



Let the world be their oyster!

A cup of flour, 2 eggs, 3/4th of a cup of ground sugar, 200gms of butter, a teaspoonful of baking powder and a little milk is what goes into your favourite cake”, Mama Sharma was explaining to her 5-year-old son Amish. Amish's curiosity in what was cooking often took him to the kitchen and his mother was in the habit of sharing recipes and culinary tips with her little son.

Mrs Sharma had begun to notice her son's inclination towards cooking when he was just 3. He seemed to prefer fiddling with the pots and pans in the kitchen to playing with toy cars or the superheroes his cupboard was full of. More recently giving in to the little boy's pestering his mother had started letting him help in the kitchen. When a cake was being baked he would help his mother mix the ingredients, she would let him add a spoonful of sugar in the pudding mix, decorate the plate while serving – all under her watchful eye. Mr Sharma was not very happy with this, he had a son after all, and were boys not supposed to kick a ball or spin a bat on the field! But his wife would have none of it, her son was wanted to be a cook, and she would help him be one.



Stereotyping people is a foible almost all of us suffer from, and this is probably most stark when it comes to our children. The gender stereotyping begins as soon as a child is born, a boy means blue, a girl pink. A gift for a little girl is almost always a doll and for a boy a toy car, a fighter plane or a superhero. Watching a game on the telly is more a 'boy thing'. Dancing is for girls. Mom needs help in the kitchen – a girl's job of course, boys are not supposed to cry, fashion is for girls. . . and as our children grow up we often start making their career choices depending on their gender. Unknowingly or unthinkingly we push our children into preconceived boxes, without trying to understand their needs and desires.

'Freedom of choice' is a much bandied about phrase that has very little meaning in our lives with preset notions and boundaries. Yet complete freedom and happiness can only come from each individual's right to make a choice – to pick up the ladle not a cricket bat, put on football boots not dancing shoes, studying literature not science, be an army officer and not just marry one. The choices we allow our children to make without letting our prejudices cloud their personal likes and beliefs will ensure a future full of happiness and not regret for them. Breaking the stereotype now, when their minds are just beginning to learn to make choices will help them develop into unique individuals and not grow up to be just a brick in a wall.

Your child is unique and not blue. . . or pink. So shall we start?

