

Masculinity



in Essence

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Masculinity in Essence

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"Manliness" refers to those set of qualities, behaviours, and characteristics often associated with men that are considered strong, courageous, honourable, and responsible. However, the definition and perception of manliness have evolved over time, considering the changing societal norms, cultural shifts, and understandings of gender.

Here's a comprehensive definition encompassing various aspects of manliness:

Manliness is a complex and multifaceted concept that embodies the traditional and contemporary attributes, behaviours, and virtues culturally ascribed to men. It involves a combination of physical strength, resilience, courage, integrity, and emotional maturity. Manliness encompasses the ability to face challenges with courage, take responsibility for one's actions, demonstrate honour and respect, while also exhibiting emotional intelligence, empathy, and a sense of purpose. It incorporates ethical conduct, leadership qualities, and a commitment to supporting and protecting oneself, loved ones, and the community. In its modern interpretation, manliness embraces inclusivity, acknowledging diverse expressions of masculinity and rejecting toxic behaviours or stereotypes that restrict or limit individuals based on gender norms.

It's essential to note that the definition of manliness is fluid and subject to cultural, societal, and individual interpretations,

allowing for a broader and more inclusive understanding of masculinity beyond traditional stereotypes.

Exploring the traditional understanding of manliness

The traditional understanding of manliness has been shaped by historical, cultural, and societal norms that have evolved over centuries. Traditionally, manliness has been associated with specific qualities and behaviours that were considered characteristic of men. Here are some aspects of the traditional understanding of manliness:

Physical Strength and Courage: Historically, manliness was often tied to physical prowess and the ability to protect oneself, family, and community. Strength, bravery, and courage in facing challenges, including physical risks and conflicts, were highly valued traits.

Provider and Protector Role: Men were typically expected to fulfil the role of providers, ensuring the financial stability of the family. They were also seen as protectors, responsible for safeguarding their family and community from external threats.

Emotional Restraint: Traditional manliness often emphasized emotional restraint and stoicism. Men were expected to exhibit control over their emotions, refraining from showing vulnerability or expressing feelings openly.

Leadership and Authority: Men were commonly viewed as natural leaders and held positions of authority in many societies. They were expected to make decisions, guide their families, and be the primary authority figures.

Honour and Integrity: Manliness was associated with honour, integrity, and adherence to a code of conduct. Upholding one's word, being honest, and demonstrating moral principles were considered essential aspects of manliness.

Role in Work and Public Life: Men were typically the primary breadwinners, engaging in work outside the home. They played significant roles in public life, politics, and various professions.

Gender Roles and Expectations: Traditional manliness was often defined in contrast to femininity. It involved conforming to certain masculine ideals and behaviours while adhering to societal expectations of how men should behave and present themselves.

Social Status and Respect: Attaining and maintaining social status and respect within the community was tied to the demonstration of traditional manly attributes and behaviours.

It's important to note that while these traditional notions of manliness were prevalent in many cultures and historical periods, they are not universal, and interpretations of masculinity have varied widely across different societies and eras. Additionally, contemporary discussions on gender roles and masculinity have evolved to challenge and expand upon these traditional understandings, aiming for a more inclusive and diverse perspective on what it means to be a man.

Attributes commonly associated with manliness

Attributes commonly associated with manliness have evolved over time and can vary across cultures and societies. However, some traditional and commonly recognized attributes linked to manliness include:

Strength and Physical Vigour: Historically, physical strength and endurance have been closely associated with manliness. This includes both muscular strength and the ability to endure physical challenges.

Courage and Bravery: The willingness to face fears, take risks, and confront challenges with bravery is often considered a hallmark of manliness. This extends to both physical and moral courage.

Resilience and Toughness: The ability to persevere through adversity, bounce back from setbacks, and maintain resilience in difficult situations is often seen as a characteristic of manliness.

Honour and Integrity: Demonstrating integrity, honour, and adherence to a moral code or set of values is considered an

essential attribute of manliness. This involves being honest, trustworthy, and principled.

Emotional Control: Traditional notions of manliness have often emphasized emotional restraint and control. Men were expected to display stoicism and control over their emotions, avoiding displays of vulnerability.

Responsibility and Provider Role: Manliness historically included being responsible for the well-being and protection of one's family. This often involved being the primary provider and ensuring the family's financial stability.

Leadership and Decision-Making: Leadership qualities, the ability to make decisions, and take charge in various situations are often associated with manliness.

Independence and Self-Reliance: The ability to be self-reliant, independent, and capable of taking care of oneself is commonly linked with manliness.

Assertiveness and Confidence: Assertiveness, self-assuredness, and confidence in one's abilities are often seen as attributes of manliness.

Chivalry and Respect: Demonstrating respect towards others, particularly towards women, and displaying chivalrous behaviour, such as politeness and courtesy, have been associated with traditional concepts of manliness.

It's important to note that these attributes are part of a historical and cultural understanding of manliness, and contemporary discussions on masculinity emphasize a more diverse and inclusive range of qualities beyond these traditional stereotypes. Modern interpretations of manliness often embrace emotional intelligence, empathy, inclusivity, and a rejection of harmful stereotypes associated with masculinity.

Historical and cultural perspectives on what it means to be a man.

Throughout history and across different cultures, the perception of what it means to be a man has varied significantly due to diverse social, religious, and ideological influences. Here are some historical and cultural perspectives on masculinity:

Ancient Civilizations:

Greco-Roman Culture: In ancient Greece and Rome, ideals of manliness were associated with physical prowess, courage in battle, and adherence to a strict code of honour. Concepts like courage, strength, and honour were revered.

East Asian Traditions: In Confucian societies like China, Korea, and Japan, ideals of manliness were often tied to familial duty, filial piety, and scholarly accomplishments. Confucian values emphasized ethical behaviour, integrity, and fulfilling societal roles.

Medieval and Feudal Societies:

Chivalry: During the Middle Ages in Europe, the concept of chivalry emerged among knights, emphasizing bravery in battle, loyalty, courtesy, and devotion to a lord or cause.

Feudal Expectations: Feudal societies often expected men to fulfil specific roles, such as being warriors, protectors, and providers for their families.

Victorian Masculinity: In the 19th century, Victorian ideals in Europe emphasized restraint, self-discipline, and moral uprightness as aspects of true manliness. There was an emphasis on the gentlemanly qualities of respectability, modesty, and education.

Colonial Expectations: During the era of colonization, certain cultures imposed their perceptions of masculinity on indigenous societies, often influencing or challenging local ideals of manhood.

Modern and Contemporary Views:

Industrial Revolution and Modernization: With industrialization, the notion of the "breadwinner" emerged, emphasizing men's roles as primary earners for the family.

Cultural and Ethnic Variations: Different cultures have unique perspectives on masculinity. For instance, some Indigenous cultures emphasize communal values and spiritual strength, challenging Western views of masculinity.

Gender Rights Movements: The 20th and 21st centuries saw significant shifts in perceptions of masculinity due to feminist movements, LGBTQ+ rights, and discussions challenging traditional gender roles. There's been a growing recognition of the diversity and fluidity of masculinity.

Religious and Spiritual Influences:

Religious Expectations: Many religions have specific expectations for men, ranging from the protector/provider role

in Christianity to the emphasis on humility and service in some branches of Buddhism.

Spiritual Masculinity: Some spiritual traditions value qualities like compassion, selflessness, and inner strength as essential aspects of masculinity.

Cultural perspectives on masculinity are dynamic, shaped by historical, social, and ideological factors. While certain core values like strength, honour, and responsibility have been consistent, the understanding of what it means to be a man has evolved over time and continues to do so in response to changing societal norms and values.

Modern reinterpretation and evolving notions of manliness

Certainly! The evolving notions of manliness in modern society represent a shift away from rigid stereotypes and traditional expectations toward a more nuanced, inclusive, and progressive understanding of masculinity. Here are some aspects of this modern reinterpretation:

Emotional Intelligence and Vulnerability: There's a growing acknowledgment that emotional intelligence and vulnerability are integral parts of manliness. Men are encouraged to express their emotions openly, fostering healthier relationships and self-awareness.

Rejection of Toxic Masculinity: Modern masculinity emphasizes rejecting harmful aspects of traditional masculinity, such as aggression, emotional suppression, dominance, and the pressure to conform to stereotypical male behaviours that can be damaging to both men and society.

Diverse Expressions of Masculinity: There's a recognition that masculinity can be expressed in diverse ways. Men are encouraged to embrace a spectrum of behaviours, interests, and identities without feeling constrained by traditional gender roles.

Caregiving and Nurturing Roles: Modern masculinity challenges the notion that caregiving and nurturing roles are exclusively feminine. Men are encouraged to actively participate in caregiving responsibilities, parenting, and emotional support within families.

Mental Health Awareness: There's a greater focus on men's mental health, reducing stigma around seeking help for mental health issues, and promoting self-care practices. Men are encouraged to prioritize their mental well-being and seek support when needed.

Communication and Healthy Relationships: Modern masculinity values healthy communication, empathy, and mutual respect in relationships. Men are encouraged to prioritize communication skills and to foster respectful and equitable relationships.

Self-Expression and Authenticity: There's an emphasis on self-expression and authenticity. Men are encouraged to embrace their individuality, pursue their passions, and express themselves authentically without fear of judgment.

Fatherhood and Family Dynamics: Modern masculinity encourages active involvement in fatherhood and challenges

traditional stereotypes around parenting roles. Men are encouraged to be nurturing, involved parents and to support their partners in caregiving responsibilities.

Community Engagement and Social Responsibility:

Modern notions of manliness often include a sense of social responsibility and community engagement. Men are encouraged to contribute positively to their communities, champion social causes, and promote positive change.

These evolving notions of manliness represent a more inclusive, compassionate, and progressive approach to masculinity, allowing men to redefine and express their identities authentically in a changing world.

Shifting societal expectations and gender roles

Shifting societal expectations and gender roles refer to changes in the norms, attitudes, and expectations regarding the behaviours, responsibilities, and roles of individuals based on their gender. Over time, these expectations have evolved significantly. Here are some key points about shifting societal expectations and gender roles:

Breaking Traditional Stereotypes: There has been a gradual move away from rigid, traditional gender stereotypes that confined individuals to specific roles and behaviours based on their gender. This shift aims to acknowledge that gender roles can be diverse and not limited to predefined societal norms.

Equality and Inclusivity: There's a growing emphasis on gender equality, advocating for equal rights, opportunities, and treatment for people of all genders. Society is striving towards inclusivity, recognizing and respecting diverse gender identities beyond the binary concepts of male and female.

Work and Career Expectations: Societal expectations around work and careers have changed. More women are pursuing careers and leadership roles, challenging the traditional perception of men as the sole breadwinners.

Simultaneously, there's a movement to recognize the importance of work-life balance for both men and women.

Domestic Responsibilities: There's a gradual shift in perceptions about household responsibilities. Men are increasingly sharing domestic duties, caregiving, and parenting responsibilities, challenging the notion that these tasks are exclusively for women.

Education and Opportunities: Societal expectations regarding education and opportunities have changed. There's a stronger emphasis on providing equal educational opportunities for all genders, encouraging girls and boys to pursue their interests and talents without limitations based on gender stereotypes.

Expressions of Emotion: There's a move towards destigmatizing the expression of emotions and feelings, particularly for men. Society is encouraging men to express a wider range of emotions and discouraging the idea that showing vulnerability is a sign of weakness.

Representation in Media and Culture: Efforts are being made to promote diverse representations of gender in media and popular culture. There's a push for more accurate and inclusive portrayals that challenge stereotypes and offer positive role models for people of all genders.

Advocacy and Activism: Social movements advocating for gender equality, LGBTQ+ rights, and dismantling harmful gender norms have gained momentum. These movements aim to challenge and reshape societal expectations, promoting a more equitable and inclusive society.

Legal and Policy Changes: Governments and institutions are implementing policies and laws to promote gender equality and protect individuals from discrimination based on gender identity. These changes aim to create a more equitable environment in various spheres of life, including employment, education, and healthcare.

Continued Progress and Challenges: While progress has been made, there are ongoing challenges and resistance to these shifts in societal expectations and gender roles. Efforts are needed to address systemic inequalities and biases that persist in various aspects of society.

Overall, shifting societal expectations and gender roles reflect a movement toward a more equitable, inclusive, and diverse society that values and respects individuals regardless of their gender identity or expression. Continued efforts are crucial to further advance these positive changes and create a more just and accepting world for everyone.

Embracing a more inclusive and diverse understanding of masculinity

Embracing a more inclusive and diverse understanding of masculinity involves recognizing and accepting that masculinity is not a monolithic or singular concept but rather a spectrum of identities, expressions, and behaviours. Here's how society is increasingly embracing this:

Acknowledging Diversity in Masculinity: There's a growing understanding that masculinity is not uniform and can encompass a wide range of expressions, personalities, and traits. This includes acknowledging that men can embody qualities traditionally associated with femininity, such as sensitivity, empathy, and nurturing, without compromising their masculinity.

Respecting Gender Identity: Embracing a more inclusive view of masculinity involves respecting and recognizing individuals' diverse gender identities beyond the binary notions of male and female. This includes acknowledging transgender men and non-binary individuals whose experiences and expressions of masculinity may differ from traditional norms.

Challenging Stereotypes: Society is actively challenging rigid stereotypes associated with masculinity, such as the

expectation for men to conform to aggressive, stoic, or dominant behaviours. This shift encourages men to explore and express their identities authentically, free from societal pressure to conform to traditional norms.

Promoting Emotional Intelligence: Embracing a more inclusive understanding of masculinity involves promoting emotional intelligence, empathy, and vulnerability as valuable traits in men. It encourages men to embrace and express a wide range of emotions, fostering healthier relationships and personal well-being.

Encouraging Intersectionality: Recognizing that masculinity intersects with various aspects of identity, including race, ethnicity, sexuality, and socioeconomic status, leads to a more comprehensive understanding of diverse masculinities. It acknowledges that experiences of masculinity can be shaped by multiple factors and contexts.

Supporting Non-Conforming Behaviours: Society is increasingly supportive of men who challenge traditional gender norms by engaging in non-conforming behaviours or interests. This includes breaking stereotypes related to hobbies, fashion choices, caregiving roles, or career pursuits.

Fostering Positive Role Models: Embracing diverse masculinity involves highlighting and celebrating positive role models who represent a broad spectrum of expressions and identities. This includes showcasing men from various backgrounds who embody values like compassion, inclusivity, and authenticity.

Educational Initiatives: Schools and educational institutions are implementing programs that promote understanding and respect for diverse gender identities and expressions. This helps create a more accepting and inclusive environment for students to explore their identities without judgment or discrimination.

Media Representation: Media and entertainment industries are increasingly showcasing diverse portrayals of masculinity, challenging stereotypes, and presenting characters with multifaceted personalities and experiences. This representation helps normalize and validate diverse expressions of masculinity.

Advocacy and Support Networks: There are growing advocacy efforts and support networks that provide resources, safe spaces, and communities for individuals exploring or embracing diverse forms of masculinity. These initiatives foster a sense of belonging and acceptance for those navigating their gender identities.

Embracing a more inclusive and diverse understanding of masculinity is a progressive step towards creating a society that values and respects the diverse experiences and expressions of individuals, allowing everyone to embrace their identities authentically and without judgment.

Now, be that as it may, masculinity should not be confused with what modern society tries to portray as masculinity. Fundamentally, traditional masculinity deals with, first and foremost, protection. This goes hand in hand with courage. The primary duty of a man is protection of his loved ones. That masculine urge to want to knife that one disrespecting his family. This goes as far as even sacrificing one's life when necessary. It is biological and psychological. It is not natural to see your family under attack and not respond. Even the worm will try to defend itself when under attack. It is a natural instinct in organisms especially in humans. Therefore, when a man fails to defend his own, the question begs to be asked, is he a man?

Secondly, another virtue associated with being a man is the ability to provide. This can also be tied in with strength. For without strength, it is rare that a man can provide for his family. A man should be able to cater for his own. It is important that a man has a means of sustenance. In any society, it is mostly the men that are relied upon to sustain the society economically. A man is expected to learn a skill which is economically viable. Again, this is natural for most men. They are usually willing to use their strength to accomplish job task requiring strength especially if the mental capacity is lacking for jobs requiring mental fitness to execute. Biologically, men are stronger than women and so, it is natural that jobs

requiring strength to execute be given to men. But these days, since machines are taking over the job markets, men should be able to devise a means to sustain the family. Men cannot afford to be lazy or careless for that matter. It is important they stay at the top of their game. A man is expected to be master at his game.

The next manly virtue would be ethics. A man must be principled. His word must be his bond. Most marriages fail because men are not principled. For a man to earn respect, he has no choice but to be principled. How can his wife or partner respect him if he is not principled? How can his friends or colleagues respect him if he is not principled? There is a psychological relationship between men and women and until this is understood by both parties, there is a great chance that the man would be disrespected. A man who knows his worth cannot afford to be disrespected. He should understand the psychology of women if he is to deal with them successfully. Lack of knowledge of psychology would limit his success with women. If it comes from friends, colleagues or even family, it can be tolerated to some extent but it should be guarded against at all cost. A man must be a man. No room for laxity. Honour must be protected at all cost.

A man should also be emotionally intelligent. Men are not robots. They have emotions. And while it is natural to show vulnerability or emotions, this should be done intelligently. Also, it takes emotional intelligence to handle any relationship. Regardless of or contrary to popular opinion, a man should not cry before his spouse and children. Of course, when alone, he can shed all the tears he wants but not in front of his wife or

children. Show me a stoic and I will show you someone who has earned his respect.

Life is already mysterious as it is. It shouldn't come as a surprise if men are also mysterious. But what we find most of the time are men willing to expose their ass for a piece of ass. Men should learn to keep some mystery about them. Because life is mysterious, we are always at awe. If a man desires some form of worship from his household, he should keep some form of mystery about him. On the other hand, because Nature is mystical, it is only natural for us to communicate with Nature mystically. Men have always been content to express this mystical relationship through religion. In every religion, there is some good in it. A man should be well educated to pick out what is good from his religion. Unfortunately, even those who call themselves learned can hardly differentiate between wrongs and rights of a religion. They fail to challenge the status quo and accept whatever religion dishes out to them. How can there be progress in the society if we fail to point out the wrongs of the society. When fathers fail, children pay the price. That aside, the mystical journey is one that must be taken alone. The least one can do is raise the lamp high for others to see the light. To wrap up this summary of what it means to be a man, every man should start as soon as possible to build his empire. Building his empire is helping his family and the society at the same time. It is a pathetic sight when healthy men beg to eat.

