Chapter 3
Gender Ideology and Counselling

3.1 Introduction

This chapter is based on the research findings of a study conducted by this research scholar with the support of students registered for a course in gender studies. The research is conducted among three hundred and fifty seven primary school students in a village at Karunagappally in the district of Kollam in Kerala. The research has focused practically on discovering the ways in which girls and boys differ in their behaviour based on their experiences at home and at school, and theoretically in locating the social structures – formal and informal- that affect the differences. It focuses on gender ideology. Different theories on the ways of culture and, specifically religion, serve to create and sustain social constructions of gender are explored. Finally, counselling is explained as a system of intervention.

3.2 Roles of education, religion, and culture in sustaining gender ideology

Education plays a critical role in empowering women in society. It is important for any imperative of equitable development. As a result, it has become a major focal point of varying social movements and national and international policies for social development. In the development movement, education is recognized as a means toward achieving empowerment for women in so far as it allows them access to improved livelihood
opportunities, information on health and hygiene, personal development and greater self-confidence, upward social mobility and greater educational options for children.

The achievements of the state of Kerala represent an exceptional history in respect to education. It is applauded for achieving near total literacy, universal enrollment at the primary school level, high retention rates in schools, easy access to educational institutions even in rural areas, and gender equality in access. (George, 2000).

Despite these laudable achievements, however, recent analysis by scholars and social analysts reveals that education in itself is not necessarily an absolute guarantor of neither employment nor enhanced quality of life. There is perceptible need for a more critically sensitive and in-depth analysis of the real causes of "inadequate returns on the huge investments made" in educational systems like those of Kerala (George, 2000).

Education begins long before formal schooling. Schooling begins at home, virtually at the time of birth, and has a major role in shaping the social realities and ambitions persons develop both individually and collectively.

3.3 Social theory on gender construction through culture mediums.

Different social theorists have attempted to discuss the mechanisms both overt and covert, which contribute to the shape and form of social reality. This is an important field of inquiry because it lends depth to theories
of the social construction of gender, gendered roles, and especially power relations and female subordination.

It may be rewarding to draw attention to ideological hegemony of Antonio Gramsci (Selvy, 1997). Gramsci has perceived ideology as conception of the world that manifest in art, law, and economic activity and in all manifestations of individual and collective life (Selvi, 1997). As a result of these institutional and material bases of ideology, different interest groups converge to gain control. Through slow social processes, consensus is developed between dominant and subordinate groups and an ideological hegemony is established. Those who are subordinated are not necessarily even conscious of subordination, because the process that installs the hegemony, through comfortable social institutions such as schools, mass media, religion etc. that effectively co-opt them.

Consensus is expressed in the approval by subordinate groups of the dominant values, symbols, beliefs, and opinions. Public opinion and the prevailing cultural climate that make actions performed by subordinate groups, appear to spring from their own free will, whereas, in fact, they reflect a necessity resulting from existing relationships of dominance (Aakfke Kompter, 1997). As such, there need not be any coercion by dominant interest groups to achieve power.

Ideology explains and justifies the positions of individuals, groups, institutions, and customs in the general social order.
With respect to gender relationships, gender ideology plays an important role in shaping the lives of both men and women. Men across cultures represent the dominant groups. Economic reasons and primary claims to property and other material resources play a significant role in maintaining male domination, but more subtle reasons, observable in the values, customs, and symbols of patriarchal cultures, have a greater stake in this gendered subordination.

Religion, obviously contributes to structuring and ordering of many societies. Kerala is also bound by this observation. Women in many societies hold a secondary status in both management of the institutions and with in scriptures and/or socially prescribed norms they have encoded. The existence of patriarchal system makes it easy for repressive customs to be introduced and sustained in religious organizations. It has a tremendous impact on the capacity of men to exert power over women overtly by insisting on particular manner of 'appropriate behaviour', and covertly through socially accepted symbolic constructs. Women are expected to be passive, non-assertive, obedient, hardworking, and service oriented. These traits make a woman 'perfect'.

Women would accept these ideological constructs voluntarily in line with the values of their religious systems and gain a prestigious status or some sense of personal gratification for entertaining such often-rigorous disciplines. It justifies how ideologically hegemonic principles may acquire exalted status and be sustained, through, consent, by the subordinated group.
Religion is only one social institution that contributes to social constructions of gender and gender appropriate behaviour. It is, however, a significant contributor in its capacity to affect women at the grass root level. It affects women's self image, social relations, roles, and sense of empowerment. The symbols, values, and moral lessons are shaped by religious systems that have enormously impacted on how society has proceeded to ascribe value to the contributions of different members of society. Women's exclusion from religious institutions is symbolic of their exclusion from other sectors of society. It is difficult to address such issues, as religious doctrines are often considered as absolute and unchangeable. But there are movements that took place for religious reformation. For example, the Buddhist women's movement emphasized the social problems experienced by women along with spiritual liberation (Ken Jones, 1989). It is inspired by both the awakening of social awareness of practicing Buddhists, a subject that has spawned an entire literature and a weakening consciousness of women, discovering individually and collectively, their histories of neglect and oppression, a history that has to be corrected in order to ensure that women are optimally engaged in the continuously changing process of social renewal (Ambedkar, 1993).

Such movements are important as representations of the possibility for transformation with in a hegemonic ideology. Through becoming aware of the existing power structures in religious systems, women are challenging
subordination, gender ideologies and are thus, effectively influencing the psychology of femininity.

Reliability is what one perceives as reality. The illusion of reality that is established through ideological consensus in cultural institutions is being acknowledged in societies. The room for new paradigm invariably begins to emerge. Religious reform movements recognize the potential of religious symbolism and theology to the liberating, only if women are vitally conscious of the gender perceptions, which must be consciously and effectively altered.

3.4 A case study on gender ideology

The interactive research conducted at the village school in Kerala has provided a good case to illustrate some of these theoretical suppositions. The responses received to most of the questions asked to the students are highly suggestive of the fact that children assimilate gender constructs and ideology at relatively young age.

The school system has provided a comfortable environment to disseminate gender ideology. It has provided an environment for interaction between girl students and boy students, though such interactions consciously or unconsciously have contributed to develop certain structures.

In each of the classrooms, the students are clustered together in one large group. Each classroom has forty to fifty students. In every class, girls sit separately from the boys. They are physically separated in the line up for lunch, in the playground and in the morning assembly session. When asked
whether they would like to play together, the vast majority of the boys (163/176) have stated that they like only to play with other boys, and a similar majority of girls (156/181) have expressed their option to play with other girls.

This physical demarcation and same sex preference for playmates possibly implicate a deeper psychological separation, or start validating the gender ideology that boys and girls are properly and naturally separate. Boys choose games such as football, while girls prefer to play snake and ladder. This seems very significant because it exemplifies one of the early cures that girls and boys should be treated differently. This may be translated later in to a peaceful, nonresistant acceptance of the oppressive differences in opportunity and unequal access to resources that are characteristic of gender relations.

Another dimension assessed is career ambition of the male and female students of the village school. The response for the question of what they would like to be when they grow up is quite revealing in this respect. Despite the fact that seventy-three of the students are from agricultural families, an extreme minority (12/357) of them are interested in pursuing agriculture as their chosen careers. Interestingly, girl students have responded to the question more enthusiastically than boy students. They have expressed their choices as doctors, engineers, police officers, and computer personnel. Aspiration to achieve among girl students is very high, though they are given gendered education.
Twenty of the boy students are unsure about their choices. Girl students have preferred to work outside their houses. Another question is about sharing educational opportunities. Given financial constraints, boy students have preferred their education to continue where as girl students have opted not to continue their studies in such a situation. The reason is that girl students and boy students have recognized men as primary food providers for their families. So girl students have given boy students a preference in education.

Sixty-seven percent of the girl students have accepted that boys deserve to be educated more than girls. Preference for unequal opportunity and unequal power relationship is ingrained in the psyche of those school children.

The outward appearance of advancement through educational opportunity in Kerala may be misleading to others because the reality seems to indicate that women are generally conformist at heart. It starts at a very early stage of childhood, promoted by education, and passed on to generations.

Another question is to state whether girls are smarter than boys.

All Students other than twenty-three of the girls have agreed that they are smarter than boys where as boys unanimously have agreed (176/176) that they are smarter than girls. This shows the low self-esteem of girl students and sex determined self-image. Such perspectives of girl children may be
sustained by subtle messages managed through various cultural mediums, mass media, educational systems, and religious institutions.

Other questions investigated are also suggestive of an ideological hegemony that can construct gender relationships based on sex differences.

3.5 Deconstructing the constructs and transformation

The drive for universal access to basic education and other important social services is for social betterment. Access to education must be accompanied by a broader effort to search out and acknowledge the underpinnings of social systems and ideologies that govern our collective and personal relationships and opportunities.

Theories on ideological hegemonies ensuring gender ideologies are pointers to reality, that for women to advance socially and emotionally, and to effectively break the bonds that have been bestowed on them by virtually invisible ideological structures, they would need more than a book and a pencil. There are numerous powerful social structures and impediments in existence that obstruct women's empowerment. A strategy based primarily on education may have negative or nominal effects, if the other structures of the overall system are ignored.

Power is embodied and exercised through a net like organization. And not only do individuals circulate through its threads but they are always in a position of simultaneously undergoing and exercising this power. They are not only its inert consenting target but are also always the elements of its
articulation. In other words, individuals are the vehicles of power, not its point of application (Selvi, 1997).

This implies that if women are aware of the ideologies that shape them, they might be able to reshape them. If women are not, then they remain its 'inert' consenting target. The crucial factor is that women are the vehicles of power and that even doing nothing, women are doing something. Women can effect a general ideological change, if they begin to see and detangle the intricate webs of power that subjugate and befit them.

3.5.1 Attitude to sex roles - an illustration

In Ernakulam, a 3-year girl prepares lunch in her toy kitchen for her 5-year brother who acts as her husband and for her two toy children. She cooks rice, vegetable thoran, sambar, and fish curry. She transfers them on dishes, serves them for her husband and children, washes the pan and other utensils, brooms and sweeps the floor where she works. Later, she washes her clothes, takes an oil bath and gets ready to sleep. The next day morning, she does her homework and leave for her paid work. All her activities are an exact replica of those she has seen her mother performing many times at their home. Her husband drives himself to office in his toy car after finishing breakfast that his wife has served him. The boy enacts exactly like his father.

Every one who has observed children from age three onwards may have come across with such imitations of and rehearsals for adult roles- little
girls doing what women do and little boys practicing what men do. All such behaviours are sex-appropriate behaviours.

Societies prescribe certain bahaviour for women and men and these define not only sex roles but also concepts of masculinity and femininity. Children learn sex-role identification, the internalized knowledge of one's sex to include internalization of the roles, typical of one's sex in the society and the reactions and attributions characteristic of those roles. While there may be underlying biological pre-dispositions for the acquisitions of some sex-typed behaviour, it is assumed that the role of learning in a social context is far more important for developing sex role identification. The cognitive view of the process of mediating the learning of sex role status is that sex typed behaviour is learned neither by the simple reinforcement of discrete acts nor by the initiations of the same sex people. Instead, child develops rules or generalizations from what it observes and then applies these over broad classes of behaviour. Slowly, sex role presence is observed in both girls and boys beginning at a very early age. By age 3, nursery school children show sex related preferences for toys and activities. Little girls in nurseries are in the doll corner, dressing up and playing house, boys are outside, fighting, playing soccer, cricket and the like. Boys do not show a cross-sex preference in their middle-childhood where as those girls preferring masculine role tend towards greater role ambivalence. Thus, such girls show dichotomous sex role preference. Girls have much greater latitude to engage in a host of male activities, especially before adolescence.
Role adaptation, the display of sex typed behaviour, is learned as a function of reinforcement, modeling, and the development of concepts about what is appropriate for one's sex. This observation is supported by empirical research (Linn. 1971). When boys are firmly identified with masculine role, they enjoy the status of being the dominant sex, and the pre-requisites that attach to the status of maleness. Boys develop identity disturbances at a slower rate, as they get older. Girls on the other hand, grow up to discover the prejudices prevailing against them on all sides. They learn that they occupy an inferior status. More of them than males show a preference for the role of the other. But preference is not identification.

Girls may prefer the male role but maintain a feminine identification. Males show a same sex role preference where as females show opposite sex role preference, for example, the proportion of girls who plan to have paid work is expected to be greater than the proportion of boys who prefer domesticity. Parenthetically, although, the homework is accorded good wages and high status, it could be probable that an increasing number of males may take an interest in homework.

As children grow, other sources of influences beyond home and family converge to strengthen sex typing of the socialization process. Television, books, and school provide models for them, instructing them how they ought to be and behave, informing them in countless ways, often indirectly, of the values of the society and of its expectations of them as females and males.
It is unfortunate that personal traits such as autonomy, assertiveness, competitiveness, and initiative have been consistently called masculine in the literature, while dependent, passive, nurturing, and sensitive have been labeled feminine. Thus, a whole array of characteristics emerges under the words masculine and feminine. Such usage is sexiest. It reinforces the relationship between socially valued characteristics in males; it encourages the notion that if girls want to fulfill their potential, they must become more masculine.

Familial and social processors shape the experience of girls. Here socialization gives her perceptions and learning that show her clearly where her 'place' will be. As she matures, she has to make choices that boys do not need to, and in the process, something of herself gets lost. By adulthood, the values and interests of women are very different, from those of men, and while those interests are functional for the role of women socialized for them, they may be inadequate for other kinds of achievement in the larger world.

As the needs of the society change, so do values. As women require skills and competencies relevant to many social roles hereto held by men, their display of these will become common and accepted, and many will acquire the confidence, which, more than aggression, is necessary for leadership.

Entrepreneurs are no exception to the influence of gender ideology. They also have passed through the same type of gendered learning process.
3.5.2 Training needs of women entrepreneurs

Training needs of women entrepreneurs will have to be filtered through gender sensitized lenses.

Venkatesan (2004) founding trustee of the Bharatiya Yuva Shakti Trust, New Delhi, an NGO involved in spreading the spirit of entrepreneurship expressed the need to set up mentor clinics' to provide guidance to aspiring entrepreneurs. Lakshimi, the daughter of former president of India, R. Venkataraman, while delivering a lecture on entrepreneur-driven economic development and youth power remarked that entrepreneurs like musicians are born as well as made. Young entrepreneurs could gain from the experiences of those accomplished in the field. She further said: "Unemployment is the problem. Youth is the solution. Out of one billion of the youth population in the age group of 15 to 24, India had two hundred and twelve million. One third of the Indian population did not have even primary education. The vocationally trained labour force was a mere 5.06 percent in India. Analyzing the unemployment scenario, she said, Kerala tapped the list among the states. Let us not debate on big things while forgetting about the immediate goals- adding incrementally to the guidance of mental prospectus.

3.6 Stress and emotion - clinical illustrations

The idea of viewing emotions of employees, as a resource of interest to organizations to manage is first formulated by Charles Wright Mills (1951). Mills argued that the worker has to control her facially expressed feelings. Hochshild (1997) further argued that emotional work is the effort human beings make to ensure that their feelings and emotions are in harmony with socially accepted norms. Emotions are a resource that the individual can make use of when carrying out work assignments. Nevertheless, Martin et al. (1998) claim that emotions are largely de-emphasized and marginalized. In organization theory, rationality and emotions are binary opposites. It is cognition versus emotion.

Kunda’s (1992) study of engineers working at a high-tech company suggested that the experiences of burn out is an every body’s work life problem that the individual is expected to deal with.

Martin et al. (1998) have studied the use of personal counselling as a method of reducing the negative effects of stress. Martin observes that work stress is a response that must be controlled. Two models of stress could be perceived. Stress is an embodied phenomenon, a set of physical responses to unfavorable work conditions. Headache, illness, sleeping problems etc. are examples of such embodied experiences.

On the other hand, stress is seen as an emotional response to perceived problems. Thus, stress is one the one hand embodied, and on the other hand it is emotional. It is experienced in the body, but equally experienced as an emotional state. It is embodied as well as emotional, personal as well as social.
If stress is formulated as a personal problem, counselling is an inevitable subsystem of any organization. The interviews have pointed out the psychological effects arising from work stress. The inability to concentrate on work assignments, the unwillingness to talk to colleagues and others, general feelings of insufficiency and vulnerability, depression, anxiety, and low self esteem are reported as outcomes of stress.

Fear is one of the negative emotions that impede a person’s life. An entrepreneur client remarked: “If I don’t do good in business, I have loss than profit; if my products are not marketed sufficiently, if installments of bank loans are not timely remitted, if husband refuses to give me space, if my children accuse me the cause of financial bankruptcy, I feel I am a failure both at home and at my business”.

A fantasy of what might be, thinking the worst, constant fright— all lead to ‘fear’, a powerful negative emotion.

Many women in many cultures are attuned to intense fear. It one is constantly frightened and thinks the worst, one may be emotionally ready to set up conditions for bad things to happen. In other words, one may be ready to trigger stress response. Chronic worry of “what if the business fails,” may constantly shake many entrepreneurs.

Anger can be viewed as a destructive emotion when it is out of proportion to the situation, and impatience to the self and others can compound one’s stress. Expression of anger is not as important whether or not a person constantly feels angry. Chronic hostility is a problem and
continually expressing it can lead to a habitual response to any annoying situation. Conversely, there are women who are unable to express anger. Instead, they weep and wash their anger. Being in touch with one's feelings, recognizing it, and acting on it is vital to maintaining mental and physical health. It is probable that a person is not aware of her anger. The first check is whether it is necessary for a particular situation and how it can be appropriately expressed. It is legitimate to feel angry when a subordinate or peer or one's boss endorses uncomfortable, unacceptable, sexually abusive comments to a woman entrepreneur or for that matter to any woman. Another woman entrepreneur has anxiously remarked; “I am shocked to realize that I am angry. I was sure that I was upset. But I did not tell him anything. I was silent. I wanted to resist his aerobic conversations with sexual coating. I wish I could confront him. But I didn’t”. It is a response to an incident of sexual harassment. She still holds stress from inaction.

Thus, certain stress resistant skills- hardiness, commitment to react, or proactive responses- more appropriately, sense of control, and enjoyment of challenge can be learnt. They are life skills of women. The required change is from stress prone to stress hardy personalities.

Women who experience a sense of being in control have greater coping capacities and experience fewer harmful effects of stress.

One of the clients said, “When everything is all right every one may work well. But for me, to work well, I do not need everything perfect. I do not like to waste my time. I need to do the right things. Otherwise I lose my cash.
My product is very good. But much of the problems I face are from difficulties in marketing. I am really lucky that though I have problems, I comfortably exist with them.” She continued elaborating the marketing problems she faced for her product sold in the indigenous market.

“At times I feel very exhausted. Because I never find time to be with people at my home with whom I can share my problems”. Another client remarked, “It is amazing, yesterday is difficult from today. Problems never end. Business life is very busy, and I wish I could share with my husband my stories of profit and loss making. Business is passing through a very tough stage. Now I am indebted to so many, tension is always at sky level. But I feel I should not stop my business.” Another client remarked. “I never feel dejected or guilty, I know in business I have to face this kind of a turbulent stage.” Asked about the option to share her feelings with a professional counsellor she said, “yes, I will, for sure, like to share my problems with a business counsellor. But do we have one who is good?” She too faces difficulties in marketing her product. Environmental hazards, like personal factors contribute to stress. Counselling helps to differentiate environmental stressors from personal stressors.

An interviewee remarked, “Some time I feel I am in a cage, so secluded, as if I am born to lose….. lose everything…… my business, my husband, my children. You may call it in anyway. Depression? Dissatisfaction? Disappointment? What ever may be, this is how I feel?”
Another said, "My life is an ever ending effort to sell my products with the products of other business women. You call it competition. All the 7 days I work. But things are all right for me. It is just like living in a red alert area. Stress is there, but it is all right.

For the question, how many hours do an entrepreneur work, the answer is as follows.

"No account book kept. I cannot measure my work. Other than six hours sleep, I work. But I enjoy working."

Another client remarked while asking about overload of work. "I sleep with a long list of things I could not finish in a day plus another list of ‘things to do’ to be completed the next day. 24 hours should not have been the hours of a day. I have work for forty-eight hours a day. Everything has a dead line. My problem is discontinuous nature of my work. A number of meetings, interruptions at work in my factory.... all complicates my life... does this mean I hate my life? I do not know. It is difficult."

Yet another client shared her feeling.

"I never get time to monitor everything superbly in my business. Business needs continuous attempt to cut short time in each work. ‘Save our time’ is the motto of our business. It is difficult to convince my family members regarding ‘save to work’ theme. Some time I feel lack of control over situations at my homework. Compromise is possible only at home, not at the factory. There I am very business like."
I am a hard working businesswoman. I know I cannot avoid stress. I know I need support. If I get, it is good. If I do not, I never bother about that too" - is the opinion of a businesswoman.

Another client expressed in the following manner.

"The time pressure is really intense. But I know I have to manage my time. But I don't want to spend all my time to learn about time management. I know I have to talk about things other than business. But I do not know anything other than business talk. At home, I have guarded behaviour, consciously trying to eliminate business lessons for my children".

"Phone-calls irk my husband. I know I bring business talk to home. So much is going on in the business that all those things are deep in my head" - told a client.

"Tele-counselling is a good idea, some time, I ask myself, " what am I doing? One thing is sure; I want to learn to prioritize vis-à-vis work - whether I am at home or at my business. Now I am ready. Where am I supposed to reach for professional help?"

"No work is out of question. Talking about business at home is a complicated one. I will be the first causality. Ha- ha- ha- ha- hah - (She laughed)."

"Taking time out for reflection is a good idea. I do that a lot. Who wants to rock the boat you travel?" - A client's remark.
My son tells me, "Amma, you talked all about how you could not finish work. Why don't you ask me to do some specific work? ... He is really smart, but he will not do any thing" - reflection of an entrepreneur client.

"Certain tasks I cannot delegate. My problem is I have problems in communicating with my husband. He says something, means something else. I do not know what would be his face next morning- shining or shivering. He tells me not to bother. But I do bother a lot!" - another client's words.

Two partners in a business remarked:

"I feel sad and gloomy. I feel that I should not have stepped in this business. This business is our trap. We have to save ourselves. Several installments are now due to the bank. The loan we have taken has to be repaid. Today, we do not know what to do. Wind up or continue. No aim, No good experiences other than us being together. We seriously talk of suicide."

There are women entrepreneurs who thrive in business and also others who are in acute distress.

Counselling is inevitable for helping those distressed women entrepreneurs to cope with stress.

Standard work conditions are increasingly becoming stressful. Responses such as stress, burn-out, strong emotions, for example love or envy, and so forth are perfectly normal responses to way complex social formations or systems such as organizations, operate. The experience of stress is a social response, result of the ambiguities produced in a specific setting.
The tradition of logo centric thinking is dominant in organization theory (Hassard et al, 2000, Gregen and Cohitney 1996; Turner 1996).

### 3.7 Marital relationship

Marriage is perceived in many Asian cultures as a path to security that an average woman can hope for. The socialization process confirms that marriage is the only acceptable outcome for women. As more women develop values of autonomy and interdependence, women's life style can necessarily improve. Marriage is still thought of as conveying status on a woman by providing economic and emotional security in many cultures. However, stress is compounded due to unhealthy marital relationship.

Marriage should be a relationship of intimacy based on equal freedom and identity of both partners (O'Neill and O'Neill, 1972). Marriage is an intimate relationship in which both partners can grow, each supporting the other. The patterns of traditional marriage breed expectations, ideals, and beliefs, impossible to be fully implemented by working women. The belief that one's spouse can fill one's needs- economic, physical, intellectual, and emotional- creates exclusivity, possessiveness, endurance, and security. But it also endorses a static quality, which inhibits growth and spontaneity, and stifles creativity.

A good marital relationship fosters the expectations that both partners will change, that each will take responsibility for self and grant it to the other, that one's mate can not fill all one's needs, that the partners will be different
persons, not because one is husband and the other is wife, that liking and loving will grow out of mutual respect that the marital relationship allows. Those expectations reflect the values of autonomy, flexibility, personal growth, and interdependence within a dynamic, responsive relationship. This represents self-actualizing environment to marriage. Marriage enshrines growth to the fullest human potential. Husband and wife have to interact with each other in ways that are mutually augmenting.

Guidelines for successful marital life include equality-respect for equal status; role sharing - the sharing of roles associated with homework; identity - personal growth with realization of one’s potential; privacy - each having time and space along with ‘togetherness’; honest communication - sharing of one’s real feelings free from defensiveness in the process of growing up in the relationship; trust - an outgrowth of the guidelines based on respect for the integrity of the other.

Love is the result of a happy marriage. In a truly open, growth enhancing relationship, love glues the couple with happiness. Flexibility in roles will obviously result, if these values are nurtured. Role sharing will be based on the needs for occupational and parental roles, agreeably working out for both. The basic idea is that both homework and paid work should be shared without making paid work more valuable than unpaid work and that couples can work out an emotional agreement which recognizes the talents, wishes, and needs of both. Women will lose the total dependency status and material security. Role development necessitates awareness for such a change.
3.8 Counselling system

Counselling is a relatively recent discipline. It involves planned and systematic processes encompassing principles and practices that aim at increasing the levels of individual and group effectiveness in order to achieve an expected quality of life. It is therefore a systematic goal oriented approach to change, invariably attempting to improve the fit between the individual and the environment.

A system consists of a set of inter related elements. Counselling is viewed as a system composed of elements like counsellor, counsellee, goals, techniques, diagnosis, and outcomes. Counselling is a learning oriented system in which the counsellor, professionally competent in relevant psychological concepts and skills, seeks to assist the counsellee, by methods appropriate to the latter’s need and within the context of the total personal development to learn how to put such understanding into effect in relation to more clearly perceived, realistically defined goals to the end that the counsellee may become a more productive person. This process enables one to have insights into oneself in relation to others. Such insights lead one to more clearly perceived and realistically defined goals and actions. They enable one to attain life skills for personal and social development. Counselling thus aims at reaching a state of self/group understanding, self/group direction, and self/group motivation. This requires systematic efforts to understand psychological, physical, behavioural, and interactional issues and strategies to address such issues.
Counselling as a fast growing discipline has rapidly progressed from its modest beginning in the latter part of the 20th century to its current dynamic status. It is found to be of service to different sections of the population. They include students, teachers, and employees, mentally ill and unhealthy persons and traumatized individuals. In the history of its growth, as a science and a profession, it has changed its emphasis aims and roles. Currently counselling is moving in the direction of assisting counselees to acquire realistic and socially constructive coping behaviour patterns. Counselling invariably has a major role in the prevention of mental health problems, and in the development and maintenance of a healthy self-concept.

Unfortunately professionally trained personnel in trauma treatment and rehabilitation are very limited and defined by the current state of knowledge. In South Asian countries the demand for trained counselors is far more than its supply. Nevertheless, with very limited theoretical and practical knowledge, counselling is practiced with less therapeutic content.

3.8.1 Mechanism of counselling

The input of the counselling system is the counselee denoted by the word client. The Counselling system consists of preliminary diagnosis of the psychophysical status of the client, gathering data through appropriate methods, exploration of the data in association with the client, identification of the problem and their prioritization, consensus decision-making in collaboration with the client for generating action plan, action implementation and follow-up. Thus, the objective of the counselling system ostensibly
becomes helping the stressed entrepreneurs to perceive, understand, and act on the events that occur in the external environment. The stressed entrepreneurs may be given support to get a better insight into one’s own psychological processes aiming at skills in problem solving and decision-making.

The three basic components in the counselling system are diagnosis, action plan, and action implementation. The client is perceived as a system, as the behaviour of the client is the outcome of interactions between the self and the environment. The focal person or group of persons may form a client system. Client system diagnoses form the foundation for a variety of interventions. The diagnostic component represents gathering and analyzing data regarding various aspects of the existing condition of the client. The action component is composed of all activities designed to improve the functioning of the client and encompasses interventions. Interventions are viewed as a set of structured activities composing of change inducing elements. They are intended to improve the functioning of the client and are tailored to address a variety of problems at the individual and group level. Thus, the diagnostic component identifies and prioritizes the problem, and the action component guides the interventions to intended outcomes.

3.8.2 Crisis stress intervention

A crisis may occur due to an incident of severe business loss or due to a series of events leading to business failure. Such events, perceived negatively
could also provide opportunities for exploration and growth. Although the nature of the event that triggered a crisis determines the consequences of the crisis, several common characteristics are identified in all such cases. They include occurrence of an unexpected or unusual problem that precipitated stress demanding immediate attention; arousal of feelings of vulnerability and helplessness; variety of contradicting messages from multiple sources on the issue and the possibilities of varying resolutions and emergence of a series of problems out of a single event. As crises propel intense negative feelings with disastrous consequences, immediate concern of any intervention must be to help a client regain their ability to think and act constructively for rebuilding self-confidence. The goals of crisis intervention are most likely to be achieved, if interventions can closely follow the precipitating event leading to the crisis before crystallizing the subjective reactions of the client.

Counselling journey of a thousand miles begins with a few steps that decide the course of interventions. A severely stressed entrepreneur, struggling to survive her stress caused by loss of business may be hostile, uncommunicative, and too aggressive. Another may be with paranoid attitude. Yet another may be in absolute silence with intense despair. In the first few contacts, the goal of the counsellor is to get acquainted with the client, obtain information to draw a clear picture of the issues of the client, assess the potentials of the client to formulate possible interventions and realistic action programme. It is possible that the counsellor skips free flowing expression of the client in one's preoccupation with gathering data in the
initial encounter. It is likely that feelings have flooded the counselling session. However, a trained counsellor is an alert observer.

Counselling is a complex blend of art and a science. Success of the client system change rests on mastering the principles, techniques, and processes of counselling. The counsellor faces multiple challenges in the area of work and must always be involved in action-research. Action-research is research on action with the goal of making that action more productive in the best interest of the client. Research on action programmes is inevitable for resolving social issues. An intervention successful at one point of time need not be so in another circumstance. The need to discover workable, practical solutions to problems is always felt in the area of stress counselling.

Action research is an approach to problem solving. It could be used as a model or paradigm. It is also termed as a process – a sequence of events and activities within each iteration (diagnosis → action plan → action implementation → feedback → reformulation → diagnosis) and also in a cycle of iterations. In other words, a continuous gathering and analysis of human relations research data to change behaviour is necessary in stress counselling. Absolute deficiency is felt in the availability of professional stress counsellors trained in this field. The counsellors have to be educated and trained in participative, collaborative, and problem focused counselling.

In summary, counselling represents an approach and method to enable the focal system to change.
3.8.3 “Do”s in counselling

For counsellors, to gain the confidence of their clients, and thereby enable healing to take place, here follows a list of “Do”s that are critical in counsellor-client relationship.

♦ Ensure respect

♦ Ensure privacy and confidentiality

♦ Ensure empathic listening

♦ Ensure psychological support

♦ Generate verbal and nonverbal interventions to absorb the pain

♦ Generate interventions to reduce self-blame

♦ Generate interventions to minimize guilt

♦ Generate interventions to reduce anger

♦ Generate group interventions to enhance skills in interpersonal relationship

♦ Generate interventions to minimize social isolation.

♦ Provide information regarding legal rights

♦ Provide information regarding other available support systems.

3.8.4 “Don’t”s in counselling

Just as counsellors must protect and provide information to stressed victims as outlined above, counsellors must, erstwhile be sensitive to clients'
feelings. Following are some mistakes that are found that "Don't" work well in stress counselling.

a. Never ignore the victim’s stress experiences.

b. Never ask questions such as:

"Why didn’t you sense the danger of losing your business?"

"Why didn’t you stop your business?"

"Why didn’t you inform your husband?"

"Why didn’t you come earlier for support?"

Such statements may erode the self-confidence of the victim. A counsellor has no role to make a stress victim lose her self-confidence.

Never share any kind of information to anyone without the consent of the stressed client.

c. Never prescribe alternatives to stop business, resign from job, and take unauthorized leave from work without ensuring their consequences on the victim.

d. Never pursue a counsellor’s role without adequate information and training.

e. Never feel reluctant to access technical expertise, if required.

f. Never postpone an urgent course of action, if it ensures incredible support to the victim.
g. Never forget to maintain one's flow of energy in dealing with trauma from stress.

h. Never ignore the possibilities of self-directed abuse.

Thus, stress counselling provides opportunities to design an action plan to address personal stress. Effective stress counselling can ensure enhanced levels of performance at work.