



ISSN 2581-9917

Maitreyi College (University of Delhi)

Internal Complaints Committee
(Against Sexual Harassment)

संवेदना

Half Yearly E-Magazine
2019
Volume - I | Issue-2

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Peer Reviewed E-Magazine 2019

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The views expressed in the write ups are those of the authors concerned.
The editors are not responsible for them.

Chairperson's Message

I am glad to know that Maitreyi College is excelling in various academic endeavors and it is a matter of pride that 'Samvedana' is being allocated ISSN number for the kind of quality publication that it has proved itself to be.



Varied themes of gender discrimination that the magazine addressed previously and addressing presently provide a spectrum of gender bias that is existent in the contemporary world. It should be noted that the two most common forms of harassment are Quid Pro Quo sexual harassment and hostile work environment. Institutions are responsible for developing ethics, values and proper behaviour on their premises. The way these values are promoted and developed has a major impact on the organizational culture. It is this cultural environment that prevents the occurrence of any form of harassment. I am glad that Maitreyi college not only advocates and nourishes such an environment and culture, but is also deliberating on the related issues and concepts through Samvedana.

While addressing the pertinent issues on all forms of harassment, I am sure the magazine would create a good platform for debates on Gender bias and establish its own place in the academic realm.

I congratulate the editorial team for their untiring efforts.

Balaganapathi Devarakonda
Professor & Head
Department of Philosophy
University of Delhi



Principal's Message

It has been rightly said; “The pen is mightier than the sword”, expression of thoughts has always been a very effective tool in creating awareness amongst masses. With the adequate support of technology, its impact can be manifold.



With pride, I state that the collaborative efforts of our editorial team of e-Magazine “Samvedna” has paved off its way in obtaining ISSN number for their sincere efforts!

The initiative undertaken by the team in invoking society by compiling the poignant experiences of our talented writers is commendable.

Their experiences are eye opener and may play a guiding role in shaping our society and making it a much better place to live in!

Dr. Haritma Chopra
Officiating Principal
Maitreyi College
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EDITOR'S NOTE

Our society is changing for the better, though at a slow pace. Women are defying gender bias, social dogma and set norms. It was difficult to imagine a woman as the defence minister or IG police or prisons till sometime back. Kalpana Chawla, Pratibha Patil, Sumitra Mahajan, Kiran Bedi, Kiran Majumdar, Sania Nehwal, M C Mary Kom, P V Sindhu, Lata Mangeshkar are some women who have made it to the top in recent times due to their sheer determination and strength of purpose. We have had women like Gargi, Maitreyi, Meera Bai, Anadibi Joshee, Janki Ammal, Kamala Sohinie, Ann Mani, Rageshwari Chaterjee, Darshan Ranganathan, Sarojini Naidu, Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit, Indira Gandhi....in our glorious past.



The paradox in our society is the mindset of men that still trivializes the achievements of women. It is a challenge in our times. Women, on their part, have started raising their voice through movements such as #MeToo after suffering atrocities for years. It is incredibly brave to speak up and face a probable situation that their plight then onwards will define them. Many of them actually have received threats and some lost their livelihood as they opened their mouth. But they are being heard; they are surviving this harsh situation. But it is also appalling that some women are using these initiatives to settle scores. It is unfortunate as one such allegation can destroy a man completely. His family, career, and reputation can just fall apart. It is, thus, correct to suggest that just as a man should be penalized if guilty of sexual harassment, the woman should also face the music if she is found to have framed a man to get even.

FEMINISM IS NOT ABOUT ONE UP(WO)MANSHIP, IT IS ABOUT EQUALITY.

Dr. Prachi Bagla
Chief Editor



Feedback on January issue

This is a wonderful step to provide great medium to make youngsters aware of aspects of society which are seldom talked about openly and to openly share their views on the same. Looking forward to further issues.

Dr. Purnima
Assistant Professor
 Department of Otorhinolaryngology and
 Head & Neck Surgery
 SMS Medical College
 Jaipur

Congratulations to the team. Most articles are on the socio-psychological aspects. Some suggestions that I feel I can make this magazine more relevant to the needs of the students:

1. The details of the ICC committee can be made available in the magazine along with simple and brief pointers on when and how one can approach the committee.
2. Emphasis on articles about the rights of women, various legal safeguards and other institutions (NGOs, Government institutions, etc.) that can be approached, specific cases can be discussed here.

Good to see the last article on the legal-regulatory framework against harassment in workplace, Vishakha guidelines.

Priyanka Singhal
Treasure, Governing Body
 Maitreyi College

Just read the articles here- such impressive work by young students. I was particularly taken by the piece on acid attacks.

Congratulations!

Meenakshi Ponnuswami
Associate Professor of English
 Bucknell University USA

I want to express my gratitude to you for sharing with me the first volume of Samvedna 2019. My congratulations to the Principal of Maitreyi college Dr. Haritma Chopra, editor of Samvedna, Dr. Prachi Bagla and her team on launching a gender sensitive magazine.. I enjoyed reading the articles and art works published in the magazine. It provides a forum to gender sensitive contributors, especially young scholars. The articles cover a wide range of issues- sexual harassment and discrimination, status of women in society, need to recognise the individuality of women, etc. I think perhaps if we consider some suggestions given below, the magazine can be more comprehensive :

1. The sensitisation concerns both women and men. Out of 15 pieces (essays, poems, etc.) published in Samvedna, only one is written by a man. It might perhaps give a broader perspective, if gender-sensitive articles written by both women and men are provided space in the magazine.
2. Most write-ups in the magazine depict vivid picture of status of women in the society. These, of course, seek to make readers sensitive to gender question. But if some articles, poems or art works are educative in the sense that they target misogyny and regressive values, it can serve better purpose.
3. The magazine can also provide a review section. In this section, gender -sensitive movies such as Kahani or Pink, or books can be reviewed or simply summarised.

Jagpal Singh
Professor of Political Science
 School of Social Sciences
 IGNOU

Nice magazine

Dr. Anoop Misra

Fantastic effort- 'Samvedna' a beautiful and apt name for the magazine.

Dr. Rajesh Saraf

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ENGLISH SECTION



A Crying Soul

She was as childish, as someone could be

But great in her thoughts

What if, she is no more

Do not blame her, but me

I was dumb and deaf, but not blind

I could not hear her screams, but can see her plight

I cannot speak, but can imagine, how was she before this took place

She was an innocent girl, naive of the cruelty of the world

Today, she is no more

It is not her who was raped and killed

It was me who died

It was not a woman who lost her life

But the soul of humanity

The humanity will never be in peace until

That soul is crying

She is crying

Zheer Ahmed

JNU



Against All Odds

Travel twenty kilometers away from any tourist destination, and you get a real flavor of rural India. Posh hotels and resorts, large and wonderfully decorated restaurants and manicured lawns suddenly transform into dirt roads where cows and dogs roam around freely, countless small shops, road side eating joints and tea stalls looking for customers. Everyone seems to be doing something, no matter how insignificant it may seem to the onlooker.

And then there are sights which make one smile and wonder at the same time. For example, seeing people washing clothes and taking bath in ponds along with buffalos always makes one wonder whether the net result from this undertaking is cleaning or further contamination! For me, most enjoyable is the sight of children in school dress waking in small groups. They look happy and disciplined. One wonders, how far is their school and what kind of education these children are getting?

While relaxing and refreshing, these countryside surroundings also evoke an uneasy feeling. Are these people getting their fair share of opportunities in education, knowledge, health care, entrepreneurship and wealth? In outskirts of Udaipur, I suddenly found myself asking these questions.

After enjoying a very old and extremely beautiful temple complex, we happened to come across several children roughly in age group of 8-13 years. They were playful, looked happy, slim and fit. Certainly, no worrisome issues of childhood obesity there! They all go to school and learn English, Math etc. We started to have an enjoyable conversation with them, challenging them with simple math problems etc. They did not shy away from us. Even though the majority of answers they gave us were incorrect, they tried hard and gave their best.



Among them was one little girl, who was taking the challenge just like Maharana Pratap stood against mighty Akbar. Both her parents do manual labor in nearby fields. They are uneducated and cannot read and write their names. Still, they elected to send their daughter to school, which I assume, is with the hope that her

daughter's life will be better than theirs. But will this dream be realized?



Meeting this little girl took me 30 years back in memory lane. I was a senior resident in Internal Medicine at All India Institute of Medical Sciences, New Delhi. I was in outpatient clinic working like a robot with a critical goal of finishing my clinic by 3 to 3.30 PM. There entered an elderly woman in mid seventies with a child no more than 12 to 13 years of age. Since it was not a pediatrics clinic, I was about to tell her that she is in a wrong clinic. Before I could say anything, she had a bout of productive cough. It was clear that she and not the child was the patient. The child took charge and informed me that her grandma has been sick for past 3-4 months. I will spare the details, but it became very clear to me that she has tuberculosis. I wrote for a miniature chest radiograph and tried to direct them to radiology department. The child told me that he will figure it out. He seemed confident.

Sure enough, he came back after an hour with the miniature chest radiograph. A presumptive diagnosis of tuberculosis was made. I wrote the standard anti-tubercular therapy starting with four drugs for two months and two drugs for an additional four months. All the drugs and instruction were obviously written in Queen's language. I told them to pick medication from pharmacy, start treatment and come back in a month. While explaining this to child, I suddenly asked my self- "really"?

Do I really expect a 12 year child to understand and make her grand mother take all these medications appropriately? So I did something unthinkable. I asked the child to go and pick the medications and come back and wait for me to finish my 200+ patient clinic. He did that. After finishing my last patient, I approached them to give proper instructions, with medications in hand.

I was flabbergasted.

Folks, he had already figured it all out. Just looking at my paper prescription and drugs names on the strip, he exactly knew the entire regimen. He figured it all out by matching the initial alphabets of the drugs (I=INH, R=Rifampin, P=Pyrazinamide, E=Ethambutol) on the prescription and the medication strips. Speechless, I wanted to know more about this child, who was obviously more intelligent than I ever was.

He came from a poor state in the eastern part of India. Both his parents were manual laborers. He was going to a local school. He knew his alphabets. When his grandmother became ill, there was no local help. His parents had to work every day to make ends meet. At this time, the child volunteered to take her to the premier medical institute of India, where the “good” doctors could provide world class care to 200 + sick fellows in a half day outpatient clinic. He travelled by train for more than 800 Km. He found his way from railway station to AIIMS by public transport (not in an AC car). Above all, he made it to my clinic without help of any benevolent soul who will cut through the red tape and get his sick grandmother to my clinic; of course for a “nominal” service charge.

After working in several top institutes in the United States and meeting some very accomplished people, I am still looking for a more intelligent and confident individual than this child was. But I wonder every now and then as to what happened to him. Could he pursue further education or did financial pressures pull him to do manual labor to add to the unjustifiably meager earnings of his parents? Is he a physician, CEO, engineer, teacher, scientist or an entrepreneur (hopefully, not a politician from that state), or is he still living the dream which will never become a reality?

After meeting this little girl, I cannot help thinking about her future on the same lines. How long will she pursue education? Equally important, will she find an institution that has means and expertise to educate her? Will financial pressures rob her of all her future and force her to work in fields or as an unappreciated and underpaid domestic worker?

Give her opportunities in education and she can be anything. If she succeeds, she could contribute more to society than those born with a silver spoon. Unfortunately, the odds are seriously against her and I fear that she may never realize her full potential without proper education and fair opportunities. On one hand she could live a life that every human on this planet deserves, and on other, she could spend all her life struggling to have basic human needs and with dreams that have no chance of becoming reality. Education is the only way for her to achieve her full potential. She does not need charity. She needs fair opportunities and a level playing field.

I have no question that the child I met 30 years ago had potential to go very high, if he was given fair opportunities. I feel the same about this little girl and all other children we met 20 km out of city limits of beautiful Udaipur.

Dr. Prasoan Jain MD
West Virginia, USA

Common Health Issues in Indian Women

Women's health is an important issue. Women play a pivotal role in the family, taking care of husband, children, and parents. Traditionally, Indian women have been assigned a disproportionate share of daily household chores. Even women gainfully employed full time outside the house are expected to be responsible for most, if not all daily needs of other family members. The physical and emotional burden resulting from this unfair division of labour is under-recognized and wilfully ignored. Research has clearly shown that poor maternal health is directly linked to poor child's health.

And yet, women's health is often ignored or given a lower priority than men's health. Some of this is due to long-standing traditions and social factors. It is a common knowledge that many people do not welcome baby girls with same enthusiasm as a baby boy. As uncomfortable as it sounds, the fact remains that in our society boys and men enjoy a higher status and are privileged. They get lion's share of family resources in terms of education and health care due to discriminatory cultural beliefs. Societal forces of patriarchy, hierarchy and multi generational families contribute to different gender roles in Indian society. A major change in mindset is needed in this context

Some factors directly affecting women's health especially among the poor are lack of education, poor hygiene, poor nutrition, and inadequate access to healthcare. And then, due to biological reasons, there are several health issues unique to women.

In India, we have an unhealthy desire to have boys in the family. The highly illegal and shameful practice of female foeticide is still prevalent and is one of the highest among developing countries in the world. With strict laws against prenatal sex determination, people go on increasing their family size till they have a desired numbers of boys. The end result is a large family that women are expected to take care of. That places further burden on health and well being of women. All of this conspires to perpetuate the vicious cycle of poor health and wilful neglect of women's health issues.

Some common health problems among women in India include:

- **Anaemia** : It is a condition in which haemoglobin level is low in the blood. This results in low oxygen carrying capacity of the blood as a result of which women feel weak, easily fatigued and listless. The problem can start in childhood as a result of poor nutrition and gets worse with the

- onset of menstruation at puberty due to periodic blood loss.
- **Malnutrition** : It is also a very common cause of poor health in Indian women. Poverty, lack of education, and social factors, as already enumerated, play a major role.
 - **Dysmenorrhea** [severe cramping pain during periods] and menorrhagia [overly profuse bleeding during periods] are commonly faced by young women during puberty.
 - **Vaginal infections** : Due to poverty and lack of education women are not able to take care of vaginal hygiene. Common symptoms include itching and swelling around vagina and discharge
 - **Problems in women** during pregnancy are many and include spontaneous or illegal abortions, premature labour and malnutrition. At child birth there could be postpartum haemorrhage which refers to excessive blood loss after childbirth that can be rapidly fatal.
 - **Maternal mortality** : India is among the countries with highest maternal mortality. There are four reasons for high maternal mortality in our country. First, prenatal care is not considered important in poor people. Second, skilled people are not available to conduct the deliveries especially in villages. Female doctors are far less than male doctors. Third, in emergent situations, timely help or assistance in not readily available and fourth, postnatal care is not properly offered after childbirth. The problem of poor maternal nutrition during and after the pregnancy is still at an epidemic level. There is no concept of maternity leave from house-hold chores. Issues like postpartum depression, negligence as a punishment for not delivering a male child remain important and under-appreciated problems among Indian women.
 - **HIV/AIDS/other sexually transmitted diseases** : Unprotected sex and with multiple partners can lead to transmission of HIV/AIDS or other sexually transmitted diseases. These are again common in poor women due to illiteracy, sexual abuse, domestic violence etc .Chances of contacting tuberculosis along with HIV are quite high. Though domestic violence is common in poor but even prevalent in urban and educated women, it is kept under the rug due to family pressure and concerns regarding stigma to growing children.
 - **Cancer** : Women can suffer from breast cancer, cancer of the mouth of the uterus [cervix], of the uterus, or the ovaries. Lack of awareness and late diagnosis hampers the chances

cure and prolonged survival. Genetic history can play a big role in individual risk assessment. Routine examinations including Pap smear screenings can help with early diagnosis and treatment of cervical cancer. Mammogram screenings should be performed at regular intervals for breast cancer. There are standard screening guidelines for early detection of breast and cervical cancer, which are very poorly followed in India.

- **Heart disease** : This is the leading cause of death in women. It was not recognised earlier as it is still believed that only males die of heart attack. Women with heart disease may present with atypical symptoms. Often, their complaints are simply ignored or are attributed to house hold fatigue.
- **Autoimmune disorders** : These are a group of diseases which produce antibodies in the body which destroy healthy body cells. An example is hypothyroidism where the patient gains weight, and feels fatigued, becomes more sensitivity to cold, and develops dry skin, puffiness of face, constipation etc. It is easily treated with lifelong treatment with thyroid hormone.
- **Mental stress and depression** : Domestic violence, feeling less important in the male dominant society, high demands

of household chores, pressure at work place in working women are some of the contributing causes.

Problems at menopause include:

- **Dysfunctional uterine bleeding** : where there is bleeding after regular menstruation has stopped. It must be immediately attended to, since it may be a sign of underlying uterine cancer.
- **Osteoporosis** is another under-recognised problem that causes weakening of bones. Inadequate absorption of calcium and vitamin D deficiency increase the risk of post-menopausal osteoporosis. It is not a trivial issue as it can lead to fractures with minimal or no trauma.

Certain issues are more prevalent in urban women such as

- **Diabetes** : The incidence of diabetes among women living in urban areas is much higher than among women living in countryside. Type II diabetes is a disease of affluence directly related to obesity and insulin resistance. If not controlled, it can lead to complications like premature death due to silent heart attacks, kidney damage, blindness. Long standing diabetes can also cause peripheral neuropathy where there is pain and loss of sensation starting at the feet. Non healing foot wounds can occur in diabetics which can lead to

life- and limb threatening infections, sometimes needing amputation. Diabetes can also run in families so those with a family history should be particularly vigilant. It can be prevented to some extent with healthy diet and regular exercise, but if elevated blood sugar is found medications may also be needed.

- **Obesity** : The incidence of obesity is increasing which is due to sedentary life style, fast food, and lack of exercise. Obesity can lead to diseases like diabetes and hypertension both of which can then lead to heart disease. Sometimes drastic measures such as bariatric or weight loss surgery may be required.

Some health issues are more prevalent among women living in rural areas than those living in urban areas. Perhaps the most important and under-recognised is chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD). While smoking is the most

important underlying cause among males, the main reason for development of COPD among women living in rural areas is cooking using biomass fuel. Long term smoke exposure from burning biomass fuel in closed spaces can have permanent damaging effect on lungs. The victims develop chronic cough, sputum, breathlessness and wheezing.

At the end I want to say that we should remember the slogan Healthy Women, Healthy Nation. But slogans alone will not get the work done. It is time to get serious about it. The important issue of inadequate attention women's health needs to be acknowledged and something needs to be done about it. Well thought out and properly executed women's health initiatives can have positive impact on women and their whole family including future generations. Proper education and awareness about potential health issues can go a long way towards securing the health of our nation.

Dr. Pramila Bhalla

*Seniour Consultant , HIMR
Jamia Hamdard, New Delhi*

Dr. Usha Das, MD



Fairer Sex : Still Not Treated Fairly?

It has been 72 years since India got its independence from the British rule, yet we're still not truly free. Certain sections of the society, even in the metropolitan cities, is still under the clutches of some age-old customs, conventional and customary thinking. One typical example is discrimination on the basis of gender. In India irrespective of caste, creed, religion and social status, the overall status of a woman is lower than men. Right from the time a woman is pregnant instead of wishing her that she has a healthy baby, people wish her 'ladka hi hoga'. If she gives birth to a baby girl the woman is told 'koi baat nahi', 'Agli baar ladka ho jayega'. A male child is preferred over a female child. A male child is considered a blessing and his birth is celebrated as opposed to a female child where her birth is not celebrated and is considered more of a burden. Female child is considered 'parayadhan' meaning that girl will get married and move to a new family/household whereas the male child will continue the family's name and legacy. Instead of rejoicing the birth of healthy baby girl people are obsessed with having a male baby. This obsession sometimes even forces people to resort to illegal ways to determine sex before birth and abort the female fetus. Government of India banned prenatal sex determination in 1994, under the Pre-conception and Prenatal Diagnostic Techniques (Prohibition of Sex Selection) Act. In spite of these efforts the sex ratio is still skewed as according to 2011 census there are 940 females for every 1000 males. This discrimination does not end here. Typically in rural and backward pockets of our country, despite a variety of efforts at various levels, many girl children are denied the basic rights of education as they are confined to home and not sent to school. And sometimes when the educational opportunities are restricted/limited in small towns, girls are not allowed to leave their hometown and move to big cities for higher education. On the other hand boys/men have no restrictions. They have all the liberty to do whatever they want. When it comes to getting married parents are in a hurry to get their girls married without even waiting for the girl to attain minimum age legally allowed for marriage, because they believe

that the only major role of women in society is to get married, take care of husband, in-laws and bear children. At the time of marriage the girl's family is considered lower in position and they have to give dowry as well as the girl to the guy's family. Sometimes after getting married women are not allowed to continue their jobs, are confined to homes, have no say and all the decisions are taken by the husband/males in the household. Even if women make foray into careers they still have to face gender discrimination at work place especially in male dominated settings. This type of discrimination often leads to low self-esteem and lack of confidence which can sow the seeds for stress-related psychiatric illnesses like depression and anxiety. Unequal treatment makes a woman feel dejected and demoralized. Sometimes she even has to face sexual harassment. The recent #MeToo movement has shed light on this issue. To sum up, women are at receiving end even though they may be super talented and highly

qualified or even better compared to their male counterparts.

I strongly believe that time has come that we rise - rise against the age-old customs and traditions that pull women back. Poverty, illiteracy, patriarchal set up in society - some of the factors leading to discrimination - need to be targeted. Women should be educated and made aware of their basic rights and capabilities. Women should be encouraged to be financially independent. Women empowerment can lead to a radical change. And to bring about this change a concerted effort is needed. Education, I believe, is the key to bring about a paradigm shift in our society.

Women, when provided with right opportunities, have made their mark in every field be it sports, education, medicine, politics, fashion industry, military, etc. This draws our attention to the fact that women have incredible potential, which if tapped well, can lead to immense progress and development of a society.

Dr. Aparna Das
University of Arkansas
USA



Domestic Help in India: A Struggle for Survival

Abstract

Domestic help in modern household is indispensable. With the premise that part time female domestic help, called maid, lead a difficult life, the current study undertook a primary study based on sixty subjects to discern three aspects of their life viz. economic survival, social survival, and their working life. The sample was a convenience sample with females in the age group 18-65 years working part time involved in household chores like cleaning, washing, cooking, etc. The results are based on simple analysis of percentages.

Domestic Help Scenario in India

In the modern times, women are taking up employment outside home and hence are not able to perform household chores on their own because of paucity of time. The domestic help, full time or part time, is hired for performing household activities and are paid for their services.

Demand for domestic helpers or maids, is increasing significantly day by day. They have become a necessity. If the maid does not come for work, floors don't get mopped, dishes pile up.

These domestic workers belong to the informal sector and are often subject to human rights abuses with respect to their working conditions. They work for long hours, with little pay and no social security. Domestic help has evolved as a regular feature, poorly regulated in India. In contrast most of the developed countries are capital oriented (not labour oriented) as a result of which situation is different there.

Topic

Our study mainly revolves around the

struggles of domestic workers in India viz economic survival, social survival and relations at their workplace. Rationale of the topic selected (in terms of the three aspects) is as follows:

1) **Economic Survival** : Women domestic workers face several problems in their personal and occupational life. They work for long hours and are poorly paid. They don't have job security. Some of them work in more than 3 houses and they become sick. Their houses are very small and they have to live in poor surroundings with a risk of being more vulnerable to diseases. Most of the domestic workers are barely of legal working age and their wages are less than the minimum fixed by the government. Neither the Maternity Benefits Act nor the Minimum Wages Act or any other labour laws apply to domestic work.

2) **Social Survival** : In Delhi, a domestic worker revealed that she ties her two children to a cot while she is working in the homes of others because there is no one to watch over them and nowhere to take them, and no other way to ensure that they remain safe when alone at home. The resolution of a work-life imbalance for some leads to serious work-life deficits for others, and an overall reinforcement of a gendered division of labour in society.

Women Domestic workers have health problems like respiratory disease, bodyache and skin disease, due to their occupational life. Their family life is marked by family conflicts, poverty and debts. Most of the women face harassment at home by their husbands and other family members, and more than half of the cases are not even

reported. Most face domestic violence at the hands of abusive, alcoholic husbands.

3) Relations at Workplace : Domestic workers can be hired and fired at will. The employer has no legally binding obligations. If they take leave even for genuine reasons, they may lose their job. Some domestic workers do not get any rest during the day while others may not be given proper food or living space. Apart from facing routine, structural exploitation in the form of low wages, heavy workloads, and long hours, domestic workers face graver dangers, as is evident from cases of employers confining and assaulting them coming to light with frightening regularity. They are constantly vulnerable to verbal, physical and sexual harassment and have nowhere to turn to complain of ill treatment. Part-time workers are unable to leave positions in which they are harassed due to a constant fear of eviction from their houses in slums or on the pavements and the need to support their families.

Scope

Our study is based on women domestic workers:

- Who are more than 18 years' old
- Who work part-time in 1 or more houses
- Who are hired independently and not through agencies

Methodology

The sample size of our study is 60 subjects who are female domestic workers.

The study uses primary data collected through questionnaires. The answers are based on personal interviews with the domestic workers. We asked relevant questions to the workers based on their economic and social situations and relations at workplace. We used multiple

choice questionnaires; it offered the respondents a reasonable range of answers to choose from.

Personal visits to the places where the subject works helped to give an insight to the intricacies of their lives.

Limitations of the Study

We had to use convenience sampling in our study, i.e., the subjects were selected because of their convenient accessibility and proximity. In some questions the respondents were reluctant to answer because they wanted to protect themselves of discomfiture or embarrassment.

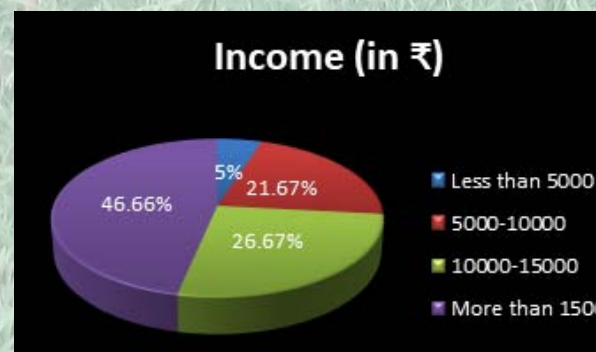
Like when we asked them about the drinking and smoking habits of their spouse/ other family members, they were not ready to give us that piece of information. Also when we asked them about their interpersonal relations, i.e., if their family members harassed them physically or mentally, we didn't get the expected response. Only few of them admitted that they were being physically tortured by their husbands/ other family members. These were the problems we faced in our study.

Data Analysis

Sixty subjects were contacted in our study, the questions from the questionnaire were asked to them and the results are presented hereby.

ECONOMIC SURVIVAL

Total Family Income



We asked the respondents their total family income from all sources

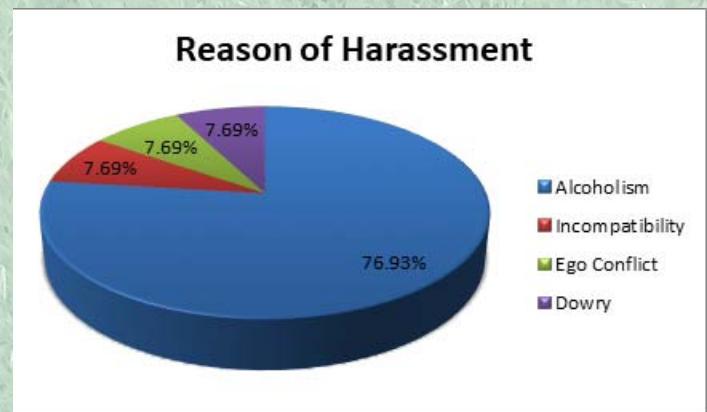
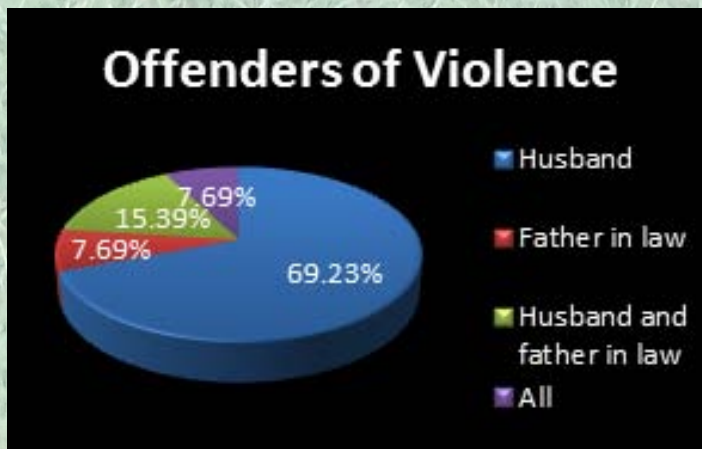
As mostly the woman in a family works as a domestic helper and the male member also earns, therefore, as the data is showing around 47% of the families are earning more than ₹15000 but they have many mouths to feed.

SOCIAL SURVIVAL

Habits of spouse/other members of family

Drinking, smoking and chewing of pan masala, gutka, etc. have ill effects on the body.

Women choose this work as a last resort in many cases and earn money even then 43% of the respondents' spouses waste money on drinking and 33% of respondents' spouses even smoke.



RELATIONS AT WORKPLACE

Number of hours worked per day

For part time jobs the average is four hours per day of work as per the norms. While only 3% of the respondents work for 3-4 hours per day, around 97% of the domestic helpers overwork.

No. of hours	Count	Percentage (%)
3-4 Hours	2	3.33%
5-6 Hours	32	53.33%
7-8 Hours	26	43.34%
Total	60	100

Work Exploitation

We asked them if they faced exploitation at their workplace and if they did what kind of exploitation they faced. We found that 10 out of 60 respondents have faced exploitation at work, i.e., approximately 16% of the workers. Most of them have faced exploitation in the form of overwork being forced by the employer. They work more than they are paid for.

Nature	Count	Percentage (%)
Overwork	6	60%
Salary Cut	1	10%
Sick leave	1	10%
Salary cut and Overwork	2	20%
Total	10	100

Action Taken

We inquired about the action they took against the exploitation.

It was found that majority of the respondents who faced exploitation at work tolerated it and took no action against the employer.

Action Taken	Count	Percentage (%)
Tolerate	8	80%
Leave job	2	20%
Total	10	100

Pictures

Pictures of a domestic worker's habitation



Findings and Suggestions

The conclusions and suggestions based on our data analysis are as follows:

Findings

Economic Survival

Domestic helpers are found to be economically lagging behind.

According to our analysis, more than 45% have income of more than 15000 a month, but have a large number of family members too. More than 50% have a single room to live with their families with no separate kitchen and bathroom. We have also found a case where 7 people share the same room. They are unable to save money for future. Most of them do not have a bank account. Only 53% of them save money for the future. Money earned by them is not sufficient to fulfil their nutritional needs. The data shows that 49 out of 60 of them cook vegetables every day. 16% of them do not consume fruits at all. However, most of them drink milk 5-7 days in a week.

Social Survival

According to our data analysis, Social Survival of domestic workers revealed surprising facts.

More than 50% of the respondents said that their family members do not drink, smoke, and consume pan masala, gutka etc. And to earn their bread, most of the female domestic workers are engaged in cleaning floors and washing utensils and work for 5-6 hours a day while some work even for 7-8 hours.

Moving on to Social security and survival of their children, 8 out of 60 respondents said that their children are maltreated and 75% of them are victims of verbal abuse. Furthermore, 13 out of 60 respondents disclosed the fact that they are being

harassed by their family members. Overall conclusion drawn from analysis above shows that domestic servants are leading an unbalanced social life. On many aspects we doubt the responses as many of them were reluctant to respond and apparently they were not disclosing the truth.

According to our analysis, more than 45% of female domestic workers are facing physical violence while more than 35% of them are facing both physical and verbal abuse by their better half. The prime reason for such harassment came out to be Alcoholism. Other reasons are ego conflict and incompatibility. And astonishing fact is 7 out of 13 respondent families know about the harassment but only 3 of them get help from their family, remaining are helpless.

Relations at workplace

According to our data analysis, most of the respondents work 7-8 hours a day and take four to five days of leave per month. They work very hard to earn their living.

Working in the unregulated domain of a private home, mostly without the protection of national labour legislation, allows for female domestic workers to be maltreated by their employers by impunity. Women are often subjected to long working hours and excessively arduous tasks. The domestic workforce is excluded from labour laws that look after important employment related issues such as conditions of work, wages, social security and maternity leave.

We also found out that over 16% of the respondents have faced trouble of some kind at their work, be it overwork or salary cut. And they didn't report it, but kept tolerating it because they can't afford to lose their job. Out of the 10 respondents who faced exploitation at their workplace, only 2 of them dared to leave their job

because they didn't like the environment they were working in. But fortunately, none of the respondents faced any physical harassment at their workplace.

Suggestions

- It is suggested that women domestic workers be made beneficiaries of adult/continuing education. This will empower them and make them better prepared to face challenges of life.
- The wages that most of them earn are less than minimum wages and woefully inadequate to meet daily needs, let alone plan for savings. It must be ensured that they get extra remuneration for extra work done.
- Workers what so ever. They must be brought under the cover of all social security measures that are extended to workers employed in the unorganized sector.
- A considerable number of respondents reported that they did not feel respected

at work. Domestic workers should not be referred to as servants. The work done by domestic workers must be accorded dignity and respectability.

- Measures should be taken to prevent verbal/ physical/ sexual abuse at the workplace. A local level board should be set up to receive, examine and resolve complaints related to harassment. Employers must be made aware of the importance of developing and maintaining healthy employee - employer relations.

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The work embodied in this research titled Domestic help in India: A struggle for survival is a bonafide and original work by following students of Maitreyi College :

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Age : Just a Number!!



On January 20th, 2017, D N underwent p a c e m a k e r implantation for complete heart block at the age of 96 years. I have seen her at the office every 6 months since then. At 98 years of age, she is presently among my oldest patient, though my all time record is implantation of a pacemaker in a 102 year old patient, who lived for 4 more years!

D N lives independently in her own apartment, does her own grocery shopping, cooking, cleaning, controls her finances, and drives to her activities, thus retaining complete independence. This is unusual even in United States, where a significant proportion of aging population retains independence well into their 80s. In an effort to find clues, I talked to her recently, and following is the summary of my discussion with her.

D N was born outside the city of Albany, New York in the countryside. Her father was a violinist, and lived to age 79. Mother lived to age 86 years. Her brother lived to age 96 years. She had one friend in her neighborhood with whom she spent time. She remembers that her school was directly across the street from her house. She went to business school, worked at Red Cross for 5 years, then got married to a Canadian. She moved to Chicago,

Mississippi, but has lived in Pennsylvania for 55 years. She was married for 63 years, had 4 children, and describes her marriage as “very good”. In fact, she stays in contact with her nieces and nephews in Canada, whom she visits often.

D N described her routine as follows. She wakes up at 530 A.M. She buys groceries early in the morning to avoid crowds. She cooks her own meals, and her diet mostly consists of salads, chicken and fish, sweet potatoes; she puts butter on everything. She drinks wine daily in moderation with her meals. Her meals are small, and she avoids sweets and sugar. She moves around a lot, doing her housework, walks, does her own shopping, and exercises daily on a treadmill. She played card games with her family all her life, and now plays bridge and pinnacle regularly with her group of friends. Her memory is crystal clear. The only thing she said she does not do is cleaning her windows! She does not take any naps, sleeps at 10.30-11.00 PM, and has no problem sleeping.

Upon asked the secret of her good health, she offers no additional clues, other than to say that she does not get upset easily about anything, especially if she can do nothing about the issue. She does not tell people what to do, and does not like to be told what to do.

Most likely D N has good genes. Her lifestyle, however, may shed some light on the excellent quality of life she enjoys at 98 years of age! Many of my own patients tell me that age is only a number-they enjoy excellent quality of life despite health issues and many adversities.

Dr. Praveer Jain
Cardiologist
 Pennsylvania USA

DREAMS

'I want to be a fighter pilot when I grow up. ' Said a five year old girl.

All that she wanted was to hear a word of appreciation. But in the sea of laughter that followed, she heard none. But that was 30 years ago - the first time when she had shared her dream. But that wasn't the last time she would hear the tone of discomfort and apprehension in people's voices. She went on hearing people say

'How can a girl be a fighter pilot? '

'Can girls be good at physics? You should take up humanities child.'

'Who will marry you?'

'Sorry, we don't take women for these kind of positions.'

And then her time came. The time when she would step on the jet she had always admired in movies. One women among hundreds of men. Her jet was among the firsts to take off. She let it roar past the border into no man's land and into the enemy's sky. She did was she was meant to do. Never in her life she let herself bend according to other's rules.

She wanted to live among the clouds and that's exactly what she did.

Arpita Mary Abraham

Jesus and Mary college

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Gender Equality In India : A Viewpoint

An overview. The Global Gender Gap Index is an index designed to measure gender equality. It considers the state of gender discrimination in 144 emerging economies. India has for the last two years been positioned at 108 amongst 144 countries. Gender inequality and gender discrimination are a universal phenomenon and United Nations and all nations in the world are seized with this problem and many a remedial measures, acts, laws have been enacted world over which has lessened this menace but there is yet much to be done before its completely eradicated.

India : In India, female child has been, since antiquity, been viewed as a burden to the family she has been born into. This is primarily due the physical insecurity women face all over India and heinous crimes on women are a common day occurrence. Down the ages, chastity of a woman has been considered as the honour of a family in Indian society. Lack of security to common masses has been the story of India and security of chastity of a girl child, especially ones who have attained puberty, till her marriage at her parental home and after her marriage at her husband's home, has evolved many an Indian customs which were and are being followed even today. These have stymied the true potential of this section of population and they are yet to become able contributors in the making of modern India.

Evolving Modern Indian Society. The

girl child, a victim of child marriage, dowry, unequal nutrition vis a vis her male siblings and unequal education opportunities, have yet managed to break many a shackles of archaic traditions and customs, aided by state policies against gender discrimination and spread of literacy in the country. But modernization has its cons and one such con has been the advent of dish TV in the 1980s and now direct to home broadcasts of Indian electronic media. The exposure of the Indian males used to seeing his family womenfolk covered from head to toe and in veil, to skimpily clad women and Baba Sehgal music, has warped their sense of reasoning and this has led to increasing commoditization of women in Indian society which gravely threatens the security of working women.

Population Bomb : As India steps into 2020, over 50 percent of the Indian population will have an average age of 29 years. The majority of this population, seeking gainful employment may lose out due to lack of qualification, automation in this era of Artificial Intelligence. The male coefficient of this unemployed work force has already started grumbling loss of jobs to their women counterparts. This coupled with the gender imbalance due to rampant unchecked female foeticide, despite rise in literary standards, of average gender ratio of population to 925 female to every 1000 males will make finding a bride difficult for them, adding to their frustration, leading to rise in crime against women and gender discrimination/exploitation.

Much has been written on the gender inequality/discrimination in India, its causes rooted in the patriarchal society preferring sons over daughters, the menace of dowry, the inequalities in education and nutrition of girl child as she is treated as dead investment as ultimately she will be married off, child marriages and of the plethora of laws enacted by State and Central governments to uplift the girl child, much of which are flouted openly as the religions and the society at large turns a blind eye to their implementation. All these causes of discrimination has created namely restricting the opportunities of education and nutrition for the girl child, the ramifications of which can be seen in the economic inequalities namely lack of job opportunities, inferior pay packages and exploitation, lack of access to bank loans and lack of encouragement for entrepreneurship. This has led to minimal representation of women in core manufacturing industries, infrastructure development, teaching, scientific and military professions. Notwithstanding all the pitfalls of the society in relation to development of girl child, this year's CBSE results have seen two Girls jointly topping the examination and the pass percentage of girls being 88.7 vis a vis 79.4 of the boys, which augurs well for the country. In the workforce, the sincerity, dedication and intelligence of the female workers are making them preferred candidates for employment but women make a paltry 25 % of the workforce out of which a whopping 97 % is in the informal sector. If this figure increases by 10 percent then over the next seven years the value addition will be to the tune of \$770 billion.

Even when this paltry workforce steps out of the protected domains of their homes, they face discrimination, the causes and remedies of which have been briefly outlined in the following paragraphs.

Work : Home conflict. The Indian male, the preferred child of Indian society carries his superior status in his marital agreement too, even if his wife is a working professional. He expects her to be home in time and even after a hard day at work, fulfill all her obligations as a Indian wife, i.e from cooking to cleaning to teaching children to taking care of in laws and the list is rather infinite. This is creating a conflict situation and increase in domestic violence wherein again the wife is at the receiving end. Ultimately many such able female workers either drop out of employment or prefer not to get promoted, to strike a healthy balance between professional and family life (sic!).

Parental Care : Gender norms universally prefer mother to be the care giver to the children. For a professional woman this would, after the end of her maternity leave mean the end of her career. To prevent this, there is a requirement for the males to avail not only their right of paternity leave but to also ably contribute to bringing up the children, sharing the load equally with his wife. In India, this is easier said than done though increasingly husbands are contributing but the mother still remains the primary care giver. To prevent parental care from affecting either the work or the children, the State must provide high quality low cost child care which will be an incentive to the mothers/ either of the parents to take a sabbatical

from work , without being worried about finances. In addition, the employers too can offer “flexible work times” to the parents and the “work from home” option. Employers too can offer “shorter working hours”. All these initiatives will help retain skilled manpower in the industry and the productivity of the nation will gain.

Earn Well to Defeat the ills of Gender Inequality. Empirical evidence suggests that women in workforce who are well paid are often considered superior to their male counterparts earning inferior pay packets. This enable s the women to not only lead the men which is kind of unheard of in a traditional society like India but it also enables her to break the shackles of many a taboo which stymie the growth of women in India . More often than not , due to the present level of gender discrimination in the society , a superior woman maybe perceived as a threat by the Indian male and this may lead to conflict situation for the women , in a male dominated traditional society. The society often wins such conflicts unless the education of the children addresses gender equality and the society too changes.

Is Marriage an Institution of Inequality? In India marriage is the medium of transferring status, wealth and property from generation to generation. But this institution also comes with strongly prescribed gender roles. Women’s personal and civil rights and access to financial resources are strictly controlled in marriages. Regardless of the economic status of the family, women and their labour was considered the property of her husband. This however has undergone

a sea change in India, thanks to the spread of education and formulation of laws to protect the gender equality. Recently Supreme Court struck down the the archaic law of “Adultery” which defined only women as the culprit . The Honourable Supreme Court categorically upheld gender equality and stated that “married women are not Chattel of their husbands”. For a married working couple in India, the emphasis on understanding and practicing Gender Equality is a key to the not only the success of the marriage but also of their career. This requires a mindset change in the society to which education is the key.

Remedies for Gender Equality at Workplace. Some remedies to correct gender inequality in the workplace are suggested below:

- **Gender Pay Parity :** This will ensure equal pay for men and women doing same job and help men recognize women as their equals.
- **Gender Balanced Leadership :** In the workforce, as a policy ,the proportion of women leaders should be equal to the percentage of the women workforce in the lower rungs. This will ensure a healthy environment and also encourage the junior rungs to aspire, knowing the system to be equal towards all.
- **Gender Balance Across Disciplines :** In any industry, as per policy (desirable) the work force in all sub discipline of that industry must be balanced including in those which are considered male bastions. This will give a huge boost to

Gender Equality and instill confidence in the women work force and women in general in this patriarchy dominated society.

- **Gender Neutral Assessment :** Often in India while assessing, the female worker is discriminated as it is thought that a good assessment will make her eligible for promotions and posts of leadership considered male domains. And that after promotion, the women may not be available due to confinement during maternity leave or other commitments as found in traditional Indian households. This mind set needs to change and a system put in place where the assessors are sensitized about the need to assess without gender discrimination into which they have been ingrained since childhood .
- **Equal Workforce Participation :** A concept utopian in today's India as the present gender inequality deprives larger portion of the women from joining the labour force in equal numbers as men .This needs to be remedied post haste by ensuring equal opportunities to all children in all spheres during their development years .This will pay huge dividends to the nation.
- **Equal Share of Domestic Responsibilities :** State and the Industries must put in place provisions which ensure that the men

and women work force contribute equally in discharge of their domestic responsibilities. Provisions such as maternity leave, parenthood leave to men, which ensure that motherhood doesn't affect career and that career doesn't affect parenthood. In addition, flexible work hours, work from home provision, shorter work hours and vacations during children's school holidays are a few suggestions which may help ease the domestic front of their workers and a happy worker is always a productive worker.

In Conclusion : Our evolutionary past inclines males to dominate females and females to be deferential. But we shouldn't be slaves of history. The need of the hour is to evolve a system of fairness and justness in the society by ensuring gender equality and putting in place an education system which sensitise the ills of gender inequality and extols the virtues of Gender Equality and the pressing need to adopt measures to ensure gender equality. Children, so sensitized, will break the shackles of traditions and taboos which are the root cause of gender discrimination and ensure an India where the tenet of equality engraved in our constitution is practiced to its letter and spirit. This will pay enormous social and economical dividends for our Nation and we will march into modernity of scientific world , in all its glory, with heads held high.

Col. Rabindra Nath Ghosh Dastidar



Egalitarianism- A Ladder That Only Goes Down

“Gender equality is more than a goal in itself. It is a precondition for meeting the challenge of reducing poverty, promoting sustainable development and building good governance.”¹

Kofi Annan has rightly highlighted the importance of gender equality in his statement, mentioned above. Every society where an individual loses opportunities on the basis of his or her gender, is a prey of gender discrimination. Gender discrimination has existed in our society and has been feeding on roots of progress and growth making it impossible for us to be at par with the gender equal societies. It is mostly the females who face discrimination on the basis of gender. Patriarchy is a worldwide phenomenon and women across the globe have been fighting for decades for their rights and equal opportunities.

The discrimination against females begin even before their birth and is continued throughout their lives. There are several cases of female feticide due to sex determination , and those of them who do make it to this world are mistreated and face discrimination throughout their lives. As a result of

discrimination, the feminine gender is denied of the basic necessities like proper nutritious food, education and health care, this is only the tip of the iceberg that gender discrimination is. The women who fight against the system and are successful in attaining proper education while maintaining a healthy lifestyle have to survive in an environment that strongly perceives men to be better and more capable than their female counterparts. They have to fight the notion that women do not have the caliber and intelligence to take up managerial positions or high profile jobs.

Gender discrimination gives rise to a number of problems, imbalance in sex ratio being the major one. Lack of education among the women which is a result of the gender based discrimination is a very crucial issue and needs to be addressed. Education is an important tool, is the key to the growth of human. And no matter what gender a person is, he/she has right to education. There are many empirical evidences that, increase in female education improves human development outcomes such as child survival, health and schooling whereas lower female education had a negative impact on economic growth

¹ <http://word.world-citizenship.org/wp-archive/1672;www.bustle.com>

as it lowers the average level of human capital. Such kind of imbalance in the education largely affects the economy as education is directly related to economy. A large section of uneducated and unskilled population results in the downfall of the economy since this huge section of population is dependent on others' income for their own survival. Another economic impact of gender discrimination is unequal wages among male and female. The wages of women is much lower than men's despite the same level of position, their chances to get a job is also comparatively lesser.

To quote Qingrong Ma "The only way to solve the problem of women's subordination is to change people's mindset and to plant the new idea of gender equality into every mind." With the change in times there has been an evident change in people's mindsets regarding the position of women in the society. The governments across the world, including the Government of India, has taken several steps to prevent discrimination on the basis of gender and to secure the rights of

women. Hindu Succession Act (1956), Dowry Prohibition Act (1961), The DC and PNDT Act (2002) are some of the initiatives taken by the Government of India to secure the rights of women in our country. The government has also launched various schemes, such as 'Beti Padhao Beti Bachao', 'Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidhyalay' and 'Indira Gandhi Mitrivita Sahyog Yojna', in order to lessen the gender based discrimination. Several non-governmental organizations, such as Equality Now and ProMundo, have also been working to fight the evil of gender discrimination.

It will be safe to say that we are living in a world where a great section of the population has accepted women to be at par with the men. This acceptance is a result of the struggle which went on for decades and yet there exists a section of people who are still walking on the path of gender discrimination. For a better tomorrow we will have to put efforts in attaining a society free of gender bias.

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Phoenix Wings

It all started with a fairy tale wedding. Dressed in a beige lehenga I took the seven steps with hopes of a happily ever after life in my heart. Little did I know that my heart was going to be broken into a million pieces crushing my spirit and changing me forever.

Why is it that a woman dreams of her son's wedding from the moment he is born, but the moment her son gets married, she starts seeing her daughter in law as her enemy who is out to steal her son? Troubles started in my supposed paradise soon after honeymoon as nothing I did was good enough for my mother in law and pushed by her, my husband too started finding faults with everything I did. This constant criticism took a toll on our relationship but before I could decide on anything I found that I was pregnant. I hoped that maybe the child would bring some happiness but the moment which was supposed to bring joy only brought tension in my world. While both my mother in law and husband wanted a heir, they were furious at the increased expenses of doctor's visits, medicines and even food. Pretty soon both of them started throwing hints that they only want a male child and craftily kept wondering aloud if my gynaecologist would tell me the sex of the child despite knowing that this is illegal. But when I kept ignoring all their hints my husband suddenly announced one day that he is going for an on-site project to London for a year and that he is leaving next week itself. I was in my last trimester of pregnancy and this announcement hurt big time. I couldn't understand how a father can stay without even looking at

his child for a year.

I wasn't even allowed to bid him goodbye as that right was exclusively of his mother. It would be shameless of me to even try to hold his hand with her around. And so without a word to me, he left. Though I had a nasty feeling in my heart, I didn't know for sure that this would be last we would ever meet. He didn't call for a month and would pick my call only once in a fortnight. I still could not figure out what did I do to get this kind of treatment. A couple of months passed and I was blessed with a beautiful angel - my daughter. Seeing her tiny little hands and feet made me forget all my pain. But more heartache was about to come. For 4 days after the daughter's both, my husband didn't even call me and when I managed to call him despite being in so much pain, he had the audacity to ask me how I could be happy on the birth of a girl child.

I was shattered and confused. On one hand were people telling me that a child deserves both parents and I have no right to deny her one parent's love just because I can't get along with my husband, but on the other hand I didn't want to make my daughter a burden on a man who didn't want her. How could I be sure that my daughter would get the love of a father who wasn't even happy on her birth? Wouldn't it be worse for her to be raised in an environment of such hatred and no love? People around me told me how many problems my daughter will have to face without a father in her life, but I wondered if it would really be a good idea to have just a namesake father or for my daughter

to constantly feel unloved in a place which is supposed to be her home?

My confusion was sorted out by my husband himself when he barged into my parents' home one Sunday only to character assassinate me in front of my neighbours. He thought doing this would kill our reputation in society and force us to probably even leave the city quietly and he would get freedom from me easily. Little did he know that my neighbours were already wondering what kind of man wouldn't visit his new born daughter for six months. And by trying to character assassinate me, he convinced my neighbours of his own cheap mentality. They all stood by me and some even convinced my father that your daughter doesn't deserve such a man and his family. The divorce decision became so much easier with my neighbours' support.

I can't thank my neighbours enough for not just standing by me at that time but also by not isolating me by treating me as a stigma like in numerous Bollywood movies. In fact I was encouraged to take part in every social function and was repeatedly told that I shouldn't isolate myself and should move on in my life for my daughter's sake. I was constantly assured that whatever happened wasn't my fault and so I shouldn't punish myself at all. I started rebuilding my life with my daughter and parents. Took up a part time job to engage my mind and devoted myself towards raising my daughter. She grew up as an adorable and intelligent kid and soon I was about to face another worry.

How to convince the schools to admit daughter of a single mother? But here a friend gave me advice which I follow

till date. She told me if you let others judge you then they will find all sorts of weaknesses in you and never respect you. But if you accept yourself for what you are completely and face world with your head held high, they will be forced to see your strengths and admire you. "Jhukti hai duniya, jhukane wala Chaihiye" the phrase never seemed truer. I approached the school authorities with full confidence and on learning that I am so confident and bold despite being a single mother, they only had words of admiration for me and my daughter managed to get admission easily. Since then her performance at school has proven to the world that a single mother can raise her child just as well as a regular dual parent family. She did face a class bully once who despite knowing that she doesn't have a father wouldn't stop harrasing her asking about her father. But instead of silently crying with my daughter or feeding her any lies, I straight away approached the school teachers as well as the Bully's mother and told them clearly that I would not tolerate such kind of bullying and that bully be better taught some manners. Today despite having changed her school, that bully is one of my daughter's best friends.

So the bottom line is that society will stigmatized you only if you let them judge you. But if you are sure of yourself and can look at the world in its eyes, then the world would bow down to your confidence and eventually will also become your biggest support. Ultimately everyone either needs a weakling to bash or a hero to look upto. It's our choice whether to be a weakling or a hero.

Disha Gupta

The Language Of Sexism In Politics

Discrimination against women has been a long running phenomena in the Indian society at all levels and fields. Its 2019, we have started movements, broken stereotypes and reached new heights. And yet, there are times when our progressive pronouncements take a hit. In the past decade, India's economic growth has shown tremendous increase but its progress towards gender inequality has been fairly disappointing.

The Internet describes sexism as "Prejudice or discrimination based on a person's sex or gender. Sexism can affect anyone, but it systematically and primarily affects women and girls. It has been linked to stereotypes and gender roles, and may include the belief that one sex or gender is intrinsically superior to another". Sexism towards female political candidates is most apparent during election times. Male candidates making sexist comments about their female colleagues is something that is widespread in the political spectrum and must be tackled at every level of governance. Over the years, women in power have tried to fight their way through to be treated equally and get the same level of opportunities and respect as their male

colleagues in the political realm.

It's not surprising that the campaign for 2019 Lok Sabha Election also began with the harsh sexist remarks by some candidates against their female opponents. Political discourse this time went to an all-time low. Instead of concentrating on 'real issues', politicians of all political shades attempted to demoralise their counterparts with all kinds of personal, offensive, and unethical comments like 'Khakhi Underwear', 'beauty but no quality', 'jeans and sari', 'chocolate faces', rough vs beautiful faces', 'size of bindi', 'facial everyday', showing complete disrespect towards dignity of women. Women in politics are just politicians so why is the criticism not based on flawed politics instead of personal attacks based on beauty, body language or clothes? Sexism is slow, toxic and is happening every day, whether its unnoticed or unintentional. Even subtle sexism can have real impacts on candidates. Very few people acknowledge that they hesitate to vote for a woman. While increasing representation of women in the public spheres is extremely important, which might be attained through some form of affirmative action, an attitude shift

is essential for women to be considered as equal within their homes and in broader society. Sadly, the political reality in India is the same as actual reality. Despite increasing rates of economic growth, even today, the world's largest democracy reeks of patriarchy and misogyny.

Make no mistake, sexist comments during the election campaign is not something unique to India but it is a common phenomenon all around the world, even in countries and societies that claim to be equitable. Women routinely face questions which male candidates never have to encounter. When it comes to media coverage of female candidates, the focus is usually on appearance, work-life balance and family roles. Their leadership and authority are questioned based on their clothes and appearance. While we never see any male candidates

being scrutinised for the same. Politics is not a field which is particularly famous for its gracious behaviour but the misogynistic remarks which the female candidates are subjected to, reflects the mind-set of men who are not comfortable seeing women holding positions of power. So, how do we see the same politicians respecting the larger female population? Why are we so obsessed with the personal life of female candidates specifically? It is time to ask these questions and form a formal code of conduct. Hardly any party takes any serious action, which makes it easier for male candidates to repeat such actions. How much sexism actually changes the way voters perceive the candidate and influences votes is a matter of debate. While these comments are seen as 'harmless' by male candidates, there are multiple instances to show that it changes the way electorate views certain politicians.

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With input from Zheer Ahmed, JNU



The Optimist

In Paris, on my way to the hotel, I catch glimpses of all the historic places I have read about. The iconic Eiffel Tower, the most monumental boulevard, Avenue des Champs-Élysées, and the triumph of Gothic architecture; Cathédrale Notre-Dame de Paris still standing tall despite the recent fire. It is my fifth visit for work, a life's journey that has brought me to this charming enchanting city.

I was born in a middle class family; my father was a civil engineer. My mother trained as a lawyer who stayed at home to raise my two brothers and me. Growing up we all aspired to be engineers, doctors or lawyers; these were the only three professions that were known to us and acceptable. Of course, we had an uncle who lived in the USA who came and visited us every three years. Chandresan Kaka or Chad Uncle told us stories about his life in Florida. The beautiful beaches in Florida; his houses with swimming pools; and the opportunities that America presented.

Although after studying very hard and coming first in my high school, I did not get into any of the medical colleges or engineering schools. I started doing my bachelors in Mathematics at Hindu college.

I had applied to B.Sc (Hons) in Human Biology course in All India Medical Institute, Delhi and quite forgotten about my application. My father approached me when I got back from my first day in college and said that I had been accepted. I did not know whether I should continue to pursue the trodden path or try something new. This course was started by the Dean to encourage bright Indian students to pursue research. It involved spending the first year with the medical students and then pursuing research courses. I was in the first batch of this course. The first year was interesting. I learnt anatomy, physiology, and biochemistry with the medical students and met my future husband. The second and third year curriculum was completely unplanned. I ended up taking eighteen courses in our second year and biochemistry in my third year. It did teach me that life is unplanned and there is a lot to be learned. After completing my Master's in Biochemistry, I began my PhD in Biochemistry.

Once again, my life took a surprising turn and I received a full scholarship to pursue a PhD in University of Tennessee, USA. I arrived in USA the land of my dreams, with my luggage

lost in transit. I just had a shoulder bag with no clothing other than a winter coat that my father thought would be most essential for me in USA. Nobody could quite understand what I was saying, it was 10 pm and the taxi dropped me at my school where all the doors were locked for night security. I managed to show my acceptance letter to the personnel in the hospital and was taken to my dormitory by the campus security.

After finishing my PhD, I did a post-doctoral fellowship to get my green card, and started pursuing a career in academics. My husband decided that city living and academics was not the right choice for his family. He wanted to practice as a medical cardiologist. I tried to continue my academic career driving through two states everyday, while being there for my young children. In the winter, the 4-hour daily commute became unsustainable and I started looking for opportunities closer to home.

I received a phone call from a recruiter who asked me if I would

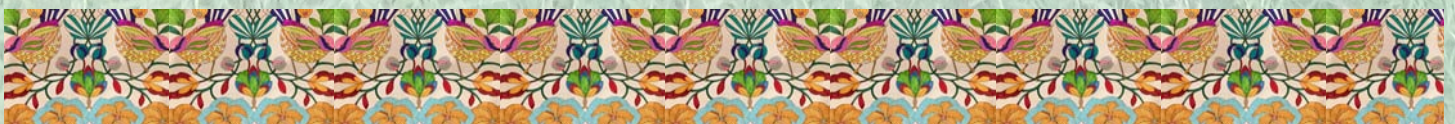
like to interview for a medical writing position. I started as a medical writer in a pharmaceutical company, a profession that is not taught in school but is very interesting. I could use my scientific and research training to write about the safety and effectiveness of therapeutic agents and get them approved by health authorities. More than 20 years later, after being through many ups and downs, working in small biotechs, mid size and large pharmaceutical companies and long hours, I now Head the Department of Medical Writing (US) at the largest French pharmaceutical company.

I would like to end with a poem from The Optimist:

"Life handed him a lemon,
As Life sometimes will do.
His friends looked on in pity,
Assuming he was through.
They came upon him later,
Reclining in the shade
In calm contentment, drinking
A glass of lemonade."

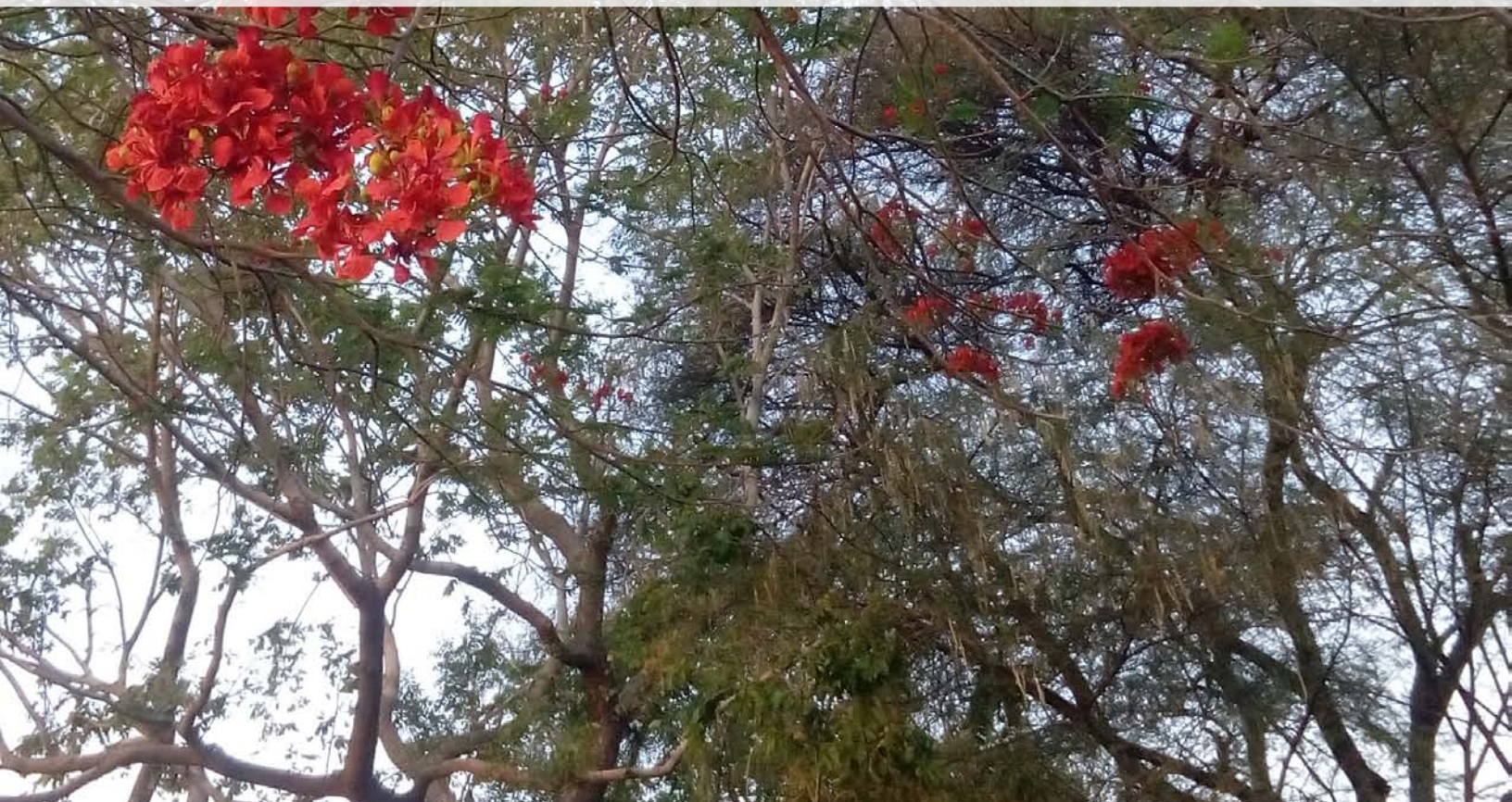
-Clarence Edwin Flynn, 1940

Dr. Madhavi Gidh Jain
Pennsylvania, USA





हिन्दी भाग



(प्रेरक व्यक्तित्व)

अरुणिमा सिन्हा : एक बुलंद कामयाबी का नाम

खुदी को कर बुलंद इतना कि हर तक्दीर से पहले
खुदा बंदे से खुद पूछे बता तेरी रज़ा क्या है...

अल्लामा इक़बाल का यह शेर अरुणिमा सिन्हा पर सौ फीसदी जमता है। अरुणिमा सिन्हा नाम को ख़बरों में ज़रूर देखा जा सकता है, लेकिन ख़बर से भी बड़ा उनका प्रेरणा देने वाला व्यक्तित्व है। उनकी आवाज़ और अनुभवों में वे सब बातें मौजूद हैं, जो किसी भी व्यक्ति के लिए संजीवनी से कम नहीं। वह बुलंद एवरेस्ट पर चढ़ने वाली पहली दिव्यांग भारतीय महिला है। यह गौरव उनके नाम से दर्ज़ है।

रोज़ ही अख़बारों में ज़िंदगी से हारे हुए लोग अपनी ज़िंदगी का वास्तविक महत्व समझे बिना उससे मुँह मोड़ लेते हैं। मुश्किलें उनकी ज़िंदगी पर जीत हासिल कर लेती हैं और वे हारे हुए लोग मौत में आज़ादी को पाने की नाकाम कोशिश करते हैं। नेशनल हेल्थ प्रोफाइल के अनुसार भारत में आत्महत्या की दुःखद घटनाएं बड़ी तेज़ी से आगे बढ़ रही हैं। आंकड़ों के मुताबिक साल २००० से २०१७ के बीच आत्महत्या के मामलों में २३ फीसदी की बढ़ोतरी हुई। इसी तरह के और भी आंकड़ों की संख्या को इंटरनेट पर देखा जा सकता है। ये आंकड़ें यह भी बताते हैं कि यह समस्या गंभीर है। युवा बनते हुए भारत में यह एक विंता का विषय भी है।

इसलिए इस माहौल में अरुणिमा की चर्चा करना और भी ज़रूरी हो जाता है। सन् २०११ का वह न भूलने वाला सफ़र सुनना भी बहुत मुश्किल है, पर अरुणिमा अपनी विभिन्न चर्चाओं में उस घटना को याद करती हुई उस दर्द को फिर से जीने लगती हैं, जो किसी के भी रोंगटे खड़े कर दे। लखनऊ से दिल्ली आती हुई पद्मावती एक्सप्रेस के जनरल डिब्बे में कुछ बदमाशों ने उनकी सोने की चेन खींचने की कोशिश की। अरुणिमा ने इसका जोरदार विरोध किया। वहाँ मौजूद लोगों ने आगे आकर उनकी कोई मदद नहीं की। अरुणिमा को चलती ट्रेन से नीचे फेंक दिया गया और वह रातभर तड़पती रहीं। करीब ४९ ट्रेन उनके

पैरों को रोंदते हुए गुज़रीं। बरेली डिस्ट्रिक्ट में बिना बेहोश किए उनका इलाज हुआ। आज जो अरुणिमा हमारे सामने दिखती हैं, वे पुरानी अरुणिमा से और भी मज़बूत अरुणिमा हैं।

अरुणिमा की कहानी में दर्द की महत्वपूर्ण भूमिका है। फिर चाहे वह शरीर के अंगों से जुड़ा दर्द हो या मानसिक दर्द। दर्द आदमी को घुटने के बल बिठा देता है, लेकिन अरुणिमा के मामले में इसी दर्द ने उनको फौलादी हौसले से भर दिया और आगे जो उन्होंने किया वह उनके नाम से इतिहास के पन्नों में अंकित हो गया।

अरुणिमा अपने शब्दों में बताती हैं कि अस्पताल में उन्होंने ख़बर देखी कि इस पूरी दुर्घटना में साय आरोप उन पर ही थोपा जा रहा था। उनके घर के लोगों ने पूरी सफ़ाई भी दी पर इसका कोई फायदा नहीं हुआ। अस्पताल के बेड पर लेटे हुए उन्होंने एक फ़ैसला किया कि वह अपने काम से सबको इसका जवाब देंगी।

वॉलीबॉल की नेशनल चैंपियन ने उस रोज़ अपने लिए और भी कठिन काम चुना और वह था - पर्वतारोहण (माउंटेनियरिंग) का। वाज़िब है यह उनके लिए आसान नहीं था, क्योंकि उन्होंने इस दुर्घटना के बाद अपना एक पैर खो दिया था। दूसरे पैर में एक रॉड थी। इसके अलावा उनकी रीढ़ की हड्डी में भी फ्रैक्चर था। जब उन्होंने माउंट एवरेस्ट पर चढ़ाई की बात लोगों के बीच रखी तो हौसला तो कम मिला, उसके बदले में उन्हें कई सलाहें दी गईं। यह भी कहा गया - “पागल तो नहीं हो गई हो? इस हालात में कैसे कर सकती हो?...”

लेकिन सच्चाई तो यह है कि अरुणिमा यह समझ गई थीं कि ज़िंदगी अपने आप में वह तिलिस्म है, जो कुदरत ने इंसान को बेमिसाल तोहफ़े के रूप में दिया

है। वह अपनी बातों में इस बात का जिक्र बड़े ही निराले अंदाज़ में करती हैं। वह कहती हैं कि उनकी अंतःआत्मा ही उनकी सबसे बड़ी मार्गदर्शक साबित हुई। लोग शरीर और उसकी मुश्किलें देख रहे थे लेकिन अरुणिमा अपनी आत्मा और दिमाग की ताकत को समझ चुकी थी। यह अपने आप में मजबूत शिष्ययत की पहचान है।

अरुणिमा के अनुभवों को सुनने में वह ताकत मिलती है, जिसकी हम सभी को जरूरत होती है। उनके परिवार ने उनके एवरेस्ट फ़तह करने के फैसले का साथ दिया और साथ ही वह सीधे बछेंदी पाल से मिलने पहुँची। बछेंदी पाल ने भी उनकी हौसला आफजाई की और उन पर यकीं किया। विश्वास एक ऐसा भाव और शब्द है जो खुद के अंदर वह लौ जगा देता है जिसके बल पर इंसान अपने अंदर की ताकत को समझता है। अरुणिमा को भी अपने पर विश्वास था। और अंत तक इसी विश्वास ने उनका साथ भी निभाया।

क्या एवरेस्ट समिट उनके लिए आसान रहा? कतई नहीं। उनके खुद के अनुभवों में वे बताती हैं कि टीवी पर या फोटो में यह सब बहुत अच्छा लगता है, पर जब ज़मीन पर उतारा जाता है तब असली चुनौतियों से सामना होता है। उन्हें कई घंटे लग जाते थे फील्ड में। इसके अलावा नीली और हरी बर्फ में उनका कृत्रिम पैर फिसल जाया करता था। यहाँ तक कि उनके शेरपा जो उनकी मदद के लिए थे, ने भी कहा कि इसके चलते तो उनकी जान भी जा सकती है। लेकिन अरुणिमा की ज़िद जो अब उनकी दृढ़इच्छाशक्ति का स्वरूप धारण कर चुकी थी, हार मानना नहीं चाहती थी।

एवरेस्ट समिट में वे रात के समय चढ़ाई करती थीं, क्योंकि उसी समय मौसम अपना मिजाज़ शांत रखता था। वे बताती हैं कि जब उनके सिर पर लगी हेडलाइट कहीं घूमती तो वहाँ लोगों के शव नज़र आते थे। वे यह सब देखकर डरतीं भी। लेकिन फिर उन्होंने ने अपने मन से कहा कि अगर यह लोग एवरेस्ट फ़तह नहीं कर पा रहे तो इन सब के लिए वे खुद फतह

करेंगी और जिंदा वापस लौटेंगी। यह अपने आप में उनके मजबूत मन की मिसाल है।

वह पल भी आया जब उन्होंने ऑक्सीजन खत्म होने की कगार पर भी एवरेस्ट को पा लिया। एक जोखिम भरा फैसला लिया और अपने तिरंगे के साथ एक फोटो भी खिंचवाई। उन्होंने अपने शेरपा से एक वीडियो भी बनाने की बात कही। उनका कहना था कि अगर वे जिंदा नहीं भी पहुँचती तो यह वीडियो भारत में उनके युवा साथियों तक पहुँचा देना। वह दिन २१ मई २०१३ का था जब वह विश्व के शिखर पर थीं।

अरुणिमा की कहानी किसी जादुई कहानी से कम नहीं है। इस कहानी में उनके हौसले, उनके दृढ़निश्चय और जुनून ने उनको इतिहास में एक ऐसे चरित्र में बदल दिया जो एक प्रेरणा का स्रोत बन चुकी है। उन्होंने यह साबित किया कि शरीर के अंग की कमी, लड़की होना और मध्यम वर्गीय परिवार से ताल्लुक रखना, कुछ भी आड़े नहीं आ सकता। बस मन में एक फैसला हो और अपने लक्ष्य को पाने की प्रबल इच्छा हो, फिर सब कुछ संभव हो सकता है।

अरुणिमा सिन्हा ने 'बोर्न अगेन ऑन द माउंटेन (२०१४)' नामक किताब भी लिखी है, जिसमें उन्होंने अपने बेमिसाल अनुभवों को समेटा है। अरुणिमा की ज़िदगी का सफ़र हम सभी के लिए एक प्रेरणा का कैनवास रचता है। आज के दौर में वह एक ज़रूरी किरदार बनकर उभरी हैं, जो हर पल हार न मानने की बात कहता है।

उनके अनुभव लोगों के मन में दस्तक देते हैं - हार कर न बैठने की। राजेश रेडी की इन पंक्तियों से अरुणिमा अपने व्यक्तित्व की झलक देती हैं। इन पंक्तियों को वह कई टॉक शो में कहती हुई नज़र आती हैं -

अभी तो इस बाज़ की असली उड़ान बाकी है,
अभी तो इस परिदे का इम्तिहान बाकी है।
अभी-अभी मैंने लांघा है समुद्रों को,
अभी तो पूरा आसमान बाकी है।।

ज्योति

शोधार्थी

जवाहरलाल नेहरू विश्वविद्यालय।

(टिप्पणी- प्रस्तुत लेख इंक्टॉक्स.कॉम में अरुणिमा सिन्हा द्वारा कही गई बातों के आधार पर लिखा गया है।)

आधुनिक युग का संकट और औरत की स्थिति

कहते हैं अगर यह देखना हो कि कोई समाज या राष्ट्र तरक्की कर रहा है या नहीं, तो उस समाज या राष्ट्र में औरत की स्थिति को देख लेना चाहिए। समाज या राष्ट्र की स्थिति का पता चल जाएगा। और यह बात सही भी है। कोई भी समाज अपनी महिलाओं को हाशिये पर रख कभी आगे नहीं बढ़ सका है। एक समय था जब भारत में औरतों की स्थिति वर्तमान से कहीं बेहतर थी। जहाँ वह अपने वर चुनने के लिए स्वयंवर खाती थी। जहाँ वह पुरुषों के साथ युद्धों में भाग लेती थी। उसे शास्त्रार्थ में पराजित करती थी। यह देश मैत्रेयी, गार्गी, विद्योतमा, रानी लक्ष्मीबाई का देश था। आधुनिक युग का सबसे बड़ा संकट तो यही है कि यह युग जितना विकसित होता जा रहा है, महिलाएं उतनी ही हाशिये पर धकेल दी जा रही हैं। हम इसकी एक बानगी इस लेख में देने का प्रयास करेंगे।

‘नारी तुम केवल श्रद्धा हो।
विश्वास रजत नग पग तल में।।
पीयूष स्रोत सी बहा करो।
जीवन के सुंदर समतल में।।’

हिंदी के महाकवि जयशंकर प्रसाद की ये पंक्तियाँ जिस नारी की छवि हमारे सामने प्रस्तुत करती हैं, वो शायद ही हमारे तथाकथित आधुनिक समाज में कहीं दिखाई दे। जिस समाज में औरत और आदमी के लिए मापदंड अलग हों; वहाँ हम कैसे एक औरत की समानता, उसके अधिकार, उसकी स्वतंत्रता को शब्दों और विचारों की एक अंधी गली में धकेलने में कामयाब हो गये हैं? क्या यह सिर्फ पितृसत्तात्मक समाज होने भर से हुआ या हमारी नसों और नस्लों में स्त्रीविरोधी संस्कार कूट-कूट कर भरे गये थे? स्त्री विरोधी ये संस्कार आज हमें अपने घर, समाज,

राजनीति, हर जगह देखने को मिलते हैं। एक पिता अपने पुत्र के कॉलेज से पिकनिक पर जाने पर सवाल नहीं करता लेकिन वही अपनी बेटी के जाने पर उसके सामने सवालों की झड़ी लगा देता है। आपका भाई देर से घर लौटता है तो कोई हलचल नहीं होती, लेकिन ४-५ बजते ही हमारी चिताएँ हमारी निष्ठाओं में तब्दील हो आधुनिक समाज में औरत की सुरक्षा के नाम पर एक और बंध बाँधने का काम करती है।

आधुनिक समय में हम औरतों की समाज में भूमिका पर नहीं बल्कि उसकी सुरक्षा और स्थिति पर चर्चा करने लग जाते हैं। यह अपने आप में विडंबनापूर्ण स्थिति है। बेहतर होता अगर समाज निर्माण में उसकी भूमिका पर चर्चा-परिचर्चा और विवेचन किया जाता। ऐसे में भी हमारे सामने जो उदाहरण पेश किए जाते हैं, वो उन खास महिलाओं के होते हैं, जो इतिहास और राजनीतिक रूप से काफी सबल थीं। हम उन स्त्रियों की स्थिति के माफ़त अपने समाज की प्रत्येक महिला का सामान्यीकरण कर देते हैं। मसलन जॉर्सी की रानी का उदाहरण देते वक्त एक वर्ग महिलाओं की बहादुरी की गाथा गाता दिखाई देता है। निश्चित ही महिलाएं आधुनिक रूप से बहादुर होती हैं, लेकिन क्या यह सही है कि जॉर्सी की रानी के समय की अधिकतर औरतों की दशा जॉर्सी की रानी लक्ष्मीबाई की तरह हो। हम जानते हैं, ऐसा नहीं है लेकिन यह भारतीय समाज की विडंबना ही कही जाएगी कि हम अपनी कमजोरियों पर चर्चा करने की अपेक्षा उससे बचकर निकल जाना चाहते हैं। कहते हैं किसी देश की समृद्धि या विकास का पता उसकी राष्ट्रीय आय या प्रति व्यक्ति आय से नहीं चलता अपितु उस देश या समाज में महिलाओं की स्थिति और भूमिका से

चलता है। यही कारण है कि जिसे हम ग्रेट ब्रिटेन कहा करते थे और जिसके साम्राज्य में कभी सूर्यास्त नहीं होता था, वह भी अपनी महिलाओं को सम्मान न देने के कारण आज तक आलोचना का केंद्र-बिंदु बना हुआ है।

पौराणिक और प्राचीन काल का इतिहास उठा कर देख लें। स्त्री, पुरुष के साथ युद्ध में जाया करती थी। केकैयी ने दशरथ से दो वचन उनकी रक्षा करने की एवज में रणभूमि में ही मांगे थे। चाणक्य ने चंद्रगुप्त की निजी रक्षा का दायित्व पुरुषों की अपेक्षा औरतों को दिया था। प्राचीन और पौराणिक काल में आपको ऐसे अनेक उदाहरण मिलेंगे जो आज स्त्री की महत्ता और समाज के निर्माण में उसकी भूमिका को दर्शाते हैं। वैदिक काल से आज तक स्त्री की स्थिति पर दृष्टिपात करने से तस्वीर और साफ हो सकेगी।

वैदिक युग सभ्यता और संस्कृति की दृष्टि से स्त्रियों के लिये स्वर्ण युग था। उनकी योग्यता, प्रतिभा, स्पष्टवादिता, ओजसविता ने नए मानदण्ड स्थापित किये थे। यह ऐसा समय था जब स्त्रियों की स्थिति पुरुषों के समतुल्य नहीं बल्कि उनसे भी ऊपर थी। उनके बिना यज्ञ अपूर्ण समझा जाता था। यज्ञों में भी उसे सर्वाधिकार प्राप्त था। वैदिक युग में पिता, पुत्रियों पर भी उतना ही ध्यान देते थे जितना पुत्रों पर। उन्हें प्रत्येक विद्या सीखने का हक था। उनका व्यवहार भी केवल घरों तक सीमित न था, अपितु उन्हें मेल-मिलाप के लिये माहौल मिलता था। उस युग में मैत्रेयी, गार्गी और अनुसूया नामक विदुषी स्त्रियाँ शास्त्रार्थ में निपुण थीं - 'यत्र नार्यस्तु पूज्यते रमन्ते तत्र देवता' उक्ति वैदिक काल में निश्चित ही सत्य उक्ति थी। उस समय सुशील स्त्री होने के साथ-साथ उसके सुसंस्कृत और सुशिक्षित होने को उसका संस्कार माना जाता था। उसे अपने भाई एवं पति की ही भाँति सभी अधिकार प्राप्त थे।

उत्तर वैदिक युग, वैदिक युग के पश्चात् का युग स्त्रियों की इस दशा को बरकरार न रख सका। उसकी स्थिति में गिरावट आई। उसकी स्वतंत्रता और अधिकारों को सीमित किया जाने लगा। धर्मसूत्र में बाल-विवाह का निर्देश दिया गया, जिससे स्त्रियों की शिक्षा में बाधा पड़ुंवी और उनकी स्वतंत्रता एवं शक्ति को संकुचित करने के लिए तथाकथित ज्ञानियों ने कहा कि उसे पिता, पति और पुत्र के अंतर्गत अपने व्यवहारों को सीमित रखना चाहिए-

“पिता रक्षति कौमारे, भर्ता रक्षति यौवने।
पुत्रश्च स्थाविरे भावे, न स्त्री स्वातंत्र्यमर्हति।।”

अब वह राजमहलों की शोभा मात्र रह गयी। उस समय में भी आम औरतें रनिवासों की औरतों की तुलना में ज्यादा स्वतंत्र थीं। लेकिन तब भी उच्चवर्ग की महिलाएँ घर की चारदीवारी में कैद हो गयीं, पढ़ने-लिखने व वेदों का ज्ञान असंभव हो गया और उनके लिए धार्मिक संस्कारों में भाग लेने की मनाही हो गयी। बहुपत्नी प्रथा का प्रचलन हो गया और वैदिक युग की तुलना में उत्तर वैदिक काल में स्त्री की दशा और भी दयनीय हो गयी। रही सही कसर स्मृति ग्रंथों ने पूरी कर दी।

स्मृति युग में स्त्रियों की स्थिति पहले से ज्यादा बदतर हो गयी, कारण यह था कि बाल-विवाह तथा बहुपत्नी-प्रथा का प्रचलन और बढ़ गया। इस युग में विवाह की आयु घटाकर १२-१३ वर्ष कर दी गयी। विवाह की आयु घटाने से शिक्षा न के बराबर हो गयी, उनके समस्त अधिकारों का हनन हो गया। उन्हें जो भी सम्मान इस युग में मिला वह सिर्फ माता के रूप में, न कि पत्नी के रूप में। स्त्रियों का परम कर्तव्य पति जैसा भी हो उनकी सेवा करना था। विधवा पुनर्विवाह पर भी कठोर प्रतिबन्ध लगा दिया गया।

मध्यकाल आते-आते भारत की राजनीतिक स्थिति बहुत हद तक बदल गयी। मुस्लिम आक्रमणकारियों के आने के बाद भारत में पर्दाप्रथा ने अपने पैर पसारे। मनीषियों ने हिन्दू धर्म की रक्षा, स्त्रियों के मातृत्व और रक्त की शुद्धता को बनाये रखने के लिए स्त्रियों के सम्बन्ध में नियमों को कठोर बना दिया। ऊँची जाति में शिक्षा समाप्त हो गयी। विवाह की आयु घटकर ८-९ वर्ष हो गयी। विधवाओं का पुनर्विवाह पूरी तरह समाप्त हो गया और सती-प्रथा चरम सीमा पर पहुँच गयी। इस युग में केवल स्त्रियों के संपत्ति के सम्बन्ध में सुधार हुआ। उन्हें भी पिता की संपत्ति में उत्तराधिकार मिलने लगा।

यह काल वही है जहाँ 'जिह घर देखी सुंदर कन्या तिह घर जाय धरी तलवार' जैसे कथन प्रचलित थे। राजनीतिक परिवर्तनों ने समाज में तेजी से बदलाव करने शुरू किये और कहना न होगा कि इन बदलावों की कीमत पर औरतों को रखा गया। पुरुषों ने इसमें भी अपने लिये आश्रय तलाश लिया। जोधाबाई जैसी रानियाँ इसका एक उदाहरण कही जा सकती हैं। मध्यकाल में सतीप्रथा, बालविवाह, विधवा-पुनर्विवाह पर रोक, देवदासी, पर्दाप्रथा जैसी विकृतियों ने समाज में महिलाओं की स्थिति को दयनीय बना दिया। महिलायें सिर्फ घरों की शोभा बन कर चारदीवारी में कैद हो गईं। पति की परमात्मा से भी बढ़कर सेवा करना तथा बच्चों का पालन-पोषण करना उनकी प्रतिदिन की दिनचर्या बन कर रह गईं।

पितृसत्तात्मक समाज में औरत को महाभारत और रामायण के युद्ध का मूल कारण माना गया। पुरुषों ने औरत को कटघरे में खड़ाकर निर्णायक की भूमिका के लिये स्वयं को तैयार करना शुरू किया। जिसमें वे काफी हद तक सफल रहे और औरत को धर्म एवं संस्कारों के नाम पर एक लक्ष्मण रेखा के भीतर रहने के लिये बाध्य किया गया। पितृसत्ता ने यह काम भी

औरतों के हाथों पूरा किया। मसलन शादी के बाद विधवा हो जाने पर केश न रखने, रूखा सूखा खाने, चप्पल न पहनने जैसे बंधन लगाए गये। एक पुरुष कई विवाह कर सकता था पर एक औरत के लिये पति को परमेश्वर बताया गया। एक लंबी प्रक्रिया के बाद एक औरत की मानसिकता इस तरह की बनाई गयी कि वह भी स्वयं को बंधनों में ही आजाद समझने लगी। उसे पर्दे में रहना भाने लगा। पुनर्विवाह पाप लगने लगा। शिक्षा तक का अधिकार उससे छीना गया। फिर एक नये जागरण का उदय हुआ। परतंत्र होने के बावजूद कुछ स्वतंत्र मस्तिष्कों ने स्त्री की शिक्षा के लिये दरवाजे खोले। ईश्वरचंद्र विद्यासागर ने २७ बालिका विद्यालयों की स्थापना की। राजा राममोहन राय ने सतीप्रथा और बालविवाह के विरुद्ध कानून बनवाने के लिये जद्दोजहद की।

औरत को एक वस्तु के रूप में तब्दील करने में बाजार ने महत्वपूर्ण भूमिका निभाई। १९३० के बाद पनपे उदारीकरण और वैश्वीकरण के दौर ने इसे और बढ़ाया। यह बड़ा दिलवस्प है कि सन् १९९४ में विश्व सुंदरी के तीनों ताजों पर भारत का कब्जा हुआ, जिसे भारत बड़े दंभ की नज़र से देख रहा था। वह दरअसल भारत में सौंदर्य प्रतियोगिताओं के नाम पर बाजार को आपके घर तक पहुँचाने का जरिया मात्र था। मसलन एक फ्लां कंपनी को अपने शैंपू बेचने के लिये एक सौंदर्य आइकॉन की जरूरत थी। वह उसे ऐश्वर्य राय आदि के रूप में मिल गया था। हालत यह हुई कि जब काफी छोटे समय में ब्यूटी उत्पादों ने यहाँ कि उत्तम वर्ग की महिलाओं (साथ ही पुरुषों) तक अपनी पैठ बना ली तब पुनर्वास कॉलोनियों यहाँ तक की झुग्गी झोपड़ियों में ये उत्पाद (शैंपू आदि) सैशे के रूप में प्रस्तुत किये गये। एक रुपये के विलनिक प्लस ने हमारे समाज में यह गलतफहमी भरने की कोशिश की यदि शैंपू लगाया तो लाइफ झिंगा ला ला।

बिल्कुल संभव है कि आपको लगे कि हम भारतीय समाज में महिलाओं की भूमिका पर बात करते करते बाजारवाद और उसकी तकनीक पर बात क्यों करने लगे। तो कहना न होगा कि उदारीकरण के बाद समाज और किसी देश की भूमिका बाजारवाद के संकट से आजाद नहीं, निश्चित ही इसमें औरत को एक उत्पाद के रूप में प्रस्तुत किया जाना अहम है। आप यदि विज्ञापनों का एक संक्षिप्त आंकलन करने की कोशिश करें तो पाएंगे कि गाड़ी का विज्ञापन हो या बाइक का, शेविंग ब्लेड का विज्ञापन हो या पुरुष अंडर वियर का, यहाँ तक कि आइसक्रीम और वॉकलेट जैसे बच्चों के उत्पादों के लिये जिस तरह से भारतीय सिने तारिकाओं और सुंदरियों का इस्तेमाल किया जा रहा है, वो बाजार रूपी एक नवसाम्राज्य की आहट की सिर्फ सूचना नहीं देता बल्कि आपके दरवाजों पर बार-बार दस्तक देता है और दुर्भाग्य यह है कि आप चाहें या न चाहें, आप चाहे स्वागत करें या अपने दरवाजों पर सैंकड़ों कुंडियाँ लगा लें, यह बाजार अपने उत्पादों के रूप में आपके बेडरूम तक पहुँच जाता है और आप कुछ नहीं कर पाते। मैं अक्सर सोचता हूँ। वैलेंटाइन्स डे, वॉकलेट डे का चलन पिछले पंद्रह बीस सालों में इतना क्यों बढ़ गया। यही नहीं, शिव के भक्तों या कांवड़ियों की बयार एकाएक कैसे आपकी सड़कों पर निकल आई। जाहिर है बाजार चाहता है कि यह बयार और बढ़े।

वैलेंटाइन्स डे पर आप अपनी महिला मित्र या पत्नी के पास जाते हैं, आप बताते हैं कि आप उन्हें बेहद चाहते हैं। वह नहीं मानती क्योंकि आपने न तो उसे गुलाब दिया और न ही कोई गिफ्ट। हम यहाँ महिलाओं का सामान्यीकरण नहीं कर रहे बल्कि

वर्तमान समय में हमारे दृष्टिकोण और महिलाओं के प्रति हमारे रवैये पर सूचनात्मक टिप्पणी देने का प्रयास मात्र कर रहे हैं।

हम पुरुषों ने अपने लिये एक सुखद माहौल तब भी बनाये रखा था जब हमने कहा था कि महिलाएँ घर की शोभा होती हैं। या 'बिन घरनी घर भूत का डेरा' कहा था। जब एक माँ अपनी बेटी के रिश्ते के लिये आए लड़के वालों के समक्ष अपनी बेटी को यह कहकर प्रस्तुत करती है कि हमारी बेटी तो बिल्कुल 'गाय' है। तब इन वाक्यों से आप आज के समाज में औरतों की स्थिति को बेहतर समझ सकते हैं।

हमारे समाज और संसद में आज भी ऐसे वाक्य सुने जा सकते हैं जब औरतों के बलात्कार के लिये उनके कपड़ों या देर तक काम करने को मूल कारण बताया गया। हम किस तरह का समाज बनाना चाहते हैं। आज भी बेटी को शादी के बाद उसके पिता की संपत्ति का भागीदार बनाने में उसके भाई और रिश्तेदारों को परेशानी होती है। हम एक ऐसे आधुनिक समय में उपरोक्त बातों को कहने का जोखिम उठा रहे हैं, जहाँ एक स्त्री को आज भी पराया धन कहकर संबोधित किया जाता है। यह एक ऐसा समय है कि अगर आपकी पत्नी थककर घर आई है और आप उसके पैर दबाने की कोशिश मात्र कर लें तो आपके घरवाले और पड़ोसी आपको 'जोरु का गुलाम' जैसी विरुदों से विभूषित कर देंगे। यह संकट सिर्फ स्त्रियों के लिये नहीं है, बल्कि यह संकट उन पुरुषों के लिये भी है जो स्त्रियों के पक्ष में और उनके अधिकारों के लिये अपनी आवाज बुलंद करते हैं।

डॉ. तरुण गुप्ता

सहायक प्रोफेसर

शिवाजी महाविद्यालय, नई दिल्ली।

२१वीं सदी के नेता

भारत के कुछ नेता
राजनीति नहीं गुस्ताख नीति करते हैं
कहने को तो वो अभिजात्य वर्ग हैं
पर जुबान से गंदगी उगलते हैं
ना है पद की गरिमा, ना देश का सम्मान करते हैं।

सरेआम महिला अंगवस्त्र के नाम पर
अपनी सोच प्रकट करते हैं
कोई कहता गलती हो जाती लड़को से
सिर्फ बलात्कार पर
केस जो फांसी तक जाते हैं।

क्यों कोई नहीं पूछता इन गदारों से
क्या धर्म है तुम्हारा
नियत क्या है उस धर्म की
क्या बेटी, बहन है तुम्हारे घर भी
हैं, तो बाकई वो खौफ में हैं?

कोई क्यों नहीं पूछता
सत्ता में आए तो नीति क्या होगी तुम्हारी

जो महिलाएं तुम्हारी जुबान में सुरक्षित नहीं
क्या तुम्हारे शासन में हो पायेगी?

कोई तो पूछे इनसे
कितने काबिल हो तुम
और तुम्हारा लक्ष्य क्या है
कैसे देदे अपना कीमती वोट
तुम्हारी नपुंसक सोच को।

पहले जाओ देखो अपनी औकात
झांको अपने गिरेवाँ में
बदलो अपने घटिया विचार
खुद पर शासन करो
अपना प्रशासन ठीक करो।

हम तो जनता हैं
तुम जैसे लोगों को बिगाड़ते हैं, बनाते हैं
वक्त पड़े तो, महिलाओं के लिए
तुम जैसो को ही फाँसी पर भी चढ़ाते हैं
तुम नेता हो तो नेता रहो
हम अपनी सरकार खुद बनाते हैं।

चन्दा यादव

बी.ए. (ऑनर्स)– राजनीति विज्ञान

शैक्षणिक सत्र : 2011–14

मैत्रेयी कॉलेज, दिल्ली विश्वविद्यालय।

स्त्री की देह

स्त्री की देह
 वो उससे बहुत आगे है
 अक्सर सुना करता हूँ
 और सुनता हूँ
 आलीशान घरों की दीवारों
 से आती कुंद हँसी को
 चुप विल्लाहटों को
 जहाँ उनकी यही देह
 रौंदी जा रही है
 अक्सर देखता हूँ
 छवियाँ
 जहाँ जालीदार जंगलों
 और छज्जों से
 यही देह बुला रही है
 आमंत्रण दे रही है
 आओ मुझे रौंदो
 मैं स्त्री हूँ
 हिंसक हमबिस्तियों के साथ
 सोने को अभिशप्त
 तुम मेरे भीतर के अंश को
 कभी पा नहीं सकते
 क्योंकि तुमने पाना नहीं
 हासिल करना सीखा है
 और सीखा है

कब्जा करना
 राज करना
 दिलों पर
 तुम्हारे बस में न तब था
 न अब है
 हो भी कैसे
 तुम वो जानवर हो
 जो खुद मार कर खाते हो
 और मेरा दिल कितनी ही बार
 कितने बिस्तियों पर
 कितने आलीशान घरों में
 आफिसों की मेज पर
 कॉल सेंटर्स की कैब के भीतर
 रात और दिन हर क्षण
 कितने कितने
 लोगों की आँखों
 हाथों
 नाखूनों
 से रौंदा जा चुका है
 और तुम हो महामानुष
 तुम रौंदी हुई वस्तु
 को स्वीकार नहीं करते
 और देह क्या है
 वस्तु ही तो है।

डॉ. तरुण गुप्ता
 सहायक प्रोफेसर
 शिवाजी महाविद्यालय, नई दिल्ली।

बेटी की व्यथा

बेटी ही है, इस धरा का
आरंभ, अस्तित्व और अंत
बेटा गर भाग्य है
तो बेटी सौभाग्य है
बेटा वंश चलाता है
पर बेटी से ही वंश जना जाता है

बेटी ही जननी
वो ही है सृष्टि की सूत्रधारा

परंतु क्यों
समाज में सम्मान नहीं है
परिवार में सम्मान नहीं है
जन्म से पहले मारा जाता है
जन्म लेले तो जीवन भर ताड़ा जाता है
हर मोड़ पर जीवन के
सुनो तुम बेटी हो
हो तो तुम बेटी ही
कह-कह कर नकारा जाता है।

बेटी के अस्तित्व को नकार कर
बेटों को सरांखों पर रखा जाता है
बेटों को दूध-घी में तारा जाता
सुखी रोटी पर भी बेटी को लताड़ा जाता है

पराया धन घर की लाज बोल
घर की चारदीवारी में, समाज से दूर
अंधेरे बुल्हे को थमाया जाता है
बगावत के डर से, बेटी को बचपन से
पढ़ाई-लिखाई से दूर, चुप रहना सिखाया जाता है।

अफ़सोस

कब समझेगा ये समाज
बेटी ही है इसका उद्धार
बेटी आंगन में फैला उजाला है
गहरे अंधेरे में, एक किरण है बेटी
सही जीवन का आवरण है बेटी
कष्ट में भी धैर्य है बेटी
ममता का सम्मान है बेटी
पिता का अभिमान है बेटी।

इसकी व्यथा और वेदना का
अब हो स्थाई उपचार
क्योंकि सिर्फ बेटी है

इस धरा का
आरंभ, अस्तित्व और अंत
आरंभ, अस्तित्व और अंत ।

चन्दा यादव

बी.ए. (ऑनर्स)— राजनीति विज्ञान

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मैत्रेयी कॉलेज, दिल्ली विश्वविद्यालय।

चश्मे बहुर

एक रोज़ सोशल मीडिया पर एक तस्वीर तैरती हुई देखी। उस तस्वीर में तीन इंसानी स्केच बनाए गए थे। एक लड़की और लड़का साथ खड़े थे और थोड़ी दूरी पर एक और लड़की का स्केच बना हुआ था। ऊपर अंग्रेजी में लिखा था कि असली खुशी अपने 'एक्स' (पुरुष मित्र) को किसी 'बदसूरत' के साथ देखने पर मिलती है। इस पोस्ट को हजारों लाइक्स मिले थे। साथ ही साथ इसे ढेरों बार साझा (शेयर) भी किया गया था। कमेंट्स भी काफी थे। यह वास्तव में हमारी मानसिकता की तरफ़ इशारा करता है। हम इसी युग में जी रहे हैं जहाँ इस तरह के सुंदरता के पैमाने हमें चौंकाते नहीं हैं। हमारे बीच सुंदर और कुरूप के मापदंड तय हैं। यह आज से नहीं है, बल्कि हजारों साल से ये हमारे समाज और दिमाग में मौजूद हैं।

खूबसूरती और बदसूरती ये दो पैमाने हैं, जिन्हें हर रविवार को अख़बारों में सुंदर दुल्हनों और दुल्हों की ख़्वाहिश में देखा जा सकता है। कई अदाकाराएँ टीवी पर आकर यह सीधे तौर पर बतलाती (जतलाती) हैं कि आपका गहरा एशियाई रंग बहुत ख़राब है और इसे फ़लां क्रीम लगाकर गोरा किया जा सकता है। गोरा रंग मतलब सुंदरता। अगर आपकी त्वचा का रंग गहरा है, तो यह आपकी सुंदरता नहीं है, बल्कि यह बीमारी की निशानी है। यह निष्कर्ष बहुत सारे क्रीम के विज्ञापनों ने निकाल लिया है। हम सब इन झांसें के शिकार हैं और खुद की खूबसूरती को दूसरों की नज़रों से हर पल मापते हैं।

गौर से देखने पर हम पाएंगे कि हमने खूबसूरत होने के पैमाने तय कर रखे हैं और जो इस पैमाने पर ख़रा नहीं उतरता उसे हम कई नामों से संबोधित करना शुरू भी कर देते हैं। लेकिन कभी इस बात के बारे में ठहर कर नहीं सोचते कि प्रकृति में हर आकार और रंग के लिए समान जगह है। क्या कभी आसमान में ज़मीन से दिखते हुए बादल एक रूप में देखे जा सकते हैं? क्या कोई दो पेड़ों का आकार या रंग कभी बिलकुल एक जैसा होते हुए पाया है? क्या मिट्टियाँ

अलग रंग की नहीं हैं? प्रकृति को नज़दीक से बैठकर अपने में समा लेने की क्षमता का घटाव पिछले कुछ वर्षों में और गहरा हुआ है। हम एक बहुत असंतोष की जिंदगी के मालिक बन चुके हैं जो हर पल किसी दूसरे की जिंदगी में घुसना चाहता है। हुबहू किसी दूसरे की नक़ल बन जाना चाहते हैं और शायद यही वजह है कि खुद से ताल्लुक नहीं रख सकने की होड़ में इंसान सबसे आगे है।

बात खूबसूरती की चली है तो हिंदी साहित्य के कहानी सम्राट प्रेमचंद की एक कहानी की बात ज़रूर कर लेनी चाहिए। उन्होंने अपनी कलम से कई बेहतरीन कहानियों को रचा है, जो आज भी चाव से पाठकों द्वारा पढ़ी जाती हैं। ऐसी ही उनकी कहानी 'आभूषण' है। यह कहानी महज चार चरित्रों के माध्यम से सुंदरता के मायने बताते चलती है। लेकिन हमें इसे गौर से समझना होगा और उससे पहले कहानी को कई मर्तबा पढ़ लेना ठीक होगा।

कहानी में, शीतला नाम की शादीशुदा महिला अपने ही गाँव के ताल्लुकेदार के यहाँ उनकी नवविवाहिता पत्नी को देखने जाती है और उसके द्वारा पहने गए गहनों पर सम्मोहित हो जाती है। घर आकर वह अपने पति से गहनों की खातिर झगड़ा करती है और पति आहत होकर कमाकर गहने बनवाने के लिए घर छोड़ देता है। इस बीच नवविवाहिता जिसका नाम मंगला है, वह अपने को खूबसूरत न पाकर पति के व्यवहार के चलते घर छोड़कर चली जाती है। मंगला का पति शीतला के पति की गैर-हाज़री में उसका ख़याल रखता है और उसे गहने बनवाकर देता है। शीतला रूप की रानी है, पर दूसरी तरफ़ आभूषणों के लिए दीवानी भी है। कहानी के अंत में शीतला का पति बेहद दुर्बल और दयनीय अवस्था में घर लौटता है। फिर भी शीतला उसका ध्यान नहीं रखती बल्कि अपने गहनों में खोई रहती है। अंत में उसका पति मर जाता है। शीतला की वास्तविक कुरूपता देखकर मंगला के पति को अपनी पत्नी के साथ किए बर्ताव का अफ़सोस होता

है। मंगला के बारे में लेखक काफी कुछ लिखता है और बताता है -

“संसार कहता है कि गुण के सामने रूप की कोई हस्ती नहीं। हमारे नीतिशास्त्र के आचार्यों का भी यही कथन है पर वास्तव में यह कितना भ्रममूलक है! कुँवर सुरेश सिंह की नववधू मंगलाकुमारी गृह-कार्य में निपुण पति के इशारे पर प्राण देनेवाली अत्यंत विचारशीला मधुरभाषिणी और धर्म-भीरु स्त्री थी पर सौंदर्यविहीन होने के कारण पति की आँखों में काँटे के समान खटकती थी।”

लेखक शीतला के चरित्र का भी कई जगह विवरण देता है। जैसे-

“...मंगला के आभूषणों को पहन कर शीतला प्रसन्न हो रही है। उसके पैर जमीन पर नहीं पड़ते। वह दिन भर आईने के सामने खड़ी रहती है। कभी केशों को सँवारती है, कभी सुरमा लगाती है। कुह्या फट गया है और निर्मल स्वच्छ चाँदनी निकल आयी है। वह घर का एक तिनका भी नहीं उठाती। उसके स्वभाव में एक विचित्र गर्व का संचार हो गया है।...”

दिलचस्प यह है कि यहाँ असली सुंदरता का महत्व समझाने के लिए लेखक ने दो स्त्रियों को ही चुना है। कोई आम पाठक इस कहानी को पढ़ेगा तो शीतला के बारे में वही धारणा बनाएगा जो कहानी में बयां है। मंगला के साथ हमदर्दी होगी और पाठक की सच्ची भावनाएं मंगला ले जाएगी, लेकिन शीतला के चरित्र की दुर्बलता के कारणों पर कहानी में कोई प्रकाश नहीं डाला गया है। क्यों किसी औरत के मन में गहनों के प्रति प्रेम है या फिर क्यों हर औरत सुंदर दिखना चाहती है, वह भी दूसरों के लिए, ऐसे सवालों पर आज के समय सोचने की विशेष जरूरत है। औरत पर हर समय सुंदर दिखाने के दबाव का मनोवैज्ञानिक अध्ययन का काम शुरू हो चुका है। उम्मीद है इसके

विश्लेषण से बहुत सी गुत्थियाँ भविष्य में सुलझेंगी।

रटे हुए संवादों में से एक संवाद मन की सुंदरता के बारे में भी है। यह मापदंड बुरा भी नहीं, लेकिन यह कोई अकेला ही तय पैमाना नहीं है। खूबसूरती किसी भी व्यक्ति के मन में, सोच में और व्यवहार से जुड़ी है। एक साथ सभी जीव जगत् के प्रति समानता, बंधुत्व और स्वतंत्रता की बात को हम अपने जीवन में कितना अमल में लाते हैं, यह भी एक महत्वपूर्ण कारक है। उदाहरण के लिए जानवरों को बचाने की कोशिशों में बहुत से लोग आवाज़ बुलंद करते हैं पर वही लोग दूसरी तरफ चमड़े से बने परस, बेल्ट, सोफ़ा आदि के सामान भी खरीदते हैं। यह एक तरह की उपभोक्तावादी कुरूपता है। अपने लिए जिस परिवेश की हम खुद तमन्ना करते हैं पर उसी परिवेश में किसी दूसरे को बर्दाश्त भी नहीं कर पाते, तब यह हमारे चरित्र की दुर्बलता और असुंदरता ही है।

बातें तो बहुत सी हैं कहने की, पर एक ज़रूरी बात यह है कि आज हम जिस खूबसूरती को वास्तविक समझ रहे हैं दरअसल वह बाज़ार द्वारा निर्धारित है। बाज़ार हमारे जीवन के मूल्य तय करता है। उसका नियंत्रण घर के अंदर तक हो चुका है। ज़रूरतों के बगैर हमारे लालच को उसने बेहद बड़ा बना दिया है। हमारी नज़रों पर वही ऐनक लगी है, जो बाज़ार ने बनाकर हमें बेची है। इसलिए खुद से अपनी मुलाकात ज़रूरी हो गई है। खुद से मिलना मतलब एक अंतर्मन का मंथन, जहाँ व्यवस्थित सोच के अंकुर फूटें। संतुलित मानसिकता इसके लिए बेहद ज़रूरी है।

चश्मे बहूर का अर्थ बुरी नज़र को दूर करना या रखने से होता है। ये दो जोड़ी शब्द हमें आईना दिखाते हैं कि क्या हम खुद के मन को बुरी सोच या ख़यालों से दूर रखकर सुंदर हो पाते हैं या नहीं?

ज्योति

शोधार्थी,

जवाहरलाल नेहरू विश्वविद्यालय।

तीसरी लड़की

यह कहानी शुरू होती है जब तीसरी लड़की का जन्म हुआ। सबकी नजरें एक लड़के के जन्म का इंतजार कर रही थीं। और जब लड़की का जन्म हुआ तो ओह! एक बार फिर लड़की ही हो गई!!

सबकी आंखें नम थीं। कोई नहीं चाहता था उस लड़की को देखना।

उसके एक साल बाद एक लड़के का जन्म हुआ। एक बहुत शानदार पार्टी मनाई गई। सबकी खुशी का ठिकाना न था।

किस्मत से इस घर के चारों बच्चों को शिक्षा प्राप्त हुई। लेकिन तीनों लड़कियां एक सरकारी स्कूल से पढ़ाई करके आगे बढ़ीं और इकलौता लड़का द्वारका के इंटरनेशनल स्कूल में पढ़ाया गया। जब लड़कियों ने इस भेदभाव को कई जगह महसूस किया तो उन्होंने अपने इरादों को और भी मजबूत कर लिया।

उस तीसरी लड़की ने अपनी मेहनत और लगन से सीबीएसई बारहवीं की परीक्षा में अपने स्कूल में पहला स्थान हासिल किया और शिक्षा मंत्री से बधाई पत्र भी प्राप्त किया।

इसी तरह आगे की पढ़ाई में इस लड़की ने हर जगह पहला स्थान पाया। और सीटैट जैसी परीक्षा जिसमें केवल 0.3 प्रतिशत बच्चे ही सफल हो पा

रहे हैं, सफलता प्राप्त की। अन्य दोनों लड़कियाँ भी अपनी पढ़ाई पूरी करने के बाद शिक्षक के पद पर पहुँचकर एक अच्छी नौकरी कर रही हैं। और अपने भाई की पढ़ाई का खर्च भी अब यही लड़कियाँ देखती हैं, जो कल तक बोझ समझी जाती थीं। पढ़ाई के साथ साथ वह लड़की इस भेदभाव को मिटाने के लिए अपने एक और सपने को पूरा करने की कोशिश में लगी हुई है और वह सपना है यूपीएससी में चयनित होने का, जिसे वह एक ना एक दिन जरूर पूरा करेगी।

आज इनके पिता का नज़रिया भी बदल गया। पिता के इस नज़रिए को बदलने के लिए इन लड़कियों ने बहुत मेहनत भी की। इस कहानी के माध्यम से केवल यही कहना चाहती हूँ कि एक पिता को अपनी बेटी के जन्म का दुःख नहीं होना चाहिए और एक बेटी को अपने पिता को गर्व महसूस करवाना चाहिए। क्योंकि भेद-भाव एक लड़की या लड़के का नहीं होता है, एक इंसान का होता है।

अंत में बस यही कहना चाहती हूँ कि लड़कियां बोझ नहीं होती हैं। यह कहानी उस तीसरी लड़की की ही है जो इस समय मैत्रेयी महाविद्यालय की एक होनहार छात्रा है।

सुधा यादव

बी.ए.—द्वितीय वर्ष

एनसीडब्ल्यूईबी, मैत्रेयी कॉलेज।

(टिप्पणी - मैत्रेयी महाविद्यालय की आन्तरिक शिकायत समिति द्वारा आयोजित कहानी लेखन प्रतियोगिता में प्रथम पुरस्कार से पुरस्कृत लेख।)

बेटों से प्यार, बेटियों का तिरस्कार

सुजाता की शादी उसके माता-पिता ने बीस साल की छोटी उम्र में कर दी। वह अपनी ग्रेजुएशन भी पूरी नहीं कर पाई थी कि उसकी शादी कर दी गई। सुजाता से छोटी दो बहनें और एक भाई भी था। सुजाता के पिता कपड़े की एक दुकान पर मुनीम थे। उनकी तनख्वाह में ही परिवार अपना गुजारा कर रहा था। अब माता-पिता का सारा ध्यान सुजाता से छोटे लड़के वसंत पर था। वसंत पढ़ाई में सामान्य ही था। बाहरवीं क्लास में पढ़ता था। उसे मोटी फीस वाले इंग्लिश मीडियम के स्कूल में उन्होंने दाखिल करवाया था। सोच रहे थे कि वह डॉक्टर बनेगा, तो बहुत कुछ कमा लेगा। जीवन में सुख ही सुख होगा। बेटियाँ क्या खाक देंगी। बेटियों की पढ़ाई पर सुजाता के माता-पिता ने कुछ ज्यादा ध्यान नहीं दिया।

बारहवीं कक्षा में ही वसंत फेल हो गया। घरवालों को यह आभास हो गया कि वसंत डॉक्टर नहीं बन पाएगा। पिता ने अपनी सारी जमा पूंजी खर्च करके वसंत के लिए एक रेडिमेड कपड़ों की दुकान खुलवा दी। बेटा था भई! वह बेटियों की तरह सर पर बोझ थोड़े ही था। कपड़ों की दुकान अच्छी चलने लगी और इसी घमंड में वसंत ने माँ-बाप की इज्जत करना भी छोड़ दिया। सुजाता की दोनों बहनें अपनी बारहवीं

कक्षा में पास होकर एक दुकान पर सेल्स-गर्ल का काम करने लगी थीं और इसी से घर का खर्चा भी चला पाती थीं क्योंकि वसंत तो सारे कमाए हुए पैसे शराब और नशों में ही उड़ा देता था। कुछ दिनों बाद सुजाता से छोटी बहन की शादी भी एक अच्छे परिवार में हो जाती है और वह अपने ससुराल चली जाती है।

सुजाता की सबसे छोटी बहन कंचन पढ़ाई में बहुत ही अच्छी थी। वह अपने कमाए हुए पैसे जोड़कर अपनी पढ़ाई करती गई और सी.ए. बन गई। वसंत ने एक अमीर बाप की बेटी से लव-मैरिज करके अपने माँ-बाप से अलग रहने लगा, क्योंकि उसकी पत्नी उसके माँ-बाप के साथ नहीं रहना चाहती थी। अब घर में केवल सुजाता की सबसे छोटी वाली बहन कंचन ही रह गई थी। उसी की कमाई से घर अच्छी तरह से चल रहा था, लेकिन अब उसके माँ-बाप को यह चिंता सता रही थी कि जब कंचन की भी शादी हो जाएगी तो यह घर कैसे चलेगा? वह कहाँ रहेंगे? उनका क्या होगा? अब माता-पिता पछतावे की आग में जल रहे हैं कि बेटे के अलावा बेटियों को कुछ दिया ही नहीं तो अपेक्षा भी क्या करें? इस कहानी का कोई अंत नहीं है। हाँ, इस कहानी से बेटे और बेटियों में फर्क करने वाले माता-पिता शिक्षा जरूर ले सकते हैं।

नेहा

जानकी देवी मेमोरियल कॉलेज
दिल्ली विश्वविद्यालय।

(टिप्पणी - मैत्रेयी महाविद्यालय की आन्तरिक शिकायत समिति द्वारा आयोजित कहानी लेखन प्रतियोगिता में द्वितीय पुरस्कार से पुरस्कृत लेख।)

छोटी सत्ता पर महिलाओं की पकड़

आजाद भारत में पंचायती राज का सफर १० मई १९४८ से माना जा सकता है। आजादी मिलने के बाद पंचायत व्यवस्था को लेकर सक्रिय और सार्थक प्रयास शुरू हुए। १ मई, १९४८ को संविधान सभा के अध्यक्ष डॉ. राजेंद्र प्रसाद ने इस बाबत तत्कालीन कानून मंत्री बी. आर. अंबेडकर और संविधान सभा के सम्मुख एक प्रस्ताव पेश किया। काफी बहस-मुबाहसे के बाद २७ नवंबर, १९४८ को इस प्रस्ताव को पास कर दिया गया। संविधान के चौथे अध्याय में नीति-निदेशक तत्वों के अंतर्गत अनुच्छेद ४० में पंचायत संबंधी प्रावधान किये गये। पंचायती राज को भारतीय राजव्यवस्था का हिस्सा बनाने के लिए जनवरी १९५७ में अपनी रिपोर्ट सौंपी गयी। समिति ने अपनी सिफारिशों में लोकतंत्र के विकेंद्रीकरण और त्रिस्तरीय (ग्राम, तहसील और जिला स्तर पर) पंचायत व्यवस्था की सिफारिश की। एक अप्रैल १९५८ को समिति की सिफारिशें लागू कर दी गयीं। इसी आधार पर २ सितंबर, १९४९ को पंचायती राज अधिनियम पारित किया गया। १९७७ में जनता पार्टी सरकार ने अशोक मेहता समिति का गठन किया। समिति ने सत्ता का विकेंद्रीकरण कर उसे संस्थागत रूप देने की सिफारिश की और पंचायती राज मॉडल प्रस्तुत किया। लेकिन इस समिति की सिफारिशों को नामंजूर कर दिया गया। सन् १९८७ में डॉ. पी.वी.के. राव समिति ने पंचायती राज पर अपनी सिफारिशें सौंपीं। १९८७ में पंचायती राज संस्थाओं की समीक्षा और सुधार के लिए सुझाव देने हेतु डॉ. लक्ष्मीमल सिंघवी ने कहा कि पंचायती राज संस्थाओं को संविधान में स्थान दिया जाना चाहिए। सन् १९८९ में राजीव गांधी सरकार द्वारा वर्तमान पंचायती राज प्रणाली को सबल बनाने के लिए ६४वां संशोधन पेश किया गया जो पारित नहीं हो सका।

ग्रामीण राजनीतिक क्षेत्र में कुछ वर्ष पूर्व तक महिलाओं की भूमिका नगण्य रही है और पंचायतों में उनका प्रतिनिधित्व नहीं के बराबर रहा। आज ग्राम पंचायत में जिला स्तर की संस्थाओं में महिलाएं निर्वाचित होकर ग्रामीण विकास में महत्वपूर्ण भूमिका निभा रही हैं। आज नौ राज्यों के पंचायतों में पचास फीसदी से ज्यादा महिलाएं जनप्रतिनिधि के रूप में

सामने आयीं हैं, इसके लिए उन्हें कई झंझावतों के दौर से गुजरना पड़ा है। धीरे-धीरे ही सही महिलाएं घूंघट की ओट से निकलकर समाज की मुख्यधारा में आने लगी हैं।

पंचायतों में महिलाओं की एक तिहाई भागीदारी सुनिश्चित करने के उद्देश्य से १९९२ में ७३वां संवैधानिक संशोधन अधिनियम पारित किया गया। इस संशोधन अधिनियम के द्वारा ग्रामसभा का गठन होना अनिवार्य हो गया और ग्राम पंचायतों और सदस्यों की कुल संख्या का कम से कम एक तिहाई संख्या महिलाओं के लिए अनिवार्य कर दी गयी। इस व्यवस्था का प्रभाव हुआ कि देश में लाखों महिलाएं पंचायतों के नेतृत्व हेतु मैदान में आ गयीं। इस संशोधन के जरिये महिलाओं के अस्तित्व और अधिकार को भी स्वीकार किया गया। वर्तमान संदर्भों में देखा जाये तो बिहार, मध्यप्रदेश, झारखंड, त्रिपुरा, उत्तराखंड, हिमाचल प्रदेश, राजस्थान, केरल और पश्चिम बंगाल राज्यों के पंचायती चुनावों में महिलाओं के लिए आरक्षण का प्रतिशत बढ़ाकर पचास कर दिया गया है।

अब कई लाख महिलाएं पंचायत चुनावों में भाग लेने लगी हैं। इसमें कोई शक नहीं कि इनमें से बहुत सारी महिलाएं ऐसी हैं, जिनके परिवार पंचायतों में रहे हैं और जिनके पीछे परिवार की ताकत है। कुछ महिला पंचायत प्रतिनिधि ऐसी हैं, जिनके अधिकार उनके पति या अन्य पुरुषों ने अपने पास रखे हुए हैं। तीसरी श्रेणी में वे महिला प्रतिनिधि हैं, जिन्हें लगता था कि वे पुरुष सहयोगी के बिना अपनी जिम्मेदारी का निर्वाह नहीं कर पायेंगी। लेकिन चौथी श्रेणी में वे महिलाएं हैं, जिन्होंने अपने कार्यकाल में आत्मनिर्णय, साहस और बौद्धिक क्षमता का परिचय दिया है। वैसे देखा जाये, तो ऐसी महिलाओं की संख्या अपेक्षाकृत कम है, लेकिन उनका प्रदर्शन अन्य महिला प्रतिनिधियों को प्रेरित करता है। कुछ समय पहले दिल्ली के लेडी इरविन कॉलेज ने महिला पंचों की भूमिका और उनके जरिये आ रहे बदलाव को लेकर अध्ययन किया था। उसका निचोड़ यह था कि हरियाणा, हिमाचल प्रदेश और उत्तराखंड जैसे राज्यों में चुनी गयी महिला पंचों ने अपने विवेक के आधार पर फैसला लेने का

साहस दिखाया था, जबकि बाकी राज्यों में ये महिला प्रतिनिधि अधिकतर पुरुषों की कठपुतली ही बनी रहीं। ऐसा पाया गया है कि अपने बूते काम करने वाली प्रतिनिधियों का कार्य पति या किसी महिला के दबाव में काम करने वाली महिलाओं से बेहतर है। महिला प्रतिनिधियों ने अपने कार्यकाल में भ्रष्टाचार को पहचान कर इसका विरोध किया है और तमाम परेशानियों के बावजूद विकास कार्य किये हैं। जिन ग्राम पंचायतों में महिला प्रधान हैं, वहां भ्रष्टाचार में काफी कमी आयी है। ऐसा पाया गया है कि महिला प्रतिनिधियों के कारण आम महिलाएं कम मजदूरी, गैर बराबरी, उत्पीड़न, बलात्कार तथा पति द्वारा छोड़ दिये जाने जैसी अपनी समस्याएं इनके समक्ष खुल कर रखने लगी हैं। पंचायतों में प्रतिनिधित्व से महिलाओं की स्वतंत्र पहचान बनी है। वे घूँघट की ओट से निकलकर समाज की मुख्यधारा में आयी हैं। केवल साक्षर, कम शिक्षित, तकनीकी शिक्षा से वंचित तथा विकास कार्यों से अनभिज्ञ महिलाएं भी जब आरक्षण के माध्यम से पंचायतों में पहुँची, तो उन्होंने जानकारीयां जुटाकर अपना सर्वांगीण विकास किया।

भारत विश्व का पहला ऐसा देश है, जहां महिलाओं को चुनाव के जरिये सशक्त करने की दिशा में कदम उठाया गया है। लोकसभा की शहरी और ग्रामीण विकास संबंधित स्टैंडिंग कमेटी ने सिफारिश की है कि महिलाओं के सशक्तिकरण के लिए उनका आरक्षण कम से कम दो वर्ष होना चाहिए। महिला अध्यक्ष या सदस्य के खिलाफ अविश्वास प्रस्ताव दो साल में एक बार से अधिक नहीं लाया जा सकता और यदि कोई महिला किसी कारण से हटती भी है, तो उसके स्थान पर उसी वर्ग की महिला को बिठाया जाना चाहिए। हम यह भी मानते हैं कि देश का समग्र विकास महिलाओं की भागीदारी के बगैर नहीं हो सकता। चाहे गाँवों में साक्षरता के प्रसार का अभियान हो या गाँव के युवकों को रोजगार उपलब्ध कराने का मामला हो, गाँव में पीने के पानी की समस्या हो यह सब कार्य ग्रामीण महिलाएं ही आपसी सहयोग और विकास कार्यों में सबकी भागीदारी सुनिश्चित करके कर सकती हैं। बढ़ती आबादी की रोकथाम, पर्यावरण की रक्षा, बच्चों को पौष्टिक व संतुलित आहार देने और इन सबसे बढ़कर स्थानीय संसाधनों की अधिकाधिक आत्मनिर्भरता प्राप्त करने की दिशा में महिलाएं ही अपना योगदान और नेतृत्व दे सकती हैं।

अधिकतर महिलाएं पहली बार राजनीतिक माहौल में आ रही हैं। इसलिए उनमें भय, संकोच एवं घबराहट होती है। ऐसी महिलाओं में साहस उत्पन्न करना होगा तथा महिलाओं को उनकी आंतरिक क्षमता एवं शक्ति पर भरोसा करना होगा। राजनीतिक माहौल में अपराधीकरण, आतंकवाद, कालाधन, चरित्र लांछन जैसे दुर्गुण आम हैं। इस बात से कोई इंकार नहीं कर सकता कि इन दुर्गुणों से अधिकतर महिलाएं सार्वजनिक रूप से अलग रहती हैं।

७३वें और ७४वें संविधान संशोधन के बाद एक बड़ा बदलाव यह हुआ कि महिलाओं एवं पिछड़े व कमजोर वर्गों का भी प्रतिनिधित्व सुनिश्चित हुआ। ३३ प्रतिशत महिला आरक्षण के प्रावधान की वजह से ही यह संभव हो सका कि आज करीब दस लाख महिलाएं पंचायतों का प्रतिनिधित्व कर रही हैं। पिछले १९ सालों में महिलाओं की राजनीतिक स्थिति पूरी तरह बदल गयी है। पंचायतों में ३३ प्रतिशत आरक्षण है, हालांकि इसकी अधिकतम सीमा निर्धारित नहीं है। यह महिलाओं की राजनीतिक भागीदारी सुनिश्चित करेगा।

वर्तमान पंचायतों में औसत महिला प्रतिनिधित्व ३६.९४ प्रतिशत है। कुछ राज्यों मसलन मध्यप्रदेश, झारखंड, बिहार, छत्तीसगढ़, राजस्थान, उत्तराखंड, पश्चिम बंगाल आदि राज्यों में महिला आरक्षण ५० प्रतिशत कर दिया गया है। आकड़ों के मुताबिक बिहार में कुछ चुने गये प्रतिनिधियों में ५५ प्रतिशत महिलाएं हैं। उम्मीद की जानी चाहिए कि आने वाले समय में समाज का ताना बाना पूरी तरह बदल जायेगा। राजीव गांधी का कथन है - "गांव ही हमारी व्यवस्था का मूल है, लेकिन यदि व्यवस्था को मजबूती देकर विकास करना है तो प्रत्येक गरीब तक हमें पहुंचना होगा। आज यदि हमारा देश मजबूत है तो इसी कारण से कि इस देश की आम जनता बलशाली और उत्साह से भरपूर है। हाँ, हम व्यवस्थापकों ने जनता के उत्साह का भरपूर लाभ नहीं लिया। स्वराज्य की पहुँच गाँवों तक नहीं हो पायी है। हमें ऐसा करना ही होगा और उसका माध्यम है - पंचायती राज। इस पर हमें ध्यान देना होगा।"

डॉ. सीमा सिंह

सहायक प्रोफेसर, हिन्दी विभाग
एनसीडब्ल्यूईबी, मैत्रेयी कॉलेज।

NEWS ANALYSIS

By Prarthana Judith Herald

Analysis

Hot khichdi poured on 4-year-old who asked for extra egg in Bengal

HT Correspondent

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BERHAMPORE: A four-year-old boy, who asked for an extra egg while having breakfast at a state-funded child development centre, was allegedly stripped and burnt with steaming khichdi by a staffer in Raghunathganj area of Bengal's Murshidabad district on Friday.

The inspector in-charge of Raghunathganj police station, Chinmoy Bhattacharya, said a complaint was lodged against the staffer, Sehari Bawa, on Saturday. She is absconding. The child has been admitted to Jangipur hospital with severe burns in his legs and hips. "I spoke to the district magistrate and sought a report from the administration on the inhuman incident," said Ananya Chatter-

THE INSPECTOR OF RAGHUNATHGANJ POLICE STATION SAID A WRITTEN COMPLAINT WAS LODGED AGAINST THE WOMAN, SEHARI BAWA, ON SATURDAY.

jee Chakraborty, chairperson of the West Bengal Commission for Protection of Child Rights (WBCPCR).

Located in Khidirpur village, the centre is part of the Integrated Child Development Scheme under which children up to six years were provided with supplementary nutrition, immunisation and pre-school and non-formal education.

"To generate jobs, the administration trains local women to

run these centres. The boy, whose family lives in Kanupur village, was sent to the ICDS centre around 8 am on Friday. Minu Bibi, his mother, said, "My son came home crying a little after 9 am... I rushed to the ICDS centre to find out what happened. Some children told me Sehari Bawa stripped my son and poured steaming khichdi on his lower back for daring to ask for an extra egg."

Lying in the hospital bed, the boy said, "I didn't do any mischief. But Didimoni (teacher) beat me and some other boys... I don't know why she poured khichdi on me."

Block development officer (BDO) of Raghunathganj-1 block, Masadur Rahaman, said, "I went to the hospital to see the child. We have initiated a probe."

Who is Safe?

I find no single page in the newspaper mentioning about how small children and women feel safe in our country. It looks as though the world is completely drenched with misery, hopelessness and despair. It is pathetic to read about harm being meted out against infants and toddlers whose feet have still not touched the ground, who are unaware about the complexity of life but are being punished for no fault of theirs. What is shocking to notice that both the crimes have been committed by female helpers? In the first case we find that the staffer of the state funded child development centre in Bengal was guilty of pouring hot 'KHICHDI' on the

four year old's back who asked for an extra egg. Isn't this quite shocking?

Well coming to the second case we find that two female helpers sexually abused a three -and- a -half year- old toddler by shoving stones into the girl's private parts at a renowned baby day-care centre and primary school in Hyderabad. What is pertinent to mention here is that both the incidents occurred at a day care centre under the watchful presence of the helpers, who are entrusted with the responsibility of looking after the children and what is pitiable is that the helpers themselves are accused of committing the crime. Therefore this raises an alarm in the minds of the reader, and the question rises - "How protected are the children in such state-funded child development centers or day-care centers at large?"

Well I believe it is the government's responsibility to look into the implementation of such programs, since starting an initiative is easy but implementing it, is hard. Trustworthy and honest teachers should be kept in charge, who would administer the helpers and watch out for any unforeseen circumstance. The protection of children is and should be the first priority. The marks and the pain of these abuses hurled out to them can never be erased, but the fear should be removed from their minds and tender hearts. As citizens we need to be aware of the harms caused out to children. It is good that such incidents are reported in the newspaper and in the media to make the people aware of the ill happenings in our society, so that even the parents are vigilant about such horrendous incidents and can take action against the perpetrators of such an offense. However the larger question that still remains is "WHO IS SAFE IN TODAY'S WORLD?", I guess the answer to this remains an evident 'No', but ending with an optimistic note I would rather say that strict and stern action should be taken by the authorities against those responsible for such an incorrigible behavior so that even the young can live a safe and a healthy life.

WOMEN SEXUALLY ABUSE CHILD AT DAYCARE CENTRE

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HYDERABAD: A three-and-a-half-year-old toddler was allegedly sexually abused by two female helpers of a renowned baby day-care centre and primary school at Izzatnagar in upscale Madhapur area in Hyderabad.

Andhra Pradesh Child Rights Protection Committee president P Achyuta Rao said the incident took place on April 10 and police have registered the case on the same day following a complaint from the child's mother, whose husband is an IT professional working in a software firm in Madhapur.

Rao alleged that the child's mother had complained that the two ayahs (female helpers) - Parveen and Narsamma - had abused the child and shoved stones and a twig into her private parts, causing bleeding injuries.

"Police had not taken up investigation on the pretext that they were busy in election duty on the following day," he said.

When contacted, Madhapur sub-inspector Rammohan Reddy said the girl was immediately shifted to a government hospital.

"As per the preliminary investigation, there were no signs of any sexual abuse, but it was found that the helpers had pushed a small stone into the girl's private parts. There was no bleeding as per the reports," he said.

He, however, said the two ayahs had not been formally arrested but were being questioned. An FIR was registered against the accused under sections 5 and 6 of the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act.

The school management is not available for comment.

Aspiring model fights off molesters, police go online to nab them

HT Correspondent

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NEW DELHI: Two men have been arrested for allegedly molesting a 22-year-old aspiring model in south Delhi's New Friends Colony after she refused to accompany them to their residence in Ghaziabad, police said Saturday.

Chinmoy Biswal, deputy commissioner of police (southeast), identified the arrested men as Sunny Kumar Verma, 28, and Pratham Singla, 20. Both their fathers are serving in the Indian army, the DCP said. The men were arrested following a complaint filed by the woman, who lives in Gurugram, at the New Friends Colony police station.

The woman works with a multinational firm. Earlier this month, she had come across an advertisement of a modelling competition on a social media site. She had approached organisers and transferred around ₹16,000 as participation fee.

"On March 2 evening, Sunny Verma and his three volunteers asked the woman to visit them at a Gurgaon pub to discuss work. From there, they persuaded her to accompany them to another pub in a prominent hotel in Delhi's New Friends Colony," said the DCP.

But when it was time to leave for their homes around 5.30 am, the next morning, Verma and Singla hired a cab and allegedly asked the woman to accompany them to their Ghaziabad flat.

"The woman refused and agreed to get into the cab only when the men promised to first drop her at her home in Gurugram," said the DCP.

But when the trio got into the cab, the men allegedly locked the



■ The two suspects after their arrest. SOURCED

doors when she tried to get out. "When she began screaming for help, the driver stopped the vehicle and let her out. She then booked another cab," DCP Biswal said.

Just as the woman entered her cab, Verma and Singla allegedly entered her car.

"Verma grabbed the woman's hand, molested her, abused her and warned her of consequences if she didn't accompany them. The woman managed to push the duo out, lock the car from inside and speed away," said the DCP.

Once a police case was filed, investigators used the social media accounts of the suspects to track them down. "They were arrested from a night club in Connaught Place on Wednesday," said the DCP.

"The suspects posed as modelling contacts to lure young women. They would then be duped of money with promises of making them judges or brand ambassadors of the modelling firm they claimed to run," said the DCP.

Analysis

It is shocking to find out how people today, are blindly trusting online social media sites. Here in this case the girl should have first checked the authenticity of the site. Furthermore the report states that the two men asked her to accompany them to the pubs for discussing work matter. I believe that there can be much more sophisticated places to discuss work rather than going to a pub. I find it quite mysterious that how can a 22 year old grown up girl, trust men whom she is meeting for the first time and accompany them to 2 pubs. What is questionable here is that the trio left the spot the next morning at 5a.m. which means that they spent the night together, and the fact that she sat with them in the cab in spite of being told to further accompany them to their flat in Ghaziabad, and thus was unwise in taking the decision. In a city where one cannot even trust one's friend or relative, here is a girl who undoubtedly spends a night alone with the so called organizers without a hint that these men are guilty of running a bogus modeling firm, duping young girls of their money and promising them false dreams. One should be well acquainted with the fact of not trusting social media sites and should also have the discernment regarding transferring of cash to unknown people and unknown sites. As it is not only about the loss of money but also a threat posed to a woman's life and her safety.



28-year-old engineer held for raping FB friend

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: An engineering graduate was arrested for allegedly raping a teacher he met on Facebook. The 28-year-old accused later recorded the act as well which was then used to blackmail the woman.

DCP (northwest) Vijayanta Arya said that the accused, Kishan, has been booked under IPC Sections 376 (rape) and 67 of the Information Technology Act.

In her complaint, the woman said that she met Kishan on Facebook in October 2017 and they started chatting. The woman, who is a teacher, later started meeting Kishan. She said that during one of these meetings she was taken to a guest house in Adarsh Nagar, where Kishan allegedly raped her. He then promised to marry her, but kept on postponing the date.

Meanwhile, the accused had also recorded the act with the woman and started blackmailing her. The woman came to know that Kishan had uploaded her photos and videos on Instagram. When he refused to delete them, she went to police. Officers called the accused for questioning. As cops scanned his mobile phone and social media profile, they found explicit content which he had uploaded using a fake handle.

The accused was sent to judicial custody.

Analysis

SOCIAL MEDIA: FRIEND OR FOE?

A civil services aspirant held for raping a woman! Yes you read it right. Even I couldn't believe my eyes. Here is a man willing to work industriously and serve the country but indeed falls into the evil cycle of lust for a woman whom he met online, and destroys not only his future by tarnishing his image but also exploits the woman and leaves with her a painful memory, now difficult to erase.

Here again in this case we find that the duo met on facebook in 2017 and since then kept meeting each other. The accused took the woman, a 24 year old music teacher to a guest house and forced a physical relationship on the pretext of marriage. He repeatedly did this to her and when the victim refused, he threatened her of sharing her obscene pictures on social media. It is only when she came across a photo sharing app containing her photos, she decided to report it to the police.

How can women trust men whom they meet on a social media platform? I fail to understand that how can one be ignorant to the incidents happening in Delhi against women and still trust a man whom she met on social media and not even face to face. Women today need to understand that in today's society no one is to be trusted! The question that rises today is whether we have started trusting social media more than our conscience? Do we accept everything based on its face value, not realizing the repercussion involved? Also what is questionable here is that the girl willingly went with the man to an unknown guesthouse.

We need to discern for our own selves rather than rely on what the internet has to offer to us. All this looks glamorous, but the real world is hollow and full of filth, it is important that girls do not fall into the trap of being promised a marriage proposal and be misused on the pretext of it. It is high time that we realize the pros and cons of the global media and the internet around us. I do not condemn the fact that internet can be used for spreading awareness and knowledge at the same time, but what is important today is to discern and be wise and not act like a buffoon trusting anyone, anytime. SO, BE WISE!

POSTERS

**Prize Winning Entries in Inter-College Poster Making Competition held
at Maitreyi College**

FIRST PRIZE



Muskan Verma

B.A (Prog.) 2nd Year

Maitreyi College (University of Delhi)

SECOND PRIZE



Ankita Dutta

B.A (H) Political Science 1st Year
Maitreyi College (University of Delhi)

SKETCHES

By Simran Tyagi
Based on Articles in January 2019 Issue

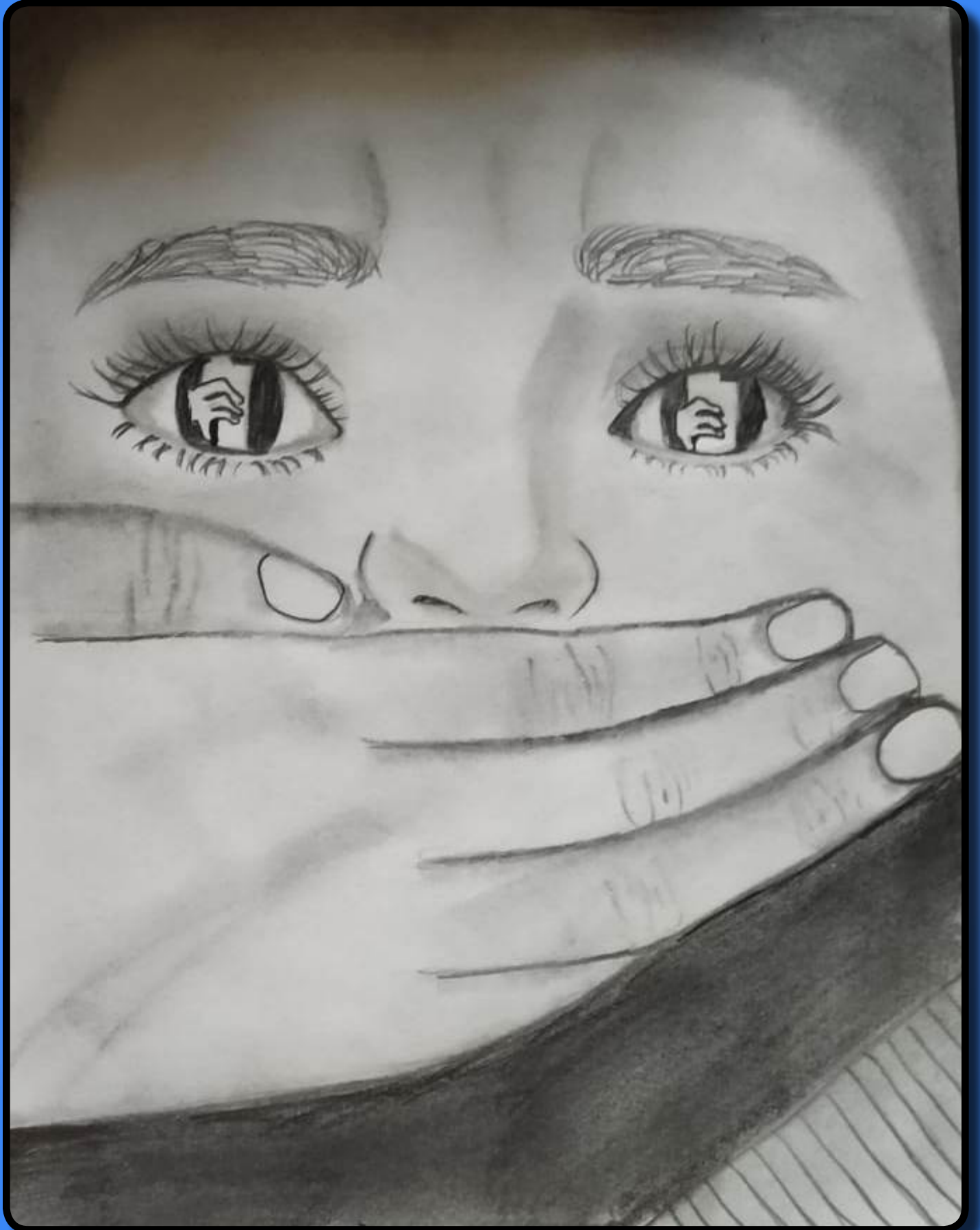
Acid Attack



Was She Weak



बाल बलात्कार



ISSN 2581-9917



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Cover Picture Courtesy : Dr. Praseon Jain, MD West Virginia, USA

Magazine Design by : Mr. Santosh Kumar, 9810247681