

Gender Representations in English Textbooks used in Grade Eight under National and State Boards, India

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Abstract

This research investigates the representation of different genders in the English textbooks used in grade eight in India. The main objective of the research is to find out what the different representations of genders are and how the language and images are used in the three English textbooks *Blossoms*, *Honeydew* and *Read Now*. This study employs quantitative and qualitative analysis. Part of Fairclough's (1989) Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) frameworks that is *the description, interpretation and explanation* is used for the analysis. Content and textual analysis has been conducted using the *schema, frame* and *script* as part of 'member resources' (MR). The analyses are divided into seven categories such as gender of authors, gender of characters, male or female centred topics, firstness, images and visibility, language features and plot to answer the two research questions. Additionally, the images have been analysed using Critical Image Analysis tool. The results of the investigation indicates that gender biasness or stereotype still exists in the English textbooks used in Indian school despite the government's endeavour to establish equality and justice in matters of education as per the national policy of education. In conclusion, the study also provides certain pedagogical implications and recommendations that can help in eradicating the issue of gender inequality of the learning materials in English classrooms

Keywords: gender representation, sexism, images, gender stereotype, gender roles English textbooks.

1. Introduction

Textbooks have often been considered to be an important teaching aid in imparting basic knowledge in all societies. They serve as instruments to make available

for a given age group, knowledge, in a particular subject and lay foundations for standard learning and shared culture. Apart from conveying the basic knowledge in a particular subject matter, textbooks directly or indirectly affect and tend to influence a child's upbringing by "transmitting models of social behaviour, norms and values" which are considered as acceptable and appropriate (UNESCO, 2009). These concepts are more prone to develop during the formative years of a child's life and have a tendency to influence children's way of thinking.

Traditionally, India has always been a patriarchal society where women are dominated and controlled by male members of the society as revealed by the history of the country. The issues related to gender in India had gained importance since the 70's once the report "*Towards Equality*" was published in 1974 by the Committee on the *Status of Women in India, Ministry of Education and Social Welfare, Department of Social Welfare* (NCERT Report, 2013-2014). In education, the need to make the curriculum gender inclusive gained momentum in the 70's. The Indian Government has taken certain steps to promote equality in the field of educational. For example, the *National Policy on Education* (NPE) 1986 emphasised on the elimination of all kinds of discriminations on the basis of gender

As a country striving towards gender equality, one way of doing so is to educate the young learners through textbooks used in schools in India. If men and women are presented equally and no particular gender is stereotyped, then children might grow up without any preconceived notion of gender roles. Gender perceptions can be made positive through education. Thus, investigating the current textbooks used in the Indian Curriculums is the focal point of this study and to find out how different genders are being represented in textbooks in Indian schools. This study hopes to provide concerned authorities, educators and society awareness regarding the need to be in line with the objectives in developing gender equal educational environment.

Briefly, Indian schools are mostly found to be affiliated to either of the following boards/curriculums which operates at different levels such as - (i) three boards operates at the national level, (ii) some relatively small number of schools follow foreign curriculum and (iii) each state has its own curriculum. Of these, the national and the state level of education has been focused upon in this research. At the national level the two boards or

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curriculums are the *Central Board of Secondary Education* (CBSE) and the *Council for the Indian School Certificate Examination* (CISCE). At the State level, there is a *Department of Education* under which the school system operates. Each state has control of their departments in terms of teaching materials like textbook selection and evaluation (Kumar, 2014). For this study the State Board of West Bengal or the *West Bengal Board of Secondary Education* (WBBSE) has been taken into consideration.

Language is the most important tool for communication and it reflects the societal structure and gender perspective of a given society or community. At present, there are many societies which are patriarchal and which gives more value to men than women and these values are reflected through the language used (Umera and Okeke, 2012). Language is dynamic, it is continuously evolving to demonstrate the altering nature of the society. To name a few, there are various scholars like Lakoff (1975), Key (1975), Thorne and Henley (1975), who published different studies on language and gender, and explained the relationship between the two. According to Bell, McCarthy and McNamara (2006), *gender* is a contextual-dependent concept which bestows a variety of strategies related to language to both females and males. Each and every society has its own outlook towards the roles that men and women play and has certain fixed expectations from them which are dependent on the cultural, religious, political, economic and social factors. In most societies it is culturally assumed that men and women stand for two extreme traits- female are regarded as the suppressed group which stands for the negative characteristics like weakness, passiveness, dependence and emotionality; whereas men form the dominant group which stands for all the positive characteristics like strength, activity, rationality and independence (Ho, 2009, as cited in Majid and Fateme, 2015). Kress (1996. p.16) points out that gender inequality which begins with schooling and is demonstrated in the teaching materials is matter of great concern as these textbooks and syllabus serve to become “design for a future society” (as cited in Soleimani, 2015). UNESCO (2011, p.6), defines *gender stereotype* as “simplistic generalisations about the gender attributes and the roles of individual and/or groups and about differences among them. Stereotype can be positive or negative but they rarely communicate accurate information about others.” These generalisations are made keeping in line with the societal norms, values and ideologies associated with the two genders.

In 2013, the Pew Research Centre pointed out that in U.S.A the number of women breadwinners is gradually increasing, 40% of the women are earning more than their partners (Wang, Parker and Taylor, 2013, as cited in Craeynest, 2015). Nevertheless, the gender gap still exist in the European Union, (*European Institute for Gender Equality* (EIGE), 2013). Thus, although, EU might only be just halfway through in achieving its goal of gender equality, but gender discrimination is still very much seen in other parts of the world, India is not an exemption. The situation is still desolate in developing countries where women are often discriminated in matters of healthcare, education, rights etc. The reason behind this problem relies to “cultural preference for sons over daughters” as found in China, India as well as Caucasus and Balkan states (Barot 2012, p. 18, as cited in Craeynest, 2015). In these countries, the society views males as more valuable than females – a son is regarded to be an asset whereas a daughter is regarded as an economic liability. Women grow up to become nothing more than maids for the household for whom dowry is required to be paid during marriage. They are thus regarded as inferior to men (Mullins 1998, para. 1-7, as cited in Craeynest, 2015). Furthermore, women suffer in matters of education especially in these low-income countries. Through the help of various NGO’s like UNICEF, the role of men and women all around the world is changing as these non-governmental organisations are putting effort to promote gender equality. This change should also be reflected in the textbooks which are being used in schools to educate young learners.

In India language, in most cases, is taught through literature. Literature from time immemorial has played a key role in teaching English to foreign and second language learners all over the world. The roles of literature in teaching English language has been supported by many researcher such as Collie and Slater (1987, p.3-6) on the basis that it provides scope for presenting authentic materials for learners, helps in enriching the linguistic and cultural aspects of the learners and emphasizes on the learners personal involvement. Literature is a concoction of different genres like prose, poetry and drama. Each of these genres help in inculcating different language skills in the learners. Vocabulary, grammar, critical thinking, communicative skills etc. can be taught and honed through literary texts.

Textbooks of all kinds have been studied by many researchers throughout the years since they are the main materials adopted by teacher in a teaching-learning situation. Apart from the time spent with textbooks during class hours, the learners also spend considerable amount of time reading these textbooks for revision and homework even out of class. Furthermore, learners tend to consider textbooks to be infallible and hence do not challenge the knowledge and values embedded therein (Chung, 2014). Thus a lack of gender awareness in education strengthens the existing inequalities between the two genders by once again reinforcing the discriminatory tendencies and undermining the self-esteem of the girls (*The World Conference on Women*, 1995).

Many researches have been conducted to analyse the gender representation in textbooks over the years. Not only have the researchers analysed the visual representations like the illustration and photographs but the text too have been studied to identify any discrimination or stereotyping of gender and use of sexist language. In 1977, Coles (as cited in Hall, 2014) examined five materials widely used in adult education. The analysis revealed that in 150 stories, men were referred to three times more than women. It was also found that men occupied skilled and managerial positions are were looked upon as breadwinners but the female were found to be nothing more than housewives and subordinate workers. Arnold-Gerrity (1978, as cited in Hall, 2014) had analysed the content of nine primary reading textbooks to examine the participation of females in character roles. She found that there were twice the number of male characters than female characters in the first four books meant for grades one and two, whereas the male centred stories were five times more frequent in the three readers for grades three and four. She furthermore found that the men had wider and varied occupational roles in contrast to women whose roles were mainly restricted to being housewives and mothers.

Various studies also found the same in the Asian context. Ansary and Babaii (2003) had studied the textbooks *Right Path to English I and II* (1999 edition) concentrating on the status of sexism and found that the visibility of female gender were low; 1:1.4 was the ratio of female to male in the textbooks and in illustration was 1:1.6. Out of the total of 40 topics presented, 27 were male oriented that is 67.5%. They also found that in matters of usage of paired nouns like “uncle and aunt”, “brother and sister”, the feminine noun always followed the masculine noun. Mirza (2004) in Pakistan studied

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a total of 194 textbooks for six different disciplines and her findings were extensive, but to summarise it, she found the reference to females were far outnumbered by the reference to male. In 2010, Hamdan conducted an analysis of a series of English language textbooks used in Jordan and the results showed that men occupied 62 of the total 78 jobs which male dominant roles negating the fact that in recent times, the women of Jordan too held varied occupational designations starting from ministers of governments to taxi drivers. These findings can be predictable as these countries are male dominated society.

There are some studies which however have yielded different results. The research conducted by Nagatomo (2011) in Japan University showed that the textbook *Conversation Topics for Japanese University Students* did not promote any gender imbalance. The study found that the female characters were more in number, together with higher visibility and more active roles. In contrast to most studies where there gender imbalance was found to be inclined towards the domination of males, here it was found that most of the topics were oriented towards the female areas of interests. There was almost no gender bias found in the sentence structures since in most cases gender-neutral terms were used. In the research conducted by Dominguez (2003), it was found that there was no sexist bias throughout the textbook studied. In the books *Sparks 5* and *New Total English* published in Belgium and Britain respectively, a conscious effort made towards the problem of gender imbalance could be seen unlike in the textbook *Contact 5*, published in Belgium as found in the study by Craeynest (2015).

Most of the analysis conducted in Indian context by the Department of Women's Studies, NCERT, in various subjects focused mainly on the quantitative aspect like the frequency of the portrayal of women in both contents and illustrations rather than the qualitative aspect. The concept of equality has been dealt in a narrow sense as such the authors of these textbooks, as a means to promote equality, increased the number of visual representation of women. Recently a study was conducted by the NCERT, Department of Gender Studies (Srivastava, Department of Gender Studies NCERT, Ministry of Human Resource Development, 2013-2016) which analysed the textbooks of ten states of India- Assam, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Odisha, Maharashtra, Manipur and Rajasthan. In this study, the author team was examined, occupations and roles were observed. The main protagonists together with the

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content of different disciplines were analysed from the perspective of gender sensitivity. Visuals included in each of the textbooks had been analysed both qualitatively and quantitatively. The findings revealed that some measures have been taken towards gender inclusion in different subjects yet there is still scope for improvement.

2. Objectives

This study aims to address the following objectives:

1. To investigate how genders are being represented in the English textbooks used in grade eight of Secondary schools under the two National Board, CBSE and CISCE, and one State Board, WBBSE, in India. As childhood development takes places in the transitional period from childhood to adulthood (age 10-19) as stated by the World Health Organisation, thus this study aims to investigate textbooks used in grade eight. This stage of a child's life is crucial not only because of physical changes but also psychological changes that she/he undergoes during this period. Therefore, making them aware that genders should be treated equally might have a positive impact on children's perception about men and women that could lead to a more balanced and open-minded society.
2. To find out how language is used in the English textbooks of grade eight of Secondary schools under two National Board (CBSE and CISCE) and one State Board (WBBSE) in India and what message do the images used in the textbooks convey. As individual's upbringing shape their language from early age, therefore language used in the textbook is necessary to be identified as children tends to learn and remember what they have learnt from books. Thus, knowing the language contents of these textbooks and the messaged conveyed through the images can give a good idea on how genders are represented to the learners.

3. Research Questions

Based on the objectives this study aims to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the different representations of genders in the English textbooks

Blossoms, Honeydew and Read Now used in grade eight of Secondary schools

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under two National Board (CBSE and CISCE) and one State Board (WBBSE) in India?

2. How are the language and images used in the textbooks *Blossoms*, *Honeydew* and *Read Now* to represent the different genders?

4. Materials and Method

4.1. Selection of Textbooks

In line with the research questions, three English textbooks used in grade eight under three above mentioned curriculums have been selected which are **Blossoms** used under the State Board (West Bengal Board of Secondary Education or WBBSE) in schools in the state of West Bengal in India and is developed by Textbook Development Committee consisting of by a group of eminent educationists, teachers and subject experts; **Honeydew** is the English textbook used in schools affiliated to one national board (CBSE) in India (Reprint Edition 2013). This book too has been developed by the Textbooks Development Committee consisting of 8 members, 3 males and 5 females and published by the publication team of National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) and the third textbook **Read Now** is used in grade eight in most schools affiliated to another national curriculum which is CISCE (First published 2015). This book is published by Viva education, written by Angus Maciver. These textbooks serve as course materials for the three different curriculums.

4.2. Framework of Analysis

A mixed methodology has been used as a framework for the analysis of this study using a part of Critical Discourse Analysis or CDA focusing mainly on content or textual analysis to investigate how genders are being represented in three English textbooks. The researcher has adopted and adapted a part of Fairclough's (1989) three-dimensional model, which is one of the most widely used approach to investigate gender representation in EFL/ESL textbooks. Fairclough's three-dimensional framework for the analysis of text and discourse consist of – (1) the *description* from the linguistic view point of the formal characteristics of the text, (2) the *interpretation* of the connection between the discursive process/interaction and the text and (3) the *explanation* of the link in-between discourse and social and cultural reality. The explanation employs the following: *schema*, *frame* and *script* (Fairclough, 1989). *Schemas* represent various types

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of activities, *frames* represent various topics and subject matter or referent within the activity and those who are associated with these activities, i.e. the subjects and the relationship among them are represented by the *scripts* (Fairclough, 1989 pp. 158-159). *Content analysis* has been used to analyse how the genders are represented in the three English textbooks in India through quantitative and qualitative analysis. The images have been analysed using Critical Image Analysis as a tool.

4.3. Procedure of Data Analysis

The study is divided in two parts. In the first part a *quantitative* analysis has been conducted to count the *number of male and female authors, male and female characters, number of male or female centred topic/themes, and firstness*. In the second part, a *qualitative* analysis has been conducted focusing on the *images, language features, and plots* to answer the research questions. The text, images, exercises, dialogues, captions has been analysed qualitatively and the results have been discussed.

5. Results and Discussions

Research Question 1: Based on the findings, the three textbooks illustrates the extensive dominance of males in terms of *the authors, the characters, topic focus* and the *firstness* of characters in the three books.

1. Authors

Table 1: *The Percentage of Different Authors who represented different genders in the three textbooks*

Textbooks	Male authors	Female authors	Unknown/ neutral authors
Blossoms	77%	15%	8%
Honeydew	86%	5%	9%
Read Now	71%	19%	10%

Table 1 indicates that male authors are dominant in the three textbooks. Although **Blossoms** and **Honeydew's** *Textbooks Selection Committee* who was responsible for the selection of the texts were both males and females, the texts selected are mostly written

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by male authors. Whether these selections are intentional or not, the unequal representations of different genders can be an influence of the Indian culture which is a male dominated society. In case of **Read Now**, as a male author was responsible for the selection of the texts perhaps this can be the reason why the texts are male dominated.

2. Characters

Table 2: *The Percentage of Different Characters that represented different genders in the three textbooks*

Textbooks	Male characters	Female characters	Unknown/ neutral characters
Blossoms	46%	20%	34%
Honeydew	42%	17%	41%
Read Now	63%	12%	25%

The findings indicate that male characters outnumber the female and neutral characters. The explanation perhaps can be based on the perspective of the writers that having equal female or neutral characters in each story can hinder the creativity and imaginative freedom of the writers in matters of story line and plot. However, it can be argued, that the *Selection Committee* should be aware that inclusion of stories portraying female characters will help students to know that females, in a male dominated culture, have equal representation in society. Indian society is changing and the role of women in the society is also changing, yet in textbooks, which play a big role in educating society, these changes are not mentioned at all. Therefore, to educate young learners in terms of the role of different genders in society, this should start by looking at the different teaching materials that schools are using in the classrooms specifically the National and State Board in India.

3. Topic Focus

Table 3: *The Percentage of Different Topics which represented genders in the three textbooks*

Textbooks	Male centred topics	Female centred topics	Unknown/ neutral topics
Blossoms	77%	8%	15%
Honeydew	75%	12.5%	12.5%
Read Now	66.6%	9.5%	24%

Table 3, illustrates that male centred topics dominate all the three textbooks. This unequal representation is supported by greater number of male characters and perhaps can be influenced by the authors as well. Thus, in the stories, male protagonists are often the focus of the plots. Secondly, as most stories are set in the 18th or 19th Century and are often taken from western societies, this perhaps influences the importance of male roles than females during those periods and focuses mainly on deeds, hardships, adventures and journeys of male characters instead of females or neutral characters. The portrayal of the female characters in conventional roles also reflected the same.

4. Firstness

The findings show that there are some positive representations of females in terms of firstness. There are a few instances of female being referred to first in a sentence although the pattern could very well be reversed. For example, in **Blossoms** it was found that, the reference of the *niece* comes first followed by the *male cousin* (Blossoms, p. 34, Lesson 4). Another example shows, the reference to the *mothers* followed by the *sons* (Blossoms, p.71, Lesson 8) and the reference to the *daughter* first followed by the *husband* (Blossoms, p.92, Lesson 10). Another example found in **Honeydew** was when the *mother's* name is mentioned first followed by the *father's* while talking about the parents (Honeydew, p.27, Lesson 2, see 4.2.1.4). This example is quite important because in Indian society naming an adult female first followed by an adult male is unusual.

In spite of this, males firstness is also found in the three textbook where the *a King* is mentioned first followed by a *Queen* (Blossoms, p.61, Lesson 7), the *sister* being referred to in reference to the male character Bijju (Honeydew, p.113, Lesson 8) and the *Ronder*, the *husband* is being mentioned first followed by the *wife* (Read Now, p.195, Lesson 21). These examples highlight the stereotypical gender roles where the females or

the wives are mentioned in reference to the male character. In many societies, women are always mentioned in reference to the husband, father, brother or son.

5. Images and Visibility

Table 4: *The Percentage of Different Images which represented genders in the three textbooks*

Textbook	Male Participant	Female Participant	Neutral Participant
Blossoms	74%	13%	13%
Honeydew	77.5%	8.5%	14%
Read Now	62%	7%	31%

Table 4 illustrates the percentages of gender representation in images in three textbooks. As found, male participants in images have outnumbered the female and neutral participants. Based on the findings of the second and third categories (*characters* and *topics*) it was found that male characters and male centred topics have extensive presence. As the majority of characters are male, the images used as part portrayal of the characters in the story are also dominated by males. Females on the other hand are sparingly presented in all the above categories, therefore females visibility in in terms of images portrayed is considerably low. On the other hand, neutral characters, those characters which have not been ascribed any particular gender are sufficiently presented in all categories as well as images.

Therefore to answer question 1, based on the findings, it indicates a clear picture of unequal gender representation in the three textbooks used in two national and one State board in India. This means that the aim of the government to implement gender equality in the educational sector as part of the educational policies is still facing challenges before it can be fully achieved.

Research Question 2: The following sections provides the findings and discussions of the analysis of *images*, *language* and *plot* of the textbooks.

1. Activities in Images

In the three textbooks a wide range of *activities* can be found in the images starting from *hiking, riding tricycles, strategizing battle plans, practicing Judo, fighting a shark, reading, conversing etc.* Most of the activities portrayed in the images involve physical strength and are masculine in nature. Some neutral activities are also presented like *sitting on a school desk, resting, preaching, playing etc.*

2. Active Participants in Images

Table 5: *Active Genders in Images*

Textbook	Male	Female	Both M/F
Blossoms	81%	13.5%	5.4%
Honeydew	96.8%	3.1%	
Read Now	86.5%	13.4%	

The table indicates that the three textbooks are dominated by the males when it comes to active participants in images. This male domination implies that in the Indian society, females are still regarded as second to males and not equal and hence are not presented in active roles like the males.

3. Passive Participants in Images

Table 6: *Passive Genders in Images*

Textbook	Male	Female	Both M/F/neutral
Blossoms	86.6%		13.3%
Honeydew	84.6%	15.3%	
Read Now	94.5%	3.6%	1.8%

The total number of male participants in images outnumbers the female and neutral participants in all the three textbooks and thus, the total visibility of males in both active and passive roles are more than female and neutral visibility.

4. Status in Images

In **Blossoms**, men are mostly portrayed as having status in images (they are depicted as leaders, heroes, councillors, etc.), while for women such pictures are rare. In **Honeydew**, female having status in images even among men are present (Image 55, where the focus is on a female singer amidst all politicians at the event of celebration of Indian Independence). Similarly, in **Read Now** there are few images in which women enjoy status (Image 143, where in an arena, the old woman is found beating the powerful Thor in a game of wrestling). However, based on the findings, it can be highlighted that females having status have been presented in all the three books but not sufficiently nor equally in comparison to males.

5. Body Language

A positive step towards ensuring equality between two genders is to represent men in unconventional roles and body language like being *afraid* or *worrying* etc. which is evident in the findings of three text books. Yet as far as women are concerned, no positive changes can be noticed, thus indicating a need to reconsider the way women are represented in the textbooks.

6. Clothing

Men are portrayed wearing a wide range of clothes from *casual* to *formal* even *mountaineering gears* and *diving gears*, whereas women are restricted to *traditional* and *casual outfits* with only one instance of *work wear*. This is because most of the stories portray men in a variety of character roles while women are presented in conventional roles.

7. Direction of Eye

The findings of *the direction of the eyes* of the participants in the images of the three textbooks, indicate that **Blossoms** has neutral representation of the male and female from the perspective of the direction of the eye/eye contact, while **Read Now** has better representation of females in this respect. Only **Honeydew** has a conventional portrayal of male and female which can be attributed to some extent to cultural aspects of the context. For example an image portraying a husband and a wife shows the husband looking at the wife but she is found to have her eyes cast down which might be interpreted as a mark of respect or shyness shown to the husband as found in Indian societies. In the three

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textbooks, there are images with single participants who are found to stare at the camera/viewers or elsewhere in the distance. There are also images with two or more participants where they are found to either stare at each other or at the camera or at a common object/participant.

8. Occupational Roles

The data shows that male enjoy occupational roles which are higher in status like *Prime Minister, Soldier, Doctor, Knight* than those enjoyed by the female genders. The jobs assigned to neutral characters also show a wide variety ranging from high to low status job but for female, their occupational roles are conventional, and mostly restricted to nurturing and caring jobs like *teachers, governess* etc., with no instance of equal representation of males and females in this section.

9. Gender Roles

Apart from a few instances where men and women have been represented in unconventional ways, like the father is seen *baking* and *buying vegetables*, the rest portrays them in their stereotypical roles and duties in the society. Women in all the three books are shown *taking care of households, nurturing children, worrying or admonishing them, cooking* and even in a negative light as *witches, enchantress* and *as an object of desire*.

10. Traits and Hobbies

Women in the three textbooks are mostly seen exhibiting motherly *attributes* like *care, love, affection protectiveness, worry, nervousness, anxiety, gentleness* etc. Men are seen displaying a variety of traits like *anger, curiosity, ego, farsightedness, intelligence, wisdom, compassion, well grounded, spiritual* etc. Apart from positive traits, they are seen possessing negative traits like *anger, revengeful attitude, roughness, manipulative behaviours* etc. The roles are mostly stereotyped with only a few exceptions of gender inclusive features of men *weeping* or being *afraid*.

Women are restricted mostly to indoor hobbies while male are seen indulging in both indoor and outdoor activities.

11. Generic Man

In three of the textbooks, *generic man* has been used repetitively. It used as suffix for professional designation as well. However a few gender inclusive features are also observed in **Blossoms** and **Honeydew** where dual gender pronouns and ‘humans’ are used in place of masculine pronoun and generic man.

12. Plot

In the plots of the texts in the three textbooks women are represented mostly in subordinate roles. There are instances of neutral plots as well. Most of the stories are set in the 19th Century era, thus it is inevitable to find more male protagonists than females. So, more stories with female lead and equal representation must be included to make it more gender neutral. Moreover there are fairy tales included in the textbooks. These are the stories of the past. In the real world, students need to read texts which are realistic, stories which reflect the world around them.

13. Literary Features

There are instances when a non-living thing or an animal has been endowed with human attributes. Some have been ascribed the male gender while other are kept neutral. A metaphor compares the mighty and vigorous *sea* with a *dog* highlighting the masculine traits and is symbolic of male power, strength and aggression. *Death* has been personified but no gender has been ascribed whereas the *duck* and the *kangaroo* in Lesson 6 of **Honeydew** are assumed as males as revealed from the CBSE guidelines where both have been referred to as ‘*he*’. This is contradictory to the original meaning of the word ‘*duck*’ which by definition is feminine gender.

This implies that in cases where human attributes have been endowed to non-living things or animals, mostly male gender have been used along with some instances of neutral gender, while females are hardly referred and when they are mentioned they are used as symbols of weakness. This stems from the cultural perspective where all the powerful and strong things are referred to as males while the weak and docile things are regarded as females.

Thus, in these textbooks, the images and language used reveal the presence and dominance of male characters as opposed to the more equal representation of both genders. Beginning with *roles, duties, occupations* etc. men and women are portrayed in the conventional roles as seen prevalent in the society for years together. But, in recent times, the societal roles, duties and profession choices of the genders are rapidly changing and breaking stereotypes. Nevertheless such representations have not been found in any of the stories. One reason may be that these stories which are included in the three textbooks are taken from an earlier age where the social rules and norms of the earlier period prevalent and likewise were depicted in the stories. Inclusion of more recent stories which reflect the current social positions and roles of genders as well as those stories which are contextualised might help in overcoming such conventional representation of the genders.

6. Pedagogical Implications

There are a number of practical implications on the findings and discussion of this study. From the above findings, it is evident that the three textbooks analysed in this study reveals the existence of gender stereotypes and unequal representation of both the genders. Some of the implications of the same on teaching and learning are as follows:

1. Textbooks implicitly convey ideas and notions about the social norms and values which get transferred to the minds of the learners as the epitome of acceptable and appropriate gender roles in a given society.
2. In order to avoid such issues, the teachers need to be aware of the materials, especially, the textbooks and the notions and beliefs embedded therein which get conveyed to the learners. One solution is to include gender free materials but this might prevent the learners from enjoying various classical stories or literary masterpieces.
3. Another solution is to tackle these notions and beliefs with dexterity so as to avoid and prevent the learners from following the characters and imitating their roles. Since most of the text included in the textbooks are literary texts written in different eras and having different plot and story structure, it is necessary for the teacher to distinguish the literary world with the real world as well as to brief the

learners about the timeline during which the stories were written so as to clarify the reason behind the roles played by the different characters.

4. Moreover, a comparison with the roles and duties of both the genders as represented in the textbooks with that which is visible in real life situations may be conducted in classes so as to initiate critical thinking and challenge the stereotypical notions and representations of the texts.
5. This gives way to another possibility of activities which might include reconstructing the text by ensuring that all the genders are equally represented through group discussions.

The issue on how genders are represented in textbooks can be used to educate young learners and this needs to be combated with immediacy since these textbooks serve as the tool for change as they propagate social norms and ideas of gender roles and duties.

7. Recommendations

1. The first recommendation is to be aware of and include more topics and texts which have equal representation of male and female genders. Gender inclusive texts too can be added to the syllabus so as to break the stereotypical notions and thus prevent gender imbalance and ideas associated with each gender.
2. If gender biased texts are used in classrooms, the teachers should put effort to compare the literary text with the real world so as to point out the difference between texts and reality. The non-gender inclusive texts such as classics can be used for discussions of gender roles and duties. Such texts should be introduced along with historical context or time frames so as to provide explanation of such representation.
3. Texts which are written by female authors should also be included equally with male authors. The usage of gender neutral words, avoiding the usage of generic man, use of dual gender pronouns and representation of gender in unconventional roles might have a positive impact on the minds of the learners.
4. The third gender who are most commonly referred to as belonging to the LGBT community are invisible in these textbooks although they are very much visible as part of the society. Thus, including the third gender as characters in stories, or sharing their deeds, achievements and contributions to the society too will foster a

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positive notion towards the community and also reinforce the fact that they too are accepted as part of the society, that is they are no different than others.

5. Lastly, the inclusion of more female references and female and male characters pursuing diverse cross gender careers will encourage and motivate learners and help society in building of a broader and open mind set in terms of gender and their roles in society.

8. Conclusion

Although India is a patriarchal society, this notion can be changed if the government exerts more effort to pass different challenges to make the society as gender inclusive as possible. The portrayal of stereotypical concepts and images about the gender roles and duties in the three textbooks studied in this research will not help to eradicate the inequality that exists in all spheres of Indian society but rather reinforce them. If the textbooks continue to depict men and women in conventional roles and do not include the third gender as a part of society and as acceptable, the new generations of young learners will continue to foster such narrow minded concepts and notions about gender roles in society which can be harmful for the human race at large. Thus, it is essential to review the current textbooks used from the perspective of gender and include and update the books so as to ensure that the current trends in the society are manifested therein. If positive changes are found reflected in the textbooks, young learners, who will eventually become a part of the future societies, will be educated with such positive concepts.

Although this study used three main English textbooks under three curriculums in grade eight in India, this small scale study can provide a further scope on detailed investigation of English textbooks used in all the grades of the three curriculums to understand how the genders are being presented throughout the primary, secondary and higher secondary educational levels. A deeper and intensive study will further help in identifying and improving the representation of genders in the textbooks to help the *National Policy on Education* to ensure that the equality and change in the status of women and the third sex through education are fulfilled.

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