

DAY 1: 26 AUGUST 2013, SEMINAR ROOM 2

India International Centre 40, Max Mueller Marg, New Delhi-110001

TIME: 3:30- 4:30 PM

The Session for Gender Stereotyping, need for a more positive image of older women was taken by

1. *Chair: Shovana Narayan, Kathak Guru & retd IAAS, Padmashri & Sangeet Natak Akademi awardee*
2. *Dr. Subhadra Channa, Professor, Department of Anthropology*
3. *Dr. Anagha Tendulkar, Senior Lecturer, Sophia College of Women, Mumbai*
4. *Dr. Sailesh Mishra, Founder President, Silver Inning Foundation*

Topics Covered:

- a) Ageing as a subjective experience:- life conditions cultural and social by Dr. Subhadra Channa, *Professor, Department of Anthropology*
- b) Deconstructing the gender stereotypical image of ageing women by Dr. Anagha Tendulkar, *Senior Lecturer, Sophia College of Women, Mumbai*
- c) Social Media Activism for Older Women Rights, Dr. Sailesh Mishra, *Founder President, Silver Inning Foundation*

Abstracts from this sessions are:

1. Title: Deconstructing the Gender Stereotypical Image of Ageing Women

Author: Dr. Anagha Tendulkar, *Senior Lecturer, Sophia College of Women, Mumbai*

Stereotypical images are socio-cultural constructs. These refers to the conventional, 'Accepted by all and Expected by all' idea of the given phenomenon. Stereotypes can therefore be treated as cliché, banal with nothing new to offer to the society. Nevertheless in Social Research these images can be deemed as useful because they provide a basic understanding of the phenomenon under study indicating the general trends associated with it. In research such images can function as yardsticks which enable researchers to appraise the level of conformity or deviation of the phenomenon from the reference point. Therefore the efficacy of stereotypical images in social research cannot be denied.

Gender based stereotypes of ageing women are the product of two important variables, namely Gender and Age. It would be interesting to note that for the individual; gender is specific in its acquisition as against age which is a continuous phenomenon. Therefore the intersection of the two has to be a dynamic and fluid combination. To capture its essence and to standardize it into stereotypes is almost impossible; yet there appears to be a firmly established image of ageing women which highlights her vulnerability, dependence and fragility.

Without contesting the validity of the content of the image it would be advisable to look into some of the inadequate trajectories that have compelled us to arrive at the image of ageing women. Firstly, we believe that there is only one single monolithic image of ageing women. In reality, there are multiple images of old women generated by multiple subgroups in society. The differences within the images may not be as pronounced as the difference between old man and old women but differences certainly prevail.

Secondly, the gerontological studies so far have been correctly partial towards silver women. Lack of empirical research in the specific area of male ageing has generated a skewed data base about ageing women. This is not to state that old women do not have problems but to point out that our reflections are incomplete. A symmetrical presentation of both the genders with gerontological ontology is a valid requirement of healthy and discerning research. In reality it would be important to deconstruct the existing image and consequently reconstruct the images of elderly women to acknowledge them as equal stake holders in the processes of development. There is an urgent need to reexamine these issues at a macro level. The new identities have to be engineered and will have to be nurtured with a more positive attitude.