

GENDERED SOCIALIZATION OF A GIRL CHILD IN A HINDU PATRIARCHAL SOCIETY

Ashu Sharma

This paper attempts to understand the gendered socialization of a girl child in a patriarchal society. It argues that socialization is gendered, culturally constituted and socially recognized process. It highlights the ways in which young girls and women are expected to behave and perform the appropriated roles in a patriarchal society. It is contended here that socialization, though is a universal process, is gendered, like gendered division of labour

Introduction

Socialization is an ongoing process of development in which people develop and define who they are as individuals in relation to the society in which they live. The present venture aims at the socialization of girl child in a patriarchal society. A Patriarchal setup implies 'Male domination', male prejudice (against women) or simply 'Male power.' Women are produced as the gendered subjects. Gender roles are conceived, enacted and learned within a complex of relationships. The desirability of having sons and the undesirability of having more daughters in Indian societal context often speaks of the patriarchal mindset. It can be stated that the construction of feminine identity begins very early on in all societies. Girls began to understand the special value accorded to boys when they hear comments like, 'very sweet, how wonderful if she had been a boy. The notions of adjustment, tolerance and sacrifice are embedded in cultural ideology and therefore, restraint, obedience and sacrifice are important elements in girl's training.

Natal Home

Girls grow up with the notion of temporary membership within the natal home. They have no right of membership in the natal family, and have and have no obligation to contribute towards its maintenance. Their main concern is to establish themselves in the new family and acquire

status there. In the Natal home, girls are socialized during their Pre-Pubertal and Pubertal phase.

1

The Pre-Pubertal Phase

During this phase, a girl is considered to be intrinsically pure. This quality of purity is given special recognition in several rituals. For example, the eighth day of the festival of nine days (navratras) is one such special occasion when little girls are invited for worship food. During this phase, they can play with boys and no restrictions are imposed upon them.

The onset of Puberty

The onset of Puberty introduces dramatic changes in the life of a girl. In many societies, the onset of Puberty is celebrated in different forms like in Karnataka, at her first menstruation, a girl is feed dry coconut, milk, ghee, certain fruits, a mixture of jiggery and sesame seeds, and also meat and chicken soups, among meat eating groups. At this stage, a girl has now crossed the threshold-out of childhood and into the most crucial stage of her life, when her body has acquired the capacity to reproduce. So this phase is characterized by restrictions on movement and on interaction with males. This phenomenon of boundary maintenance is a crucial element in the definition of the cultural apprehension about the vulnerability of young girls and the emphasis on their purity and restraint in their behavior. This is expressed in the construction of 'legitimate' and proper models of speech, demeanor, and the behavior for young girls. These models defines how she should carry herself, the way she sits, stands, and talks and interacts with others.

The Process of Socialization for future roles.

It is of course, difficult to speak of a single pattern of gender based division of work since it is characterized by considerable diversity across regions and social groups. The notions of appropriateness or inappropriateness of particular kinds of work for adult females and males get reflected in the work assigned to girls and boys. The naturalness of such division is conveyed to little girls effectively, without necessarily generating a feeling of discrimination, by encouraging them in various games which involves 'dolls', 'house-hold', 'Kitchen work', 'marriage' and 'visiting neighbors'. Beginning with assistance in cooking and other kitchen work, serving food, caring for younger siblings, preparing for the worship of family deities, and looking after the aged, girls themselves learn to take over some responsibilities of the household. Another aspect of girls socialization process is that they should learn to bear pain and deprivation, eat anything

they are given. This is a part of the training for the reality that there is not any certainty about the type of family or home she will go after marriage. So she is being socialized in the way that she should be like water, which does not have a shape of its own and so can take the shape of the vessel into which it is poured.

Conclusion

The structuring of women as gendered subjects through Hindu rituals and practices is fundamentally implicated in the constitution and reproduction of a social system characterized by gender asymmetry and the overall subordination of women. To state this, however, is not argued that women are passive, unquestioning victims of these practices. It is within these limits that women questions their situation, express resentment, use manipulative strategies, utilize their skills, and turn deprivation and self denial into sources of power and attempt to carve out a living space.

References

- Dube, Leela.2001. 'Anthropological Explorations in Gender': Intersecting Fields. New Delhi. Sage Publications.
- Walby, S.1990. 'Theorizing Patriarchy'. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- Ardener, Shirley.1975. 'Perceiving Women'. New York: Wiley.
- Dube, Leela.1997.'Women and Kinship'. United Nations. University Press.