals, since such portrayal could make young girls and boys internalise the belief that crying is the only coping mechanism for females when dealing with a challenging situation. Also, it may internalise another belief that it is not okay for men and boys to cry when faced with an emotional upheaval. In order that both these belief systems do not nurture in our children, the textbook writers need to be careful about the context and situations in which women and men are depicted as crying.

First-ness in Language used

First-ness in language can provide evidence of gender imbalance. Although effort has been made to use gender neutral terms like children in the exercises in all the five textbooks, especially on Teachers' page, expressions like him/her, boys and girls, he/she have been used at 43 places in the five textbooks analysed. Some other instances of male-first occurrences included use of expressions like fight with your brother or sister, what work do these men or women do, and dada-dadi, nana-nani, father-mother, papa and mama, where the male was addressed first and then the female. If talking about first-ness in terms of female, only at 16 places the expressions like girls and boys, her/him, she/he, mummy-papa and sister-brother were used to address both the genders. There is a scope for making the textbook gender sensitive by substituting the above phrases with more gender neutral or gender sensitive phrases. In many a situations with the use of plurals, gender first-ness can be addressed and also both genders can be imagined to be involved in the tasks.

A similar study conducted on Punjab board's English language textbooks for classes VII to X in Pakistan also concluded that gender bias in school textbooks needs to be addressed. The

language used in the text of class VII textbook itself was gender biased. 'He' had been used in the examples to explain a point reinforcing in the minds of young children that women do not have an identity of their own (Mattu & Hussain, 2003). The female first-ness to male first-ness ratio of 16:43 reflects that the pattern followed in all the five textbooks is in fact a reflection of society's preference for males. It is a reflection of the superiority that is associated with being a 'man' which is engrained in the mind-set of the population.

Gender specific expressions in Language-

Use of various gender specific expressions in language could be seen in all the textbooks except *Marigold – II*. Many of these expressions stereotype and limit various occupations to one particular gender. Such terms used included policeman, ice-cream man, milkman, signalman, balloon man, newspaper boy, vegetable man, washer man and school master.

In addition to this, it was found that in many exercises and to explain a point, a child was referred to as 'he', for instance, "[E]veryone is great in his own way", "[T]he more confident he feels, the more motivated he will be...." and "[T]he child should learn to trust himself.....", "[E]very child sees every story he hears..", "[H]e learns that each of his friends has...", "[A] child can let his friends see the....", "[C]hild's freedom to express how he thinks", "[A] child can stand on his head through the practice of yoga", "[H]e (child) can never be clever enough...." and "as sad as a man can be". These expressions may be a result of inadvertently displaying the personal perceptions and learned ways of writing but they definitely perpetuate the male-centric bias in thinking. These have to be addressed through a conscious effort of unshackling archetypal mindsets.

There were instances where girls and boys were labeled with certain stereotypical traits like, in a chapter 'The magic garden' in *Marigold – III*, the use of expression 'the boys are good to us too. They dig the ground so well', labeled boys to be physically strong who could dig the ground while girls watered the plants in the accompanying picture. In a poem 'First day at school' in *Marigold – II*, a child was wondering, "If my teacher will look like Mom or Gran..." reinforcing the stereotyped teaching profession for women.

It is time that we do away with such stereotype expressions reflecting our patriarchal society, at least in our textbooks to begin with.

Textbook authors

However, the skewed gender representation in textbooks could not be linked to the involvement of female or male authors during writing and publishing of the books as more female authors were involved in writing and developing the content of the textbooks in consideration. (Table 5).

So this under representation and stereotypical portrayal of females can be attributed to the general mind-set of both females and males in our patriarchal society. The textbook authors whether female or male, after all are part of this society which seems to be dependent on actions led by men and women being more emotional and subservient to men. Until and unless a firm resolve to be gender neutral is made, it becomes tough to avoid what appears to be natural due to the process of socialisation they have been through.

Conclusion & Recommendation:

It can be concluded that since textbooks reflect the curriculum, they are extremely important sources of information for young students.

Stereotypes in representation of females and males were seen in visuals, texts, depiction in occupation, leading actors in chapters, depiction in games, language used and overall representation of females and males.

Both invisibility of women and stereotypical portrayal wherever visible are issues of great concern in the textbooks analysed. The textbooks depicted lesser number of women in visuals and content including chapters and exercises as compared to men, signalling a biased opinion that women contribute less to society as compared to men. Women and men were engaged in stereotypical roles both in content and visuals. There were significantly lesser number of females in the textbook and whenever and wherever they were present, they were shown to be in their traditional stereotypical roles like, teachers, nurses, doctors, cooking and other such nurturing roles. There was no contemporary occupation or role defined for them. It is difficult for young minds to find a female role model in the present textbooks since they did not focus on the range of roles that women and men play in our constantly evolving society. This is instrumental in shaping the vision of girls and boys about who they are and what they can become, and such distorted images and portrayals can have a detrimental effect on the construction of gender identity among young children. Through this under-

representation of women and stereotypical portrayal of both women and men, young children are constantly being exposed to the message that males are superior and females are inferior. This is really detrimental to the socialization of the young minds as they are being made to believe in such stereotypical gender roles since their foundation years. In societies where they already enter the school environment with a pre-set belief about gender roles and occupations from their socialization in families, the textbooks further reinforcing their belief system will reiterate the gender biased ideology in their minds.

It is extremely important and necessary to remove such bias from the content, visuals and exercises from school textbooks beginning right from preschool till higher secondary level across all states and countries. From the studies reviewed, the stereotypical depiction of women and men in the textbooks can be called as a universal phenomenon. If, as a society, we want to broaden the potential for growth and development of both women and men, we need to address this issue at the earliest. Otherwise, we can only expect that the formal curriculum at schools would further reinforce the traditional gender roles that young minds have been socialised into from their families and other sources of socialisation.

In terms of language used, it is recommended to pay attention to the adjectives used for females and males. More stories and poems highlighting women and young girls in strong roles need to be included rather than depicting girls as crying in some statements used in exercises. Also, for textbooks to address both females and males equally, it is important to substitute 'he' which was used more in examples with 'she' or 'he' depending on the context or use 'she/he' where both sexes are applicable in the subject or use plurals like 'they'. The approach of using only he/his/him is a sexist approach and needs to be substituted with a more gender neutral approach. The use of plural pronouns like 'they/them/their' instead of 'he/she/her/him' is a good alternative. Also, 'it' can be used in stories where animals are playing the protagonists instead of representing them as males.

In terms of appropriate representation of both the sexes in both visual and text, both women and men should be shown in realistic roles depicting a progressive society. Instead of constantly showing women in their traditional roles of teacher, nurse and doctor, they should be shown in other professions such as engineers, lawyers,

architects, along with representations from all types of work and jobs they take up now-a-days. Even though the numbers may be less, for instance, women in call centres, as cab drivers, pilots, in army and police services, as scientists and lab technicians and men as cooks, stewards in hospitality and washing clothes and caring for children and old people etc., a gender-neutral representation will help the students to break free from the stereotypes.

However, that doesn't mean that the domestic work that they do should be looked down upon or criticised. In fact, it is equally important to acknowledge the fact that men may be equally interested in cooking. Men may also like to care for their children and play with them. Men may not always like to be masculine or be engaged in

outdoor sports and therefore they need to be relieved of this burden of a macho image. So whether talking about unpaid tasks performed at home or paid professions people may be engaged in, outside of the home, stereotypes need be done away with in order to depict a more realistic and progressive society and inculcate the right gender ideologies in the mind-set of young girls and boys.

Since, the teachers majorly rely on textbooks for imparting knowledge to their students irrespective of the grade and standard, the textbook writers and authors need to be careful about all the above aspects. It is not just the visibility of women and girls which is important, but correct and fair representation of each gender is crucial.

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