

Abstract

Studies on technology and society in India neither throw enough light on the issue of the relation between gender and technology nor do they problematize the private sphere which in common parlance is considered to be the sphere of women. Keeping this lacuna in mind, the present paper explores how women use, domesticate and relate to computers in the private sphere. It throws light on ICT related behaviour of women. It explores the different uses to which women put computers at home. It finds out how and why women assign different gender identities to the computer. It also explores the kind of activities which women perform on the internet. This paper throws light on whether the so-called relation of women to computers at all creates any empowerment for women. It reveals an interesting phenomenon of how the computer is domesticated in the private sphere. It shows how differential use and access to computers by women at home can create stratification along lines of gender. In order to serve its purpose the paper depends on in-depth interviews and narratives of women in Kolkata who are educated, married but not in paid jobs, belonging by definition to a privileged section of the society. These women are neither academically nor professionally associated with this technology. The study shows that women share a relation with computers which is at the same time empowering as well as disempowering. Computers have only in a few cases brought about positive changes in their lives.

Keywords: *domestic sphere, home computer, gender stratification, gender identity.*