

GENDER - The View

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Foreword

The book titled “Gender-The View” is a work that tries to view the representation of “Gender” in the popular advertisements. The manner in which gender is represented in the advertisements is focussed in the book. The stereotyping of gender, understanding of the idea of gender pertaining to the representation in the advertisements, the positive and negative statements about gender equality represented have been focussed from an analytical point of view in the book.

Gender - The View

When you wake up every morning, whether you think of your office work or the recipe for the breakfast depends on one answer- “What is your gender?”. The gender assigned roles by the society are numerous and beyond doubt most of us try to fit into the gender roles assigned to us. Right from childhood, we envision our lives holding in mind the expectations of the society that we should fulfill.

Once you return from office, after a hectic day of work, you can relax at 180 degree on your cushion and there would be a person offering you tea with a 70 degree slant. Irrespective of the age, social background, if we try to visualize these two people, in most cases the gender of the person relaxing after office work is male and the gender of the person offering tea is female. Until the recent decades, this visual was a common presence in the advertisements of tea and coffee powder. There is a change in the advertisements, but let take a minute to think, if this change in the advertisements is reflected in the society.

In order to understand human evolution, the study of infant behavior, subsequent development process, the social conditioning, the structure of the society have all been studied in depth by the anthropologists. The children have the natural tendency to socialize because they are happy getting attention and love to be in lively environment.

Everyone is equal before law. Law of a nation cannot permit gender bias, but still, there prevails a sad reality of how the gender bias is incorporated into the functioning of governance and civilian behavior in many countries.

In many conservative societies, it is taken for granted that every married woman has the duty to childbearing and rearing. Even the number of children the women should bear is decided by the elders or the spouse. In case the women, voices out her choices, there is always a tinge of irritation from the family followed by the labeling as “spoiled brat”, “feminist”, “a woman with no respect for the value system of

the family”’. A recent advertisement of a popular tea brand is an eye opener, regarding this scenario that prevails in the family.

This advertisement is a well studied one, where the social scenario is reflected clearly. A lady is getting ready, to go for her office work, the assumption the viewers could reach from her attire and the reply she gives to the phone call, gives an idea that probably she is employed in corporate sector. The mother-in-law arrives on the scene, and when she finds the tea jar empty, she feels unhappy. She diplomatically informs her daughter-in-law to resign her job, as she would find it very difficult to manage the family and the job at the same time. Later she finds the tea filled in the cups and takes it.

The smart daughter-in-law asks how the teas tastes, to which the mother-in-law answers that the colour, taste, aroma are perfect. The daughter-in-law states that the family, office and child would be similarly taken care of her in a perfect manner. This particular advertisement

underwent a revision in the narration in the following dialogue “Once the child is born, you resign your job, because it would be hard for you to manage the family and the child at the same time”. The revised version had the modification as “Once the child is born, it might be difficult for you to manage everything, if you feel that you need some rest then it might be difficult for you”. This revision in this advertisement carries a lot of importance as to how the world views the career and the official aspirations of a women.

Men are expected to have a good career, it is a mandate attributed to the gender, the colloquial phrase which says “Uthiyogam Purusha lakshanam”, is the accepted stand of the society in many instances. The income earned by a woman in a family is mostly viewed as secondary income. If there arises a need for a family member for a caretaker, the first lot always falls on the women in the family. In case the family does not have women who are not employed, then mostly the working women are asked to take up the task, many a times at the cost

of their career choices. This reality is portrayed in many advertisements. The advertisements in the medical journals showcase mostly women as the caretaker for the ailing elderly. The basic reason for the prevalence of this kind of scenario is that there prevails a belief system that women are good caretakers; they can perform these roles very well. The female dominance in the field of nursing is a key evidence for the prevalence of this idea. On the other hand, when it comes to the surgeons and the medical experts, when the skill level is held in high regard, the feminine dominance is less. There are very few men who venture into the field of nursing profession. Mostly in South India, you can very clearly see the scenario of the hospital nurses being addressed as “Sister” (meaning nurse, rather than the relationship based idea of sister). Always the advertisements related to hospitals portray the nurses as belonging to the female gender.

Let us look at two importance fields of great importance to any country, they are medicine and defense. The defense forces are vital for

the protection and development of a nation, the army, the navy and the air force are the shield of the nation which ensures protection. This job demands 24x7 days of commitments and utmost dedication, for if they are not vigilant, it can weaken the defense system.

Now let us look at the field of medicine, this is in many ways similar to the defense force. The medical professionals have to be highly committed and their job nature equally demands 24x7 service and utmost dedication. Any negligence in their duty would result in the loss of valuable lives. Hence, they have to be active, vigilant, service minded and hardworking with great commitment.

I hope, there would be a general agreement on the above two aspects discussed. Now let us analyze the gender bias norms that are generally seen and analyze the realistic scenario. Defense and medicine , two kinds of profession, which equally demand an almost similar kind a work nature and timing. One profession has female

domination and the other has male domination. Yes, as we have already discussed, the nursing field has female majority and similarly the defense forces has male majority.

The basic reason for this scenario is that the society believes that, if the work assigned to a person has to be done in a meticulous manner, he should possess the innate requirements required for the same. From times immemorial the society has attributed the role of caretaker to women and the role of protector to men from the cave men days. Hence, the idea of protection is associated with the male gender and the idea of caretaking is associated with the female gender. This scenario is seen in the society, the reflection of which is clearly visible through the advertisements.

When a woman conceives and expects a baby in ancient times, the male would bring the requirements and the woman would tend to her health. After child birth, the role of tending the child would be taken by the mother, as she is the one who can nurse the child, now the father

would take care of all the other requirements. This scenario is not a monopoly of the human beings; even many species in the animal world adopt this model of child rearing.

In the 21st century, when the scenario has advanced, and there is no necessity for a protector at the entry of the cave, there is a liberation offered to the person to pursue his profession, even when the child rearing activity is going on at home. Now let us rethink on the tea advertisement, there father of the child, the husband of the working women, the son of the elderly mother-in law is not present in the scene. Probably let us assume that he has gone to his office for work. Now there is a question as to what crops up in his mind, if he has heard the discussion between his mother and wife, regarding her resigning the job. Here are some of the possibilities:

1. Will my mother-in-law ask a similar question to me?

2. How can I manage the family with my sole income?
3. Who will take care of the child, if my wife has to go to office?
4. If I opt to stay at home and take care of the child what kind of treatment would the society put me through?
5. If I take a career break because of the parental duties, later, will that break affect the progress of my career?
6. By placing the responsibility of child rearing on the shoulder of my wife am I being selfish?
7. Is it morally correct to ask my wife to take care of the entire family responsibility when I take time to improve my career prospects?
8. Will my decision to focus on my career, create a rift in my married life?
9. If I support my wife and share the child rearing responsibility, will my family and relatives view me as an henpecked husband?

10. If I was in a nuclear family, I could do things to help my wife, where the scrutiny of the family members would not be there?

These questions are only few of the questions that bother the working men in the current scenario.

The age old generation are tuned to a belief system that the women have the sole responsibility of child rearing, while it is the father who has authority over the child. Even the child carries the initial or the surname of the father. This is a clear marker of the gender bias that prevails in the society. The daughter-in-law handles the situation in a diplomatic manner. She is not ready to compromise on her career or her child. This is the dilemma of the working women clearly represented in through the advertisement.

Similar to this advertisements, there was another advertisement by Raymonds, which has the theme of parental duties, which should be credited for an ideal story board. A lady along with

her husband is to start for work; she remembers something and goes back. Again they get ready to leave, once again she goes inside. Later the lady comes and is about to leave to her office, while her husband is seen to hold the new born young baby along with the caretaker of the baby and waves to the young mother, who then leaves to her office, with comfort. This advertisement is a positive advertisement in breaking the gender stereotyping. Here again we can relate the two advertisements.

It is vital, that the issue of gender discrimination is addressed and rectified at all levels. As held by many, gender discrimination is not something that stops with the oppression of women alone; it has a wide scene that must be covered. The male are also victims of the gender discrimination though in a quite different manner.

Being human and being humane are innate traits that are prevalent in the species irrespective of gender. Hence, the appeal these advertisements create appeal to the general public.

The tea advertisement has given focus to the real life situation of the working women, who have to balance their work and family life, especially when they have the responsibility of child rearing. Unless otherwise there is external support in the form of a family member or caretaker, it is extremely difficult for working women to manage the situation. The offer of the mother-in-law to take responsibility in the household chores highlights that the family should be supportive of the working women. This advertisement leaves certain queries unanswered, is child rearing and domestic chores the monopoly of the feminine gender. Is it that the men in the family, like the father, grandfather have passive roles or rather no duty or responsibility in the upbringing of the child? These kinds of questions do arise in case of many other advertisements as well.

The advertisement by pain relief balm, show cases the quality of the product by focusing on the day of a homemaker, who has numerous roles

to play in the family. “When the balm is there, why should you fear pain”, is the tag line of this particular advertisement. One aspect which is to be noticed about this advertisement is the model of benevolent sexism employed in it. No doubt, it is the mother’s responsibility to take care of the family member, but is it solely the mother’s responsibility alone. The father in the family is seen reading the newspaper, returning from the office, while the mother manages all the household chores and takes care of the children and the elderly members in the family.

Interestingly, if you speak to the youngsters many of them prefer to live in nuclear families, especially at the initial phase of their married life. The major reason for this, cited by many youngsters is the family pressure, on the young couple to fit into the conventional gender roles, of the wife taking care of all the household chores. In a scenario when the couples are in a competitive career path, this poses them a great difficulty.

The questions that would probably arise in the minds of the young working women watching the tea advertisement would be:

1. Why is this question asked only to the women?
2. Why can't the elderly lady ask the same question to her son?
3. Why is the women's career choice always secondary?
4. Managing the family and the work, is it that easy without the support from the family?
5. Ultimately the assurance given by the young women, I will take care of everything perfectly. In the realistic scenario this is something that would really pose great difficulty, without a strong support system. It is high time people realize that everyone has the right to lead a life of their choice?

When we want to create a good society, we should definitely work towards, creating a society that respects the rights of everyone barring the discrimination based on gender, caste and creed.

Let us look at the advertisements that focus on the role of working women, like doctors, engineers, civil servants and people from the defense force. A decade earlier, the representation of the female gender in these kinds of roles in the advertisements was very rare. Today there is a positive change. If we have observed there is quite an improvement in the ratio of the women models in advertisements representing these kinds of roles. A civil engineering endorsing the cement, doctor recommending the soaps and antiseptic liquid are quite common today. The aviation staff, pilot and even the representation of the women in the defense force has increased.

“Boost is the secret of my energy”

Yes, this advertisements tag line is known to everyone, the famous cricketers have been the brand ambassadors of this particular advertisement. Tendulkar, Kohli, Dhoni and many more male sports celebrities have endorsed the product “Boost”. The story boards for years have been the same, with not much of change for

decades until late. The usual story board covers the expertise of a young cricket aspirant, who bowls or bats and tries to prove his mettle. The brand ambassador motivates the young cricketer and makes him focus more and encourages him to improvise his stamina and game. Hence, “Boost” the energy drink helps to boost their performance and stamina, “Boost is the secret of my energy”, goes the tag line.

One question that would have propped up in the minds of some viewers, at least, is stamina and sports the monopoly of the male gender. Yes, this rational enquiry has resulted in the new changes in the advertisements. Now the new advertisement of “Boost” has a very positive view on gender equality. A girl plays cricket in the tennis court, Dhoni, with a group of his trainee boys are surprised. The boys tell her tennis is the game for the girls, not cricket. The smart budding sport star replies, “It is not gender, but the stamina that matters in sports”. Indeed a true fact. She plays with good skill and proves to be a worthy cricketer.

Individual choices, the role of gender has a visible aura that is created by the view of the society. Let us think of a realistic example. The famous cricketer, Tendulkar's son chose to be cricketer, and his daughter, chose to be a model. The son of Amitabh Bachchan chose to be an actor, while the daughter chose to stay away from acting. Yes, beyond doubt the individuals make their choices, but even at that level, the gender narration can be clearly seen in such scenarios.

The viewership for the women in sports is comparatively very less, when compared to the fanfare given to the men in sports. This scenario is undergoing a sea change gradually. Harmanpreet Kaur's has the credit of being the first women cricketer to take the celebrity sports person role in the recent boost advertisement. The company and the advertisement team deserve applause for their efforts in forging gender equality.

Indeed a sea change. From the playground which has no space for a women to express her

desire to explore sports, there has come a day a women cricketer is endorsing the energy drink brand. Truly, it is a rocking change.

The advertisement of a popular detergent powder has given space for the women fanfare in the viewership of T20 cricket matches. The young son of cricket fan acknowledges his mother passion for cricket, while the husband does the laundry, acknowledging her passion to view the series. The older advertisements related to sports either ignored the presence of women fanfare and even worse the women in sports altogether, while the 21st century has given a twist to these pattern and come up with advertisements that promote gender equity.

The Cadbury advertisement with sports as the backdrop has created history by placing gender equality as the focus. In the 1990's Cadbury came up with an advertisement, that had cricket as the backdrop for the endorsement of the product. Unlike many other products, using cricket as the background, this particular advertisement

only had only models from the advertisement industry and not brand ambassadors.

The male lead, who is a cricketer, scores a six, which is celebrated by the crowd. The love interest/ wife of the male lead dances in joy and walks into the playground, tasting the Cadbury. This advertisement was very popular, two decades after this advertisement went out of telecasting, the Cadbury advertisement came up with another advertisement of similar nature, but with the story board promoting gender equality. Here the role reversal was done, the female lead happens to be the cricketer and the male lead the viewer from the gallery. In a moment of anticipation of which team would win the match. The female lead scores a six and the male lead who views the game from the gallery, enters the field dancing, celebrating the victory. It is a simple and captivating advertisement, but a strong narrative on gender equality. These kinds of advertisements open our eyes and thoughts. In terms of sports the fanfare for the women sports is very less compared to that of the fanfare for the

male sports. The participation of the girls in the school days are high, but once they enter higher education or adulthood, the social restrictions and the lack of support from the family and the society pose difficulties to them in pursuing sports as careers.

The JSW advertisement, featuring Geetha Bhogat, was a eye opener to this scenario, this advertisement has the backdrop of a conservative village, which does not approve of women participating in sports, especially as something like wrestling. This advertisement, focused on the strength of the product through the narrative. The dialogues of the advertisement echo the views of the gender bias society. “Women wearing shorts, women running in shorts on the streets, women fighting men in wrestling,..etc”. This advertisement is an eye opener, which tried to highlight the need for the society to respect the aspirations of the sports women.

The biopic of wrestler Bhogat and his daughter, Geetha Bhogat and Babitha Bhogat

was the inspiration behind the famous movie “Dangal”, a strong narrative that highlighted the need for gender equality.

The gender assigned norms of the society, make the father think that only a son can make his dream of winning a gold medal for the nation come true. When he is blessed with only daughters, he thinks that he has lost his chance. To his surprise, in an unexpected event, he realizes that his daughters have exceptional skills in wrestling, which if groomed would turn them into good wrestlers. The society is skeptical, the relatives scorn, but the determination of the father helps the girls to become world renowned wrestlers. This event is a narration of change.

Likewise, the role of women in the male dominating sectors are opening new avenues for creating a society that has power to create a society that does not discriminate individuals and their potentials based on gender.

The biscuit advertisements from times immemorial tried to showcase the women

bring the teacups, jars and the biscuits. The recent advertisements of a biscuit brand gave an innovative twist and showcased a man bring the teacups with the biscuits for his family to have tea. “When we understand and help each other, it leads to the better function of the family” goes the tagline. Yes, it is mandatory that people learn to see beyond the gender specific roles and pay respect to the individuals; this in turn can bring a massive change in the society.

This really brings to mind an important historic event that occurred in a person’s life. “Once a woman asked a question to a man, the question was “You have come to attend such an important historic event, why is that you have not brought your wife along with you?” The man was surprised, he told, “what would a women do in such an event, she has no idea of the significance of the event”. The rest is history, the woman who posed the question was Annie Besant and the man who replied was the great poet Bharathiar. This incident change the course of Bharthiar’s life, it turned him into a feminist,

who advocated for the need for the education and equality of women. This is the power of dialogue and narration.

One we were all feminists, yes, when we were babies. The vigor to fight and be angry at unbiased treatment is very powerfully represented by the babies, irrespective of their biological gender. The unconscious and the conscious social conditioning happen at this state. We all have thought of gifts for the new born babies. Even among the attire for the new born babies section, there emerges the idea of gender stereotyping. The blue costumes with the chotta beem design for the boys and the baby pink costume with the pretty Barbie doll pictures for the girls. Even when we go to a shop to choose the dolls for the child, the salesperson would first enquire about the gender of the child. There is a clear segregation of the toys for the girls and the boys. The fancy toys, with bright coloured costumes, Barbie dolls, miniature of the cookery items, are the usual display for the girls' choices. While the technical toys like the

cars, motor vehicles, aircrafts are for the boys. Have we ever thought why always we answer these questions and then choose the product. The social conditioning begins at this level.

Even when the school bags are purchased for the children, the gender plays a major role in their choices. This idea of gender stereotypes prevails in various forms, both visible and invisible. At both the conscious level and the unconscious level, this idea prevails deep.

In reality, the technical toys are preferred by both genders, but the appreciation, the operant conditioning forces the child to accept the socially preferred toys, rather than going for an opposing kind of choice. There should be change in this kind of choices, open choices should be created, right from the childhood.

Rather than terming female as the less capable gender for the technically advanced skill level, there should be a platform which gives equal opportunities for the children, irrespective of their gender to explore, various options.

Once there existed a belief that women are poor at mathematics, this view underwent a change, when many women proved their mettle as mathematicians. Mary Shelley, daughter of the famous poet, Shelley was a renowned mathematician.

Shakunthala Devi, the great mathematician from India, who is called as “the human computer” is a real life example for the capability of women in Mathematics. Thus we need to understand in many ways the views, that prevail in the society, limits the opportunities of the womenfolk. In case of Skuntahals Devi, as well, the biopic of her life which goes by the same name, provides examples for the biased treatment, meted out by the society.

The mathematical genius is married to a civil servant, the society expects her to fit into the role of the wife and pay attention to her duties. She voices the unjust view of the society, “If it was the husband who was a mathematics genius, the world would have expected her to

resign her job and accompany her mathematical genius husband throughout the world, in order to showcase his talent". It is very hard for the society to accept the reverse situation.

When the girls are taught to take up secondary roles, naturally, the tendency towards the professions considered as male domain lose the focus of women.

The appreciation and the disapproval from the society plays a vital role, in the decisions and the personality development of the child. In case of women who have chosen careers beyond the stereotypes, there usually happens to have factors of positive gender views, which have influenced them in their lives, especially in the earlier phases of their lives.

In terms of beauty norms, especially the manner in which the cosmetics have portrayed women has to be analyzed from various viewpoints. Grooming is a common phenomenon, that has occurred in the human civilization, and beyond doubt the advertisements lay over

emphishs on the beauty standards of women, in order to promote their products.

Skin complexion, body structure, visual appeal in appearance, beauty and attire are the major focus of these advertisements. The colonial mindset of the fair skin being preferred by the masses, is still prevalent. The models who appear in these advertisements promote the western view of body structuring and beauty, where fair complexion and the hour glass figure are the sought after beauty concepts.

Here again of late, there are few positive kind of changes in these advertisements. Instead of focusing on the complexion and the worries women carry in their mind about their beauty, some advertisements try to focus on the social aspects of high importance.

The recent advertisement of cinthol soap, is an advertisement, one of its kind, which shows a young girl aspiring to be a collector, like her elder sister. Here again this particular advertisements focus is on skincare and not

beauty. This advertisements is a positive kind of advertisements, which motivates women to understand that beauty is only skin deep, and there are matters of utmost importance to the society.

“Courage is the real beauty of women” states a recent advertisement of a toilet soap. This idea of bring women out into the social spectrum and providing them equal opportunity is of vital importance for the progress of the human civilization.

The created aura of the gender identity, makes the youngsters believe in the idea of beauty, fitness and attractiveness run behind unhealthy lifestyle trends such as starving to reduce weight, over usage of cosmetics, resorting to cosmetic surgeries to look attractive.

The filters used in the profile pictures and the method of photo shop editing work done at higher expense are the standing proof for the unhealthy trends adopted especially by the youngsters. Here again, the fitness based

advertisement mainly focus on women when it comes to reduction of weight and attractiveness, and the fitness products focusing on men tries to highlight on the idea of strength.

The recent advertisement lays focus on the need for the men folk to participate in the domestic work. This trend is quite popular in the advertisement especially in terms of beverages and cooking oil.

The advertisement of “Bru” has been focusing on the nuclear family based married couple. Of late this particular brand tries to highlight that the men also has equal role to play when it comes to household work.

The “Vim” has really created revolution by their thought provoking advertisement. The focus of the Vim advertisements have created awareness about the need for all the family members sharing the domestic chores and not stereotyping the domestic tasks as work of womenfolk.

The Bharat matrimony advertisement “on women being choosy” is another example of these kind of positive advertisement that promote gender equality. This advertisement is a clearly crafted one, where the gender bias prevalent in the society is clearly highlighted. At the initial level, the advertisement appears as quite out of context as the middle class family, visiting the prospective brides family, forcefully persuades the young gentleman to compromise on his choices, since the match appears to be a quite good one. The family appears to be happy with the alliance; despite the fact the young gentleman is quite keen about his higher education and career prospects. The final advice given by the family is that if he remains to be choosy, then his prospect of getting married is really less.

Many viewers of this advertisement would have at least sometimes wondered if the events imagined in the advertisement are futuristic in nature. The real intent of the advertisement is known at the closing end, when the a young lady suddenly replaces the young gentleman in

the car seat. This juncture is crucial, now the advertisement falls in place, the advertisement is not futuristic but rather it conveys a reality, of course a sad reality of gender discrimination. It motivates the people to think of the manner in which the women are given limited choices in terms of matrimony. “Be Choosy”, is the tagline of the advertisement that motivates the prospective brides and grooms to be choosy, as this matrimony website offers matches from lakhs of verified profiles.

The men are given more choices compared to women in terms of matrimony, this advertisement has studied the matrimony market and has voiced out the real concern of many young women who are given limited choices compared to men. The instant success of this advertisement is an eye opener to many in the society, who are victims of benevolent sexism.

A very interesting factor to consider in terms of matrimony advertisement is that most of these advertisements focus on the bride’s families looking for a match for their daughter.

The matrimony advertisement in the Sunday newspapers is an ideal testimony for the equal ratio of men and women seeking partners through arranged marriages. When it comes to the visual advertisements, most of the matrimony sites have modeled the advertisements based on the family of women. This factor is an interesting aspect to analyze. In most cases, the person very keenly looking for the match-making is the father of the bride, the elderly gentleman who keenly looks for a good match for the daughter.

The conventional belief system in the family regarding the role of the bride's father portrayed and popularized by the movies and the media is a fragile old man seeking a good match for his daughter, a groom who is well settled and would take good care of his daughter. This idea is time and again depicted in many forms in literature and advertisements.

This phenomenon is not only a trait present in India, even the works of the British writer Jane Austen proves the prevalence of this

scenario. Especially Jane Austen's "Pride and Prejudice", focused on the Bennett's family, the plight of the mother and father to settle their five daughters with their limited finance is the focus of the work. Here again, there is a loose adaption of the same work in the serial form, may be it does ring a bell, a father trying to settle his five daughters with much struggle. At least some readers from South India would have guessed the television serial named "Metti Olli", which was quite popular a decade ago, now this same serial is telecasted in as adapted version as "Kaniyadhanam", in a popular Malayalam channel. The story revolves around the lives of the father and his five daughters, who face many problems in their married lives.

One aspect, quite surprising about this television serial, "Kaniyadhanam", worth noting is that the father is a retired government school teacher of high reputation, yet, surprisingly not a single daughter of this exceptional teacher has bothered to pursue a career. The two daughters, who took up jobs before their marriages, resign

their jobs and settle as homemakers. This is something really hard to digest, for a viewer, even when the “willing suspension of disbelief” is in active state.

The term “Kanniyadhanam”, if deconstructed clearly shows the patriarchal mindset of the society. The term “Dhaanam” means given in charity, and the term “Kanniya” means unmarried women. Here again, many women have raised their concern over this practice, including a women IAS officers, who felt that this practice followed during the wedding ceremony is a practice of discrimination, which should be removed from practice.

Marriage is a decision pertaining to two individuals, who decide to carry forward their lives in harmony and understanding. When it is a matter of control and oppression, then the married life is no less burden than a life-term imprisonment.

This question of the less emphasis given to the career of women is the core theme of

the popular Malayalam movie “Jaya, Jaya, Jaya, Jaya Hae”. The film tries to highlight the problems faced by the unemployed women, the social conditioning through which the women are taught to be submissive and lead a life of unquestionable obedience.

The protagonist Jaya is an aspiring young girl, who wants to achieve great things in life, but her family always demotivates her and provides extra support and care for the development of her elder brother, in higher education and career. Once she reaches the marriageable age, she is forced to accept the match chosen by her family. Her pleas that she wants to complete her education, at least her bachelor’s degree falls in deaf ears.

According to the family, a woman can be safe, only if she is married, and above all the family has the responsibility of settling the daughter. This is the duty of the father, hence, rather than spending money on the education of their daughter, the parents try to save the amount

for her dowry and once they find a suitable match, settle her immediately.

The married life of Jaya, turns out to be a nightmare, as her husband ill treats her and even she faces physical abuse. When the physical abuse escalates Jaya decides to defend herself. The families are not supportive, even when they are aware of the physical abuse endured by Jaya. “The husband has the right to beat his wife, what’s strange with that?” this mentality is seen with many of the characters in the movie.

In the Journalism classes, the idea of interest element in the news items are taught with some typical examples such as “If a dog bites a man, it is not news but if a man bites a dog, it is news”. Another popular example is “If a man beats his wife, it is not news, but if a wife beats the man, it is news”. Yes, because the society has a silent approval for the domestic abuse. In order to maintain marital harmony, it is the necessity for the women to adjust and lead a peaceful life.

Yes, the film in fact creates news, the abused protagonist, the victim of domestic violence learns martial arts through YouTube and fights back her husband. The shocked families try to intervene and bring settlement among the young couple. Here again, the husband is motivated by his relatives to solve the differences amicably, and his cousin tells once they become parents, his could control his wife. Though the protagonist is befooled regarding the change in her husband, she realizes his true intent in a short while. The disillusioned woman is heartbroken, she looks for support and financial assistance for her upkeep. This is the crucial point in the movie, which highlights the pathetic condition of many women, who are denied access to education, due to gender discrimination.

They young lady with just her school education is not able to secure any job, nor is she able to take up any entrepreneurship activities, because the banks hesitate to give her loan, due to the lack of financial security. Finally, with the help of her brother she is able to get financial

aid from a bank and starts running a business successfully. This movie raises several questions in the minds of the viewers regarding gender equality in the twenty-first century.

Even in this digital era, many believe in the primitive notions of the vulnerability of the female gender. This movie provides answers to some of the questions that rise in the mind of many viewers. There should be equality and fairness in the manner in which children are treated irrespective of their gender. Right from food, clothing to toys, at every instance, the gender discrimination is spelt out in many families, which still believe in the superiority of the male gender.

It is high time, people stop buying toys based on the gender of the child and rather start viewing children as children, who are the future of the nation, who deserve care, good education and protection.

The secondary importance given to women by the families when it comes to career choices,

should be really brought under scrutiny. Rather than telling them their gender specific responsibilities, it is high time that children are taught to be good individuals, who hold respect for the each other, and value people based on their character and potential, they should be taught to look beyond the gender bias.

The “Vim” advertisement featuring the famous model and actor “Milan Soman”, has given a humourous twist to the view of domestic work, with the launch of “Black Vim”, the dishwasher liquid for men. A young gentleman in the unisex gym, boasts about helping his mother do the dishes, to a lady who is working out. Here, the chivalrous behavior of this young gentleman is brought under scrutiny, by the main model of the advertisement, who introduces the product “Black Vim”.

The domestic work is always viewed as the duty of the womenfolk, be it mother, sister, wife, daughter, they are all expected to be trained in domestic chores. From times immemorial

women have been unquestionably accepting the norms; they have trained their psyche to be the first to take up these tasks. Is it that, men are not competent enough to do these chores? No, they are competent, but their competency comes to the forefront only at times of crisis. When the women are absent from the domestic chores, or in a condition, where they have to step in to complete the domestic chores due to the illness of the womenfolk in the family, the men folk of the house take up domestic tasks.

The gender bias social conditioning that everyone is subjected to from childhood decides these kind of mental conditioning. These kind of social conditioning leads to the development of submissive feminine and the toxic masculine traits in the individuals. Real awareness creation is necessary to monitor these negative traits, which pose a threat to the society that cherishes equality, liberty and humanity.

The Lowes advertisement of “Vim” in the matrimonial background is a interesting

narrative on breaking the gender stereotyping. A prospective bride and groom meet as part of the ceremony related to the arranged marriage. Both are working individuals; probably from the upper-middle class background. The man offers to help in cooking after the marriage, in order to impress the lady.

The lady turns out to be equally chivalrous and offers to in turn help him in doing the dishes. She tells him that since, she might be occupied with office work, at times, and he should learn to be independent in household chores as well. The gentleman takes the cue, the domestic work is a shared responsibility, and the men in the house have the duty to take part in the domestic chores as well.

The recent advertisements of “Vim” clearly focuses on the idea of gender equality, they have the tag line of “Once you see beyond the vessels, you can view the glowing relationships”. The popularity of this advertisement gives a clear idea that the society welcomes such positive changes.

Gone are the days, when the responsibility of the financial security was being rested on the shoulders of the men and the domestic responsibility in the hands of women.

One particular advertisement in the 90's deserves mention, as it created a new narration about gender representation. The storyboard of the "Lyril" soap was developed on the basis of a survey conducted among the women in Mumbai city. The study revealed that the working women have to toil from dawn to dusk, because they have to manage the work and domestic life, which amounts to a lot of stress. The advertisement of this product was the outcome of one particular observation during the study. The "me" time or the personal time, of these working women was limited to the bathing time, wherein they could get a break from the tasks awaiting them. Hence the advertisement used a metaphorical recreation of the individual space, in the form of the natural landscape, with a spring. The advertisement was quite a success, because the people were able to see the idea of liberation, beyond the gender.

As times progress, evolution occurs, which is an unchangeable law of nature. From the laws of the jungle to the laws of the land the humans have progressed a lot. This twenty-first century would be an era that advocates the real essence of gender equality.

Echoing the words of the great poet “Bharathiar”, the people have to look beyond gender and try to enhance their lives. When the parents train their children, they should train them, irrespective of their gender to be capable enough to thrive in various spheres, such as academics that enhance knowledge, martial arts and sports that enhance physical fitness and stamina, arts and crafts that enhance skill and creativity, domestic chores that provides skill level to maintain good lifestyle.

It is high time that the parents realize that the real asset they could leave their children, is to enlighten them about the need to live their life in peace and harmony. By creating a gender bias environment, the parents are providing

wrong examples to their offspring. As we march forward, lets us ensure that the need to create space for everyone is of vital importance.

Even the emergence of a new column for the third gender in the application forms of the higher education institutions is a welcome move. The third gender has been included in the gender column. Hence, the society has opened its doors to the gender that has been conveniently ignored for generations.

The tea advertisement that focused on the third gender entrepreneurship opportunity and their need for respect and recognition in the society gained lot of applause from the viewers. Such advertisements that feel the pulse of the society are enablers of positive change.

Next time, when we watch an advertisement, we would definitely think of the social changes that have been studied in the creation of these kinds of advertisements.

Creating a world without gender discrimination is vital for the progress of the human race. The chance to bring the positive change is in our hands. With renewed vigor and energy the youngsters of the nation should vow to discard gender discrimination and work to develop a society that thrives by giving equal opportunity to all.

As stated by the popular tagline of a product, “It may not change in one day, but one day definitely it would change”. We have to be catalyst for bringing about this positive change of gender equality in the society.