

# WOMEN PSYCHOLOGY AND COUNSELLING ISSUES A NEW GENERATION – ‘DAUGHTERS’

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## **Abstract:**

*This research named ‘a new generation – daughters’ is based on the analysis of mother to daughter counselling. It speaks of a new generation that throws light on the dark corners of the society and on a different method of upbringing in daughters. This research deals with the phenomenon of mothers counselling daughters. This paper will defy the definition of women in the society without going against the rules of the society. The society trains women to be vulnerable creatures. This research deals with training women according to the odds of the society. The idea behind this research is to educate women in their roots and discover a new method of mother-to-daughter counselling.*

**Keywords:** *female, women, society, upbringing, strength, counselling, men, mothers, family etc.*

## **INTRODUCTION**

*“The secret of change is to focus all of your energy, not on fighting the old, but building the new.” \_ SOCRATES*

## **THE WOMEN OF INDIA**

During the early Vedic period, women enjoyed equal status with men in all aspects of living. Ancient Indian grammarians suggest that in the early Vedic period women were highly educated. Studies of the Rig-Veda suggest that women married at a mature age and according to the practice of the swayamvar concept were free to select their own husbands. The Upanishads and the Rig-Veda mention women

sages and seers, notably, Gargi and Mayitravee. The Rig-Veda on the other hand also mentions that women lack intellect and discipline.

The position of Indian women in the society deteriorated further in the medieval period, when a ban on remarriage by widows and child marriages became a significant part of social lives of women in some communities in India.

The Muslim conquest in the Indian subcontinent introduced purdah in the Indian society. Jauhar was practiced amongst Rajputs of Rajasthan. Devadasis were sexually exploited in some parts of India and also polygamy

was practised among Kshatriya rulers for political reasons.

In spite of such conditions, women achieved prominence in fields of literature, politics, science, education and religion. Some examples of such women are Razia Sultana, who became the only woman monarch to have ever ruled Delhi. Durgavati, The Gond queen, known to have ruled for fifteen years before losing her life in a battle with Asaf Khan, mughal emperor Akbar's general. Chand Bibi who defended Ahmednagar against the powerful Mughal forces of Akbar. Nur Jehan wife of Jahangir recognized to have effectively wielded imperial power and as the real power behind the Mughal throne.

One single quality owned by all these women mentioned above is that they lacked the fear of defeat from the dominant breed. These women shared one thing in common, confidence and belief that made them stand against all odds of the society. These women were born and brought up in a society dominated by forces of men yet nothing shook their courage.

### **A GENERAL PERSPECTIVE ON THE PSYCHOLOGY OF AN INDIAN GIRL**

Gender is recognized as the most dominant variable responsible to influence human development in the journey from conception to death, in the Indian society particularly. Gender is also a vital dimension of social stratification; putting the female at certain levels of disadvantage.

In the current society, at least in urban areas, the issues of concern

vary from the female child as being a vulnerable object in a male dominant society to her social and mental upbringing and safety. The government of India has anyway taken some legislative measures relating to gender oriented issues and protection based on women's rights.

Based on milestones, true sex differences are less apparent in childhood yet as soon as a child is born the society identifies them in two distinct categories i.e 'he' or 'she'.

By two years of age children are vaguely aware of their own sex.

By three years of age there is a rudimentary understanding of the child that the sex distinctions are lifelong. This is known as the phallic stage of Freud's psychosexual development. Freud termed the feelings and the thoughts the girl develops around this time as the well known stage recognized as "Electra-complex".

However according to Karen Horney and Clara Thompson state their view that culture and social context are important determinants in personality differences.

As a girl starts growing, she is exposed to a set of rules defining her role in the society and an appropriate feminine behaviour in a particular practical culture, idealized as a gender norm. The girl child tries to mimic the role of a mother and a wife. Upto this age a girl child's understanding is still limited.

The apparent process of gender socialization begins when a child develops an identity based on his or

her gender, this happens at the age of two and half years to three years.

The actual gender typing begins after age seven when children achieve gender consistency. At this age children select their environment and behaviour that find consistent with their own gender. A girl engages in feminine behaviour as she is motivated to model herself on other people she identifies as women in her environment.

Once the female is put to schooling, she becomes more aware as an individual.

According to Erickson, the age between five to twelve years is the stage of “industry versus inferiority” that is, the stage in which she tries too hard to attain competence. He has views these years as the most important because it is critical for the development of self confidence in the child. Discrimination from parents, teachers or the society at this age will develop feelings of inferiority and submissiveness in the child.

## **ADOLESCENCE**

Indian schools systems do not readily encourage sex education. Even in schools that have reproductive health education in the curriculum, teachers hesitate or feel embarrassed and uncomfortable to effectively instruct the students. Adolescent girls in rural areas are unaware or have little knowledge of reproduction, sexuality or menstruation. Large number of people of the rural population believes that menstruation contaminates the body and is unholy. They promote the

idea of not touching a female during her menstruation or period. Therefore they often see themselves as unclean, impure, and unholy.

In most places (urban and rural areas), the onset of puberty decreases their mobility and autonomy along with increased restriction on clothes, appearance, conduct, speech, and interaction with the opposite sex. They feel insecure and threatened of their sexuality.

Social and domestic abuse and violence against girls may contribute to dysfunctional behaviour, depression, anxiety, eating disorders, somatisation disorders, etc. Neglect and discrimination may result in low self esteem, negative attitude towards self, etc. Bad experiences in childhood may result in mental disorders such as schizophrenia, and the symptoms can be conceptualized as exaggerating and stereotyping sex typed behaviour and female gender roles.

Some documentations state that girls tend to somatise and dissociate more because of their status in an authoritarian patriarchal society.

## **THE SOCIAL ATTITUDE TOWARDS A FEMALE CHILD**

Families tend to be more protective towards their daughter than their sons. The society always has its eyes on women particularly. The society feels threatened to a woman's sexuality. For women the difference is felt from childhood itself. A female child is given dolls and made to sit indoors while the male child is made to play outdoor games. Men are

considerably rough and tough and women must be graceful and soft. Cuts and wounds aren't a big deal for boys but girls cannot afford to have scars. Mothers think twice about what daughters wear. Days when daughters aren't home on time the fathers worry. The society takes women for granted as their own headache. More than the women worry, the men around them, and the society, the patriarchy creates bars around them, several shells known as clothing, respect, integrity and virginity naming it safety. Oh the hypocrisy!

An Indian society trains its women to be vulnerable creatures. There are no biological reasons on women being the weaker sex, in fact:

According to the 'Environmental health news', contrary to cultural assumptions, there are basic biological weaknesses that are built into the male of our species. These frailties in men leave them more vulnerable than girls to life hazards, including environmental pollutants.

Men are medically the weaker sex. Whereas women can recover most medical and mental circumstances.

### **THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN MEN AND WOMEN: (SOCIO-CULTURAL, PHYSICAL AND BIOLOGICAL FACTORS)**

Gender differences concerning mortality are influenced by both in socio-cultural and biological factors. Based on biomedical research there are biological differences between men and women in anatomy and

physiology (related to the reproductive system), and there has been recognized a difference in the wide range of hormonal and metabolic factors that are important in shaping morbidity and mortality.

On the other hand research on sociological patterns, treats biology as socially neutral and develops on the assumption that these biological differences in men and women are minimal or largely irrelevant (according to, Bird and Ricker, 1999).

As far as physical factors are concerned, in an examination conducted to find out muscle characteristics between eight men and eight women in biceps brachii and vastus lateralis. These measurements included voluntary strengths of elbow flexors and knee extensors. It was seen that women were approximately 52% and 66% as strong as the men in the upper and lower body respectively (according to Miller AE. 1993).

### **PSYCHOLOGICAL DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE SEXES**

Psychological sex differences are the difference in mental conditions, function and behaviours of both sexes, these are due to a complex interplay of cultural and biological development.

A large number of factors affect the influence of the development of gender differences. These factors include genetics and epigenetics, along with differences in the brain structure, its functions and hormones, or in psychological traits such as emotions, motivation, cognition and sexuality.

Difference in socialization of male members and female members often increases and decreases the size of sex differences.

Some important psychological factors responsible in sex differences are as follows:

### **INTELLIGENCE**

It is seen that females usually perform better in verbal abilities where as men perform better at visuospatial abilities. Female advantages are in verbal fluency where they have been found to perform better in vocabulary, reading comprehension, speech production and essay writing. Whereas males have been specifically seen to perform well only on spatial visualization, spatial perception and mental rotation. Therefore researchers recommend that females excel at verbal and perceptual tasks and males on visuospatial tasks which prove to even out the sex differences at IQ tests.

### **MEMORY**

Results from research state that sex differences in memory are mixed and inconsistent. Yet some studies show no differences. Most studies have not found any differences in short term memory. It has been stated by other researchers that females have been found to have an advantage in recalling olfactory and auditory stimuli, such as experiences, faces, names and locations of objects in a particular space. However it is also seen that males show an advantage at recalling masculine events.

### **AGGRESSION**

It is usually considered that males are more likely to display aggression than females. Aggression is closely linked cultural definitions of 'masculine' and 'feminine'. For a matter of fact it is seen that women show equal or more aggression than men although less physical, and indirect.

### **PERSONALITY TRAITS**

Research based on cross-cultural gender differences has shown that gender differences in personality traits are largest in prosperous, healthy, and egalitarian cultures in which women tend to have more opportunities or equal to that of men. It is seen that men have higher self esteem and are more assertive than females. Females on an average are higher than males in extraversion, anxiety, trust and especially tender mindedness. Women are more punishment sensitive than men as men are higher in sensation seeking and behavioural risk taking.

### **EMOTION**

If measured with an affect intensity measure, it can be recognized that women report greater intensity of both positive and negative effect than men. Women have also reported a more sensitive and intense and frequent affect of joy, love, happiness etc, but more than that embarrassment, guilt, shame, sadness, anger, fear and distress. Experiencing pride is more intense in men than women. It may be concluded that women have more range of emotions than men and are constantly dealing with them therefore they are considered stronger emotionally.

## MENTAL HEALTH

Substance use disorders along with childhood conduct disorder and adult antisocial personality disorder are usually common in men. On the other hand mood disorders, anxiety disorders and eating disorders are common in women. Men tend to externalize stress while women tend to internalize it. It can be seen that men and women don't differ much in their overall rates of psychopathology, but certain disorders are more dominant in women than men. Women have high rates of anxiety and depression (internalizing disorders), whereas men have higher rates of substance abuse and antisocial disorders (externalizing disorders). It is seen that practices that involve socializing, encourage high self-esteem and benefit both men and women.

Therefore it can be seen that women and men have minimal psychological differences therefore proving no one being the inferior sex.

## MOTHER AND DAUGHTER RELATIONSHIPS

Mothers as child bearers are the most primary caretakers or the guardians of the children due to their contact with the children over a long growing period of time. One can borrow from experience from the own lives as well as lives of others that women, even as adults yearn for a bond especially with their mothers. This usually happens in case they have been neglected in their childhood. This automatically develops a feeling of inferiority and insecurity in the woman and feels underconfident

in facing the society. They also feel unwanted by the society. The ones who grow up as motherless children, continue to search for reconnection. This may last for a lifetime.

The paradox is that our mothers are our models yet we do not want to become like them.

The generation difference teaches us the limitations they have suffered and daughters don't want to go back there. Mothers often make a constant effort to make their daughters independent so that they do not suffer what they have. Daughters must be taught to believe that they are setting an example as a woman to the family thread, the generation as well as the society. Mothers must encourage the stand. Mothers must counsel their daughter since infancy and bring them up the same way sons are brought up.

The truth is that an effort has to be made to change the relationship not through distance but through a mutual responsive relationship.

Mother daughter relationships sometimes are fraught with anger, disappointment and bitterness. Daughters often complain and have responses as follows:

- She never stood by me
- She did not protect me
- I could never be enough for her
- I cannot talk to her she wouldn't understand me
- She always criticizes me for my nature
- I was never what she wanted me to be
- She never tried to know me

Some things that impact daughters as well as mothers are:

- Women are often devalued in the family, neglected, disrespected, criticized or abused by the male members of the family.
- Women are also seen as inferior members in the society if they are not the ideal picture of a woman according to the society.
- Women are often subject to harassment of abuse by men in the society and also family members sometimes, that no one speaks of.
- Women feel that their lack of power make them helpless and it is impossible to protect themselves.
- Some women have internalised negative beliefs and therefore feel unworthy, defective and flawed according to the society to make a stand.
- Women are often seen as objects or ornaments or possessions by their male family members.
- Women are told how to look by the family and society giving them no right to see their body as their own.

Women want their mothers to be authentic with them, to support their opinion and voice. Women want support from their mothers to even raise their voices in the society. We barely get a picture of women helping women. The first woman who can help a woman be the voice of change is, a mother, the strongest symbol of strength. The natural force that has caused life and existence in the planet.

Mothers are nature, and nature cannot be controlled.

One's relationship with their mother is the first primary attachment. It is the barometer for one's future relationships with themselves and the society. It builds ones:

- Sense of self identity
- Self-esteem, self-worth, and self-confidence
- experience of our body, femininity, power and sexuality, and
- The sense of their roles in the society as strong and confident women.

### **BRIDGING THE GAP BETWEEN MOTHERS AND DAUGHTERS**

Mothers may have their own way of expressing their love but they fail to communicate their support towards their daughters. Mothers as women must understand the toxic patters that develop in mother and daughter relationship due to neglect and how daughters perceive it.

Daughters in their adolescence usually draw sudden conclusions by some behaviours of the mother that seem unaccepted to them.

Daughters by default consider a mother's support as right. They become defensive when they are not able to achieve the same.

The different behaviours of the mother in the effort to interact may be communicated in the wrong way therefore resulting in miscommunication and misunderstanding them.

The following elements become a barrier between the mother and the daughter:

1. **Dismissive behaviour:** daughters who are raised by dismissive mothers often doubt the validity of their own emotional needs. They are subjected to feel unworthy of attention and therefore experience deep, gut wrenching self doubt, and in the process the feeling of intense longing for love and validation. Dismissive behaviour have been reported by daughters, that it can become combative if the mother aggressively turns dismissal into rejection. The daughter needs her mother's attention intensively.
2. **Controlling nature:** this may be another form of dismissive interaction presented very differently. Mothers tend to become very controlling in order to teach their daughters obedience. These mothers tend to micromanage their daughters and actively refuse to acknowledge the validity of their words, choices and actions. It instills a sense of insecurity and helplessness in the offspring as they know they cannot trust their mothers and would receive no support from them.
3. **Unavailability:** emotionally unavailable mothers inflict a different kind of damage. All children in the world are hardwired to be dependent on their mothers. Many daughters complaint that their mothers are emotionally disconnected from them. These behaviours may include lack of physical contact, (no hugging or comforting), unresponsiveness to a child's cries or displays of emotions, and her needs articulated as she grows older., and sometimes literal abandonment that leave its own special scars.
4. **Combative tendency:** this kind of interaction characterizes open warfare. Mothers do not acknowledge their behaviours, and they are usually careful about displaying them in public. Ego comes into the picture in such situations. For a woman to woman relationship ego comes into the pictures and sometimes mothers tend to become hypercritical and competitive with their offspring. In these kind of interactions the mothers subconsciously involve their ego which automatically becomes a barrier.
5. **Self involvement:** in such cases a mother's emotional connection with her daughter is often superficial. These mothers are self oriented and focus on themselves (e.g, their lives, work, career etc). The mother only sees her daughter as an extension of herself. Here the mother controls her involvements according her own self reflection.
6. **Role reversed:** this pattern of maternal interaction is heard about the least. In some cases involved to this the daughter at a young age becomes a caretaker or a helper to the mother, therefore the mother sees her as a medium of responsible domestic support.



## **METHODS TO HEAL MOTHER-DAUGHTER RELATIONSHIPS**

The primary principle to heal mother and daughter relationship is that both sides must be ready to acknowledge their problems and work on them. They both must be ready to visit therapist without hesitation and take the therapy positively.

### **For the Mother**

- The mother must show the concern she has for her daughter in the positive way and find out alternative ways to communicate them in order to be accepted. She must show empathy rather than criticism. This build connection. The daughter must feel comfortable to express herself anyhow she likes.
- If the daughter wants therapy to discuss the relationship shared by two- the mother must not react at everything but try to think patiently and show support and consideration to in case she also expects the same. The mother must practice listening and must ask the daughter what she needs from her.
- The mother must encourage, value and support the daughter's identity, sense of self and independence. The mother must guide the daughter in a friendly, comfortable way.
- The mother must work and explore on building the sense of self worth and learn how to meet her needs in a healthier way.

### **For Daughter**

- She must take her time for self identification. She must explore her interests and her own identity. She must develop a positive personality even if towards change, it must not create a negative character within her.
- She must take the help of a good psychotherapist to explore her own history and also to understand her mother.
- The daughter must try to figure out what are the positive qualities and traits she has inherited from her mother.
- She must try to be empathetic towards her mother and understanding yet must not give up trying to convince her gently.
- She must also learn to be assertive and know where to set boundaries with her mother.
- She must practice self compassion and try to release the anger.

## **WOMEN AND THE MEDIA**

It is often seen that media being a part of the society cultivates an ideology about women. Even though they create and preach of modern women the hypocrisy continues to evolve. The media focuses on women issues such as education, discrimination and rape, but, on such cases women are made victims to the public. The media indirectly directs towards the feminine existence as the cause. Every time there is a crime, harassment, abuse or rape, a woman is talked about. Even though in the most positive sense yet we fail to recognize that it is the woman and only the woman we are concerned

about. The media only victimises the vulnerable. The victim or the 'woman' in this case. Behind the blurred image on the TV screen lies a woman, the society knows. What we don't know or never find out or the media shows generally are the culprits. The man behind the terror caused to the woman. The media seeks answers to questions like:

- What was she wearing the night she was abused or raped?
- What time was it?
- What did she do for a living?
- Was she married?
- Even if she was did she have children?
- Where did she live?
- How were her family members?
- What was her reputation in the society?

Such questions are unnecessary when compared to the gravity of the situation. The media likes to tell people what they want to hear. The media in such cases involves itself into the personal life of the victim. The media has no empowering functions in these situations. It only terrorises more women in the name of awareness. It only silently communicates and injects fear. The fear in women of the patriarchy. The fear of the shades of the society.

Therefore women themselves must empower other women. Not by bold comments on sex, and nudity but as the symbol of peace and strength, as the symbol of psychological stability, as the symbol of motherhood. A mother that bears the tortures of society, a

woman that can withstand daily abuse, a woman that only observes, a woman that survives, women who hold themselves together no matter what, are the ultimate symbols of power and strength.

### **HOW MOTHERS SHOULD COUNSEL THEIR DAUGHTERS FROM CHILDHOOD TO ADULTHOOD?**

Mothers must inherit these following habits in order to empower their daughters:

- Teach their daughters self-confidence along with teaching themselves to have confidence in their daughters: a daughter's ideology must be supported as they usually thing according to the modern world. A daughter must be taught practicality.
- Teach them the importance of being physically strong: there aren't scientific explanations that say that men are naturally stronger than women. Even though biologically men have more upper mass that women that favour them in physical strength, but physical strength mostly depend upon the women's participation in surviving her physical surroundings and environment.
- All girls since childhood itself must be allowed to play sports that men mostly indulge in (cricket, football etc), so that they naturally build strength and stamina since infancy itself.
- Teach them the importance of leadership and dominance in the society through education and personality: young girls at childhood must be allowed to

- speak up in the family and must be seen as an important member of the family. They must not be neglected or ignored or made to feel as an inferior member. Mothers must counsel them and encourage a positive personality in them during adolescence and adulthood. It must be explained to them that they must be dominate and not let others dominate them in order to survive in the society.
- Teach them the true meaning of intellect and freedom (do not restrict them freedom): daughters must be allowed freedom for them to understand the meaning of freedom and the responsibility it comes with. They must be encouraged intellectuality that would generate a positive thinking and understanding in them and prevent a negative feeling of fear and insecurity about the society.
  - Encouraging them in participating in conversations among male members in the family: the mothers must make an effort to stand up for the daughter in the family and make her opinions be heard and supported. This way if not anyone else the daughter will feel confident and understand the mother's trust on her.
  - Teach themselves and their daughter's fearlessness: a mother must herself be fearless and must also teach her daughter to never fear any situation and stand up for it and fight no matter how impossible it is. Most of a woman's fear makes her vulnerable. Even for women who know self defence are not able to do anything in the moment due to fear. Women must not see themselves as any different to men.
  - Mothers must be broad minded enough to encourage their daughters on cultivating on their own interest: mothers must confidently support their daughter's interest and develop a confidence within their daughter that they can be successful in whatever they want to achieve.
  - There must be no differentiations between sons and daughters in the family: mothers must be convinced that their sons and daughters deserve equal love and pampering. They must be treated equally in all aspects. (daughters should be allowed all commodities that sons are and must be taught everything that sons are taught or sons may not be taught what daughters are not taught and not given the commodities that daughters don't enjoy)
  - Mothers must encourage daughters to indulge in outdoor sports in childhood: the mother must encourage daughters in playing outdoor sports that need physical strength, or the same sports that men play. Boys and girls in schools or playgrounds must be allowed to play the same sport together so girls know where they stand among them and can also outrun boys.
  - Daughters must be allowed to play and interact with boys in order to gain confidence and not feel inferior to the male members around them: daughters at all ages must be allowed to interact with boys in for them to understand that they are both at equals both physically and mentally and are no where inferior to them.

Therefore their involvement in schools, playgrounds and colleges will lead to equal levels in mentality for both boys and girls and girls with inherit qualities from boys and learn mental and physical strength and practicality.

- In infancy a child must be made aware of 'good touch' and 'bad touch' from family members or strangers: a child, especially girl children must be made aware of a stranger's touch. If she has been touched gently or sexually.
- In case if a child, adolescent or a woman is subject to sexual abuse, it must not be seen as a shame and the daughter must not be blamed for it, instead it is the mother's duty to counsel the daughter and instead of feeling afraid to face the society she must help in quick recovery of the daughter, both emotionally, mentally and socially: the mother must not lose herself in the fear of the society and the situation and grief. She must stay strong and she must counsel her daughter that what happened was wrong but falling weak may encourage the culprits, therefore she must built strength and a strong personality and intellect to again believe in herself and outrun the society. Women are beyond social rules. Women must be a symbol of power and freedom.
- The mother must have confidence in her daughter and must support her decisions rationally, she must show trust in her: a mother must trust her daughter's decisions, in case if the daughter does not want to get married or wants to work out of her native place or abroad, she should be supported.

- Women must not be kept away from injuries or scars be it emotional, mental or physical. They must not be taught to live under the notion that beauty is everything. They must be taught to fall and stand back up (the importance of defeat): it is important for mothers to teach their daughters since childhood that there may be injuries but one has to recover from them, grow stronger and go on. Women should not be afraid of pain, unconsciously they bear the most of it. They must be made ready to suffer injuries and learn from them. They must be told that power and strength is more important than beauty.

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