



Gender and the Realm of Language

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Can Language be Gendered or gender discriminatory?

□ If yes, HOW?

□ What is language?

- Common sensical understanding is it is a tool/medium of communication, isn't it? – if we agree with this definition, that language functions as a medium to communicate our ideas, opinions or conceptions, does this medium also carry the gender bias that we have?




Language and Gender

Sexist

= for a bitch or prostitute

Androcentric

- **Man (he/his/him) as generic**
- **Mankind**
- **Man power**
- **Manmade world**
- **Man a project**
- **Chairman**
- **Business men**
- ▣ **Man as the general norm and exclude women from work/labour, production, economy**



What happens when you place man as the general norm?

- Take for eg. words like Man power, Manmade world, Man a project, Chairman, Business man and so on – Don't these words exclude/deny women's contribution from the sphere of
 - work/labour
 - Production
 - Economy and so on **ALTOGETHER?**

Do you really believe that this world is just MANMADE?

- Even the physical world is not so, right?



Aren't they just words?

- They are just words and when we say 'man' we use it in a general sense as human and thus it includes women as well. Language is just a medium of communication but at times it fails to communicate what we really have in our mind or society. **SO it is actually the failure of language and not a real problem. WHY BOTHER ABOUT A PROBLEM WHICH DOES NOT EXIST?**
- It is here that we need to ask a very crucial philosophical question about language
 - **Is language just a medium through which we communicate and thus does it just reflect our society in terms of ideas, attitudes and conceptions? Or can it create things in the society?**



CONSTATIVES VS PERFORMATIVES





So what if language has a performative function as well?

- In addition to the constative – the believed customary – function, if language also has a performative function – it means that language does not just function as a medium through which what happens around is described. But it is also a plane on which things actually happen.
- That is, J.L. Austin points up the way in which our utterances can be *performative*: words do something in the world, something that is not just a matter of generating consequences, like persuading or amusing or alarming an audience. The promises, assertions, bets, threats and thanks that we offer one another are not this kind of action; but nor are they the linguistic description of non-linguistic actions going on elsewhere; they are actions in themselves
- It means when you say something you do not just report what has happened or is happening there already, but you are actually doing it.