



SC Handbook on Gender Stereotypes

For Prelims: SC Handbook on Gender Stereotypes, [Supreme Court of India](#), [Chief Justice of India](#), [Gender Stereotyping](#).

For Mains: SC Handbook on Gender Stereotypes, Issue of Gender Stereotyping and its impact on Women In Indian Society.

[Source: TH](#)

Why in News?

Recently, the [Chief Justice of India \(CJI\)](#) has released a Handbook, correcting **Gender Stereotypes** and offering guidance on how to avoid utilising harmful gender stereotypes, in particular those about women, in judicial decision making and writing.

What is the Handbook?

▪ About:

- The Handbook on Gender Stereotypes is released by the [Supreme Court of India](#) with the intention of assisting judges and legal practitioners in **recognizing, understanding, and combating gender stereotypes** present in legal language and judgments.
- It highlights common stereotypical words and phrases that are often used to describe **women in legal documents**.
- It points out instances where such language **perpetuates antiquated or incorrect notions about women's roles and behavior**.
- It also provides specific examples of **language that should be replaced with more neutral and accurate terms**.
 - For instance, it suggests using **"woman" instead of "career woman,"** "street sexual harassment" instead of "eve teasing," and "rape" instead of "forcible rape."

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ALTERNATIVE TO STEREOTYPE-PROMOTING LANGUAGE

'ADULTERESS'

Woman who has engaged in sexual relations outside of marriage

'AFFAIR'

Relationship outside of marriage

'BASTARD' Non-marital child or, a child whose parents were not married

'BIOLOGICAL SEX' / 'BIOLOGICAL MALE' / 'BIOLOGICAL FEMALE'

Sex assigned at birth

'CARNAL INTERCOURSE'

Sexual intercourse

'CHILD PROSTITUTE'

Child who has been trafficked

'CONCUBINE' / 'KEEP'

Woman with whom a man has had romantic or sexual relations outside of marriage

'DUTIFUL WIFE' / 'FAITHFUL WIFE' / 'GOOD WIFE' / 'OBEDIENT WIFE'

Wife

'EVE TEASING'

Street sexual harassment

'HOUSEWIFE' Homemaker

'FEMININE HYGIENE PRODUCTS'

Menstrual products

'UNWED MOTHER' Mother

'VIOLATED'

(e.g. 'he violated her')

Sexually harassed / assaulted or raped

'MISTRESS' Woman with whom a man has had romantic or sexual relations outside of marriage

'PROSTITUTE' Sex worker

'PROVIDER' / 'BREADWINNER'

Employed or earning

'PROVOCATIVE CLOTHING / DRESS' Clothing / dress

'SEX CHANGE'

Sex reassignment or gender transition

'SPINSTER' Unmarried woman

▪ Objective:

- The handbook aims to promote **more equitable and unbiased language usage** in judicial discourse.
- The goal of the handbook is to encourage a **shift towards language that reflects a more modern and respectful understanding of gender** and promotes equal rights for all individuals, regardless of their gender.

Why is it Important for Judges to Use the Right Words?

- The handbook argues that the language a judge uses reflects not only their interpretation of the law, **but their perception of society as well.**
- Even when the use of stereotypes does not alter the outcome of a case, stereotypical language may **reinforce ideas contrary to our constitutional ethos.**
- Language is critical to the life of the law. Words are the **vehicle through which the values of the law are communicated.**
- Words transmit the ultimate intention of the lawmaker or the judge to the nation.

Have there been Similar Efforts in other Countries?

- There have been **projects in other countries**, pushed by both academia and practitioners, which hold up a mirror for the court's practices.
- For example, the **Women's Court of Canada**, a collective of female lawyers, academics and activists write "**shadow judgements**" on equality law.
- In India, the Indian **Feminist Judgement Project** also '**rewrites**' judgements with a feminist critique.

What is Gender Stereotyping?

▪ About:

- Gender stereotyping **refers to the practice of assigning specific attributes, characteristics, or roles to individuals based solely** on their gender.
- These stereotypes can be pervasive in **societies and can impact how people perceive and treat each other** based on their gender.
 - For example, women are **supposed to be nurturing and avoid dominance**, and men are supposed to be agentic and avoid weakness.

▪ Impacts of Gender Stereotyping on Women:

- Gender stereotypes act as a **barrier for girls to access quality education**.
 - For example, stereotypes about the role of women as confined to the **domestic and family sphere underpin** all obstacles to girls' equal access to quality education.
- Women are often **held back from high status positions** in society.
- The persistent gender gap in education, employment and wages is **due in part to gender stereotyping**.
- Harmful gender stereotypes, rigid constructions of femininity and **masculinity and stereotyped gender roles are a root cause** of gender-based violence against women.

PDF Reference URL: <https://www.drishtias.com/printpdf/sc-handbook-on-gender-stereotypes>

