Chapter I

LANGUAGE-SEX-GENDER
CHAPTER I

LANGUAGE - SEX - GENDER

Language

Language, the most powerful human tool plays a definite and crucial role in the personal as well as the social life of a person. "Language is a system of symbols (words or vocabulary) governed by rules (grammar) and patterns (syntax) common to a community of people" (Diana K. Ivy. 2000, p. 171). According to Graddol and Swann "language is both personal and social, that it is a ‘vehicle of our internal thoughts’ as well as ‘public resource’" (1989, pp. 4-5). Language helps us to express our thoughts emotions and feelings. Our thoughts, emotions and feelings take shape when they are translated into language. So it is a medium to interpret or the vehicle to carry our thoughts. Dale Spender describes language as "our means of ordering, classifying and manipulating the world. It is through language that we become members of a human community, that the world becomes comprehensible and meaningful, that we bring into existence the world in which we live" (1985, p.3.)

Language allows us to express and control emotions. A person’s talk may simply be an attempt to reduce his/ her inner tension. Many psychologists believe that we have a biologically based need to vent emotions. Shouting or cursing in anger, crying in sorrow and laughing in joy are examples of this function. This can be made clear by the definition of language by Edward Sapir. "Language is purely human and non-instinctive method of communicating ideas, emotions and desires by
means of a system of voluntarily produced symbols" (1970, p.8). And of course, language can also be used to inhibit emotions.

The hypothesis, known as Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis formulated by Edward Sapir and Benjamin Lee Whorf, suggest an interrelationship between language and thought. Whorf hypothesised that "the forms of a person’s thoughts are controlled by inexorable laws of patterns of which he (she) is unconscious" (1956, p. 252). In this way, human thoughts are so deep rooted in language that it may actually control what you can think about. Our thoughts are developed according to the possibility of language. In this sense, our thoughts and emotions cannot go beyond a particular limit called the **boundaries of language**. When we think about something, or when we want to express our thought, we are compelled to restrict it within the limitations of language. So we are compelled to control our thoughts. Language can reveal or camouflage our thoughts and motives. What is going on in our mind remain hidden unless we choose to show it to others. We can discuss our inner feeling directly or reveal them more subtly. Freud is the first to turn our attention to the meanings of linguistic errors or slips of the tongue which are called the **parapraxes** caused by the inner conflicts (1966, p. 87). For example if a speaker says quite sweetly ‘we’ll do whatever, I ___ I mean you ___ want. The substitution might indicate a hidden need for control. This type of **parapraxes** reveals inner feelings. They are attempting to hide true desires and designs from both self and other. Of course, we can see language as camouflage more directly; we can hide behind overt lies, evasions and half truths.
Sapir-Whorf hypothesis consists of two arguments. The first one is called *linguistic determinism* which says that language determines the way we interpret the world. In the words of Sapir ‘we see and hear and otherwise experience very largely as we do because the language habits of our community predispose certain choice of interpretation’. (1929, p. 207). The other one is called *linguistic relativity* which follows from the first, if language determines thought, then speakers of different languages will experience the world differently. Thought is relative to language. In this sense this hypothesis argues that language shapes our understanding of the world. The result of these processes can be both positive and negative.

Language allows us to make certain aspects of reality significant by naming them. Conversely, it allows us to ignore unimportant part of reality by not naming them. Naming has important implications because it is easier to notice and think about a thing that has been named. And we cannot tolerate a thing without name as it seems threatening and mysterious. So by using the magical qualities of language, we can reduce all things to a more human and manageable proportions by naming them. Consider the following example, some terms that did not exist as part of our language until recently: *āgoḻavatkaranaṁ* (globalization) *peṉvāṇibham* (Trading of women) etc. Although the behaviours associated with these terms have existed for a long time, since they were not named so far, they were not recognized. Once these terms entered our language, it became possible to discuss these problems. If they are undesirable concepts it enables us to work to put an end of them.
In addition to naming things, language also gives things value. A word tells us something exists in it and suggests how to think and what to do about it. For example the word *cat*. To some people it is a pet, to some others it is a food item and to still others it is a variety of vermin. The way we talk determine how we think about it and how we act towards it. Consider some of the common terms that refer to woman *stṚī* (woman) *peṇṇu* (Woman) *peṇkuṭṭi* (girl) *mahiṇa* (lady) *vanīta* (Woman) etc. have very different connotations and call for very different actions.

Language enables us to assert individual and social identity. It means that each of us belongs to a particular language community and has a unique style. Talk enables us to present our style and thereby an image of how we want to be perceived by others. It also allows us to submerge ourselves in a group. Slang, jargon and shared language games can reveal social solidarity and a sense of belonging.

Language permits us to make and avoid contact. Language is the best medium to connect to others. If some one tells that *ninRe śabdam kēḷkkān māṭRamāṇu viḷiccutu* (have called just to hear your voice) - here, language is used to bridge distance. And we can talk to keep other away. It can be used to influence, regulate, persuade or dominate others. From creating a good impression to brainwashing, we use language to control others as well as our world. And on the contrary, language controls us by affecting the way we perceive and think about the world. So it seems that we are the prisoners of language.
Language, Society and Culture

Society is an organised group of people functioning in the background of different socio-cultural environments such as customs and traditions, religious beliefs, taste and preferences of the people, different social institution etc. They influence the life of the people and all these have a bearing on the behaviour of the people. The concept of language is a product of social reality since it reflects the socio-cultural behaviour of the community who speaks it and vice versa. In other words, Language reflects the thoughts, opinions and the culture of its users.

Two human beings are not exactly alike. The physical appearance, intelligence, character, culture and language differ from one individual to another. As a result, we can see differences within a language since language is closely linked with the members of the society in which it is spoken, the social variables such as age, sex / gender, ethnicity, region, education, religions, etc. are reflected in the language of the people. These differences in language are handled by linguists as variations with references to social variables.

The study of language includes the society in which the speaker belongs. This means that language and society are mutually related. The social structure is one of the prime factors which determine or influence the language behaviour and the linguistic structure. The style of speaking, the choice of vocabulary, the use of power etc. are determined by social requirements. So that linguistic structure or language behaviour may be influenced by social structure. The use of language in social
is determined by the mutual relationship between the language and society. But Edward Sapir explains how social reality is intern influenced by language. "Human beings do not live in the objective world alone, nor alone in the world of social activity as ordinarily understood, but are very much at the mercy of the particular language which has become the medium of expression for their society. It is quite an illusion to imagine that are adjusts to reality essentially without the use of language and that language is merely as incidental means of solving specific problems of communication or reflection. The fact of the matter is that the real world is to a large extent unconsciously built up on the language habits of the group". (Sapir.1929, p.207 )

In a speech community, people have norms with regard to language use. Hymes considers a "speech community as a social rather than linguistic entity. Such a community shares knowledge of rules for the contact and interpretation of speech" (1974, pp 47-51). They know the rules of the language which is used in that particular speech community. They know how to say, what to say in accordance with the context and to whom to say. Speech forms are one of the important aspects of behaviour and each and every speech community has developed their own codes of proper and improper use of language. They share a set of social attitudes towards language. We can understand people through their speech - the way of speech, the style of speech, their interactions, interpretations and response to our words. These communicative interactions determine one’s relationship with the other members of the society
Language and identity

The language spoken by a person and his/her identity as a speaker of that language are inseparable. This is surely a piece of knowledge as old as human speech itself. Language acts are acts of identity (Lepage and Tobouret Keller. 1985). It acts as a unifying force in the language community. The attachments and interactions provided by language lead to interrelationships of a peculiar kind and identity with the language which emerges as the main link in the social context.

We are identified, and identify ourselves, within the large space of the society with the different groups such as institutional, professional, friends etc we belong to, in and outside the home. Within his family a man can be identified as father, son, brother or husband. Outside the family he may be identified as a professor, a doctor etc by his profession. In the locality he may at the same time be a social worker; among the friends he may be identified by his nickname, his family name or caste name. "At any given time a person’s identity is a heterogeneous set made up of all the names or identities, given to and taken up by her / him. But in a life long process, identity is endlessly created a new, according to various social constraints (historical, institutional, economic etc.), social interactions encounters and wishes that may happen to be very subjective and unique" (Andree Tobouret Keller. 1985, p 316.)

Language creates a powerful bond with in the society. It develops a special culture among its people. Language is considered as an external behaviour along with the identification of a speaker as a member of some
group. For example, with in the group of English speaking people one can identify the American people by their way of speech or accent. Language is taken as the means of identifying oneself, for example one may say that \textit{I am a Tami/ian} Here, primarily it means that the person is born in Tamil Nadu and secondly, but indirectly and certainly with some ambivalent feelings, his/her belonging to a group is identified by its language (his/ her slang). Within the same language one can identify the speaker of a different dialect as the other. For example among the speakers of Malayalam language one may identify another by nick naming him / her as \textit{vəṭakkən} (one from the North) or \textit{tekkən} (one from the South) because of the difference in his / her way of speaking.

Language features imply the whole range of language use, from phonetic features to lexical units, syntactic structures and personal names. They are the links which bind individual and social identity together. Language offers both the means of creating this link and the way of expressing it. It creates the feeling of oneness or togetherness and national integrity. Hence, "identify is rather a network of identities, reflecting the many commitments, allegiances, loyalties, passions and hatreds every one tries to handle in ever-varying compromise strategies. These imply language use to make group affiliation to reveal permitted or forbidden boundaries to exclude or includes etc." (Andree Tobouret Keller. 1985, p. 321). The unity of men regarding the language during the building of the great tower of Babel is a very good example.

The Bible tells us of the time when the whole earth spoke one language, it was then that the people aimed to build the tower in the land
of Shiner. The unity of their language gave them the power to understand each other and they could work together with absolute unity. When the Lord saw the people building the tower he said "behold, the people is one, and they have all one language; and this they begin to do; and now nothing will be restrained from them; which they have imagined to do.

Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another’s speech"

(The Holy Bible, Genesis II)

Thus the Lord scattered the people up on the face of the earth by creating a confusion of the tongues. The lack of a common language deprived them of their unity.

Language has also become the machinery to implement power and political dominance. Identification with one’s own language has always been a marker of nationalism, for example, the terms Malayālīs, Tamilians, Kannadikas etc. show the pride in one’s own language which is considered as one’s inheritance.

Language and culture

The study of language always considers its users and the community in which the language is used. The language is deep rooted in the community of the speakers, forming and adapting itself to the needs of the people and also is intern being influenced by the culture of the users. According to Goodenough, a society’s "culture consists of whatever it is, one has to know or believe in order to operate in a manner acceptable to its members and to do so in any role that they accept for any one of
themselves." (1957, p. 167). The culture of the people is well reflected in their language.

Almost all cultures provide rules for appropriate communicative interaction, the context of linguistic items occurrence etc. An ethnographic approach to analysing communication underlined the cultural specificity of rules of communication and the totality of factors which need description. The most important aspects are settings, participants, topic and goals. (Bonvillain Nancy. 1997, p. 78). The settings classify occasions demanding certain types of behaviours formal or informal. People are very much careful to use language in accordance with the circumstances. It would not be acceptable to speak in a loud voice to others during a funeral. People don’t usually use what is called the informal language in business meetings and other official occasions. The participants in a speech interaction make a language choice depending on the status and type of other participants involved in the conversation. The choice of topic also depends on the speaker’s awareness of culture and individual expectations. The speaker’s goal is to maintain the communication smoothly without any unnecessary ill feeling and embarrassment with in the group.

No society is free from the disparities or the inequalities between the members. The inequalities in the case of power and authority make communication more or less difficult. However, the ways of interaction of people are conditioned by certain set of norms. And they are expressed in and through language. "Our linguistic and cultural structures are based on the complexities of heterogeneous elements situated in given socio -
economic - cultural empirical field of ideology. If each and every speaker of a language speaks exactly alike, behaves in the same manner, believes in every details of his faith, all linguistic, cultural and religious structures will stop functioning” (Vimla Menon. 2003, p. 41.)

**Interplay of Biology and Sociology**

The terms *sex* and *gender* are used interchangeably by laymen. For linguists and other social scientists, these terms are not mere interchangeable terms. The distinction between *sex* and *gender* primarily recognizes biological and socio-cultural differences. The term *sex* means the biological or physiological characteristics that make one female or male. The term *gender* means the most narrowly, the psychological and emotional characteristics of individuals. It signifies the characters of masculine or feminine. But in a broader sense "gender includes personality traits, attitudes, beliefs and values, sexual orientation and gender role identity" (Diana K. Ivy. 2000, pp. 6-7).

The biology of masculinity and femininity, which is a sex difference, begins to operate before the birth and soon after conception. The sociology of masculinity and femininity which is a gender difference operates after birth. As Miller and Swift put it, "at the risk of over simplification, sex .......... is a biological given, gender is a social acquisition" (1976, p. 51). These two concepts are tightly interwoven. In this sense, gender differences are partly based on sex differences. For example, mothering. The social role of mothering is considered traditionally that of the woman as she has the biological capacity of
bearing and nursing children. Physical labour is traditionally performed by men because on an average they are stronger than women.

Gender is constructed, which means that one’s femaleness or maleness is more extensive than the fact of being born on anatomically as female or male. The thing which is related to this fact is that the culture and society which mould a particular person in a specific gender. Thorne, Kramarae and Henley explain that "gender is not a unitary, or natural fact, but take shape in concrete historically changing social relationship "(1983, P.16). According to Simone de Beauvoir (1997) ‘a woman is not born she becomes, is made a woman’. This is to say that the socialisation of the female transforms her into a woman with certain apparently inherent qualities such as weakness, soft mindedness, patience and so on.

It is better to use the term sex as biological determination and gender as something that is culturally constructed. For clarifying the concept of gender as something that is culturally and socially constructed, it is to be noted that when a child is born, what is our first reaction or question? kutti ḍiṅō pēnō? (Is the child boy or girl?) We are anxious to know the biological categorisation of the child. So in the beginning the first preference is given to sex. After that through its entire lifespan the parents as well as the society are very much concerned to construct the child in the same way as they were moulded by their parents and society on the basis of deep rooted stereotyped practices and attitudes. The custom of giving blue clothes and toys for boys and pink ones for girls is an example of this categorisation.
Biological sex suggests several things about how women and men communicate and one communicated with. A person’s sex isn’t easily changed, but a person’s conception of gender is far more open to change. So biological sex is a static phenomenon. But there are exceptions regarding the artificial changing of sex of a person by the application of modern science. A person’s gender is not so static. It is a flowing phenomenon. The society can mould or construct the person’s gender.

Sex differences, being visible are usually taken as the independent variable to be correlated with linguistic variables, but they are often ascribed as gender differences in the absence of any real consideration of gender roles in the community” (Chambers J.K. 2003, p. 118).

**The concept of sex and gender**

The differences in the roles of male and female goes back to the beginning of the history of mankind. The British sociologist Anthony Giddens defines sex as “biological or anatomical differences between men and women, where as gender concerns the psychological, social and cultural differences between male and female” (1989, p. 158). This definition makes it easy to distinguish both terms even though these terms are used simultaneously. According to Lewontin "the development of gender identity depends on what label was attached to him or her as a child. Thus biological differences become a signal for, rather than a cause of differentiation in social roles". (1982, p. 142). This definition explains in an excellent way the impact of societal norms and evaluations, power structures and the role of socialization. Gender categories on the
determination of gender, institutionalize cultural and social status and they have served to make male dominance over women appear natural: ‘gender inequality in society results from a historically specific tendency to ideologically naturalize prevailing socio-economic inequalities” (Stolcke. 1993, p. 19).

Societies use concepts of gender to transform female and male human beings into social participants as women and men and to give them different roles and cultural values. This process involves expectations and evaluations of behaviour, entailing the societal attitude about their role and participation in family and community life. The distinction between sex and gender has been one of the foundations of western feminist thought. The following definitions are typical: “(Sex and gender) serve a useful analytic purpose in contrasting a set of biological facts with a set of cultural facts. Were I to be scrupulous in my use of terms, I would use the term sex only when I was speaking of biological differences between males and females and use ‘gender’ whenever I was referring to the social, cultural psychological constructs that are imposed up on these biological differences .............. (G)ender designates a set of categories to which we can give the same label cross linguistically or cross culturally because they have some connection to sex differences. These categories are however conventional or arbitrary in so far as they are not reducible to or directly derivative of natural biological facts; they vary from one language to another, one culture to another, in the way in which they order experience and action (Shapiro. 1981, cited in Bonnie McElhinny 2003, p.22).
Biological difference between men and women

There are only very few biological difference between men and women having influence on language. "Among the documented linguistic differences are that women are likely to have reading disabilities or to stutter, or to be aphasic" (Chambers J. K. 2003, p. 119). Muscular strength of a women is only about two thirds that of a man. Women have less respiratory capacity, the lungs and trachea being smaller, the larynx is relatively smaller and in consequence the female voice is higher.

Simone de Beauvoir (1997) asserts that since patriarchal time women have, in general, been forced to occupy a secondary place in the world in relation to men, a position comparable in many respects with that of the racial minorities though they are a better half numerically. This secondary standing, she argues, is imposed by strong environmental forces of educational and social tradition under the purposeful control of men (Sreedevi. B. 1991, p. 62). So the research in this field reported that the male superiority is the product of a combination of factors such as genetic, hormonal and cultural.

Linguistically, probably the most obvious difference between men and women is that men tend to have deeper speaking voices than women (Biemans. 2000). This is because of the difference in the relative size of male female larynx. Men's larynx tend to be much larger and it appears very clearly because they cause the thyroid cartilage in the throat called Adam's apple to protrude. There is no Eve's apple because of this difference.
The bigger larynx means that men have longer vocal cords. Longer vocal cords vibrate more slowly, and thus produce a lower pitched voice. The range for men is from about 80 hertz to 200 hertz and for women is about 120 hertz to 400 hertz. The fact that these ranges overlap means, of course, that the correlation of pitch difference with sex is like all sex differences is a statistical bias and not an absolute difference. Most men’s voice fall between 100-150 hertz and most women’s between 200-300 hertz (Malmberg. 1963, p.26). Typical average pitches are 120 hertz for men 225 hertz for women and 265 hertz for children.

The lengthening of male vocal cords is a secondary sexual change that takes place at puberty ‘pubescent boys must adjust to the change and many of them go through a short but for them excruciating period. When involuntary croaking sounds disturb their stream of speech’. (Rogers.2000, p. 239). The distinction of voices between two sexes is manifested at puberty then the lengthening of vocal cords. For both females and males, the fundamental frequency decreases with age in the first two decades until adulthood. The lowering of pitch happens for both sexes after maturity when the larynx is full grown.

This is purely a biological variable which differentiate male female speech. But this variable is not a universal one. It is an individual one. It may differ from person to person. There are a lot of people especially singers who can sing in low pitched and high pitched voices.
Social Interpretations of biological sex

“The male is by nature superior and the female is inferior; the one rules, and the other is ruled. The lower sorts are by nature slaves, and it is better for them as for all inferiors that they should be under the rule of a master (Aristotle cited in Diana K. Ivy. 2000, p.37). Such discriminations exist in the deep rooted beliefs in society. This is partially and primarily because of the biological difference. Nowadays biological differences between men and women have become one of the hot topics for discussion. When we raise the question why men and women are different?, the answer may be that ‘the men and women are just naturally different, so stop trying to understand it or fight it’, this is an instance of biological discrimination. Difference in sexual organs, reproductive functions, physical strength and their social interpretations will reflect in communication between men and women.

1. Differences in Sexual organs:

For a long time the male penis has been viewed as a symbol of virility - an external outward sign of men’s strength and their ability to assert themselves in the world. The externality of men’s sexual organ has been interpreted socially to identify men as the actors, doers, leaders and decision makers in many aspects of life, such as in relationships, work and politics. On the contrary, the internal genitalia of women is paralleled with the more passive, submissive profiles that women have traditionally assumed - profiles endorsed by men, and often, society in general. The
social interpretations of women’s sexual organ identify them as reactors, receivers, followers and beneficiaries of men’s decisions.

2. **Differences in reproductive functions:**

Since only women have the ability to carry a developing foetus for nine months, give birth and nurse, the reproductive capacity of men and women have profound social translations than any other factor in society. Women’s role is defined by their biology. In majority of cultures we can see that men are not physically bound to infants. This is because of their biological peculiarities. So they are more concentrated to provide the economic sustenance for the family. This is the base of the home maker-bread winner dichotomy. In Malayalam the word *annadātāvu* (bread winner) primarily goes to men.

In the 21\textsuperscript{st} century, women have achieved more control over their biological function of child bearing. She can take on the role of bread winner also. In the presence of social support system to take care of her child, there by enabling her to balance between the rules of the bread winner and the mother. As a result majority of women are engaged in different sectors such as agriculture, business, industrial and service. In such a situation, the home maker-bread winner dichotomy becomes altered. Still the society is not willing to accept the reversal of social rules i.e. the father staying at home and taking care of the family while the mother acts as the sole bread winner.
3. Differences in physical strength and hormones:

Men have more natural strength than women. They have greater oxygen carrying capacity, a lower resting heart rate, higher blood pressure and more efficient method of recovery from physical exertion (Stackard & Johnson. 1980). Because of these characteristics, men have long been thought of as the stronger sex, women as the weaker sex. According to Jacklin, “hormonal differences are among the most common biological causes given for behavioural sex related differences” (1989, p. 129). Androgens and estrogens are mainly present in all humans just at varying degrees. The hormones associated with masculinity are androgens and femininity is estrogens. These hormonal differences are largely affecting the functions of nurturing and aggression. In almost all societies men behave more aggressively than women. This aggressive nature is manifested verbally and physically. This aggressive behaviour might take the form of interruptions of subordinates, fevered attempts to persuade colleagues and show their verbally aggressive behaviour in their job. Quite often, this behaviour in men on the job is expected, tolerated and rewarded. On the contrary, females show passive character is due to the lack of androgens. The function of nurturing is associated with women because female hormones are very much inclined to nurture.

Difference in pitch

Pitch has also been used as an index for the measurement of women’s language inferiority. High pitched tones are associated with femininity and low pitched tones to masculinity. Women’s high pitched
voices are considered aesthetically unpleasing. So males who do produce high pitched utterance would be venturing into that negative realm and violating the gender demarcation lines. They would be ridiculed. Men with high pitched sounds are considered to be lacking in masculinity. If a female produce low pitched sound it also not acceptable and considered to be lacking in femininity.

Psychological differences - brain cognitive abilities

The functions of brain are considered as an extremely complex phenomenon which are tied to hormonal functioning and are related to cognitive abilities. Research has shown that, the two hemispheres of the brain have various capabilities. The left hemisphere is primarily responsible for the production of language, while the right hemisphere manages spatial ability. Studies have attempted to find a relationship between hemisphere dominance and sex, hypothesizing that hormones cause women’s and men’s brain to develop differently. It has been thought that men perform better on tests of spatial skills while women excel on tests of verbal ability, as a result of the hormonal and brain functioning (Kimura. 1987). Since most of the social interpretations of the information on brain functioning relates to cognitive abilities. The differences of cognitive abilities in relation to sex are because of the use of various areas of the brain. For example, male dominance in mathematics is related to hemisphere specialisation of the brain i.e. the right hemisphere is more fully developed in men than in women. That is why mathematics is considered as male subject. Females out performed males.
are certain capacities like language acquisition, vocabulary, spelling, writing and verbal expressiveness.

Gender and Language-Historical background and Theoretical approaches

The second half of the twentieth century is considered as the beginning era of the Gender and language research. Starting in the 1960s, socio-linguists working as urban dialectologists began providing detailed descriptions of characteristics that were said to distinguish women’s and men’s speech. (Labov. 1963, 1966 b, Wolfram. 1969, Trudgill. 1972, 1983 b). William Labov was the first to investigate the gender specific variations in Martha’s Vineyard (1963) and in New York city studies (1966 b). In these studies he considered sex as one factor among many influencing the variations, of language behaviour. To explain socio-phonological variation, he used the sociological concept of *prestige* emphasizing language attitudes as a casual factor in choosing a certain lect right from the beginning. He emphasized two features of human language behaviour.

1. Women of all classes and ages use more standard variants than their equivalent men.

2. The lower middle class *hyper corrects* its language, it copies features of middle class, whose language behaviour is more standard inorder to gain social prestige.

In his later studies he stressed the concept of *linguistic insecurity* which has a major role in the behaviour of lower middle class."The index
of linguistic insecurity involves the proportion of cases in which people distinguish between the way they speak and another way of speaking that is *correct* (Labov. 1990, pp. 225-226).

Peter Trudgill (1972, 1983. b) works with in a framework similar to that of Labov. But he has a stronger emphasis on sociological reasons to account for the observed gender specific difference in language variation. His study of Norwich (1972) included observations that men use more non standard forms then women. He explains that "the social position of women in our society is less secure than that of men . . . . it may be . . . . that it is more necessary for women to secure and signal their social status linguistically" (Trudgill. 1972, p.91) Further more men are judged according to their work, yet women are assessed according to their appearance, which includes language. Women tend to exaggerate their actual usage of standard forms, men on the contrary tend to under report their standard usage. "For men nonstandard variants fulfill the function of solidarity markers which highlight certain group values like masculinity: In other words, the notion of *covert prestige* (Labov. 1966.b) captures the hidden sociological functions of vernaculars. (Routh Wondak & Gertraud Benke. 2000, p. 135).

In 1973, Robin Lakoff’s article, ‘Language and women’s place’ (Lakoff 1973) changed the research landscape and launched a new era of work on *women and language*. From that time to the end of the twentieth century, language and gender research was dominated by three major themes which theorized both the impressions and the supposed realities of male female speech. The earliest modern theory about *women’s language*
most often associated with Robin Lakoff (1973) is commonly referred to as the *deficit theory*. It describes women’s language as ineffective in comparison to men’s language and explained women’s manner of speaking as being a reflection of women’s insecurity and powerless place in society. She states that "women are person-oriented, interested in their own and each other’s mental states and respective status, men are object-oriented, interested in things in the outside world. And men enter into bonding relationships of camaraderie in a way that they do not with women nor do women really with one another." (1975, pp. 82 - 83).

The theory called the *dominance* theory of language and gender, presented by Barrie Thorne and Nancy Henley in 1975 focused as issues of patriarchy - that is, male power and domination. The social and political arrangement between the sexes as one in which women were viewed and treated as unequal to men, because the norms of society had literally been established by men. Language differences were identified as part of a structure of unequal access and influence.

Some of the earliest and most influential studies of language and gender come from a conversation-analytic/ ethno-methodological framework. (Fishman. 1983, Zimmerman and Candace West. 1975, West and Zimmerman. 1983). Such research demonstrated that gender based power difference is an emergent property of interaction. ‘Men’s one-up discursive position vis-a-vis women as indicated through their greater propensity for interruption and their lesser engagement in interactional maintenance work, does not merely reflect, but actually produces male power as an effect of discourse’. (Mary Bucholtz. 2003, p. 51).
In her work, Dale Spender (1980) states the categories and positioning of women in language. She argues that "women's subordination in language lies in women's negative relation to language. The effect of subordination attached to women's relation to language cannot be over ruled by the construction of new and positive terms, for the problem lies not in the words but in the semantic rule which governs their positive or negative connotations" (1994, p. 29). The dominance of the male semantic rule is an effect of the dominance of male definitions or meaning.

The studies of James and Lesley Milroy (1980, 1981, 1987) represent a qualitatively new approach to language variation. As opposed to Labov, their research is more concerned with the internal variation within a certain group i.e. the working class and not with the language community as a whole. "With in the working class speech alone, this research has demonstrated that there are considerable differences between individuals, between different speech styles, between men and women and between older and younger speaker's (J. Milroy. 1981, p. 89).

Sally Mc Connell - Ginet's study (1983) concentrated on the field of gender specific differences in intonation patterns and states that "Masculine speech melodies can be heard as metaphors for control and feminine speech melodies as uncontrolled.

The difference theory represented by the writing of Daniel Maltx and Ruth Berker (1982) and Deborah Tannen (1990, 1994) hypothesized that men and women used specific and distinct verbal strategies and communicative styles which were developed in same sex childhood peer
groups. Tannen has explicitly linked her study of gender to her work on ethnic communication which contrasts the conversational styles of Greeks, Greek Americans, Jewesh Americans, and Americans of other backgrounds. She demonstrates that 'interlocutors with different cultural backgrounds can misinterpret one another’s conversational styles as personality traits such as pushiness or inconsistency (Tannan. 1981, 1982).

Each of the frameworks concentrates on the verbal characteristics of women, or as Sally Johnson (1997) observes, each of the approaches is "characterized by almost exclusive problematization of women." (Johnson 1997, p. 10) and each make use of a concept of gender based on binary opposition. The tacit hypothesis of many studies seems to be that men and women are essentially different and that this difference will be reflected in their contrasting use of language." (1997, p.11). Janet Holmes and Maria Stubbe remind us that when studied closely; gendered linguistic practices that have been over generalised unravel and became more complex. Marjorie Goodwin’s data confirm that "the notion that girls are fundamentally interested in cooperative, face-saving, interaction is called into question by "transcripts of naturally occurring behaviour in disputes" (2003, p. 243).

The most articulated theory of stylistics as a critical and liberatory feminist project has been carried out by Sara Mills (1992, 1995, 1998). Milli’s form of stylistic analysis include, in addition to the text and its author, its history, its relationship to other texts and its relationship to readers. In her most recent work, Mills (1998) draws on contemporary
feminist theory and language and gender scholarship to argue for the possibility of multiple and contradictory interpretations of texts. She suggests that the widespread influence of feminism has made sexism less overt but no less present in mainstream discourse of gender and heterosexuality (Mary Bucholtz. 2003, p.56).

However there are four significant and increasingly controversial theoretical assumptions:

1. Gender is closely wedded to sex, and the study of gender is closely wedded to the study of heterosexuality.

2. Gender is an attribute

3. The study of gender is the study of individuals.

4. Gender is best studied where most salient.

(Bonnie McElhinny. 2003, p. 22).

**Gender stereotyping - He man, She women**

In each level of society, social norms guide expectations and actions that can differ according to gender. There are different expectations for men and women. Since one is born as male or female, they become masculine or feminine through a very complex developmental process that take time to reveal. In almost all known cultures, females and males meet with distinct set of gender-related beliefs and expectations exerting powerful and often subtle influence on their thoughts, feelings, language and behaviours. These beliefs and expectations together constitute gender stereotypes.
As a representational practice, stereotyping involves simplification, reduction and naturalisation. On the basis of the gender assignment, naturalised norms and expectations about verbal behaviour are imposed upon people. People have a strong tendency to set in stereotyping. This stereotyping has a reductive tendency: to "stereotype someone is to interpret their behaviour, personality and so on in terms of a set of common sense attributions which are applied to whole groups" (Cameron. 1988, p.8).

Gender stereotypes are highly structured sets of belief systems about the personal attributes of male and female. They are widely held beliefs about female’s and male’s abilities, personality traits and social behaviour. They may be over generalized and oversimplified systems which play a crucial role in the processing of social information. According to Deaux (1995) the content of stereotypes has often been described in terms of general personality traits that characterize each sex. A typical man according to his study is characterized by the following traits: aggressive, unemotional, like mathematics and science, worldly, ambitious, objective, dominant, competitive, self-confident, logical, act as a leader, independent etc. A typical women is characterised by the traits such as gentle, cries easily, enjoys art and literature, does not use harsh language, tactful, religious, interested in own appearance, expressive, insecure, talkative neat in habit and dependent.

The doctrine of Yin-Yang in Chinese philosophy and the Greek philosophy, moulded different systems of opposites for men and women. The associations of Yin are even, female and darkness. While those of
Yang are odd, male and light. The Greek male is resting and the female is moving. While the Chinese male is active and the female is passive. As feminists would point out that whatever the system, the male gets the attributes with the higher prestige. Thus active is better than passive, but for the Greeks, to be free of all motion is superior to being a subject of motion, whether actively or passively. Similarly in India, where the male side of ardhanāriswara is detached, remote and unmoving. While the female side is active, creative and powerful that is sakti. But detachment is definitely superior to participation.

Each and every culture (society) developed and has been discussing various stereotypes for a long time. They continue to make stereotypes based on the inputs from their environment. On the basis of sexual stereotypes, boys and girls are often treated differently. From the earliest ages, girls are given different types of toys from boys. They have more light things such as dolls, doll houses and domestic objects. On the other hand, boys have more toy vehicles, toy animals and toys of great heroes such as Saktiman, Superman etc., military toys, sports equipments etc. The difference in toys cannot be explained purely by the children’s preferences. The expectations of parents and other gift givers play a major role. The content of toy catalogue and the pictures of children on the packages of toys are still stereotyped.

It is believed that, expecting different behaviour from boys and girls can be a self-fulfilling prediction. If one sort of behaviour is expected and encouraged, the child will be more likely to continue it. So that,
there is a stereotyped attitude towards the do and don’ts of male and female.

‘Sugar and spice and everything nice
That’s what little girls are made of
snips and snails and puppy dog tails,
That’s what little boys are made of.’

(Mary Ritchie Key. 1975, p. 54)

Gender stereotypes give a social and cognitive framework consisting of knowledge and beliefs about the typical or model characteristics of males and females. In other words they suggest that all the males or all the females possess certain traits, at least to a degree. Once the stereotype is activated, these traits come readily to mind and it is the fact that explains the case with which one can probably construct list of traits like the Deavx’s list.

“A real boy climbs trees, disdains girls, disties his knees, plays with soldiers and takes blue for his favourite colour.... real boys prefer manual training gym, and arithmetic. In college the boys smoke pipes drinks beer, and major in engineering or Physics...the real boys matures into a man’s. Man who plays poker goes hunting, drinks brandy and dies in the war.......

. A real girl dresses dolls, jumps rope, plays hopscotch and takes pink for her favourite colour when they go to school real girls like English and music. The real girl becomes a feminine woman who loves children,
embroiders handkerchiefs drink weak tea and succumbs to consumption”
(Sara Delamont. 1980, pp. 14-29.)

These types of concepts or the stereotyped belief shapes the child according to the society’s expectations.

Elements of the important traditional stereotypes are the following

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Masculine</th>
<th>Feminine</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Active</td>
<td>Aware of other’s feelings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adventurous</td>
<td>Considerate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aggressive</td>
<td>Creative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ambitious</td>
<td>Cries easily</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competitive</td>
<td>Devotes self to others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dominant</td>
<td>Emotional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>Enjoys art and music</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership qualities</td>
<td>Excitable in a crisis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Like Maths and Science</td>
<td>Expresses tender feelings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mechanical aptitude</td>
<td>Feelings hurt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not easily influenced</td>
<td>Gentle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Out spoken</td>
<td>Home Oriented</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persistent</td>
<td>kind</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-confident</td>
<td>Likes children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skilled in business</td>
<td>Neat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stands up under pressure</td>
<td>Tactful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Takes a stand</td>
<td>understanding</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: Adapted from Ruble (1983))
Gendered socialization

Socialization is the acquisition of the norms and behaviours expected of people in a particular society. It includes all the efforts made by a society to ensure that its members learn to behave in a manner that is considered appropriate. The socialization process has traditionally included efforts to train children about their gender roles. Gender roles are expectations about what is appropriate behaviour for each sex. Researches in this field have identified three key processes involved in the socialization of gender roles.

1. Operant conditioning:

Gender roles are moulded by the power of reward and punishment. Parents, teachers, peer group and others often reinforce *gender appropriate* behaviour and respond negatively to *gender in appropriate* behaviour (Fagot & Hagan, 1991).

When a boy starts to cry, the parents, teachers or others say that *āŋkuttiya, karayaruru* (don’t cry you are a boy.) Then he feels that crying is something bad and is associated with girls. This crying is an appropriate behaviour for girls not for boys. The reinforcement probably strengthens his tendency to *act like a man* and suppress emotional displays.

2. Observational learning:

Human beings by nature imitate those whom they admire. Generally young girls try to imitate their mother, aunts or sister or other role models. Similarly young boys imitate their father or other male role models. Such
type of behaviors reflects observational learning. Thus imitation often leads young girls to play with dolls, doll houses, playing and acting like mothers and doing kitchen work and act like home maker. Young boys are more likely to tinker with boy trucks, tool kits and act like bread winner.

3. Self-Socialization:

Children themselves are active agents in their own gender - role socialization. Several cognitive theories of gender - role development emphasize self socialization (Bem. 1985, Cross & Markus 1993) Self-socialization entails three steps. First children learn to classify themselves as male or female and to recognize their sex as a permanent quality. Second, this self socialization motivates them to value those characteristics and behaviours associated with their sex. Third, they make effort to bring their behaviour in line with what is considered gender appropriate in their culture. After gender stereotypes are internalized, they probably continue to influence behaviour through out their life.

Families, schools and media are the main source of influence in gender role socialization process. A great deal of gender role socialization takes place in the home. When children are old enough to help with house hold work, the assignment tends to depend on sex. For example, girls wash dishes and help mother in kitchen work. Boys help father to the outside work. The traditional and non traditional attitudes of parents about gender roles have been shown to influence the gender roles acquired by their children. Older siblings may also influence youngster’s gender - role socialization (Wagner, etal. 1993).
The schools and the teachers clearly contribute to the socialization of gender roles. The books that children use in learning to read can influence their ideas about what is suitable behavior for males and females (Schau & Scott. 1984).

Television is another source of gender role socialisation. Television shows have traditionally depicted men and women in highly stereotypic ways (Signorielli. 1989). Women are often portrayed as submissive, passive and emotional. Men are more likely to be portrayed as independent, assertive and competent. Another form of gender bias in television is it’s in ordinate emphasis on physical attractiveness in women. Men on television may or may not be good looking but the vast majority of women are young, attractive and sexy (Devis. 1996).

**Gender Stereotypes in Language**

Language is a good medium to express and represent the role of men and women in a particular society. Each society have their own appropriate attitudes regarding the use and don’t use of language. There may be stereotypical rules that children use a certain type of language, males use another type and female use language another manner. In language men and women are represented in different ways. In each and every aspect of language, we can see the stereotypical attitude of society starting from the pronunciation up to discourse there are some differences in varying degrees.

In certain languages like Yanyuwa (a language spoken in Borrotoola, South east of Darwin) there men speak in a certain manner and
women speak in another. They have separate dialects. If a man tries to use the feminine language, people ridicule him and vice versa. John Brandley, reported such a type of linguistic situation. Once a Yanyuwa man used the language that is a mixture of male and female dialects. But the older persons did not tolerate this incorrect usage. His mother yelled at him `hey! You are a man; you have no foreskin, why do you talk like a woman? Speak like a man, you are not a small child (John Bradley. 2000, p. 16). This type of yelling makes people ashamed and so they try to use the language which is socially appropriate to them.

Stereotyping as a representational practice is a basic notion of folk linguistics. Folk linguistics is the term used by linguists to refer to the non-linguist’s belief about language. Indeed, folk linguistics is the basis of Cameron’s glossary entry for stereotype in her reader. In linguistics a folk linguistic characterization of some group’s speech” (1985, pp. 189 - 190). With in the field of language and gender, the term stereotype is often used to refer to prescriptions or unstated expectations of behaviour, rather than specifically to representational practices (Mary Talbot. 2003, p. 472).

Gender stereotypes linked to gender ideology reproduce naturalized gender differences. In doing so they function to sustain hegemonic male dominance and female subordination. For example, in the class room, teachers encourage boys to be assertive in class room interactions. If the girls admire this type of demonstrations and do the same they are not admired at all. On the contrary, they may be teased by other girls. It seems that by teasing, the other girls are accepting their own suppression and by and by admiring the assertive boys, they are
acknowledging the right of boys to be dominant. In this way hegemonic male dominance and female subordination are sustained.

The binary opposition like these are supposed to characterize different style of talk of men and women.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>śRaddhikkuka</td>
<td>‘listen’</td>
<td>paRayuka</td>
<td>‘speaking’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pintuṇakkuka</td>
<td>‘support’</td>
<td>etirkkuka</td>
<td>‘opposing’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>aṭuppm</td>
<td>‘intimate’</td>
<td>svatantRam</td>
<td>‘independent’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>anukampa</td>
<td>‘sympathy’</td>
<td>praśnaparihāram</td>
<td>‘problem solving’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In these examples the stereotyped characters of women support a traditional idealization of mother and womanhood in general. The other side could be used in defence of male power and privilege.

Cameron characterizes feminist folk linguistic beliefs about women’s language as follows.

1. Disfluency (because women find it hard to communicate in a male language).
2. Unfinished sentences.
3. Speech not ordered according to the norms of logic
4. Statements couched as questions (approval seeking)
5. Speaking less than men in mixed groups.
It seems clear that the alleged male female styles are highly stereotypical and vastly different from each other. Activity is attributed to men in language while passivity in language is considered female characteristics.

There is discrimination regarding male terms and female terms. It is to be noted that in the case of the occupational terms, most often the male terms are considered as standard and the female term is derived from it e.g. Doctor this term is mainly for males. At the first hearing the term tells us that the person is male and if it is a female the prefix lady is to be added to doctor lady doctor, which is derived from the standard term. Similarly, vakkīl (advocate) vakkīlamma (lady advocate). The suffix amma (Mother) is to be added to the main part vakkīl. polīsu (police) vanita polīsu (woman police ) the suffix vanita (lady) is added to the main part. A driver in an autorikshaw is termed as auto driver and the auto is merely the autorikshaw. If the driver is a female the āuto is called vanita auto (lady auto) which means that the driver is a female.

This instance of language is due to the deep rooted beliefs that exist in the society. The terms related to most professions are meant for males. Only certain kinds of jobs are meant primarily for females. On the contrary the term āya (nurse) is primarily for females. To nurse children and patients is the duty of the female and is considered as innate character of hers, strongly moulded by the stereotypical attitudes of society. Some times the male version of the term gives a negative attitude e.g. āya, the standard term nurse means a female person. To indicate that is a male who are doing the same job we use some marked term male nurse. This is
just the opposite in the case of doctor. Similarly, the sex workers are struggling to get sex work recognized as an occupation like any other jobs. The sex workers are primarily considered as females the terms veśya vritti (sex profession) veśya (prostitute) the worker referred to the female but there are a lot of male person in this field who can be called āνvesya (male prostitute). The prefix ān is added to the main part. However this term shows the absolutely negative stereotypical attitudes created by society.

Gender roles are in a period of transition in our society. Many women and men are rebelling against traditional role expectations based on sex. Many parents are trying to raise their children with fewer preconceived notions about how males and females ought to behave. “Some social critics view this is a healthy trend because they believe that traditional roles have been too narrow and restrictive for both sexes” (Bem. 1985 Gold berg. 1983).

Nowadays, women engage in almost all spheres which were once considered as the male’s area. She puts her footsteps in almost all spheres that is form cultivation in the fields to the space research. There is no need to discriminate on behave in an asymmetrical way.

Sometimes the male version of a term is positive while the female is negative. Certain connotations like bachelor vs. spinster which have different meanings. The male version bachelor refers to an unmarried person but the female version of this term spinster refers to an unmarried female but it also appears to be rarely used nowadays. Perhaps because their associations are so negative. Bachelor however usually has positive
connotations; the *bachelor life* is generally regarded as glamorous, a bachelor is some one who has succeeded in not getting tied down. *Spinster* on the other hand suggests to people some one old, grey, ugly and unable to get a man. So *bachelor girl* can be used to refer to an unmarried lady to avoid such type of stigma.

There are social beliefs that construct the image of women as weak and fickle.

e.g. 1 abalayāya stRīye pīṭippiccu

(The helpless woman was tortured)

2. stRikaḷ capala cittārāṇu

(Women are fickle minded).

In the first sentence the adjective *abal* (weak) is traditionally meant for women. *Some body tortured a weak woman*. It signifies that the woman is weak, in the second sentence, the word *capala* which means fickle and it means women are fickle minded.

**Major stereotyped vocabularies related to men and women**

Masculine and feminine stereotypes are the beliefs and values that are usually associated with man and woman in a particular society In Malayalam, there are a lot of terms which signify the masculine and feminine characters meant for men and women, respectively.

Examples of some of the terms of masculine and feminine stereotyped vocabulary in Malayalam are given below.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Masculine</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
<th>Feminine</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>aṇattam</td>
<td>masculinity</td>
<td>penṭattam</td>
<td>femininity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ādhipatyam</td>
<td>dominant</td>
<td>aticcamarttapetta</td>
<td>depressed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>muraṇan</td>
<td>rough person</td>
<td>sneha mulḷa</td>
<td>lovable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>utkaṇṭalu</td>
<td>anxious</td>
<td>asūyālu</td>
<td>envious</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nirbhayan</td>
<td>bold</td>
<td>capala</td>
<td>fickle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dhīran</td>
<td>brave</td>
<td>peṭiyulḷa</td>
<td>timid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ākramaṇakāri</td>
<td>aggressive</td>
<td>atakkavum otukkavum</td>
<td>polite</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>karuttan</td>
<td>strong</td>
<td>durbala/ abala</td>
<td>weak person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>utsāhi</td>
<td>active</td>
<td>sahanātmakamāya</td>
<td>passive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yuktisahan</td>
<td>rational</td>
<td>vaikārikamāya</td>
<td>emotional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>garvulla</td>
<td>arrogant</td>
<td>kṣamāśīla</td>
<td>patient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kauṣalam</td>
<td>cunning</td>
<td>nāṇamuḷḷa</td>
<td>shy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nirūpakān</td>
<td>critic</td>
<td>sahakarikkunna</td>
<td>co-operative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>svaṭantṛan</td>
<td>independent</td>
<td>grhōcitam</td>
<td>homely</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sāhasiakan</td>
<td>adventurous</td>
<td>vaṭsalyamulḷa</td>
<td>affectionate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>durabhimāni</td>
<td>conceited</td>
<td>mṛtubhasi</td>
<td>soft spoken</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ātmavāsvāsi</td>
<td>self confident</td>
<td>vidheyatvamulḷa</td>
<td>submissive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>paruṣabhaṣa-</td>
<td>uses harsh-</td>
<td>anusaraṇayulla</td>
<td>obedient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>upayogikkunnavan.</td>
<td>language</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>netrutva-</td>
<td>have leadership-</td>
<td>saundaryabōdhamulḷa</td>
<td>beauticonscious</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>swabhāvam.</td>
<td>quality.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ēkadhipati</td>
<td>autocrate</td>
<td>paricarikkunna</td>
<td>nuturent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>prayatnasāli</td>
<td>hard working</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pariśRami</td>
<td>diligent</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The effect of stereotypes

Stereotyping is quite natural. By simplifying complex life experiences by categorising and generalising personal stereotypes, like other social schemas. We try to make sense of life. However these stereotypes have certain inherent problems.

The social conditions that give rise to the current stereotypical forms of masculinity and femininity have evolved over a long period. These social conditions are changed a great deal. Still femininity remains linked to the home, family, emotional expressiveness and caring for others. Masculinity continues to focus on the public areas of work and is associated with power relationally emotional reserve and productivity (Wood, 1994).

Sometimes we can see that stereotypes exaggerate differences between groups and minimise differences within groups. Gender stereotypes can portray men as alike when infact there are enormous individual differences among them. The same is true about the differences among women. Gender stereotypes can also make it seem that men and women are utterly different, when in fact the similarities are usually much greater then the dissimilarities.

Sometimes we act in ways that turn stereotypes into self-fulfilling prophecies. For example if a man expects a woman to be pleasant, soft spoken and unassertive towards him he will have to act just as he wants her to behave towards him. Gender stereotypes can affect the competence
of an individual. Since the interest and practices are guided by the
expectations of society, women and men still often use their basic talents
and motivation in a gender-linked way.

Gender stereotypes can act as powerful social control mechanism
by influencing the way an individual thinks, feels, talks and behaves. By
shaping the needs, motives and values of an individual gender stereotypes
lead to the internal alienation from true itself.

Thinking and acting beyond stereotypes or shattering away the
traditional, typical roles of men and women, require the thorough
understanding of the subtle ways in which they are operating in individual
social and cultural realms of life.