

WOMEN

SHiNE

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Initiative of WE Foundation



CAPT. POONAM DEVRAKHYANI



CHIEF EDITOR'S LETTER

#SHINEON

APARNA MISHRA

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Dear Readers of WomenShine,

As we welcome the holiday season and say goodbye to yet another incredible year, I want to sincerely thank each and every one of you for being a vital member of our active community. This December edition honors the accomplishments, fortitude, and strength that sum up what it means to be a woman.

This month, we explore triumphant tales, offer motivational insights, and handpick content that captures the spirit of the occasion. WomenShine continues to be your constant companion as we traverse life's complexities, providing a haven of empowerment, support, and joy.

While we celebrate, let's take a moment to consider the obstacles we've overcome and the victories we've made. Let's support one another and show kindness in the spirit of giving.

When we work together, we radiate more light and empower people around us as well as ourselves.

I hope this December brings you happiness, coziness, and a fresh sense of direction. Cheers to the amazing women we are and the even more amazing journeys we have ahead of us.

Light and Love !!

Aparna Mishra
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WOMEN SHiNE



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Soaring Above the Sky – The Trailblazing Journey of a Female Pilot and Government Servant

CAPT. POONAM DEVRAKHYANI'S INSPIRATIONAL ASCENT IN AVIATION AND BEYOND

In the world of aviation, where every journey tells a story of ambition and perseverance, Capt. Poonam Devrakhyani's narrative stands out as a beacon of inspiration. As we celebrate International Civil Aviation Day, we delve into the life of this extraordinary female pilot, entrepreneur, and government servant, whose career trajectory is a testament to breaking barriers and redefining success in the skies and on the ground.

EMBARKING ON A FLIGHT OF DREAMS: A CHILDHOOD STEEPED IN AMBITION AND EMPATHY

Capt. Poonam Devrakhyani's passion for aviation took root in her family home, where dreams were sown in the fertile ground of ambition and empathy. Influenced by her brother, a special child, she learned early the value of inclusivity and compassion. This blend of family values and personal experiences shaped her journey, driving her to advocate for adventure sports for children with special needs, and highlighting her dedication to social causes alongside her professional pursuits.



CHAMPIONING A SPECIAL CAUSE: EMPOWERING CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

Beyond the cockpit, Capt. Devrakhyani has been a steadfast advocate for children with special needs, inspired by her brother's journey. Her commitment to this cause reflects her deep empathy and desire to create inclusive opportunities in adventure sports. This work underscores her belief in the transformative power of inclusivity and her dedication to making a tangible difference in the lives of those who face unique challenges.



A DISTINGUISHED CAREER: FROM COMMERCIAL AIRLINES TO GOVERNMENT SERVICE

Capt. Devrakhyani's professional journey is marked by significant achievements and transitions. Her 12-year tenure at Jet Airways, where she piloted Boeing 737 New Generation Aircraft, earned her the title of "Golden Girl" in aviation. Her career took a new flight path with AirAsia India, where she skillfully managed the Airbus 320 aircraft. Demonstrating her commitment to public service, she later joined the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA), Government of India, as a Flight Operations Inspector, bringing her expertise to a role that directly impacts national aviation safety.





ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE AND PIONEERING RESEARCH

Parallel to her aviation career, Capt. Devrakhyani pursued academic excellence. She topped her Bachelor's of Science in Aviation, completed an MBA in Aerospace and Aviation, and earned a postgraduate degree in Aviation Law and Air Transport Management. Her research on AI for Air Safety and CRM for Airlines using IoT & AI, and advancing women's careers in aviation, highlight her role as a thought leader and innovator.

BEYOND THE SKIES: A LIFE OF DIVERSE INTERESTS

Away from her professional responsibilities, Capt. Devrakhyani indulges in paragliding, baking, and writing. These hobbies reflect her adventurous spirit, creative flair, and desire to share her knowledge and experiences with a wider audience.

INSPIRING FUTURE AVIATORS: A ROLE MODEL FOR ASPIRING PILOTS

Capt. Devrakhyani serves as a source of inspiration for those entering the aviation field, especially women. Her journey exemplifies that with determination, passion, and a resilient spirit, the aviation industry's challenges can be transformed into stepping stones for success and leadership.

CONCLUSION: A LEGACY OF INSPIRATION AND TRANSFORMATION

On International Civil Aviation Day, Capt. Poonam Devrakhyani's story stands as a powerful symbol of transformation and inspiration. From a young dreamer to a trailblazer in aviation, entrepreneurship, and public service, her journey is a vivid reminder of the limitless potential that lies within the pursuit of one's passions and dreams.



Non-Violence and Rural Women Emancipation: A Path to Progress

In the bucolic heartlands of our world, where the air is pure, and the landscapes are serene, a struggle unfolds that often remains unnoticed. Rural women, the unsung heroines of these areas, face numerous challenges on their path to emancipation. These women are the backbone of their communities, yet their voices often go unheard, and their plight is underrepresented.

THE POWER OF NON-VIOLENCE

In the intricate tapestry of rural life, the silent struggles of women demand our keen attention. We embark on a journey of profound significance – the emancipation of rural women. It's not just about the absence of physical aggression; it's about fostering understanding, empathy, and respect. These women are the lifeblood of their communities, toiling in fields, nurturing families, and safeguarding cultural legacies. Yet, their monumental contributions often vanish into the shadows of neglect.



Economic hardships, limited educational opportunities, and relentless discrimination form a web of challenges they confront daily. It's high time to cast a spotlight on their plight, a silent epidemic of violence that shackles their potential, entwining them in a cycle of suffering. The remedy lies in non-violence, a potent force capable of shattering these chains and creating sanctuaries where rural women can not only survive but truly thrive. It's a call to action, a pledge to acknowledge their struggles and propel them toward a brighter, empowered tomorrow.

Choosing non-violence is more than a choice; it's a powerful embrace of transformation. It signifies a profound shift in our understanding, acknowledging the innate potential that resides in every rural woman, a potential akin to a force of nature. Yet, this potential demands more than acknowledgement; it craves opportunity and support. Non-violence is the very path that leads to empowerment, unlocking the dormant strength within. To truly uplift rural women, our collective strength must come into play. Esteemed organizations like the ILO and IFAD have already set the stage by recognizing the pivotal role of solidarity in combating violence. Their initiatives stand as beacons, guiding us to implement similar strategies at the grassroots level, fostering a movement where empowerment becomes not just a notion but a lived reality.

THE POWER OF NON-VIOLENCE

Empowering rural women is a journey intertwined with education, a key that unlocks doors to a world free from the chains of violence and discrimination. The transformative power of education extends beyond knowledge—it instills skills that break the barriers constraining these resilient women. However, the path to emancipation is incomplete without economic empowerment. Providing access to resources, comprehensive training, and opportunities becomes a catalyst, fundamentally altering the trajectory of their lives. The silencing of rural women's suffering must end, replaced by a collective encouragement to amplify their voices.

This collective effort aims to shape a society where tolerance for violence is non-existent, making room for empowerment and equality to flourish.

The path to rural women's emancipation through non-violence is challenging but absolutely achievable. By recognizing the importance of these unsung heroines, acknowledging the toll of violence, and embracing non-violence as a catalyst for empowerment, we can pave the way for a brighter future. The responsibility to support rural women in their journey towards emancipation is a shared one. As we embrace non-violence and stand in solidarity, we can create a world where rural women are truly empowered and their contributions celebrated. Let's take inspiration from the resources provided by ILO and IFAD and be the change rural women need. With non-violence as our guiding principle, we can ensure that rural women no longer remain forgotten heroes but become the architects of their own destinies.



**- Written By :
Hema Bansal Ahlawat**

Understanding The Transformative Power of Inclusive Education Through a Pop Culture Lens

In the dynamic landscape of education, the influence of pop culture is a pervasive force, shaping not only the entertainment we consume but also the values we hold and the way we perceive the world. From movies and TV shows to music and literature, pop culture serves as a universal language, transcending cultural boundaries and weaving its threads into the fabric of our societies.

Understanding the profound impact of pop culture is crucial in our quest for a more inclusive education system, particularly in the formative years of pre-primary schooling. By examining the influence of pop culture, we aim to gain insights that inform the design of a more inclusive and culturally responsive education system, laying the foundation for a generation of global citizens equipped with the skills and perspectives needed to thrive in our interconnected world. Join us as we navigate the realms of pop culture, seeking to decode its influence and harness its potential to foster a truly inclusive educational experience.

1. Establishing Foundational Principles of Inclusivity in Pre-Primary Education

In the earliest stages of a child's educational journey, the emphasis on inclusivity is not just a pragmatic choice but a moral imperative. The internet phenomenon, an Australian animated series "Bluey" offers a delightful and inclusive example for young audiences. While not explicitly addressing LGBTQ+ themes, "Bluey" normalizes diverse family structures by featuring a diverse array of families, including single-parent households and grandparents as primary caregivers. By showcasing the beauty of varied family dynamics, the show subtly contributes to establishing foundational principles of inclusivity in pre-primary education. Fostering inclusivity in pre-primary schooling lays the bedrock for a society characterized by compassion, understanding, and respect for diversity. It is in these formative years that children begin to shape their perceptions of the world, and an inclusive environment becomes the crucible for cultivating empathy and a sense of unity amid diversity.



2. The Role of Educators: Going Beyond Conventional Boundaries

The role of educators extends beyond the conventional boundaries of imparting knowledge, involving fostering an environment where every student feels seen, heard, and valued. In the film "Taare Zameen Par," the character Ram, played by Aamir Khan, epitomizes the transformative impact educators can have. Ram goes beyond traditional teaching methods, recognizing and nurturing the artistic talents of Ishaan, a dyslexic student. This poignant narrative serves as a testament to the importance of educators fostering environments where every student feels seen and valued, emphasizing the profound impact of going beyond conventional boundaries in the pursuit of inclusive and holistic education. Integrating inclusivity into the very fabric of education requires deliberate efforts to recognize and appreciate the myriad backgrounds, languages, and abilities present within the classroom. Creating a learning space where each student feels a sense of belonging, irrespective of their circumstances, is essential.



3. Curriculum Integration: Nurturing Acceptance and Understanding

"There is only one way to look at things until someone shows us how to look at them with different eyes." - Pablo Picasso



Curriculum integration emerges as a powerful vehicle for nurturing acceptance and understanding among students. Weaving a rich tapestry of stories, experiences, and examples from diverse cultures into daily lessons broadens students' perspectives and instils in them a profound appreciation for the richness that diversity brings to the educational experience. It becomes a conduit for breaking down stereotypes, fostering mutual respect, and sowing the seeds of a more inclusive society. For example - by learning about great talents such as Stephen Hawking and his ALS, Frida Kahlo's childhood polio, or even Billie Eilish's Tourettes Syndrome; children learn to recognise how disabilities are not a barrier to success while fostering sympathy, understanding and equipping themselves with skill sets that better equip them to navigate our diverse society.

4. Addressing Diverse Learning Styles

One of the cornerstones of inclusivity in education lies in addressing the varied learning styles and needs of each student. Every child is unique, with distinct abilities and challenges. The film "Dead Poets Society" starring Robin Williams provides a compelling pop culture reference for addressing diverse learning styles. Williams' character, John Keating, employs unconventional teaching methods to engage students with varied learning preferences. This cinematic example underscores the impact of tailoring education to diverse needs, encouraging educators to embrace creativity and flexibility to meet the unique learning styles of each student. Commitment to creating an environment that accommodates this diversity, recognizing that a one-size-fits-all approach is insufficient, is paramount. Differentiated instruction becomes a guiding principle, ensuring that every student has access to the resources and support they need to thrive academically and personally.



5. Extending Inclusivity to Society

In the broader context, the need for inclusivity extends beyond the confines of the classroom and permeates the fabric of our societal structures. Take the Marvel Cinematic Universe's introduction of diverse superheroes, such as Black Panther and Ms. Marvel. These characters, representing various ethnicities and genders, resonate globally, challenging traditional norms. Beyond entertainment, they influence societal perceptions, fostering inclusivity by showcasing the strength in diversity. This pop culture phenomenon demonstrates how representation and inclusion can extend beyond entertainment, becoming a powerful force for promoting inclusivity and understanding in broader society. Such phenomena, thus setting the stage for embracing inclusivity from the earliest stages of education, contribute to the creation of a generation that values diversity, fosters empathy, and dismantles the barriers that perpetuate exclusion.

A commitment to inclusivity is not a mere professional duty but a calling to contribute to the larger tapestry of societal change. It is a recognition that education is not just about the transmission of knowledge but the cultivation of compassionate, informed, and socially responsible individuals. In the mosaic of Indian education, the efforts toward inclusivity can paint a picture of a future where every student, regardless of background or ability, is afforded the opportunity to flourish and contribute meaningfully to society.

- Written By :
Mrs Damayanti Bhattacharya

Bridging the Gap: Unveiling Gender Disparities in Blue-Collar Occupations and the Road to Financial Inclusion

“Gender equality is the goal that will help abolish poverty, create more equal economies, fairer societies, and happier men, women, and children.” - Graça Machel.

Graça Machel's quote serves as a compelling call to action for gender equality, emphasizing its potential to create a fairer, more prosperous, and happier world. However, it's pertinent to recognize that achieving gender equality is a complex and multifaceted endeavour that requires a nuanced understanding of its various dimensions and their interactions with other societal factors.



Zooming in on the narrative of human progress, gender disparities have played a significant role. These differences have affected various aspects of society throughout history and continue to do so today. However, One socio-economic avenue where gender inequality is less explored is blue-collar jobs.



Factors Fueling the Divide

The saga of gender disparities in blue-collar occupations begins with a steady convergence of societal factors. Our recently conducted survey points to the stubborn remnants of traditional gender roles as a prime contributor to this divide. Women continue to be shackled by perceptions that certain jobs are "men's work," perpetuating stereotypes that hinder their entry into these fields.

Traditional Gender Roles

Society has long held traditional expectations about the roles of men and women. Historically, certain jobs have been associated with masculinity, while others have been considered more appropriate for women. These entrenched stereotypes persist in many cultures, influencing individuals' career choices and opportunities.

Social Norms

Social norms play a crucial role in shaping behavior. In the context of blue-collar jobs, societal norms can discourage women from pursuing careers in male-dominated fields. Peer pressure, family expectations, and community attitudes all contribute to these norms.

Educational Opportunities

Access to education and vocational training can differ based on gender. In some regions, girls may have limited access to educational programs that prepare individuals for careers in traditionally male-dominated industries. This lack of educational opportunities can restrict their ability to enter such fields.

Lack of Female Role Models

The scarcity of female role models in blue-collar occupations can be a deterrent for women. Seeing few women in leadership or skilled positions within these fields can create a perception that such careers are not viable options for them.



Economic Factors

Economic considerations also play a role. Blue-collar jobs often come with wage disparities between genders, where women may earn less than their male counterparts for the same work. This wage gap can further discourage women from pursuing these careers.

Policy and Advocacy

The presence or absence of policies and advocacy initiatives aimed at promoting gender diversity in blue-collar industries can be a significant factor. Supportive policies, programs, and advocacy efforts can help break down barriers and create more inclusive work environments.

Biases in the system

The recruitment and hiring process, an initial gateway to these professions, often harbours subtle yet insidious biases. Our survey reveals that disparities persist in job advertisements, qualifications, and even interview processes. Job descriptions laden with masculine language and suggestive overtones can deter women from applying, while qualifications might be tailored in a way that inadvertently favours male applicants.

The workplace environment, a crucible where equity and inclusivity should reign, often falls short. Respondents shared that, despite some progress, the blue-collar world can still be inhospitable for women. Once inside the blue-collar workforce, women face yet another hurdle: disparities in career advancement opportunities. Survey results unequivocally show that gender disparities persist in the ascent up the career ladder. Factors such as unequal pay, overlooked promotions, and limited access to leadership roles form the formidable obstacles that women must navigate.



The Way Forward

Despite these gruelling challenges, there is a glimmer of hope. Some respondents report the presence of support and training programs tailored to address the unique needs of women in blue-collar roles. These programs aim to level the playing field by offering mentorship, skill development, and a sense of belonging. Malti, an apprentice plumber, highlights her mentor who, as a seasoned plumber herself, has been instrumental in inspiring her growth. This mentorship proves that women lifting each other up can surmount gender barriers.

The gender disparities in blue-collar occupations are undeniably complex. However, it is a challenge that society cannot afford to ignore. The solution demands a multipronged approach: dismantling stereotypes, reforming recruitment practices, fostering inclusive workplaces, and ensuring equal opportunities for advancement. The machinery of progress awaits a united front, where gender ceases to be a dividing line and becomes a rich boiling pot of diversity and strength.

Financial Inclusion of Women: Foundation for Gender Equality

As we empower women to break free from the chains of occupational biases, we must simultaneously ensure that their financial rights and opportunities are equally unshackled. Financial inclusion, the bedrock of economic empowerment, often eludes those who find themselves on the wrong side of the gender divide. Women who are fighting to be heard and respected in blue-collar workplaces may also find themselves battling for financial independence. To truly bridge the gender gap, we must bridge the financial divide. This entails not only addressing disparities in income but also dismantling systemic barriers that hinder women's access to financial services, resources, and decision-making power.

Conclusion

In summation, the excavation of these gender disparities in blue-collar occupations reveals a complex, multifaceted challenge. But within the challenge lies the opportunity for transformation—a world where the clang of metal and the hum of machinery are accompanied by the harmonious symphony of gender equality. However, as we collectively strive to unveil and address gender disparities in blue-collar occupations, let us not forget that financial inclusion is a vital note in this harmonious journey. The future beckons us to harmonize these two narratives, creating a world where all individuals, regardless of gender or occupation, can march boldly toward economic emancipation.



- Written By : Anshul Khurana



DARE DEVIL AT HEART | RACHEL

Rachel Thomas a small-town girl from Chittaranjan West Bengal dreamt of soaring in the limitless sky and became India's first woman skydiver. A daredevil at heart has made her mark by hoisting the Indian tricolor on the North Pole. From being conferred with the Padma Shri in 2005 to making an entry into the Limca book of records is no mean feat.



“THE FUTURE BELONGS TO THOSE WHO BELIEVE IN THE BEAUTY OF THEIR DREAMS.”- ELEANOR ROOSEVELT

PT: WHAT OR WHO INSPIRED YOU TO GO SKYDIVING?

RT: As a kid I always wanted to fly/ soar as one of the kites/ eagles. I could just stare at them for hours and just enjoy them. Being born in a small town my exposure was very little. I never knew there were flying clubs for women even.

PT: THE FIRST TIME YOU SKYDIVED YOU HAD CLAMMY FINGERS, DID YOU FEEL YOU SHOULD QUIT AND GO HOME.

RT: The first time I skydived was also the first time I was flying in an aircraft. Ha! ha! And now you tell this person to jump out of the plane at 4,500 ft. Everything looked like miniature toys In my dictionary the words Quit or No never existed. I think I was a born fighter. I knew I had to find a way out of my sweaty palms and I did it on my 4 th freefall. Never have I looked back ever.

PT: HOW WAS THE FEELING OF MEETING THE PM, MR RAJIV GANDHI?

RT: When I realized that I would be the last person he would be meeting on the lawns of 7 Race Course, I was a bit disappointed, honestly he spent the most time with me. He never for even one second made me feel that he was the Prime Minister of India. He went through my Log Book where we log each jump we have carried out the date and the experience. The first 10 jumps were signed and the details of how my jump was filled by my Instructor, Chantal who was a French lady whose English was sketchy.

So the PM read her remark to me and asked me what is this — No pull, forgot to pull. I nearly wanted to say whatever you can imagine but I didn't dare to so I explained — It was my Ripcord Handle that I didn't pull. He smiled and then talked to me for a long time wanting to know what I desired to do.

PT: YOU HAVE HAD QUITE A LOT OF CLOSE SHAVES, WHAT WAS YOUR FEELING WHEN YOU MANAGED TO COME OUT OF IT?

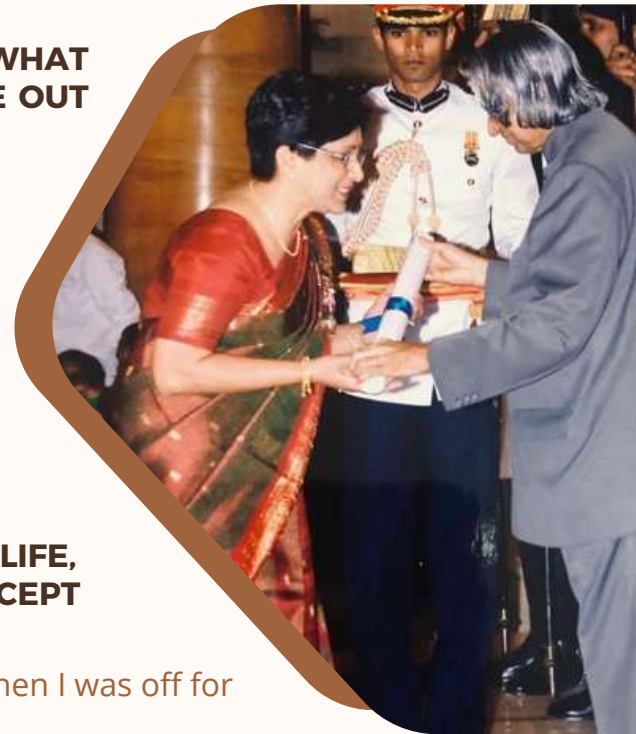
RT: I was so confident that my Creator has numbered my days. Nothing would happen before that. When I started to skydive I was just 24 with two kids 3&5 yr old. My friends were shocked how I could have not thought about my kids — I had only one answer — Do you have any guarantee crossing the road or climbing down the stairs that you won't die or get injured. When you have no answer to that then I am confident that my sport is very safe.

PT: YOU WERE FACING A LOT OF PERSONAL ISSUES IN LIFE, HOW DID YOU AS A MOTHER AND YOUR CHILDREN ACCEPT YOUR LONG ABSENCE?

RT: I was Blessed. Both my mother and sister were there when I was off for training or for competitions

PT: WHAT WAS THE FEELING OF REACHING THE NORTH POLE AND PLANTING THE TRICOLOR?

RT: To begin with reaching the 89th Latitude and due to the Arctic Storm the jump couldn't be conducted. Living in Minus 55 degrees was tough with just one solid meal, as they were not prepared for this. On the 6th when we got ready for our jump, on Point Zero, it was exciting. I had never ever dreamt of etching my name on the Top of the World. We jumped from 7,000 ft and flew our parachute to Point Zero. After landing I hosted my Indian Flag proudly there. I created history by being India's First Woman to skydive on to the North Pole. At times for me it is a dream.



PT: DO SHARE THE STORY OF HOW YOU SMUGGLED A DOG?

RT: I had gone to Russia to train with the Russians at their club to excel my skills in the sport. I had already put in 3 weeks of training offered to me by the Russians. The day I was returning home, I just couldn't buy anything for my kids, not even chocolates, as President Gorbachev was hijacked, and the country was in a very bad condition.

Walking through the Saturday market, looking for gifts I saw this lady selling an Apso. I bargained with her and bought the dog, bringing it home with my girlfriend. We showered the dog, dried it, fed it some and took it in my bag to the airport.

It's true — I had no papers but I had decided to give it away if I got caught up with— which I didn't even after he went through the X- Ray Machine.

Once I got through there was no problem Took him to the plane and after take off little Gorby (that's what we named him) was out of the bag, The air hostess fed him cuddled him and he had a great flight to his new home.

PT: HOW DID YOU FEEL ABOUT GETTING THE PADMASHREE AWARD ?

RT: I still remember a friend had called me up and asked me to check the paper out on 26 th Jan early morning. I was ecstatic. Couldn't get over it. Calls flowers and reporters started calling. It was too exciting It's the first time in India that Padmashree was given for Aerosports I am truly grateful To God for all he has done for me.

**PT: 9 WERE YOU SUBJECTED TO ANY GENDER DISCRIMINATION WHILE SKYDIVING?**

RT: Yes I was. When I was skydiving in the 80's there were no women in the Force yet. I had got special permission to skydive with the forces at Demo jumps and even to train at the Para Training Center at Agra/ but my Instructor gave me the best remark in my log book which I have quoted in my book Limitless.

In this world both the good and bad exist and at times I wonder how do I harm them or how do I take away their position for them to pull the rug under my feet .

The most thrilling award was when I got the Air Chief's Commendation I think in 1994

PT: HOW DO YOU KEEP YOURSELF FIT ?

RT: Even today I exercise daily. I try to walk 5 km daily and exercise too after it.

PT: ANY ADVICE FOR READERS REGARDING THIS SPORT ?

RT: It's one of the most amazing Aerosport in the world. It's closest to flying free like a bird. You really play with the Air to do various positions and moves. It's a sport that teaches you to be highly alert even with all the fun you have — SAFETY IS A VERY IMPORTANT PART OF THIS GAME. You always need to have plan B, when you get into a problem cause you are still falling at 120 miles per hour. You have to depend on yourself and get out of it. Trust in yourself always remember

NOTHING IS IMPOSSIBLE



- Written By : Dr. Preeti Talwar



Seasonal Tourism: OFF-BEAT PLACES TO VISIT IN INDIA THIS WINTER SEASON



JIBHI

Anamika Mishra has rightly said, **“Winter is not a season, it’s a celebration”**. Winter brings a feeling of joy. Winters inspire us to

travel more as the atmosphere is pleasing and we get to see a different side of our beautiful earth. Misty mountains and lakes, blue skies, grey beaches, all of this give a great aesthetic for amazing pictures. Another reason to travel can be the sun. At times, the sun can slow us down and make us lazy, especially with the high temperatures in India, which makes it impossible to visit places. Travelling in winter allows us to roam around and visit monumental and historical sites and also witness the real-life stories of the local people there.

So where to go? Here are some best places to visit this season.

1. TAWANG, ARUNACHAL PRADESH

Escape to the hilly abode of Tawang. Located near the Line of Actual Control in Arunachal Pradesh, Tawang is famously known for its Buddhist monasteries. Surrounded by the enthralling ranges of Gudpi, Tawang Valley, and Madhuri Lake, hikers should never miss the chance to conquer the majestic Gorichen Peak when visiting this place. March to September is the most ideal time to visit this beautiful hill station, however, if you are a skiing and snowboarding enthusiast, winters are the best time.



2. LAVA, WEST BENGAL

Lava is a small town situated in the Kalimpong district in West Bengal and is one of the few places in the state where we can see snowfall. Lava is best known for its natural beauty and it attracts many nature enthusiasts and adventurers. It is surrounded by dense pine, birch, and juniper trees and is a popular destination for bird watchers and butterflies. The Lava monastery is the main attraction of this place. Other tourist attractions are Changey Falls, Neora Valley National Park, Tiffin Dara Viewpoint, and Nature Interpretation Center.

3. JIBHI, HIMACHAL PRADESH

If you want to escape to the tranquillity of the Himalayas, Jibhi fits the spot. Jibhi is located on one of the most historical routes in Himachal, between Kullu/Manali, Shimla, Rampur, and Kinnur. It is situated below the Jalori Pass in Tirthan Valley and is an ideal destination to escape from boring city life. Adventure lovers can hike on short trails to paths leading deep into the forest, see breathtaking waterfalls and wander along the river banks.

4. DHANUSHKODI, TAMIL NADU

For mythological explorers, this place is a must-visit site. Dhanushkodi has a lot of significance and is directly connected to the epic Ramayana. This place is an abandoned town and is located at the south-eastern tip of India, in the state of Tamil Nadu. The town was wiped out during the 1964 Rameshwaram cyclone and since then, remains uninhabited. But still, many tourists visit the place, just to marvel at the fact that the travel time from here to Sri Lanka is just two hours. The most famous tourist attractions are Dhanushkodi Beach and the Ramsetu. Gulf of Mannar National Park is one of the few marine national parks in India and it consists of about 21 islands. Another attraction that adventurers love is Pamban Island. But for that, you have to cross the Pamban Bridge, which is India's first sea bridge.

5. KHONOMA VILLAGE, NAGALAND

Located 20 kilometres from Nagaland's capital Kohima, Khonoma is the first green village in India as well as Asia. During the British Colonial period, this village had shown fierce resistance, earning the title "the Warrior Village". It is also famous for its nature and forest conservation initiatives since 1998. Hence it can be said that this place is one of the hidden gems of Indian tourism. The best time to visit Khonoma is during the Hornbill Festival in December.

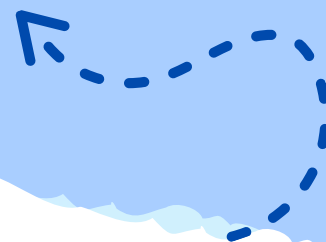


All the tribes across the state gather during this festival to celebrate their culture and customs. Hence it's the ideal time for tourists to learn about their culture and enjoy the local delicacies offered along with the flora and fauna of the village.



6. PEERMEDU, KERALA

Lying in the Idukki district of Kerala, Peermedu is blessed with abundant greenery, winding streams, and mesmerizing waterfalls. This plantation town got its name from Peer Mohammad, a Sufi saint and a close associate of the Travancore royal family. The main attraction of this place is the plantation sites where coffee, tea, rubber, cardamom, etc. are grown. The Summer Palace of the Rajas of the Travancore is also an important monument there. One the summer residence of the royal family, this place has now been converted into a government guest house. One of the best trekking sites is Grampi, situated 4 kilometres from Peermedu, and is adored by the trekkers as it offers breathtaking sights at the peak. You can also take long walks or cycle through the plantations.



Travelling allows us to open our minds and accept the world as it is. It gives us a new way of living and gives us a purpose to move forward. Travelling affects you on a mental and emotional level and you find peace through it. Hence, whenever you feel like life is not fair, or you want to escape the pressure, just pack your bags, find a destination, and start your journey.



- Written By :
Ashwathi Anoop Kumar



THE ALLURE OF CHIFFON: A FABRIC FIT FOR ROYALTY

In the captivating world where fashion and royalty converge, few fabrics exude the timeless allure like chiffon. As we embark on Womenshine's illuminating series, "**Chiffon Sarees: Unveiling the Sheer Beauty of Timeless Elegance,**" I find myself drawn into the enchanting appeal of chiffon. This fabric transcends eras and embodies regal grace. With the heart of a fashion designer with an intimate love for chiffons, let us delve into the regal allure of chiffon, epitomized by Maharani Gayatri Devi. She was the epitome of grace and poise, renowned for her impeccable sense of style. Her wardrobe was a canvas painted with the finest fabrics, and French chiffon found a special place in her collection. Her love for French chiffons declared the fabric's regal status, making the chiffon saree a symbol of refined taste and weightless elegance.

Yet, Maharani Gayatri Devi is not the sole protagonist in Chiffon's royal tale. The corridors of history unfold to reveal the sartorial choices of other Indian maharanis, each contributing to the rich legacy of chiffon.





From Maharani Sita Devi of Kapurthala, who embraced chiffon sarees as a canvas for her avant-garde fashion sense to Maharani Indira Devi of Cooch Behar, whose wardrobe was a testament to her appreciation for exquisite chiffons, one can't help but admire how the Maharanis of India transformed chiffon into a medium for self-expression.

As a designer who finds inspiration in the tales of these iconic maharanis, I can't help but marvel at how chiffon, with its diaphanous allure, has become a symbol of grace and sophistication in royal wardrobes. Its delicate embroidery and intricate motifs, combined with the finesse required to work with it, elevate chiffon beyond a mere fabric. In the contemporary era, the legacy of chiffon in royal fashion endures. Present-day queens, like Maharani Radhika Raje Gaekwad of Baroda, carry forward the tradition, infusing their modern lives with the same sense of grace and sophistication. Their choice of chiffon sarees serves as a bridge between the past and the present, a testament to the fabric's timeless appeal.

In essence, the allure of chiffon as a fabric fit for royalty is a narrative woven with threads of history, elegance, and personal style. Chiffon, with its delicate charm, remains not just a fabric but a muse for those who appreciate the artistry of fashion—a timeless and enduring emblem of regal elegance.



- Written By : Priyal Bhardwaj

Timeless Traditional vs. contemporary chic: Chiffon Sarees for every taste

Chiffon is a textile made from silk, cotton, nylon, polyester, or rayon. It tends to be sheer, with a faint shimmer and a simple weave. When held up to the light, chiffon strongly resembles closely woven netting. Chiffon is derived from the French word chiffon which means "**cloth or rag**"

The Chiffon fabric was made exclusively with Silk until Nylon was invented in 1938. After the introduction of Polyester fabric in 1958, the polyester chiffon blend became more popular because of its durability and economic viability. Chiffon sarees are beautiful to touch, see or wear.

It is a difficult fabric to work with as it has a slippery texture. While cutting or sewing the fabric. In the form of a Saree, the fabric adds shimmer and texture to the overall appearance.

Maharani Gayatri Devi's influence as a sartorial icon has been a well-known fact in the world. She was the first to use romantic chiffon fabrics to be draped as saris, and her saris were created in the looms of Lyon in France to her specifications. Her wardrobe was filled with soft pastel shades.

Gayatri Devi's style was unwavering no matter her role: Maharani, politician, wife and mother. As women of Indian royalty were often expected to be dressed in traditional attire, Maharani Gayatri Devi was typically seen in elegantly draped chiffon saris, in soft shades of pastel, worn with modest, long-sleeved blouses.



Gayatri Devi's mother was also praised for her immaculate taste about whom the Maharani said, "She always knew the best places to buy anything and she shopped all over the world." During those days, Indian royals often travelled to European capitals to fulfil their indulgences and Indira Devi's love affair with chiffon originated in Paris. Chiffon, a fabric dating back hundreds of years, was a marker of wealth and luxury due to its construction from silk, which of course made it difficult to wash.

Chiffon became more popular after the 1930s when it started to be made with nylon instead of silk, making it much more affordable for the masses. While it is now commonly used to make saris, Indira Devi of Cooch Behar was the first to adapt the chiffon fabric to the traditional sari. The draping of chiffon saris to create a dreamy, romantic look ultimately became Gayatri Devi's trademark style. Frequently she wore her simple chiffon saris with a large gemstone necklace or earrings,

She was dressed in a turquoise-blue chiffon sari with silver sequins sparkling like stars on a moonless night. She looked around with her large almond eyes. Everyone stood up. As Hillaire Belloc [Anglo-French writer and historian] once described someone, 'Her face was like the king's command when all the swords are drawn.'

New York Times Magazine reporter (1966)

"As a young student at Delhi University, I used to sneak into the Jaipur Polo ground to watch some of the finest polo players in the country. The Maharaja of Jaipur, a great proponent of the game, would play there and accompanying him used to be his wife, the Rajmata Gayatri Devi, in her soft and pastel flowered chiffons, a picture of grace and beauty."



Amitabh Bachchan, Bollywood Actor

Bollywood cinema has long been a patron of Chiffon. The beautiful Chiffon sarees have been an integral part of Bollywood's fashion for decades. It has been a favourite among the yesteryear divas like Rekha and Hema Malini to the current beauties Deepika Padukone, Katrina and Alia Bhatt.

It is the ultimate saree that you can choose to wear to a special occasion. After all, we have all grown up watching Sridevi, Rekha, Madhuri, Kajol and Juhi draped in these soft sarees and dancing in the green fields of Switzerland. This alone shows how comfortable these sarees are. Choose your chiffon saree to make a statement from small functions to weddings to daily wear.

The latest trends in chiffon sarees include bold and vibrant prints, intricate embroidery, delicate embellishments, and fusion styles with modern cuts and drapes. Pastel shades, ombre effects, and floral designs are also popular. Create a stir in bandhej, digital print, woven borders and embroidery from our trending collection of chiffon sarees.



The floral chiffon is the most common type of chiffon saree that has floral designs all over it. It is the most preferred kind of saree to wear for a friend's house, office, or small get-togethers.

A plain, single-colour chiffon saree is the ultimate example of elegance. It is super cool to wear these sarees to meetings, parties and casual outings

If your chiffon has prints, designs, embroidery or trimming on it, then it is going to look fabulous. These sarees will be blingy and you can wear them to larger events like weddings too.

Choose your chiffon saree to make a statement from small functions to weddings to daily wear.

- Written By : Gautam Gupta

Corsets



The Trend that Always 'Waists' No Time Making a Comeback

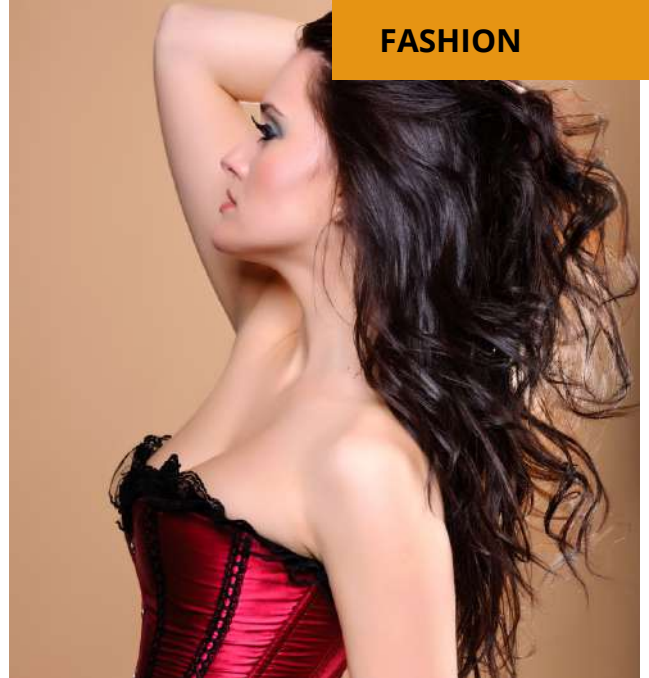
A widespread debate we often hear in the world of fashion and pop culture, in general, is "Are corsets oppressive?" Although many people would agree with this statement, many fashion historians would beg to differ for corsets were an essential piece of any woman's wardrobe.

Now, corsets have a rather tremulous history; not only in terms of gender roles but also in shape, it is important to note that- yes they did promote unrealistic beauty standards and if not executed properly, could be rather uncomfortable. However, it is to be acknowledged that they were meant to provide support. Before anyone brings up the health hazard, do you really want to trust the medical files of the 1800s? Most of the extreme waist-cinching, rib-changing corsets were worn by the society's elite i.e. The Kardashians of that time. I will go over the various arguments surrounding corsets and how corsets are back on everybody's Pinterest boards in the 2020s (If I do not say fashion is cyclical, some imposter wrote this)

HISTORY, TIMELINE

Corset-like garments have appeared as early as 1600 BC, but we will focus on the 16th century onwards. From the 16th to the early 20th century corsets were worn by both men and women. In the 19th century when corsets hit their apex, many medical files presented the belief that corsets are hazardous to health and are the reason behind various problems women face. I, personally, think we should take any medical information from the 19th century with a grain of salt. However, it's not just me.





Fashion historians, Valerie Steele and Colleen Gau have pointed out that tight lacing may have caused fainting and lowered vitality but could not have led to any major diseases. Moreover, Abby Cox, in a video with Bernadette Banner, Karolina Zebrowskax, Nicole Rudolph and Samantha Bullat strongly advised to not believe the medical journals as corsets were simply for support and only worn abysmally tight by upper-class women.

The 1900s brought forth an interest in sports and dancing; women had more freedom to pursue various physical activities. French designers were playing with a different silhouette that was more shapeless, slender, and straight unlike the hourglass shape a corset gives you, which is prominently visible in the flapper girls of the 1920s, say, *The Great Gatsby*. In 1907, Madeleine Vionnet released a collection with no corsets and is the, self proclaimed, first couturier to have done that- although Chanel and Poiret also claim to be it. Fashion started taking inspiration from the empire waistline- loose directoire silhouette of the 1790s as well as taking inspiration from Asian silhouettes such as pantaloons and robes.

To support this lifestyle and the new desired body shape companies started producing elasticised corsets. These were marketed to be the “way” to achieve a slender, lean figure all the while supporting all the activities that a young lady in the 1920s would engage in. The post-war era riddled the desire away from corsets and women started seeing them as outdated and something that belonged to their mother's or grandmother's closet.

The 1930s and 40s were when women had to take over more jobs because of the war. The 1950s saw a rise in the hourglass silhouette thanks to Dior's “New Look”, people wanted to go back to their lives so women went back to the ‘feminine’ hourglass look, bringing back the corsets.

The mid to late 60s saw another shift in the desired body type. With the hippie movement on the rise, people started focusing more on fitness and diets as well as a more ‘boxed’ silhouette.

The punk movement saw lingerie and inner wear as outerwear, which led to corsets being worn over or as clothing. Westwood in the 70s incorporated corsets in her collection and it soon became a staple for their brand identity. Jean-Paul Gaultier in the 80s yet again sensationalised the corset with his immaculate tailoring and influential clientele.



MATERIALS

The term 'Corset' was incorporated in the lexis at the beginning of the 19th century and it was used interchangeably with the word 'stays'. Corsets or stays are used hard wearing cotton, linen or satin. They would need boning to give it structure, hence, a 'stay busk' which were thin pieces of wood, whalebone and post-1830s steel. The lacing in the back was supported by metal eyelets which were designed in the 1820s.

As uncomfortable as a whalebone sounds it was actually rather soft and has an adorable story attached to it. Stay busks were often carved with names and/or dates. The whalebone used was brought back by whalers whilst on their expeditions, they were carved and given as gifts to loved ones as they were placed near the heart in a stay/corset.

In 1920 onwards corsets started using rubber and elastic as it merged with the shapewear of today. Plastic, cotton, and polyester are materials commonly used to make corsets now. However, there are many fashion enthusiasts/historians who use wood or steel for the boning among other traditional materials to make them as authentic as possible.

RELEVANCE IN TODAY'S FASHION SCENE

The resurgence started in 2015 with Jean Paul Gautier's spring collection followed by McQueen in 2016 soon Prada, Balenciaga and many others followed suit before the racks of every Zara and H&M.

Corsets as a concept never truly went out of style as shapewear, especially, with brands such as SKIMS is still just as desirable as it was in the 1950s. Although we have moved past whale bones and wood, people still wear garments for not only support but also to accentuate the body's shape or even hold it in place. Since hourglass body type started gaining popularity we were bound to see corsets make an extravagant comeback.

All in all, corsets are an evergreen part of our wardrobes, with the way they have grown with time, and changed names and shapes. I am quite excited to see what the designers are going to do now. SKIMS has been doing some experiments so let us unwrap that..



Ada Ashish



TRIPPING OVER THE TRUTH – REBUILDING EMOTIONAL STABILITY

“94% of the time, the way a discussion starts determines the way it will end.” – Dr. John Gottman



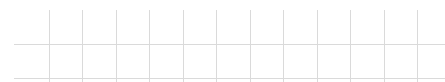
Love often encompasses acceptance, as it involves embracing someone with their strengths and weaknesses. True love is accepting someone unconditionally, which means loving them despite their imperfections. We all want a fairytale, smooth marriage/relationship with our partner but are we really understanding and accepting the truth? Are we putting effort every day to rebuild the emotional stability and assurance required to sail on? Have we ever realized and accepted that we are also wrong somewhere? Has the truth about our relationship been unleashed?

Acceptance is about valuing your partner's differences. It's about being flexible, tolerant, and open-minded. It's also about knowing how to compromise, understanding that we all make mistakes, and being ready to forgive. Acceptance doesn't mean always agreeing with your partner – it's OK to agree to disagree. Acceptance is not slavery or an act of weakness.

Accept love as they can give it to you. Accept that you love them. Accept that we all experience things (including love) differently. Accept that sometimes they can be a bit of a mess.

Acceptance helps to keep your relationship healthy, leading you towards greater intimacy and care for each other. When you and your partner feel accepted, you are more willing to listen to and understand each other's perspectives and suggestions.

However, one must not accept behaviours such as physical, emotional, or sexual abuse, manipulation, control, lying, disrespecting boundaries, ignoring, or invalidating feelings, belittling, or demeaning, and refusing to take responsibility for one's actions.



One must learn to accept differences in a relationship. Below are a few best practices which enable couples to rebuild emotional stability. Always remember to be at peace, the soul needs to be contented and not questioned. Wherever we would focus our attention will grow. Be mindful about it.

- Treat your partner with utmost respect, love, and care. Treat others as you would want to be treated. No one would be standing for you the way your spouse/partner does. So, always ensure they are your top priority. Never ignore or demean them.
- Accept your partner's flaws and embrace their strengths. No one is perfect! Acknowledge your partner's strengths and what they bring to the table. Respect your partner's beliefs and value their opinions, even if they are different from yours. Everyone is entitled to their own beliefs and values. It is okay to agree to disagree. You create a character sketch of your partner to understand them better. To realize their strength and weakness.



Understand your partner's story, experiences, motivations, and intentions. Understand what unique life experiences have guided your partner's decisions and maintain a steady foundation of trust they will do the right thing. You can try writing your journey from a third person's point of view. You will realize in that narration that both of you were at fault some or the other time and you both must work along to sail on.

- The past doesn't define everything. People make mistakes. Don't judge your partner based on their past. Focus on who they are now and who they are growing to be. Be patient. Long-term growth and maturity take time. Guide your partner towards success. If love cannot stand the test of time, then it has failed the test of love.

- Acknowledge your partner's growth and success. Knowing your partner's past and personal struggles, be proud of the growth they have achieved!

Tripping over the truth is one type of moment of insight that "delivers realizations and transformations in people's lives." While this may sound harsh, a moment of insight is "a low point that holds the promise of a better future path."

Acceptance and emotional stability are key components of a long-lasting relationship. Wishing all my readers a happy and blissful life!

"I saw that you were perfect, and so I loved you. Then I saw that you were not perfect, and I loved you even more." - Angelita Lim



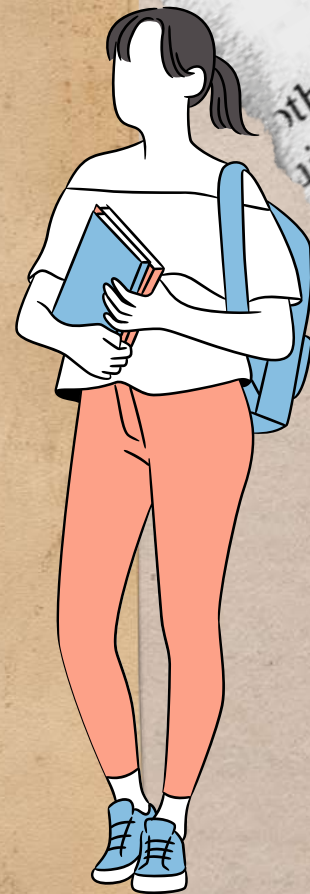
Abhrekha Jain Sahlot

मैं नारी हूँ

मैं नारी हूँ
 सदियों से पूज्य रही हूँ
 कन्या रूपेण मातृ रूपेण
 सीता भी मैं हूँ राधा भी मैं हूँ
 द्रौपदी और गांधारी भी मैं हूँ
 मैं नारी हूँ
 कभी बेटी तो कभी बहन
 कभी प्रेमिका तो कभी पत्नी
 मैं ही माँ भी हूँ
 जीवन में पल पल रूप बदलते रहे
 पर रहती तो नारी ही हूँ
 मैं नारी हूँ
 सदा सदा से कर्तव्यों की
 बेड़ियों में जकड़ी रहती हूँ
 अपने अधिकारों के लिये
 आजीवन संघर्ष करती रहती हूँ
 मैं नारी हूँ
 छोटी थी तो सुनती थी
 पराई अमानत हो
 अपने घर में अपने मन का करना
 ससुराल में बहू हो ... बहू की तरह रहो
 अपने अस्तित्व के लिये
 हर पल लड़ती रही झगड़ती रही
 मैं नारी हूँ
 मैं कोमलांगी हूँ रूपसी हूँ
 प्रेमिका हूँ अर्धांगिनी हूँ
 मैं डॉक्टर हूँ इंजीनियर हूँ
 मैं वैज्ञानिक हूँ पायलट हूँ
 मैं फौज में मेजर भी हूँ
 मैं क्या नहीं हूँ और कहाँ नहीं हूँ
 मैं जीवन की धुरी हूँ
 पृथ्वी जैसे अपनी धुरी पर घूमती है
 वैसे ही परिवार समाज देश और सारी दुनिया



नारी के इर्द गिर्द ही घूमती है
 मैं नारी हूँ
 इसीलिये शोषित भी होती रहती हूँ
 क्यों कि लोगों की नजरों में
‘जोरदार माल हूँ’ ‘क्या मस्त चीज हूँ’
 कोई अपनी नजरों से घूर घूर कर खुश होता है
 कोई यहाँ वहाँ स्पर्श कर परम सुख पाता है
 कोई मुझे मसल कर रौंद कर सुख पाता है
 यूज ऐंड थ्रो भी हूँ
 पुरुषों की नजरों में मैं भोग्या हूँ
 मैं नारी हूँ
 टिड्डी दलों की तरह चारों तरफ
 झुंड के झुंड घूम रहे मनचले
 नौकरी की लालच दिखला कर
 जीवन के रंग बिरंगे सपने दिखला कर
 सतरंगे हसीं ख्वाबों को दिखलाकर
 अपने पैने डंक मारने को बेताब
 मैं नारी हूँ
 हर कदम पर ऐसे सर्पों से
 दुनिया अटी पड़ी
 जो अपने जहरीले विष से
 नारी के अस्तित्व और अस्मत को
 अपना मौलिक अधिकार समझते हैं
 मैं नारी हूँ
 यह इक्कीसवीं सदी है
 आधुनिकता की आपा धापी में
 आगे बढ़ने की मारामारी में
 पल पल अपना रूप बदल रही
 अब यह कोमलांगी नहीं वरन्
 बदले की आग में झुलस रही
 मैं नारी हूँ
 कंगना बन गरज रही
 तरह तरह के षण्यंत्र भी रच रही
 सच तो यह है कि
 नारी तो सब पर भारी है
 नारी के बढ़ते कदम
 और बदले रूप को
 समूचा विश्व हो रहा चकित
 अब मजबूरी वश
 नारी का लोहा मान रहा
 मैं नारी हूँ



पद्मा अग्रवाल

अकेले हैं तो क्या गम है

“ माई डियर लेखिका पत्नी, आज शाम को सर्प्राइज पार्टी है” .सजल ने प्यार से उन्हें अपने आगोश में लेकर चूम लिया था .

“शाम को तैयार रहना ...मैं गाड़ी भेज दूंगा .”

“बाय ...” कहते हुये वह ऑफिस चले गये .

आज सरप्राइज पार्टी सजल क्यों दे रहे हैं न बर्थ डे है न ही एनिवर्सरी .वह काफी देर तक सोचती रहीं .फिर राशि अतीत में खो गई थी बच्चों के हॉस्टल जाने के बाद वह सासु जी की देख भाल में लगी रही . उसकी दुनिया पैरालाइज्ड मम्मी जी की सेवा करने तक ही सीमित हो गई थी .

बच्चे उस पर नाराज भी होते , ’”मॉम आपको तो अम्मा जी के सिवा कोई दिखता ही नहीं ...”

फिर माँ जी के दुनिया से विदा हो जाने के बाद उसके जीवन में ऐसा अकेलापन छा गया कि वह गम के कारण डिप्रेशन का शिकार हो गई , उदासी और आत्महत्या का विचार उस पर हावी होता जा रहा था , वह खाना पीना भूल कर लेटी छत को निहारती रहती .



सजल ने नाराज होकर उनसे अनबोला साध लिया था . नौबत तलाक तक पहुँच गई थी .

एक दिन ऊष्मा बचपन की सहेली आई और उसने उसके हाथों में जबर्दस्ती पेन पकड़ा कर मायके की यादों पर संस्मरण लिखने को मजबूर किया . उसको गृहलक्ष्मी पत्रिका में भेज दिया .

आज भी याद है जब उनका वह पहला संस्मरण स्वीकृत होने के साथ ही वाउचर आया तो ऐसा अनुभव हुआ मानों उनके पंख लग गये हैं . बस उसी पल से उनकी दुनिया ही बदल गई थी .

उनकी कहानियाँ पत्र पत्रिकाओं में प्रकाशित होने लगीं . लेखन जगत में वह जानी जानें लगीं थीं .

कॉलबेल की आवाज ने उनकी तंद्रा भंग की थी .

आज सजल खुद बाँहे पसारे मुस्कुरा रहे थे .

जल्दी तैयार हो जाओ ,तुम्हारे लेखक लेखिका मित्र तुमसे मिलने का इंतजार कर रहे हैं .

सजल ने जब गुपचुप रूप से उनकी कहानियों का संग्रह “ नीड़ “ के विमोचन के लिये उनकी प्रिय लेखिका मालती जोशी जी को आमंत्रित किया था . उनको देखना , संवाद करना उनके जीवन का अविस्मरणीय पल था , खुशी के मारे उनकी आँखें छलछला उठीं..

इस अवसर पर दो शब्द कहिये

मित्रों , अकेले हैं तो क्या गम हैजीवन में बहुत कुछ है करने को पढिये ,लिखिये , गरीबों को पढाइये , बागवानी करिये , सिलाई , बुनाई , कुकिंग , जो भी शौक आप पूरा नहीं कर पाई , उन्हें अपने अकेलेपन में पूरा करिये . खुशियाँ बाँहें पसारे आपका इंतजार कर रही हैं .



पद्मा अग्रवाल

WOMEN SHiNE

See you in the next edition