Keeping Sexism Alive through Social Acceptability: A Contextual Study of Sexist and Derogatory Slurs

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Abstract:

Manusmriti is an ancient text widely believed to have come into existence more than two thousand years ago. Ithas been single-handedly responsible for the derogatory position conferred to women in the post-*Vedic* period. It declares women as a dependent and despicable, one who requires continuous protection and guidance of the male members of the family.Regardless of the time of its first appearance, *Manusmriti* has remained colossally influential in determining the structure and the function of Indian society. This paper examines the interplay between femininity, the overt misogyny of privileged literature as a source of physical and psychological oppression of women, role of patriarchy and how language and culture behave against women, within and outside the Indian culture. The primary aim of the paper is however to shed some light on the role played by derogatory and sexist slurs across contexts and the social acceptability of it. It can be observed that vilification of women is nothing new. It reflects the construct of the society and how the social acceptability of sexist slurs has contributed to the unequal treatment meted out to women across the globe, across cultures and languages from time immemorial. Sexist slurs as represented in mass media, law,religion or other domains needs to be changed.A good deal has been written about derogatory terms used to refer to women.The denial that sexism in language exists, needs to be addressed first, if discrimination against women has to be eradicated.

Keywords: language and culture, social acceptability, sexist slurs, gender inequalities, sexism

Introduction

Yudhishthir gambles Draupadi away, he treats her as if she is not an autonomous human being but his possession. Dushasanadragged Draupadi in the court pulling her by the hair,the kind of treatment meted out to Draupadi by Dushasana as the property of men is nothing new across cultures. This is not merely reflected in cultures, but also enshrined in laws. The brazen elevation of the patriarchal values is depicted categorically in the *Manusmriti,* ancient legal text of Hinduism."Pita rakhshatikaumare………." – 9/3. The father guards a woman during virginity, the husband guards her in youth, the sons guard her in old age; the woman is never fit for independence.—(iii).Since women are not capable of living independently, she needs constant support of her father as child, under her husband as a woman and under her son as well as widow. "Vyabhacharay…………" – 5/167. Any women violating duty towards her husband, is a disgraced woman and becomes a patient of leprosy. After death, she enters womb of Jackal. Little has changed, even in the 21st century we observe that language is sexist not only in India but also across the globe. Chanakya, undoubtedly made great contributions and changed the course of Indian history. But he has given numerous offensive and derogatory remarks to women in his book *ChanakyaNiti*. Chanakya was a spiritualist who had all the qualities of head and heart but certainly he had misogynistic ideas that cannot be denied. All major religions and religious texts places the men into the dominant position and women into the subservient position.

Society's bias towards women has created a kind of language which acts as a vehicle to demean women over the centuries. Slurs is not only limited to categories like race, sexual orientation, ethnicity or religion but also tied to the social status of a given group. A slur could also possibly denote to a community or group of people who have social and political power historically.

Sexist Derogatory and Sexist Objectifying Slurs

The English term *"henpecked husband"* is widely used in an offensive sense to humiliate a husband dominated by his wife. Has anyone heard about a *cockpecked wife*, no right? There

is no parallel expression to *"Henpecked husband",* like no one hears anything like *cockpecked wife*, which also means that a man is not supposed to be controlled by a woman. Society's understanding and expectation of a wife is to be dominated and controlled by her husband, and not the other way round, Devi (2003). Every page of the *Manusmriti,* preaches acute misogyny which cannot be overlooked. In *Manusmriti*, women have been projected as despicable ,that they are not only dependent but could be a major source of misery and sorrow to the family if proper stringent measures are not taken to control them. *Manusmriti* also says that in order to keep a woman's energy channelized so that she doesn't get involved into adultery or any form of diatribe, is to compel her to clean, cook and take care of the children and look after the household.

In Assamese (Assamese or Axomiya, is an Eastern Indo-Aryan language mainly spoken in Assam,an Indian state) the expression *"mekhelartolorejua"* meaning a man who is very submissive towards his wife, which make him less of a "man".The word pairs consist of, for example, *tirutaxeruwa* (henpecked husband), however, there is no expression as puruxxeruwa (henpecked wife).

Proverbs carry the tradition of misogyny forward, eg. 'Never Marry a Woman with Big Feet'. But there is no expression like never marry a man with big feet'.The impact of misogyny on societies is strongly evidenced by proverbs which uncover women's subordination. Arabic proverb from the Maghreb advises girls, 'To stay with their dust until their day arrives', which means to evade dressing up before the wedding day. A Spanish proverb, 'To keep your wife on the rails, beat her—and if she goes off the rails, beat her'. A Burmese example 'A good dog keeps his tail tucked in; a good woman remains in the background',here it means that like the dog if the woman is not submissive and displays herself in front of the public, it becomes humiliating for the husband, brother or father .The Arabic Moroccan proverb 'People wonder at a camel if he climbs a roof' refers to a married woman who is seen on the terrace by people passing by, in other words, being a prostitute. For a man these expressions are never used. According to Dutta (2008),several Assamese expression like the word pairs include for example *ghororghoini* (house wife),there is no expression as *ghororgiri* (house husband), *potibrotastree* (devoted wife),there is no

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expression as *potnibrota swami* (devoted husband),expression like *obolanari* (weak woman) incidentally there is no expression as *obolapurux* (weak man) .Furthermore, for Assamese expression *nixohainari* (helpless woman), there is no parallel expression for men as *nixohaipurux* (helpless man) which suggests men are never helpless. They are mentally and physically strong, they can take a way out of any challenges that they come across. *Durbhogiyatiruta* which means unfortunate woman, again there is no parallel expression as *durbhogiyapurux* (unfortunate man).These are sexist representations of women in language. There are no corresponding terms for male counterpart of the following Assamese derogatory and sexist terms which are exclusively used for females to discriminate women. There are existing sex biases like:

1) *oxoti*which means an adulterous woman.

2) *kulokhini*is a woman who is responsible for the down fall to her family by her adverse behaviour.

3) *daini*is a witch who practices black magic.

4) *notesori*means an adulterous woman.

5) *mahimak*means step mother which has a negative connotation.

6) *xotini*is a co wife which in many contexts mean "a husband stealer".

7) *beisya*means prostitute, paradoxically a man who visits a prostitute has no nomenclature.

8) *dehupojibini*means a prostitute.

9) *bonori*means a woman of bad character.

10) *poyerormurkhati* means an unintelligent women who annoys and nags the husband with her stupidity and weighs heavily on the husband's brain.

11) *kulta*is a woman for whom the family's name and reputation gets tarnished beyond repair.

12) *dehesori*is an immoral and sexually promiscuous woman.

The concepts such as virginity and prostitution are placed in a larger, macro social framework exclusively used for females, according to findings. Language like 'bitch' and 'female' reduce women to mere adjectives and strips women of the power that they have spent decades trying to obtain. These sexist terms are problematic as they have social acceptability and refuse to disappear in the near future.

The authors' findings suggest that the concept of 'weak men' is superficial in Bollywood movies, tracing to one such Hindi movie '*mardkodardnahinhota*' which means *men don't feel pain*, which is suggestive of nothing but toxic masculinity. Stereotypically, masculinity doesn't value vulnerability. Some Hindi expressions like *Ladka hoke rota hai* (you cry despite being a boy), *ladka hoke kitchen set se kheltahai* (you play with a kitchen set), *ladkijaisezyadabaateinkartahai* (you talk too much for a boy), *merasher* (my tiger), are the widely used expressions in Hindi language that demean women and uplift the status of men thereby destroying the essence of woman as an individual above all.It is nothing but glorifying men and boosting their inflated ego of being superior to women.

Media Representation of Women

In media and cinema, representation of women worldwide is nothing but sexualisation and objectification of women.Why are women and girls so often the victims of violence? Slurs functions as a lexical vehicle that provides information on the way the society has been treating or rather mistreating women through ages.

Print and electronic advertisements objectify women too ruthlessly. Misogyny has evolved as an ideology which has narrowed their vision and made them a supporter of patriarchal society. Body shaming and sexist imagery in the media constitutes a gross violation of human rights .There are billboards which tell women to look fit and fresh before the husbands come home. Dolce and Gabbana in their advertisement from 2007, where they depicted and glorified a gang rape, in all its ghastly glory, was no exception. The Indian Film Industry is known as Bollywood, mainstream Indian cinema is sexist and misogynist, it has never shied

from displaying its sexist assumptions and beliefs, manifesting them in the form of songs. Bollywood is still unable to overcome the stereotypical representation of women by holding on to the use of such binaries in such sexist songs like the good versus the bad woman. Misogynistic songs in Indian film industry from songs like *tucheezbadihai mast mast*(*cheez* meaning object, literally)*, munnibadnamhui*, to *meinhu tandoori murgigatakle alcohol se* (meaning I am a roasted chicken gulp me down with a glass of alcohol) all refer to objectification of women which is highly rampant and unapologetic. Advertisements portray gender stereotypes, like when children make a mess and the man just stares and lifts his feet and a woman does the cleaning with a smile on her face. Advertisements also show men as if they are a rare breed or superior being such that they are not supposed to or can't change a diaper. It makes us believe that changing diapers, giving children a bath and feeding them is not a man's job. Furthermore, women who can't park a car, awful women drivers, advertisements that links physique and body image to a successful romantic or social life also belittle women for doing stereotypical chores which contribute to the inequality in the society. Not to mention those unspeakable deodorant advertisements, which reduce women to perfume sniffing nympho maniacs.

Sexism in Language

Swear is a very common part of cultures across the globe. It is frequently used to insult or injure the recipient, (Jay, 2009; Van Oudenhoven et al., 2008). We live in a verbal society. An insult is an attempt to reduce social status and it is psychologically painful.Often the recipient of the insult internalizes the meaning, and the person goes through physiological changes like to put down oneself in the status hierarchy(Struiksma, De Mulder, Spotorno, Basnakova and Van Berkum, 2014). However,all swear words or insults doesn't provoke the same response (Saucier, Till, Miller, O'Dea and Andres, 2015) so it cannot be judged as equally offensive. Apart from this, certain slurs may be offensive to certain groups of people (e.g. groups or communities defined according to their race or sexuality) or individuals more than others, and hence stimulate different reactions in different people. Written or verbal ,sexist language is inherently discriminatory. It points out towards an unjustified sexual bias against an individual or group, mostly women. According to Bragin (1981) a statement can be defined as sexist if it intentionally or unintentionally emanates, endorses, establishes and

exploits unnecessary or disrespectful marking of the distinction between the sexes. Thus, a sexist statement is that which points out to someone's gender when gender is actually not relevant to the context. Lakoff (1987) is of the opinion that women experience linguistic discriminations as it has referential meanings in the sense that in the way they are taught to use language and also generally the way language treats them. In language, the marginality and powerlessness of women is reflected, converging defencelessness and a sense of subservience as well as immaturity. Women are expected to speak in a certain way and the way which women are spoken of is echoed in language. The words that are associated with women most of the time goes through a process of semantic derogation wherein it has been noticed that the identity of women is linguistically submerged. Language acts a traitor for women because it works against treatment of women giving little or no importance to women as serious persons with individual views.

According to Moulton (1981), words like 'he' and 'man' etc. that claim to be gender neutral are actually not gender-neutral. The speaker intends men to be preferred to women, and terms such as "he" or "man," although sounds neutral apply primarily to men who get greater prominence in most of the cultures.

Oliver and Hendricks (1999) reflected on certain concerns like if there is any difference between "female" and "male" language.The relationship of feminine and feminist identity in terms with language were elaborately discussed in the article. Tannen (1993)explores the complex relationship between gender and language use and writes about generalizations and gender-based styles. Sexist language consumes us negatively in a society, it is accepted as part of our everyday interaction and culture. Jeffreys (2005) relates how beauty practices emerged to feed misogynist ideas of 'women beauty' causing women to feel their bodies as inadequate. The subjugation of women becomes routine in our day to day discourse, the regular use of language underestimates women and reduces the significance of women as a social category and takes away her social identity. This kind of sexist language provokes to create and maintain an atmosphere of inequality.

Sexism in Idiomatic Expressions and Proverbs

Language is a guide to social reality, Sapir (2014).It acts as a mirror of the society and no doubt that society's prejudices against women can in the idiomatic expressions and proverbs of that society's language as stylistically an idiom is a turn of expression. It is terse and forcible like for example *Lau jimaneidangornohokpatortol*, this Assamese proverb says that doesn't matter how big in size a pumpkin may be, but it always remains wrapped up under its leaves. The primary thought behind this proverb is that it doesn't matter how famous a woman is, her position is always under the control of the man. There is a Bengali proverb,commonly heard in Bangladesh, *'Abhagargoru more, bhayabanerbou'* which translates into "A lucky man's wife dies and unlucky man's cow dies". Nasreen (1992) the feminist writer from Bangladesh, in her much sought after book *Selected Columns* has discussed this proverb in one of her essays in the book. This proverb suggests that men whose wives died could marry just after one year had passed (denoted as a lucky man), however if a women remarries after one year of her husband's death, she will be labelled as a promiscuous women. This shows the status of women in the society. In Assamese this idiom *puruxorrontirirbiyon* indicates that the men's credibility is in the battle field, but nothing could be of greater virtue than tolerance for a woman. It underscores how men are agents of aggression and women as mere puppets controlled by strings held by men. Women have been reduced as symbols of passivity devoid of individual identity.

There is another proverb in Assamese which is an enormously derogatory one, that is *kukursikungirihotorzoh*meaning, "if a dog is attractive and healthy it reflects on the master," i.e., the master has taken care of the dog well. Here, a woman is compared to a dog.Theimplicationhere is that since the master isrich and wealthy, he has the capacitytotakegood care of a dog. Maintenance and sustenance of the woman by a man is often extended to mean that it is to the credit of her husband if a woman is beautiful, healthy, attractive, and richly decoratedwith expensive ornaments. In other words, it is the masculine agenda that could get a boost or increase their social standing. It could inflate the masculine ego and persona   reflected in the persona of his wife. This yet again confirms the deep-rootedidea that a woman has no identity, she is the extension of her husband, otherwise she doesn't exist.

The word *haramjada*in Hindi means that the person is a despicable man as he is not sure who his father is. It indirectly refers to the mother's character. *Mekheladhoa*is an Assamese idiom, which means to wash *(dhoa)* a women's skirt *(mekhela)*. The meaning suggests that for a man to wash a woman's skirt is the worst possible job a man could ever do which is considered humiliating even if it belongs to his own wife.These slurs manifest in creating a negative identity of women.

However in most cases in the Assamese society, only a father is responsible for a man's ill behaviour and not the mother. But, if a girl's behaviour is not as expected then the blame goes to the mother. There are a number of proverbs to support this position. It is surprising to note that in Assamese it is not "son of a bitch" but "son of a dog". Another saying that woman is wise when too late also underscores the derogatory implication of language while referring to women. Fasoli, CarnaghiandPaladino (2015), observed that sexist derogatory slurs were considered as more offensive as compared to less socially acceptable than sexist objectifying slurs. In an affective relationship the latter were more acceptable than the former. In the work-related context, sexist slurs were always objectionable whereas sexist objectifying slurs were less acceptable when it was used by a man than a woman.

How do we deal with society when women are represented in proverbial lore? It encompasses proverbs related to women of different nations and communities. 'Proverb'is a unique form of language.William Penn once said, "The wisdom of nation lies in their proverbs". The inferiority of women has been highly discussed in a number of ways in proverbs across nations and languages, it includes aphorisms and certain clichés that refer explicitly to women and the female sex.Generally it has been observed that there are two stereotypical categories in the proverb material, one being woman and other being man. According to (Malmgren, 2007) these categories are given shape and sustained within a social context. What is fundamental for the culture in question is the distinction between them. In both these categories, woman is made as a prominent theme for criticism and comment. We find male chauvinism in English proverbs like, "A man of straw is worth of a woman of gold." "If the husband is not at home, there is nobody" etc. The old German proverb on women, "there are only two good women in the world: one of them is dead, and

the other is not to be found" is not only humiliating but excruciatingly disparaging.(Storm1992:p.168), in her article, mentions that out of 11817 proverbs associated to women that she collected, 331 are not even of remotely complementary nature .

Cultural definitions of the female tend to be degrading and humiliating. Concerning conditioning and socialization of women many authors categorically define females and femininity in many different ways. According to Moi (1989) the word 'feminist' has 'a political position', the term 'female' has 'a matter of biology' and 'feminine' as 'a set of culturally defined characteristics'. Proverbs as 'wisdom texts' signify the viewpoint of those having the expertise to define what proper and improper behaviour is. It represents an incomplete and prejudiced reality rather than being objective which, in the present context of the study, is undoubtedly sexist and misogynist.

Swearing is an inseparable part of everyday life for many, but it is apparent in many given instances where it is often derogatory and humiliating towards women. Certain swear words are considered "taboo". It may not be seem to be apparent but in the long run definitely acts as a vehicle to tarnish or demolish a woman's identity in this male dominated society .Offensive swear words against woman should not be the new normal in formal or casual conversations.The use of slurs serves the functions of policing socially undesirable behaviours, and brings groups of people together. A few subset of swear words can be described as being specifically directed towards one gender, to underscore the lowliness and inferiority of a woman's character and wisdom. It is used to dictate behaviours that do not agree or conform to a society's ideas and visualization of masculinity or femininity. It has been observed that slurs which are addressed or directed towards, and judged most offensive by women are sexual, or aggressive behaviour, on the other hand slurs directed towards, and deemed as most offensive by men denote that they are being too soft or "womanly". So "womanly" has a direct negative connotation. These classifications trail patriarchal views on gender roles. This discrimination against women has been institutionalized and used every time against women. According to Affective Language Communication Model (Berkum, 2017), describes the perception of gender-directed swear words which integrates the speaker's standpoint of view and purpose into the listener's understanding and response. To

assess the degree of offensiveness, if it is internalized by a listener, an EEG study was recommended. According to the hypothesis, gender-congruent slurs will kindle more responses than slurs which are gender-incongruent, this way that one's level of acceptance of society's gender expectations could affect perceived offensiveness.

Lakoff (1975), a professor of linguistics at the University of California at Berkeley, is of the opinion that *female* has always been a bad word, "maybe it's just now becoming more explicitly recognized." Lakoff argues that a female can be human or animals, irrespective of any species, a human can be a woman, so if we refer a woman as a female "is to subtly downgrade her to a lower mammalian status, rather like calling a guy an 'ape,'" .He also goes on to say that, if we call a guy an ape, it is possible only when he is a particular *kind* of guy who is clumsy, dishevelled, insensitive, etc. Lakoff says that only because of the chromosome any woman can be called, disparagingly, a 'female'. Same goes with the obnoxious *c-word*, vs. *prick*, or *dick*. Unfortunately any woman can get those words hurled upon her by the average misogynist society. Femaleness is the only specific quality people refer which is again very sexist.

Sexism is Encoded in our Languages

Sexism is encoded in our languages,acknowledging it is the first step to re-appropriating them in an egalitarian way. In colloquial Hindi the word for having sex is "*chodna*" (to involve in intercourse), which is also the suffix to India's favorite profanities — "*bhenchod*" (sister-fucker) and "*madarchod*" (mother-fucker). While the infinitive form implies consensual sex, the abuses imply sex where the woman has no agency. In purer forms of the language, there are different words for rape ("*balatkar*") and sex ("*YaunKriya*"), but they don't exist in everyday conversational usage. In India, where a greater part of the population speaks Hindi, understanding of consent remains abysmal. YoYo Honey Singh, the Indian rap singer acknowledges a woman's beauty by saying *'Bomb lagdimainu'*. To be called a *pataka* or *bomb* is offensive, it is not a compliment. This is social acceptability of sexism in language, where we do not ban these as slurs.It continues to haunt and a woman continues to get raped every 13 minutes in India.

While one should be cautious in drawing direct causation between language and people's behaviour in society, there is a correlation between language and performance of gender — that needs to be examined urgently. To simply look at the semantics of language and entirely ignore the social context of it is to assume that languages evolve in cultural vacuums. But languages are a product of society. Linguistics and socio-linguistics looks at how caste, class, gender, race, etc., affect language, and how language, in turn, socializes its speakers through encoded power structures.

Hindi has similar gendered patterns like "*Maakiaankh*"**.** Literally it means "mother's eye"—but it is meant to connote "mother's vulva" which is a euphemistic way of saying "*Maakabhosda*," both translating to "mother's vulva." "C*hutiya*" is used to refer to someone cowardly or lame but literally translates to "vagina;" and, transphobia creeps in with "*behenke lode*" (sister's penis). And in Tamil, for instance, "*kenapunda,*" an abuse for women, translates to "loose vagina," as in, belonging to a woman who has been penetrated a lot. Colloquialisms such as Hindi's "*gaandphaadna*" (ripping the vagina), Italian's "*incazzarsi*" (getting dicked), and English's "fucking someone up" — all have the same meaning of getting livid to the extent of verbal and/or physical consequences and all call upon themes of sexual violence and rape of women. Speaking of rape, sexist joke is another way language uses humour to allow for the expression of prejudice against women.

There are several ways in which sexism, especially, is encoded in our languages as a conscious method to oppress and control women, and as a consequence of existing pejorative attitudes toward women. Being aware and wary of their many manifestations is crucial if we want to appropriate languages in an egalitarian way.

Phrases like "crying like a little bitch," "running or fighting like a girl," "*mehendilagakebaithna*" (having henna on your hands) and "c*hudiyanpehenkebaithna*" (wearing bangles on your wrist) all signify that women are the weaker sex which is sexism's core principal. Other words such as "catfight" ('cat' evolved as a contemptuous slang for promiscuous women) and the Serbian word for a woman's mother-in-law, "*svekrva*," (which translates to 'one at fault for everything') propagate the idea that interpersonal relationships

between women are toxic and irrational. Even words that somehow were neutral (or favourable to women) at their inception, have been refashioned with a sexist world-view, and their original meaning, all but lost. "Sir" and "Master" did not acquire derogatory meanings while "Miss", "Madam" and "Mistress" have become euphemisms for a "Mistress" earlier meant a woman with authority; it now means a woman, other than a man's wife, who has long-term sexual relations with him. "Hussy" meant the female head of a household; now it refers to a disreputable woman. "Madam," which used to denote a woman of high rank, is used today for a female manager of a brothel.

Then there are the most violent and obvious forms of gendered language like "motherfucker" and "sister fucker," which are used to refer to someone who fucks their own sister/mother and is a social outcast. It is also used as a threat to the receiver of the abuse that their sister/mother shall be fucked by the abuser. Either way, the words imply that women exist only to satisfy men's anger/lust/playfulness. No parallel words for brothers and fathers exist. Sons are invoked, but only to be mocked for being a "son of a bitch." There's a slew of pejorative words like "bitch" (female dog), "cunt" (female genitalia), sissy (from the benign word 'sister'), and "pussy" (slang for female genitalia) that negatively correlates the feminine with stupidity and weakness.

Everyday Examples of Gendered Language

"Mankind," "manmade," and "early man" are terms with encoded gender ideologies that have historically side lined or dismissed women. Cameron (1990) argues that: 'sexist language' is not simply regarded as 'naming' of the world from one, masculinist perspective to other; it is conceptualised as a multifaceted phenomenon which occurs in a number of quite complex systems of representation, all with their places in historical traditions. She concluded "that our languages are sexist: that is they represent the world from a masculine point of view and in accordance with stereotyped beliefs about the sexes" (Cameron 12). She said "Language could be seen as a reflection of sexist culture; or [...] it could be seen as a carrier of ideas and assumptions which become, through their constant re-enactment in discourse, so familiar and conventional we miss their significance. [...] Thus sexism is not

merely reflected but acted out and thus reinforced in a thousand banal encounters (Cameron 12)."

According to Poynton (1989), culture encompasses its norms and values towards certain concerns through a belief system which is encrypted in language. In this case the ideology is "another way of referring to the world view of a particular culture". Besides this she also says that[...] ideological meanings develop out of certain power-configurations. But in spite of separating from the society that has produced them they emulate that society back to itself in such a way as to underpin its own identity.

Klemens (2002) discusses how sexism in language can be diminished. Society's relationship with sexist language with the help of several linguistic approaches has been discussed. Several sorts of sexist language, derogatory designations for women, the generic masculine, feminine markers, were deliberated upon. The role of the media in perspective with sexist language has also been illustrated. Some guidelines were established by the Associated Press in relation to sexism in newspapers to assist journalists so that they could deal with sexist features of language. Articles from *The Washington Post* were scrutinized to observe if sexist language is still propagated.

False gender-neutrality is one of the ways in which language is gendered. Even though the words "he" and "man" are gender-specific, they are used to classify all people, even women, whereas "she" and "woman" remain specific to the female identity. Neil Armstrong's "One leap for man, one giant leap for mankind" has, in a way, forever excluded women from the first big space milestone humanity achieved collectively

If a woman falls off a ship, you'll hear "man overboard; if she's killed, its "manslaughter;" if she needs to buck up, she's asked to "man up" and "grow a pair of balls [of testicles]." This is false gender-neutrality,it is not limited only to English. The Hindi word for a male is "*purushya*," derived from Sanskrit's "*purush*," which actually means "human." Similarly, the words, "*insaan*" (human) and "*aadmi*" (man) are colloquially interchangeable to mean both. These generic masculine pronouns contribute a lot to making women's existence invisible,

concludes one University of Illinois paper published in The American Journal of Psychology, by "[reducing] the likelihood of thoughts of females in what are intended to be non–sex-specific instances." This is echoed in a different style in Assamese. *Uttar purux* (next generation) can be used for both males and females although the etymologically *purux* means male. Similary*dekaxokti* (youth power) encompasses both boys and girls, but the Assamese meaning of *deka*is predominantly and if used in isolation is a young boy.

Maleness as the norm has been encoded in languages.Obscuring of women's presence is not the only worry concerned. There are certain other terms to which feminists do commonly object: gender-specific occupational terms like "career woman," "lady doctor," "female athlete," and the like. The use of these terms seems to be premised on the idea that maleness is the norm, and that women who fill these jobs are deviant versions of doctors and athletes. These do the opposite of making women invisible; they highlight the presence of women, making it clear their participation in these fields is not default, but something out of the ordinary. The premise is that maleness is the norm, we have not heard of "career man" and that women doing these jobs are exceptions. When words such as "doctor," "engineer," or "lawyer" are used, they're accompanied by masculine personal pronouns, while words like "housekeeper," "nurse," and "babysitter" are seen with feminine personal pronouns. Oxford dictionary's example sentences demonstrate this: consider "He is a registered professional engineer in New Hampshire" as opposed to "As a registered psychiatric nurse, she spent years caring for gay kids." Even though the words "poet" and "authors" are gender-neutral, it is so anomalous to the norm of men historically dominating the literary world, that society synthesized a trivializing "poetess" and "authoress" to identify the gender of the artist. The easy solution seems to be to turn *woman*/*women* into an adjective: women Senators, women executives, a woman President. Having said that, this could have a negative connotation as well, to allow virtually every word like this. This may actually help men to box women with their "male gaze" of the English language.

The word *broad* was once used for women during Dickensian times. In the 1960s the feminists successfully lobbied the Olympics to change the name of the "broad jump" to the "long jump" as it was loathed by them. This asymmetry in vocabulary is a clear linguistic

reflection of deeply-ingrained sexism. In 2018, Baba Ramdev started selling medicine for infertility by the name of "*putrajeevakbeej*" (son-bearing seeds), it created controversy in India as, on an average more than 200,000 girls under the age of five die each year. There were 2,332 cases of female foeticide daily between 2000 and 2014. The mortality rate of girls under the age of five is 75% higher than that of boys. This is due to systemic female infanticide. Such gendered language, reflects the social reality of the country and runs the danger of making it worse by stressing on the birth of the male child.

In English language also "sex marking," is needed as termed by Marilyn Frye in 1983 (before the distinction between sex and gender had been emphasized within the social sciences) — that is, one needs to know the sex of a person to know with which pronouns to refer to them. To make sex relevant where it doesn't have to be is society's general tendency. The same insane logic applies to titles: Mr. Anurag Sharma remains Mr. Anurag Sharma throughout the man's life, but Ms. AnushkaVerma becomes Mrs.Anushka Sharma as soon as she becomes a wife after marrying Mr. Anurag Sharma. Fyre also suggests that the constant need to know the sex and marital status of the other person propagates the idea that the sex of a person is crucial in all walks of life. For her, this is a key way in which language is used to perpetuate male dominance: by emphatically and tirelessly asserting the difference between men and women.

How Does Gendered Language Affect Reality?

Ferdinand de Saussure, the father of modern linguistics, saw language as a type of social behaviour that links thought and sound, which resonated with sociological thinking of the early 20th century. His contemporaries Emile Durkheim and Marcel Maussfurther extrapolated on this social behaviour by giving 'linguistic culture' the same amount of importance as historic and scientific cultures have in the making of society. This idea that our environment is created by linguistic, historic and scientific cultures — also known as the "social construction of reality" — has now been extended to the "linguistic construction of social reality." This implies that we not only need language to be able to respond and perceive to various other kinds of cultures but also to the society as a whole. Then, it

becomes not so much about language affecting what we think about, but how we think about reality by breaking it down into categories and labelling them.

The Sapir-Whorf linguistic hypothesis is the most contemporary and straightforward of these sociolinguistic theories. It suggests that how an individual thinks and acts are somewhat determined by the language or languages that the individual speaks. According to Sapir-Whorf linguistic hypothesis,"It is quite an illusion to imagine that one adjusts to reality essentially without the use of language and that language is merely an 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 upon the language habits of the group."

The Choice

But what comes first, language or prejudice? It is understood that the gendered language mirrors our cultural assumptions and biases about gender. It shapes our biases and behaviours based on the vocabulary we have. Firstly, it doesn't matter outside of rhetoric — the chicken-and-egg-situation was created as an unsolvable philosophical paradox. Secondly, think of it as money. Bowers and Pleydell (2011) said that the primary job of language is to insert thoughts and feelings into the minds of others. The messages expressed in language influence thought.If sexist thoughts are an abstraction of the social, communicated via language, then society is anamalgamation of sexist thoughts. By logical extension, these sexist thoughts can be replaced with feminist ones to not only break the vicious cycle but replace it with a more egalitarian one. And every time we choose to communicate using a language, we also have the choice between the two ideologies from which we can decipher how to address gender. Key (1975), talks about social dialects and social and biological bases of sex differentiation,treatment of women and labels, titles, taboo words,names and gender markings.

Brown and Alderson (2010) discussed the challenges of opposite sex, sexual orientation, role of gender, and gender ideology along with age, education, religion, and ethnic background.

Sexism has deep cultural origin. Gender discrimination in a given society can be witnessed from the language of that society. Society's indifferent treatment of womenis indicative of expressions whichget proliferated in each and every language. As Lakoff (1975) says, "if it is indeed true that our feelings about the world colour our expression of our thoughts, then we can use our linguistic behaviour as a diagnostic of our hidden feelings about thoughts." An analogy can be drawn with the help of psychoanalysis where one can interpret our overt actions, ideas and perceptions in accordance with our covert desires. Similarly manifestations of hidden attitudes towards women can be interpreted with the help of linguistic data.

Conclusion

The frailties of the women are more noticeable because their behaviour has always been under the microscope mostly operated by males. Shakespeare's famous lines in *Hamlet*,where Hamlet remarks "Frailty, thy name is woman", contains much sexism and unfortunately sexism has penetrated into every facets of society, and provided seeds for social acceptability of derogatory remarks towards women.

In India, Chanakya also known as Kautaliya is considered to be a great person and the cleverest administrator. *ChanakyaNiti* is one of Chanakya's famous books and is the greatest book on *Raj Niti* by the Indians. In this book, Chanakya in the 2nd Chapter starts with the following words:*"Untruthfulness, haste, treachery, stupidity, greed, unhygienics and cruelty are a woman's seven usual flaws."*In Chapter 14 (Couplet no.11), Chanakya writes *"We should always deal cautiously with fire, water, women, foolish people, serpents, and members of a royal family; for they may, when the occasion presents itself, at once bring about our death."* In the above quote, Chanakya is basically comparing women with snakes and fools. In Chapter 1 (Couplet no.15), Chanakya says *"Do not put your trust in rivers, men who carry weapons, beasts with claws or horns, women, and members of a royal family."*

Overall, the authors discuss through the analysis, the emphasis in the literature on determining whether the offensive content of slurs and other gender identity-linked insults are

a semantic phenomenon or pragmatic one. These derogatory slurs are still accepted in the society .It ignores some vital fundamental questions, such as intense exploration of the attitudes that these offensive terms communicate and the trends that emerge in the real-world. Derogatory sexist terms are harmful to those whom they purport to denote, it is avoidable and unjust.Social acceptability further contributes to stigmatization and it labels the person, bringing the person in stereotypes which is notoriously rigid. Such words should be eradicated from our available repertoire. There should be sanctions against the use of sexist derogatory slurs. Delgado(1982) claims that sexist or racist remarks are badges of humiliation even if used between friends, these words have no other connotation. A sexist derogatory slur may remind the person of the social sanctions and that her status as lesser than the men. It may also instil psychological oppression, convincing her that she is less of a human being.

Language are weapons, it can do colossal damage in understanding the social construct if used explicitly to hurl insult and advocate the division of society into separate unequal classes according to sex and sexual preferences.

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