CULTURAL IDENTITY AND GENDER IDENTITY: THEIR INTERRELATEDNESS, AND INFLUENCE OF CULTURAL IDENTITY ON GENDER IDENTITY

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Abstract: Cultural Identity and Gender Identity are two different terms related to each other and have massive influence on each other. Cultural Identity is perhaps the most important part of one's existence. It is a sense of belonging. One cannot feel himself/herself alienated from the group, society and the country in which he/she lives. Our Cultural Identity represents us on a global platform. It connects people of different groups who are culturally identical or have same upbringing. Hence, we can say that Cultural Identity is a somewhere a broader idea than Gender Identity. Gender Identity connects those people who physically, mentally and emotionally associate themselves with any gender particularly. Gender Identity is the personal sense of one's own gender. Gender can differ from the assigned sex of that person at birth. Every society has a set of his own gender categories that helps in the formation of one's social identity and upbringing. Sex is based upon the genes, hormones and genital person is born with, but gender is decided by the idea of how one should look and behave according to the sex. Gender Identity is how you feel inside. This paper discusses the effects of culture on gender and to which extent Cultural Identity is interrelated to Gender Identity.

Keywords: Cultural Identity, Ethnicity, Gender Identity, Heterogeneous Society.

Introduction: There are various aspects of Cultural Identity. Nationality, Ethnicity, Religion, Education, etc. When we own any culture, we embrace all the customs, traditions, norms which reveals our heritage and somewhere helps us in identifying other people who have the similar traditions, beliefs and upbringing. In our family, our parents, grandparents and other family members hold responsibility to make us embrace our culture and to practice it, and it helps in making a connection with the people of similar Cultural Identity.

If we talk about India, it is one of the most religiously and ethnically diverse nation in the world. Indian people are very attached to their religion. Though India is a secular
Hindu majority country, people of various religion lives here happily and peacefully and connected with each other through sports, festivals, dance, music and language.

Gender plays vital role in one's Cultural Identity. Cultures across the world has made some standards for people of various sex to adjust themselves psychologically. Gender Identity defines one's sense of femininity or masculinity and other hidden identities.

Gender refers to the characteristics and behaviors a culture associates with being a member of one or the other of the sexes (*American Psychological Association, 2006; Upton, 2012)*. If we talk

about the role of a major category of gender i.e., women, we may find that they play different roles according to the customs, traditions and norms of that culture to which they belong. Some are responsible for domestic work such as taking care of their children and family members, performing household activities, cooking. In most societies they help in productive activities, such as, in industries, management stuffs, paid laborers.

In *The Japanese Woman,* it is stated that Japanese women believe even though men and women are different in deposition, behavior and biology, they can be equal as human *(Iwao p.3).* Not only men and women, LGBTQ community has risen above of their fear of being ashamed of who they are and has acquired a cultural as well as gender identity.

They are also participating in the development and betterment of their society and are also serving their respective countries. They are rising their voices and are fighting for their rights too.

Society has determined the characteristics of various genders, especially of men and women. Women traditionally come under the category of polite, gentle, passive, emotional, dependent, communicative and as well as obedient, whereas, men are traditionally considered as powerful and strong, independent, rebel, inexpressive, straightforward. These Cultural labels influence the Gender Identity of a person and a person indirectly. Sometimes, these traditional beliefs demoralize the person. These beliefs have become an unfair point to raise fingers on the capabilities of women. They face humiliation and rejection at their working place. Even there is a huge difference between the pay scale for man and woman at various working platforms.

Societies are heterogeneous in their composition. There are divided in various class, race, religion, community and these have made some moor which are portrayed as an ideal and appropriate behavior for a person of specific sex and that person should follow that. The United States of America and other developed countries are trying hard to demolish the barrier of discrimination against women and LGBTQ community. In childhood days, boys are made to play with gun, blocks, videogames and cars as it defines their masculine character, whereas, girls are made to play with dolls, which defines her feminine qualities. However, it is believed that the toys with which a child plays determine his/her future skill and tells about his/her inclination towards a specific gender. Playing with blacks is considered giving experience in specific relations and in mathematical concepts, where playing with dolls and dramatic role playing is associated with learning to be a nurturer (*Gonzalez-Mena 2006).*

Conclusions: Therefore, one's femininity and masculinity can be regarded as their Gender Identity, as it refers to the degree of one seeing themselves as a man or woman, within a society (Stets & Burke, 2000).Gender is defined as the social construct of sex. One's social construct (gender) can be different from his biological makeup (sex). So, there is a long way to go to eliminate the gender discrimination which is being highly influenced by cultural norms.

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