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Question: Is gender relations changing in the 21st century? What are the areas of change and the factors driving the change.

Gender relations refer to relations between men and women that are socially determined by culture, religion, or socially acceptable ways of thinking or being. These relationships between men and women, as they exist in most societies, are characterized by the marginalization of women in decision making and other forms of power sharing in the home. This is giving rise to gender-based violence, death, poverty of families, neglect of children and a variety of societal dysfunctions In the interest of justice, empowerment and the development of families and communities, these relations need to be analyzed and new solutions found for their transformation. The problem will need to be analyzed both from its personal and systemic roots.

History has it that men have been the dominant sex in roles and responsibilities at all levels, social, political, economic and religious. The dominance doesn’t mean that women have no influence or didn’t play an important role and responsibility in history.

In the current generation of 21st Century, gender is often misunderstood as promotion of women who have taken more active role in different sectors and careers despite some traditions still hold women inferior in their society like numerous cases reported in Indian cultures women still come from traditional strict households, they have accepted their roles and feel comfortable in their decisions or lack thereof. Feminist movement gained momentum in the 1960’s and 70’s in the United States together with other Human Right groups that advocated for equal rights among all genders in recent centuries after observing women gender being domesticated by cultural norms, religious believes, traditional marginalization yet for the few women who were out speaking role models showed great hope. Gender roles in communities changed lately whereby women now play equal role as men in owning lead large companies, very active in their families and communities, own personal businesses, manage big organizations, head political groups, earn higher academic degrees from all sectors equal to men, to mention but few as compared to early centuries. Both genders actively attend sporting events; go to bars and all other outdoor activities that were dominated by men alone. The 21st century demonstrates equal participation of both genders in different activities as compared to early centuries that kept women behind by being responsible for domestic chores.

**Work**

Traditionally, both genders have different roles and responsibilities whereby men were considered responsible for taking care of the family financially; guiding the family while listening to their spouse though they make final decisions while women are to take care of children and household duties. During the 20th – 21st centuries, there strengthened Gender inequalities in all areas that are rooted in social structures. Others defend men to be more burdened while others argue that women are more burdened with daily chores such as laundry, cleaning, cooking food, shopping, looking after sick relatives and carrying our repairs while men only show significant contribution by other services of mending faulty items around the house. Both genders to some extent perform equal domestic duties though tradition still holds some societies.

**Education**

The most powerful agency of change for the modern woman has been formal education system, from which a large number of elite women have emerged. Intelligent, educated, and confident, they can be found in all leading occupations; they now challenge many aspects of patriarchy and are gradually organizing to ensure that the political arena expands sufficiently to accommodate them.

**Marriage Proposals**

Marriage proposal in early centuries, men typically propose to women which was traditionally their role but in the 21st Century, women are stepping up by proposing to men as they get down on their knees. They have boldly come out elaborating men initiative proposals that can’t wait any longer for men to propose. Sometimes cultures term them as taboo breakers who boldly ask their future husbands to be hand in marriage. Men traditionally take head the process of proposing for marriage but this has changed in the 21st century where women now take bold action in dating and propose for marriage.

**Dress code.**

Culturally dress code for men and women are defined by norms and expectations that relate to an understanding to tell difference between man and woman. The dress has the most direct contact with the human body and is therefore considered an integral part of the self. Dress codes differ from culture to culture, religion to religion, tribe to tribe, some people use different dress code for different settings for different gender (marriage parties, church/mosque, offices, etc) for example the easiest identified dress code is men put on trousers and shirts while women put on skirts and blouses. However in the 21st century, the trousers are worn by both genders. Women dress on trousers, shirts and neck-ties like men while men as well take part in women dresses, skirts and blouse though not widely in public.

Some of these driving factors constitute to the present development in gender relations and gender roles:

**Role of assets**: There is a growing body of evidence on the relationship between female asset ownership and women’s empowerment. The WDR presents evidence indicating women’s asset ownership is associated with lower levels of domestic violence and women’s earnings (rather than simply household assets or wealth) are associated with greater decision-making power; personal assets also play a key role in enabling women to leave a marriage, to cope with shocks and to invest and expand earnings and economic opportunities.

**Public investment:** This makes a strong case for public investment in health, education and water and sanitation as a route towards gender equality. For example, expanding access to secondary schooling has helped shift norms in favour of both boys’ and girls’ attendance.

**Globalization**: Access to information, advertising and television can expose men and women to new and varied ideals of gender roles and expectations.

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