

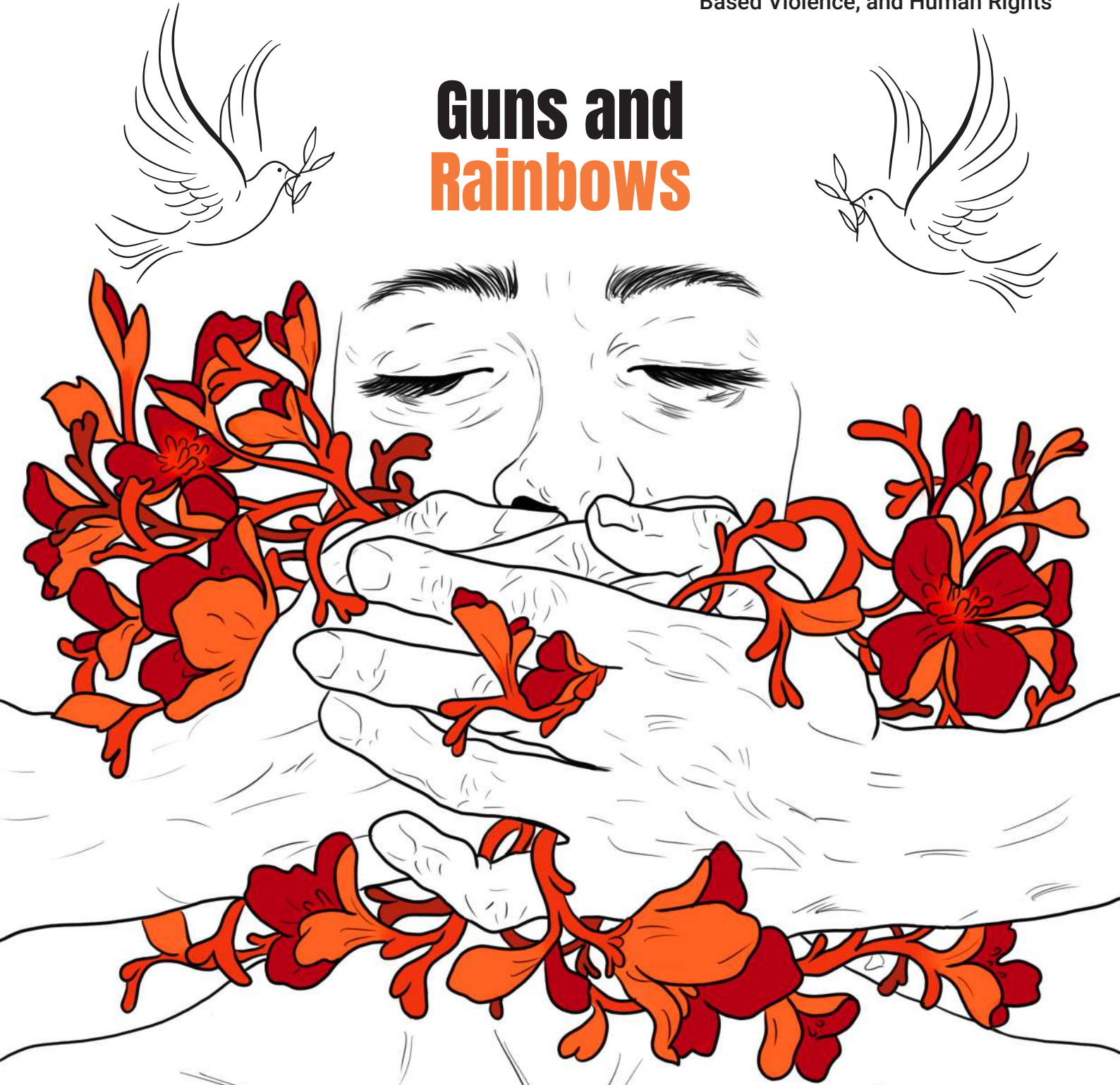
**iLEAD**<sup>®</sup>

# THE **iLEADER**

November, 2023

16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence, and Human Rights

## **Guns and Rainbows**



**The Gender of Love**

**Empowering Women:  
PWDVA Insights**

# iLEAD THE iLEADER

November 25, 2023

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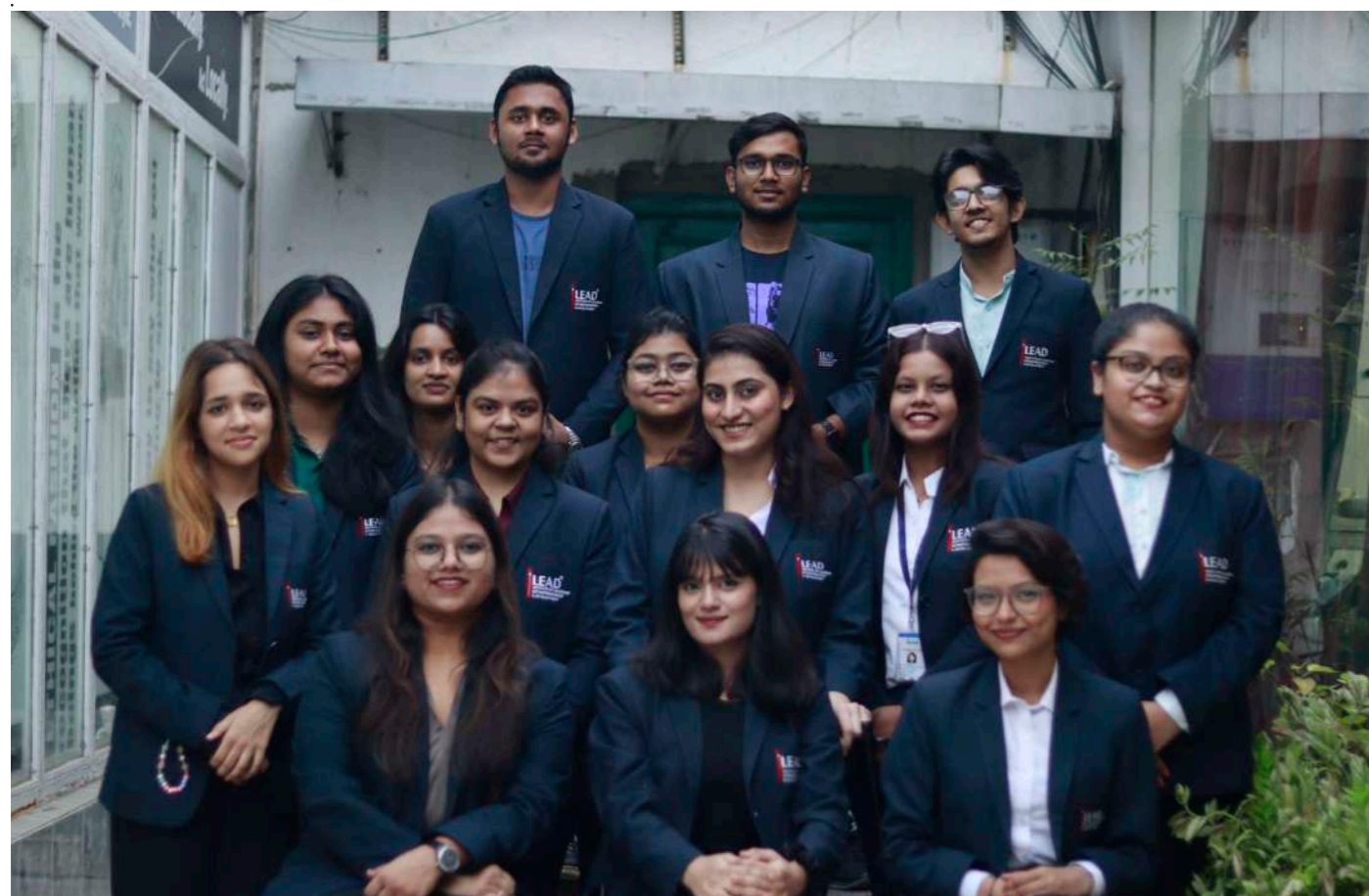
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# From the Editor's Desk

## Editor-in-Chief introduces her angry, bold and hard-hitting edition of *The iLEADER*



DEEPIKHA DEB

those who contributed to make this as powerful as it is. There were days which were triggering, days which were emotionally draining and oh there were nights! The team pulled all-nighters in a row, in an attempt to do justice to this issue. For this issue is as personal as it is political.

As you flip through the pages, you will encounter powerful artworks and photographs, hard-hitting stories, and narratives penned by survivors, articles dissecting enablers, talking about things that cause discomfort, compellingly illustrating the collective struggle against gender-based violence, for human rights. This edition challenges you to reflect on your role, as it did to us—whether as passive witnesses, unwitting enablers, or advocates for change.

I express gratitude to iLEAD for unveiling this edition on November 25, 2023, a UN Observance Day that is hoped to mark the start of a global movement. Amid gender-based violence and the erosion of human rights, this edition stands as our commitment to shedding light on shadows and contributing to the global effort to end gender-based violence. These pages that you will flip through, are an outcry against violence and the erosion of human rights. We are appalled, sad, and most important, angry at the apathy towards the unending violence and atrocities. So, we will always be here, standing in solidarity against gender-based violence, upholding human rights and saying their names. Till the violence ends.

In solidarity,  
Aiema Tauheed

*Editor-in-Chief*

This edition of *The iLEADER*, has been planned to mark The 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence initiated by the United Nations in 1991, commencing from November 25 every year and resonating until Human Rights Day on December 10.

This issue has entailed an unstoppable journey that has been a rollercoaster of emotions, delving into untold stories and confronting uncomfortable truths. This might be one of the final editions produced under me, and I am truly grateful to all

# Media and its Subtle Bias

*Aishi Chatterjee fearlessly dissects the intricate web of women's experiences and gender-based violence, prompting us to re-evaluate and transform our society's perceptions.*

TV shows, advertisements, films and music videos often downplay the severity of the violence against women, almost sensationalising it. They do so by employing tropes such as focusing on the outfits worn by the victims, their bodies, the location of the incidents. The media tries to show as if the women were "asking for it" which cleverly shifts the focus to victim blaming rather than perpetrator's behaviour. For instance, in Netflix's 2022 Korean series 'Tomorrow', when Yun-hui is sexually harassed, her father's initial reaction is to question why she was out alone at night. The fact that we tell our women to be safe but never teach our men how to behave shows the way we have failed as a society. These misogynistic viewpoints become the accepted status quo.

Women are also portrayed as submissive in other Asian dramas from countries like Thailand, China, South Korea, Pakistan and Turkey. Most of these dramas and films revolve around the humiliation of women. Series like 'Caged Birds' (Russian) and 'Avlu' (Turkish) emphasise the extensive physical and emotional violence on women in the name of control. Characters like Alp's growing obsession over Ecem in 'Avlu' and her struggle for freedom perpetuate the patriarchal narrative that men are stronger than women.

In 2013, Business Insider listed brands that glorified sexual violence, including advertisements from brands like PETA, Dolce and Gabbana, Calvin Klein etc. The ad from Duncan Quinn's suit advertisement sparked controversy as it featured a model in bondage collar and lingerie with undertones of toxic masculine dominance over a woman.

Furthermore, most media tend to spotlight thin, able-bodied, fair-skinned women, even in the Indian context, often to justify the cause of abuse. We have to take into consideration that gender-based violence, racism, fatphobia and ableism are used as tropes to rationalise the cause of abuse against women.

In a 2022 article in The Tribune, the film 'Darlings' has taken a controversial standpoint with the film's trailer seemingly promoting "domestic violence" against men, as Alia Bhatt is seen inflicting violence on her on-screen partner. This has led netizens to question, "What if the roles were reversed?"

Anya Taylor-Joy (British-American actor), during a press tour for 'The Menu' in a BBC interview, commented on the portrayal of feminine rage stating, "I have a thing about feminine rage. This is no disrespect to any writer. I see a lot of men doing really terrible things and women sitting silently with a single tear falling". Taylor-Joy continued, "And I'm like, Oh, no, no, no. Women get mad and angry".

She recounted a conversation with Mark, the director of 'The Menu' where she expressed her desire to play a scene truthfully by attacking the male character. This



video has gained nearly three million likes on TikTok. Actions like these on-screen are often applauded, but in real life they are met with disapproval. Once again, this statement underscores the unbalanced power dynamics in society.

Media shapes our views. We must challenge harmful portrayals of violence against women and promote understanding. Let's create a more equitable society, addressing the root causes of gender-based violence, not victim-blaming.

# Empowering Voices

- By Ariba Parvez



Sexism starts from scripts

It's the era of pop culture,  
Never have I known how stories unfold.  
That there was such a thing portrayed  
And we laughed it off as fools.

Time changes  
People change  
But why are the same tales being chased?  
We talk about others' faults,  
But shouldn't our society be blamed?  
Where women are supposed to stay in the kitchen,  
Men are supposed to lead;  
Girls are supposed to like barbies,  
Boys are supposed to like cars;  
There's a conflict if girls act manly,  
And boys express their emotions.  
Why do we never hear their cries?

In pop culture, women are suppressed by men  
And we take pleasure in watching that?  
Can we really call ourselves "human" if we enjoy hurting one of our own?  
Shouldn't we spread awareness through the shows,  
than showing it in a delightful way?  
In TV shows, truth unfolds.  
The reality is twisted,  
But it's time to reshape our hearts.  
Let us rewrite the script,  
Change the way the story's told.  
Equality should be our aim  
Music and shows should be our friend  
And let the world know  
We wouldn't settle for less.  
We shouldn't be judged on our gender but our individuality.  
Gender violence is not to be glorified  
It's time to reshape our society.  
In the world of pop culture,  
Let there be gender equality.

# The Veiled Normalization of Violence in Indian Soaps

Explore the disturbing trend of violence disguised as entertainment in Indian soaps.

In the bustling world of Indian television, where melodrama meets the mundane, a trend has silently woven its way into our living rooms—violence disguised as entertainment. The small screen, often considered a reflection of society, has, over the years, played a significant role in shaping perceptions. However, one cannot help but wonder, are our beloved soap operas unintentionally normalizing violence?

I am Anupa, a 20-year-old juggling between my studies and a part-time job living in the city. I live on the fourth floor of my residential building. My neighbours upstairs, a young married couple never seem to be peacefully quiet. The wife Karishma, not much older than me had become a friend of mine. I had many a times noticed the various marks and bruises all over her body that appeared overnight, and I wasn't a fool to not know here they had come from. Not being able to keep quiet any more I asked her about them one day to which she responded saying, "Kya didi yeh toh miya biwi mein normal hai. Halki nok jhok hoti rehti hai. Yeh unn ke pyaar dikhane ka zariya hai. Aap TV nahi dekhti ho kya?". That was my wake-up call, and I began to understand how deep of an impact the media we consume can have on our psyche and understanding of the world.

The power of television in shaping societal norms cannot be understated. Indian soap operas like 'Madhubala-Ek Ishq Ek Junoon', 'Kahiin Toh Hoga', 'Kutumb', 'Uttaran', 'Naa Aana Iss Desh Mein Laado', 'Doli Armaano Ki' often depicted intense family conflicts, emotional turmoil sometimes escalating to physical altercations, subtly normalizing aggressive behaviour; also they frequently portrayed revenge and violence as central themes, contributing to the normalization of aggressive actions as a means of justice and showcased toxic relationships where characters resorted to manipulation and, at times,

physical or emotional confrontations to settle disputes.

Also, family dramas, rom coms or thrillers like 'Ishq Mein Marjawan', 'Ye Hai Mohabbatein', 'Iss Pyaar Ko Kya Naam Doon', 'Iss Pyaar Ko Kya Naam Doon...Ek Baar Phir', 'Rang Rasiya', 'Ishqbaaz', 'Namak Ishq Ka', 'Ghum Hai Kissi Ke Pyaar Mein', 'Udann', 'Titli', 'Udaariyaan', 'Ek Boond Ishq' and many more have been known to glorify emotional abuse or romanticize the manhandling of women.

Over the past two decades, Indian television has witnessed a surge in the depiction of violence in daily soap operas. From verbal abuse to physical altercations, these shows often portrayed unhealthy relationships as the norm and somehow always ruled the TRP charts.

According to a study conducted by Media Watch, a non-profit organization focusing on media content analysis, incidents of violence in prime-time soaps have seen a staggering 30% increase in the last five years.

According to a survey conducted by the Indian Psychological Association, 60% of respondents admitted that they believe aggressive behaviour is an acceptable way to deal with interpersonal issues, attributing this belief to the influence of television content.

As the editors, writers, creators and even consumers of our cultural narratives, we must question the impact of the content that is being produced. The normalization of violence in Indian soaps is not just a creative choice; it's a societal statement. By fostering a sense of responsibility and awareness, the entertainment industry can play a major role in shaping a society that values harmony and understanding over aggression and conflict and also prevent many more Karishmas out there from making such statements and accepting whatever they're being put through as 'normal'.

- By Anupa Bagchi



Iss Pyaar Ko Kya Naam Du (2011) was one of the most loved shows on TV

# Reel to Real: Violence in Indian Films

Delve into the romanticization and implications of violence in Indian cinema, with popular releases like *Thappad* (2020), *Darlings* (2022), and *Kabir Singh* (2019).

The extensive and varied repertoire of Indian cinema has greatly influenced the cultural landscape of the country. However, the way violence is portrayed in Indian films and its possible effects on society, are becoming more prevalent nowadays. Recent films like "Kabir Singh", "Baaghi 3", "Darlings", "Thappad" and many more have talked about unpacked violence on screens, in extremely diverse ways. These range from romanticization to condemnation of violence. One common ground that they all share is that each of these films have real life consequences.

The normalization of violence in Indian cinema has the potential to have significant social repercussions. Viewers may become desensitized to the severity of violence when it is shown without sufficient context or consequences, which lowers their likelihood of considering it to be a severe problem. It is estimated that about 20% of all films are crime dramas, while nearly 50% contain a considerable amount of criminal activity.

"Kabir Singh" (2019) revolves around a brilliant but troubled medical student who descends into self-destructive behavior after a failed romance. The way Kabir's acts are presented in the context of great passion and love in the film is indicative of the normalization of violence. By romanticizing these traits, viewers may come to see aggression and possessiveness as normal forms of love, potentially blurring the lines between healthy and harmful relationships.

Anubhav Sinha's "Thappad" (2020) is a powerful exploration of the repercussions of domestic violence on a woman's life. The film revolves around the protagonist, Amrita, who decides to seek legal recourse after her husband slaps her in a fit of anger. In the beginning, Amrita's family and friends urge her to forget



Taapsee Pannu in a still from *Thappad* (2020)

and forgive, demonstrating how domestic violence is normalized.

"Darlings" (2022) is a dark comedy that explores the lives of two ladies who are also the victims of domestic violence and eventually get entangled in the web of crimes. It explores complex relationships and societal norms with a mix of humor and drama. Alia Bhatt's stellar performance, along with a strong supporting cast, brings depth to the narrative. The film adeptly delves into themes of empowerment, identity, and resilience. The script balances emotional moments with light-heartedness, creating a captivating experience. Director Jasmeet K. Reen skillfully navigates the storyline, crafting an engaging and thought-provoking film.

While there are films that condemn violence on screens, there are also films which romanticize it. Filmmakers ought to aim for responsible storytelling and be aware of the possible effects of their portrayals. In response, viewers ought to watch critically, identifying and challenging instances of accepted violence. Indian cinema has the potential to develop further as a medium that not only entertains but also positively influences social discourse by cultivating a culture of awareness and accountability.

- By Dhrity Chakraborty

# Unmasking the Unseen Influence

*Namrta Gupta uncovers long-standing sexist patterns, focusing on the role of media in the propagation of toxic masculinity and the objectification of women.*

In recent years, as well as in the past, media and pop culture have underrepresented and devalued the image of women, which has greatly influenced society by normalising the attitude of disrespecting women, sexualizing and objectifying them, as well as promoting aggressive or toxic masculinity. The list is never-ending.

Obviously, when something is continuously portrayed in pop culture, people start to believe in it. We can see in movies, TV shows, and even in songs and advertisements that gender-based violence isn't only normalised but also glamorised.

Since the 1900s until the present, media and the way it portrays women have undergone several changes, but something that hasn't changed is sexism.

We could see that, in older movies, women, especially the female leads, were portrayed as weak, timid, and damsel in distress who needed a male lead to always come to her rescue, whereas the male leads were the strongest and were meant to fight and protect. Sadly, not much has changed even in the films being made today.

In older movies like 'Hadh Kar Di Aapne', 'Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge', and 'Ranjhanaa', stalking, harassing, and flirting with women were normalised.

The apparent 'bad women', or 'vamps', were portrayed as courtesans and home wreckers including working women who failed as 'women' in serving their families. This was evident in movies like 'Aitraaz', 'Kama Sutra: A Tale of Love', etc.

In movies like 'Kabhi Alvida Na Kehna', 'Silsila', and 'Chori Chori Chupke Chupke', cheating by men has been normalised, whereas if a woman cheats, then she is seen as the 'vamp'. There is also beauty standards set for women. In movies like 'Main Hoon Na', 'Kuch Kuch Hota Hai', 'Vivah', 'Kabhi Khushi Kabhi Gum', and many more, a woman's beauty is prioritised the most. Even in recent times, in almost all of the movies, the female leads are the prettiest.

They also promote aggressive male supremacy and toxic love, where the male leads can do as they please, be it slapping the female lead, kidnapping, stalking, inappropriately touching them, or threatening them. In movies like 'Kabir Singh', 'Badrinath Ki Dulhaniya', 'Kya Kool Hain Hum', and many such movies, they basically portray that as long as it's the male lead, they can do anything.

We live in a society where women have been groomed since

their childhood on how they should behave, dress, sit, smile, eat, and even whom to marry! Their fate is decided by their families or society. There are many unseen restrictions on them, which can be seen in movies like 'Gully Boy', 'Dil Dhadakne Do', 'Dear Zindagi', and many more.

Even in advertisements, women are sexualized; for example, in an advertisement as simple as that of 'Slice Aamsutra', a seductive style is used for its sale. Even in cosmetics advertisements, beauty standards are all we see. There are also so many derogatory songs where women are objectified, like 'Gandi Baat', 'Aare Pritam Pyare', 'Fevicol Sea', etc.

It's time for us to take action and stand up against this. In order to advance as a society, it has now become crucial to challenge these norms, promote gender equality, and demand more responsible and fair representation of every individual, regardless of their gender.



Shah Rukh Khan and Kajol Devgan in a still from Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge (1995)

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# Empowering Women: PWDVA Insights

*A dark shadow frequently lurks in the peaceful corners of our homes, where love ought to flourish: the pervasive issue of domestic violence.*

- By Harshita Agrawal

Violence against women persists even in the 21st century, with women constituting the majority of victims of domestic violence since the beginning of time. It affects women from all walks of life, regardless of their age, caste, religion, or class. Domestic violence can be physical, sexual, emotional, economic, and psychological. According to the National Family Health Survey (NFHS), 2019–2021, 29.3% of married Indian women between the ages of 18 and 49 have experienced domestic or sexual violence, and 3.1% of pregnant women aged 18-49 have suffered physical violence during their pregnancy. That is merely the number of incidences that women have come out with; many more often go unreported.

To end domestic abuse, governments from all throughout the world have taken proactive steps. In India, the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act (PWDVA), 2005, governs domestic abuse.

## The PWDVA defines:

An **"aggrieved person"** as a woman who is or was in a domestic relationship with the respondent and who claims to have experienced domestic abuse.

The term **"respondent"** refers to any adult male who has been or is in a relationship with the aggrieved woman and against whom the woman has filed a complaint, as well as any male or female relative of the woman's partner.

A **"child"** is defined as any individual under the age of eighteen, which includes foster, adoptive, and stepchildren.

**"Domestic violence"**, under PWDVA has been defined broadly enough to include a wide range of living situations, for instance, live-in relationships, bigamous and fraudulent relationships.

## Survivor Resources

The Act mandates that victims receive proper medical care, counselling, and shelter accommodations in addition to legal assistance as needed.

## Safeguards

Orders for protection against the respondent may be issued for the victim's safety in the following situations: when he commits acts of violence, assists or encourages them, enters the victim's home or place of business, tries to speak with her, seizes any of her property, or threatens individuals who are close to the victim.

## Custody of children

If child custody is required, it should be granted to the victim, with the respondent having the option to visit if needed.

## Financial relief

In addition to protect the victim from abuse, the respondent owes

it to her to maintain her financial support. Regardless of whether or not the victim has legal rights over the household, if she has lived in the house with the respondent, and he has been violent with her, then the respondent is liable under the Act. This means that even if she does not have legal or financial stake in the house, the respondent cannot evict her.

Thus, PWDVA plays a vital role in the judicial system by providing women who are victims of domestic abuse with immediate safety and assistance. Its comprehensive framework guarantees a more responsive and equitable method of addressing the intricacies of domestic abuse by providing survivors with legal recourse.

To sum up, the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act represents a significant advancement in defending the rights of abused women. Although it offers a solid legal foundation, its actual impact depends on how well it is implemented, how well-informed the community is, and how persistently advocacy is done. Looking back at the progress made, it is evident that continued efforts are necessary. Transforming legislative provisions into real change requires empowering survivors, building stronger support networks, and creating a zero-tolerance culture for domestic abuse. The path to a society free from domestic abuse necessitates constant efforts at all levels and a shared commitment.



According to the National Legal Services Authority (NALSA), over 11lakh cases of domestic violence have been registered under PWDVA since its inception

# Guns and Rainbows

Toxic positivity in times of distress.

- By Aiema Tauheed

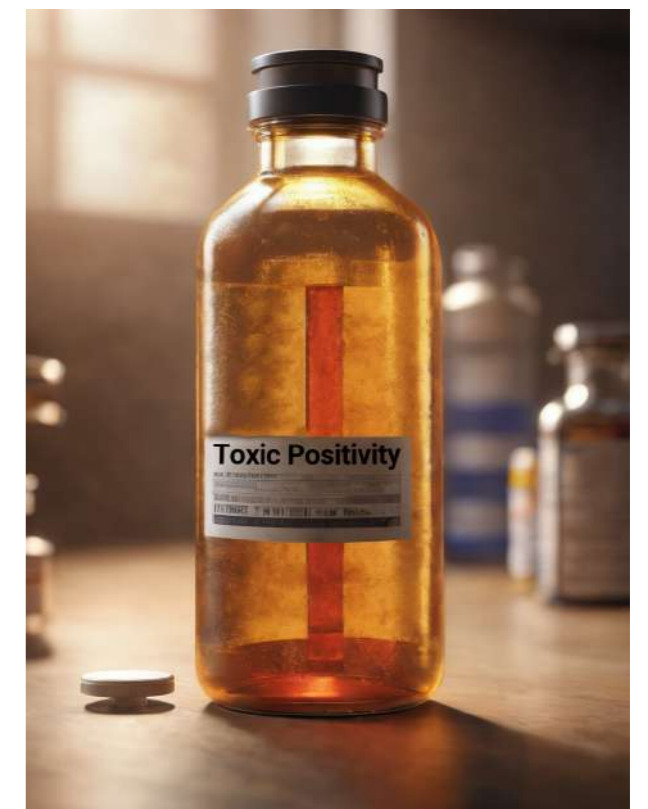
At the outset, there is nothing wrong with being positive. Silvers of hope, lemonades and rainbows, treasuring simple pleasures, gratefulness are imperative to survival. The pursuit of happiness is not evil. However, Tal Ben-Shahar compares the relentless pursuit of happiness, as a value, to sunlight. The sun is vital for life on earth, but if you stare directly at it, you can go blind. “Toxic positivity can be described as insincere positivity that leads to harm, needless suffering, or misunderstanding,” Gayani DeSilva, a U.S.-based psychiatrist, tells Health.

"Be positive", "Don't worry, be happy", "Don't think about it", "Stop being so negative", "You have so much to be grateful for", "Keep smiling", "Be happy", "Spread joy". These are popular rallying cries to diverse and endless painful scenarios ranging from "I got bullied" to "Thousands of people are getting killed in wars". Toxic positivity enables ignorance, institutional and collective apathy, allows for authority to evade accountability. More than 45 armed conflicts are currently taking place throughout the Middle East and North Africa. Asia is the theatre of 19 Non-International Armed Conflicts (NIACs) involving 19 armed groups. Crimes against humanity are on the rise. Gender-based violence is becoming more and more widespread. More than 11,100 Palestinians have been killed in Gaza since October 7th, 2023. Being unflappably perky enough to dismiss authentic human emotions and suffering comes with privilege. This means the privilege to be able to live in blissful ignorance or to compartmentalize things—“elevating the good and wilfully ignoring the rest,” as The Cut explained.

The bright side is in fact, just another gaslight. “On a micro level, toxic positivity segues into gaslighting — where people think it is them, not someone else, responsible for their suffering” – Saumya Kaliya from The Swaddle explains. Amidst the horrors of COVID-19, platitudes showered on common people by influential people, with the spotlight on ‘all is well’ and finding your zen, the onus of recovery shifted onto citizens grappling with COVID-19. This also painted an ingenuine picture of reality to the people, dismissing their sufferings. Thus in the current global climate marked by misery and militarization, the pollyanas of the world end up exacerbating the situation simply by affording to deny it. Leaning on platitudes is not the solution to massacres and wars, crimes against humanity, gender-based violence, ethnic cleansing, etc. However, civic-driven effort, which begins with simply acknowledging the problem, helps. This can be demonstrated by the 2015 Paris Climate Conference or The French Revolution.

Imagine if the freedom fighters of India decided to not worry, be happy, we would have still been living in the shackles of colonialism. If stepping out of our apolitical aesthetic on social media speaking up for those in need mars our social media experience then it is high time we realized that death tolls are more people than numbers. And comfortable silence causes tangible damage.

There is a difference between toxic positivity and optimism. Optimism is looking toward a solution or an outcome while acknowledging the problem. The former leaves no room for empathy or compassion. On a micro level, psychologists suggest acknowledging the pain a person might be experiencing or asking what they need as an antidote to toxic positivity. Feeling heard and cared for does not only soothe people and nations in distress but it also sparks positive change.



Unrelenting positivity brands authentic human emotions like sadness, grief, anger, etc. as “weaknesses” or “failures”

.....



# An Indian

*Alia Hossain through her verses explores the various spectrums of Indian society.*

An Indian speaking flawless English,  
Is held up to ridicule for saying 'ayyo',  
While jasmine flutters in coconut hair.

An Indian who dances Bihu,  
Is thrown mockery upon,  
For tiny weeny almondy eyes.

An Indian who is known Dalit,  
Is separated from upper class,  
Within the space of learning.

An Indian educator believing in a faith,  
Teaches the innocent angel,  
To thrash the other.

An Indian tying the knot of love,  
Takes a big pot of dowry,  
To bring home a goddess of fortune.

An Indian ploughs the field,  
To grow grains; only for the nation,  
To eat their earnings instead.

An Indian who carries a child,  
Brushes the tender head of son,  
Girls though; beheaded before birth.

An Indian common man,  
Is fed the happenings of town,  
In the context of politically funded parties.

An Indian holding a card of opposition,  
Is met with a mishap of regional internet shut down

An Indian who raises voice,  
For the ones without;  
Is arrested to death.

A human who writes,  
Writes for eternity,  
And this Indian is writing a truth;  
That won't pass the censorship,  
But I continue;  
Continue till I bleed  
And bleed till I write.



According to a recent report by Human Rights Watch, the dropout rate from elementary school for Dalit children is 51%, while the national average is 37%

# ডগ্ন রূপনগরী

- By Tanisa Saha

একদিন অত্যাশ্চর্য নভোনীলিমায়  
শূন্য অকপট জিজ্ঞাস্য বাটিকায়  
জবাবের মাল্যদান—  
কি? প্রত্যহ কিছু আফ্রিক ক্ষুধার তাড়নায়  
নিজেই কোনো প্রহরে দৈনন্দিন ছন্দবদ্ধতায় দিচ্ছি স্ব-গর্দান  
আলোয়ার পিছে ছুটে হচ্ছে লোক পলাতক  
হতেও পারে চাঁদ হয়তো ঘরেতেই আটক।

তুমি হ্যাঁ তুমি! তোমার মনে হয় তুমি এসব পারবে বদলাতে?  
যে থাকে না ভালো তারার ভিড়ে, আহত যে তীক্ষ্ণ কথার তীরে—  
প্রতীক্ষায় বসো না হয় কোনো লাল সকাল অবধি?  
স্মরণীয় হোক সেই ছোট মেয়েটি চাইতো কি?  
মৃদু মন্দ হাওয়ার তোড়ে কোনো এক কাগজী নৌকো করে  
প্রতিষ্ঠিত পরিমল নির্মলা রূপনগরী চাইতো সে  
নোটে গাছটারও অস্তিত্ব নেই, রূপনগরীও তাই রইলো অবাস্তবেই  
বাস্তবতার জাঁতাকলে সেই মেয়েটাও বুঝি ফুরিয়ে গেলো?



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অবশেষে জেনেছি মানুষ একা

# Femicide: A Grave Menace to Society

*Unveiling the harrowing reality of femicide, this article exposes a global epidemic claiming women's lives.*

- By Harshita Agrawal

"Femicide" or "femicide" refers to the intentional killing of women or girls based on their gender. It's a term often used to highlight the gender-based nature of such crimes, emphasizing that these acts are rooted in discrimination and violence against women.

Femicide, like all forms of gender-based violence against women and girls, is a global issue that impacts every nation and region. According to a report published by the UN in 2022, 56% of the killings of women and girls worldwide in 2021 were cases of femicide. The report's statistics are shockingly high, yet they are the tip of the iceberg. Due to regional differences in criminal justice recording and investigation procedures, too many femicide victims remain uncounted. Approximately 4 out of 10 deliberate homicides of women and girls in 2021 lack sufficient evidence to be classified as gender-related killings.

We know that gender-based killings occur in a variety of settings outside of the domestic sphere, yet frequently, only deaths committed by an intimate partner or family member are classified as femicides. They can be caused by hate crimes involving sexual orientation, or can be connected to armed conflict, human trafficking, or other types of organised crime. They can also be related to harmful practices like female genital mutilation or so-called "honour" – based violence.

Femicide serves as a stark reminder of how ingrained gender inequality is in society. It depicts a system in which women are at a disadvantage due to unequal power dynamics. Fighting femicide requires addressing the underlying causes of inequality, eliminating systemic discrimination, and creating an atmosphere in which every person, regardless of gender, can live without fear of violence.

It is essential to acknowledge femicide as a symptom of larger societal problems in order to combat it successfully. It is imperative to address gender-based violence, discrimination, and cultural practices that reinforce detrimental stereotypes. Education is essential for challenging the deeply held prejudices and promoting an egalitarian and respectful society. Gender-sensitive education can help the society build a future in which femicide is unthinkable as a tragedy. In addition, legislation and law enforcement are essential in the fight against femicide. Effective enforcement of strict laws that forbid gender-based violence sends a clear message that such actions will not be tolerated. Furthermore, it is critical to offer victims and survivors support services so they can rebuild their lives and contribute to the larger movement of societal transformation.

To conclude, it should be noted that femicide is a disturbing reality that needs immediate attention. Through addressing the root causes of femicide and implementing comprehensive plans into place, society can work towards eliminating the practice and creating a more secure world.



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According to a report by UN Women, there were around 45,000 cases of femicide worldwide in 2021

# ছড়ি না ঘুড়ি?

-By Tanisha Saha

ঘুড়ির জন্ম ওড়ার জন্য ভাবতে অবাকই লাগে  
উড়তে হলে পেছন থেকে বেরং সুতলী কেন টানা থাকে?

স্বাধীন সে নিজেকে মনে করে—

যদিও নিয়ম সুতোয় তাকে বেঁধে রাখে

কত আড়ম্বর কত অলঙ্কার ঘুড়ির গায়ে

সংস্কারের লাটাই সবাই চায় নিজের নিজের হাতে...

কজন আবার অপেক্ষা করে ঘুড়ি ছিঁড়ে পড়বে বলে,

যাতে কাটা ছড়ি আহা থুড়ি ঘুড়ি কুড়োতে পারে 'ভোকাট্টা!' বলে,

উন্নত জনতা নর্দমার ধারে বা গলির মোড়ে।



ঘুড়ি তুমি কার আকাশে ওড়ো? তার আকাশ কি আমার চেয়ে বড়...

# Women's Reservation Bill and Human Rights

*"Empower a woman, and you empower a nation".  
This article delves into the transformative journey of the Women's Reservation Bill in the Indian Parliament.*

In the vibrant tapestry of a nation's progress, the role of women is pivotal. Their empowerment not only uplifts individual lives but also propels an entire nation towards greater heights. As Arundhati Roy eloquently stated, "There's really no such thing as the 'voiceless.' There are only the deliberately silenced, or the preferably unheard". The discussion on the reservation of seats for women in the Indian Parliament has been a resounding echo in the political chambers since the tenure of former Prime Minister Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee in 1996, a visionary step towards gender equality and the protection of fundamental human rights.

The bill made its debut in the Indian Parliament in 1996. Despite the noble intent, it encountered significant opposition and was shelved, primarily due to the lack of a majority in the then government. After several earlier attempts, the Lok Sabha (LS) and Rajya Sabha (RS) jointly passed the Women's Reservation Bill in 2023, commonly referred to as the 128th Constitutional Amendment Bill or Nari Shakti Vandana Adhinyam. It seeks to reserve 33% of seats in the Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assemblies for women. The bill also proposes sub-reservations for SCs, STs, and Anglo-Indians within the 33% quota, and that the reservation will continue for 15 years.

The necessity for the bill becomes evident when looking at women's representation in the Indian Parliament. The Lok Sabha currently has 82 women members of parliament, constituting 15.2% of the total, while the Rajya Sabha has 31 women members, accounting for 13% of the house. These numbers represent a significant increase since the inception of the 1st Lok Sabha when women's representation was a mere 5%. Recent data from UN Women underscores this gap, with countries like Rwanda (61%), Cuba (53%), and Nicaragua (52%) leading the charge in women's representation. Even Bangladesh (21%) and Pakistan (20%) have outpaced India in terms of female political participation.

The bill proposes rotating reserved seats for women among different constituencies, ensuring a fair and balanced representation, advantage of which is multifaceted. It offers an equal opportunity for women to participate actively in politics, aligning with the principles of human rights. It empowers women, allowing them to play a crucial role in decision making and above all, it champions gender equality, a core human right.

Passing this transformative bill was challenging, with political oppositions and deeply entrenched cultural norms limiting women's involvement in politics. It goes beyond politics; it challenges stereotypes and highlights women's capabilities in leadership and decision-making.

The bill has a positive impact on various aspects of human development, such as education, healthcare and social welfare. Examples from Panchayats in different regions show that increased women's participation leads to tangible improvements in women empowerment, healthcare and infrastructure.

The Women's Reservation Bill in India is not just legislation; it's a commitment to gender equality, empowerment and human rights protection. It reflects India's determination to empower women and break down stereotypes reaffirming that in the pursuits of gender equality, **equal rights are not special rights.**

- By Atiya Khurshida

# The Art of Resistance

*iLEADERS wield the paintbrush to illustrate the power of the art of resistance against the decay of human rights and the widespread, gender-based violence in the world.*



Souvik De. *Erosion of Human Rights*. 21 x 13 cm. 2023. Image courtesy of the artist.

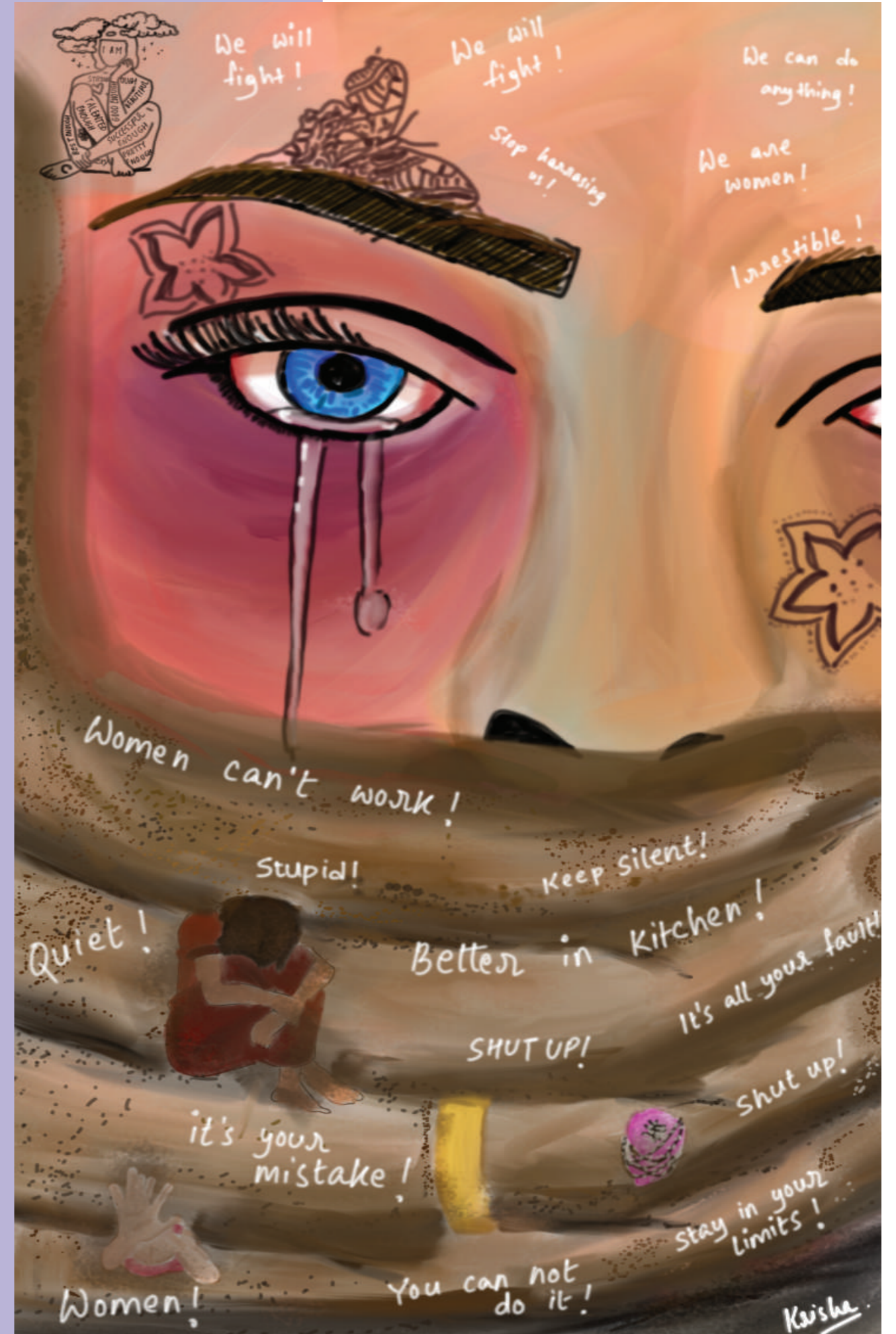


PIXABAY

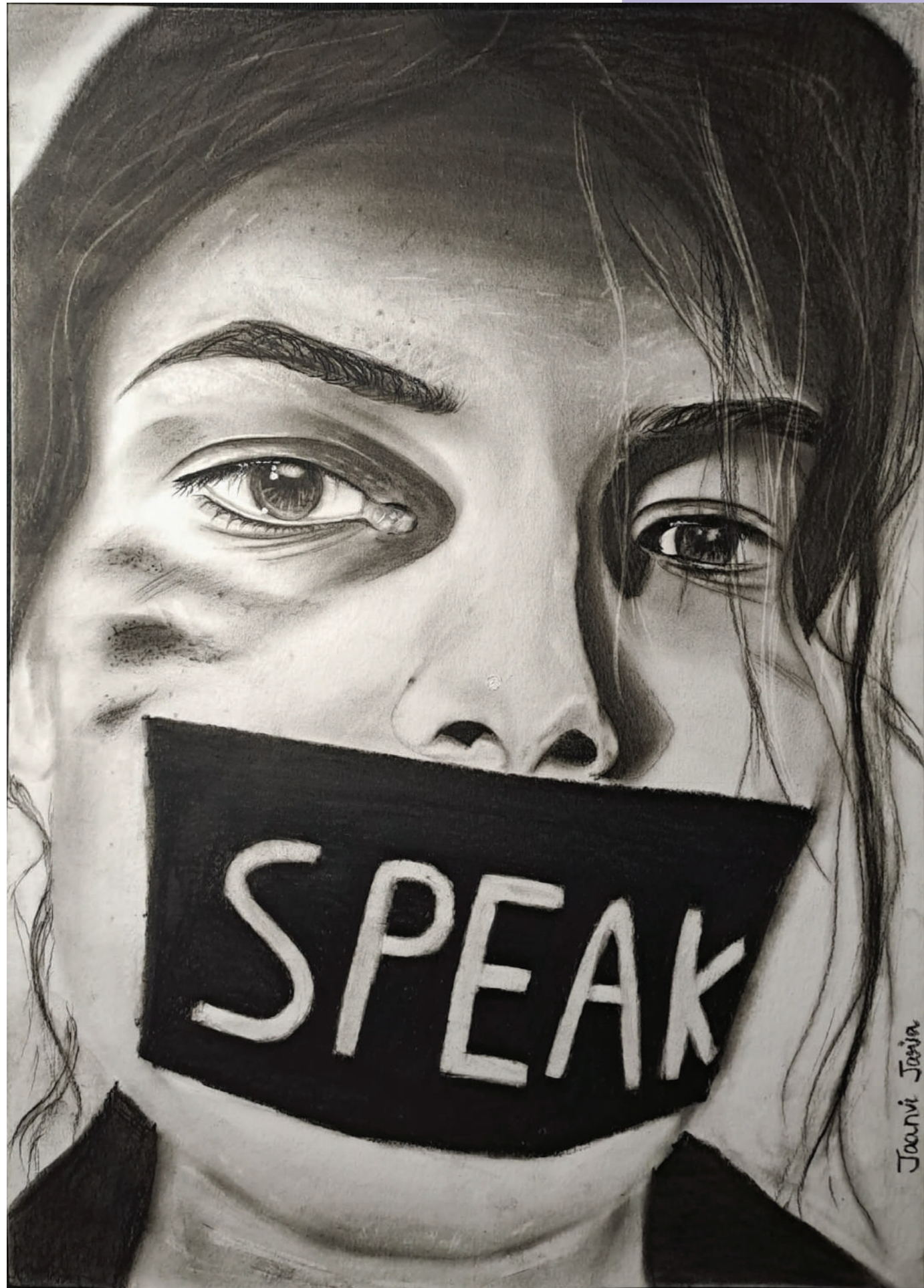
According to the Election Commission of India, in the 2019 Indian General Elections, only 9% of the tickets were given to women.



Srijita Mondal. *Are we really independent?*  
35 x 28 cm. 2023. Image courtesy of the artist.



Krishna Goyal. *Fighting the social stigma.*  
21 x 29.7 cm. 2023. Image courtesy of the artist.



**Jaanvi Jaria.** *Breaking the silence.* 21×29.7 cm. 2023.  
Image courtesy of the artist



**Tanya Singh.** *Caught.* 21× 29.7 cm. 2023. Image courtesy of the artist.

# The Portrait

- By Zaina Timol

## Chapter 1

### Unearthing the past and roots: Tracing the history of victim blaming

Throughout history, there's been a pattern. People, whom we call victims, have always been painted in a negative light. This comes from the way they've suffered. Whether it was at the hands of others or circumstances that they couldn't control, this narrative is what shaped our understanding of justice and empathy, which in turn made us who we are today. Violence has been made normal through gender norms and power structures. And as a result, the cycle of victimization survives.

### Myths and Literature: A Saga of Suffering

Myths, those ancient tales, marked the bedrock of human storytelling. It's an eerie glimpse into how victims were portrayed in ancient society. Take Medusa's terrifying transformation in Greek mythology; it strongly reflects the fear early civilizations had for powerful women. It seems that throughout history, there has been a fascination with victimhood and punishment that just won't let go.

The ability of literature to shed light on the complexities of being a victim and the injustice people suffer from is remarkable. A prime example is "The Scarlet Letter" by Nathaniel Hawthorne. This book tells the story of Hester Prynne during the 17th century. After committing adultery, she gets publicly shamed and avoided by everyone in her village, as if she were a leper. She is given an "A" on her clothes to signify sinning against her husband. The novel makes readers ponder how much societal judgement can



The Rape of the Sabine Women by Giambologna

impact any individual.

### Visual Arts and Music: Expressions of Pain

As Edgar Degas said, 'Art is not what you see, but what you make others see'. Visual arts and music also offer a captivating window into victim portrayal. Take a look at Goya's painting called 'The Third of May 1808'. With faces filled with fear and agony all while standing in a backdrop of darkness, we can really feel the horrors war brings to life. This painting doesn't just capture history. It burns the brutal truth of victims during times of conflict into our collective memory.

Sculptures also weave tales of pain and suffering using marble and bronze. 'The Rape of the Sabine Women' by Giambologna and 'The Abduction of the Sabine Women' by Nicolas Poussin freeze moments of violence against women in time. This forces viewers to confront the chilling reality of their victimization. Beating across centuries, these sculptures are powerful reminders of how unjust we are.

Music carries a very deep emotional resonance. In this way, it can convey the

tales of victims to our very souls. Billie Holiday's 'Strange Fruit' hauntingly narrates the brutal lynching that happened to African Americans in America. Tracy Chapman's 'Behind the Wall' gives a glimpse into the world where domestic violence happens on a daily basis. Using just these instruments, victims find a way to speak out.

### Gender Dynamics

The way victims are portrayed is very peculiar. For example, women have historically been shown as weak and dependent. Portraying them like this too often reinforces that stereotype. On the other side, men have been expected to be stoic and strong, making it harder for people to believe when anything bad happens to them. These portrayals can be worse if the victim is also a person of colour.

It is evident that gender-based violence has existed in our society since the beginning and is ethically wrong, which has left an enduring impact on our society. Something that we need to challenge and change so as to progress as humans. As said by Mary Pickford, 'The past cannot be changed. The future is yet in your power'.

# of Victims:

## Chapter 2

### The ongoing quest for change

Is the way victims are portrayed in our society and even in the media really ahead of our time? Chapter 2 is an ongoing saga exploring how we perceive and treat victims. And it's no stranger to contention, either. It's a web of themes like sensationalism, the #MeToo movement, intersectionality, and victim-blaming that contribute to the evolving portrayal of victims.

### Sensationalism: A Double-Edged Sword

As Oscar Wilde once said, 'The public is wonderfully tolerant. It forgives everything except genius'. Sensationalism is like a double-edged sword for victims. The shock value of any case often eclipses empathy. When reporting tragedy and suffering, the true gravity of crimes committed is ignored, distorting reality.

In the past and till date, sexual assault or domestic violence cases were covered with a more sensationalistic angle that emphasised lurid details rather than empathising with the survivor's experience.

### #MeToo: Empowering Voices

In 2017, the #MeToo movement gained global prominence. With it came the ability for survivors to break free of the silence and unite, allowing victims to connect through their experiences.

Stories of countless individuals were shared, both in and out of the entertainment industry, showing how sexual harassment and assault can be experienced by anyone, regardless of their gender. Collectively, they created a voice that couldn't be ignored.

### Intersectionality: Recognizing Diversity

The concept of intersectionality was created to better understand the diversity of victim experiences. Essentially, it emphasised the fact that multiple forms of discrimination can happen at once.

Take a male survivor who has experienced domestic violence, for example. They will have very different experiences compared to a woman who also survived domestic violence. In these situations, gender and race intersect to create unique results.

### Victim Blaming: Perpetuation of Harmful Stereotypes

As author Brené Brown puts it, 'Shame corrodes the very part of us that believes we are capable of change'. The fear of victim blaming doesn't just quiet them; it's also making it less likely for survivors to share their stories.

Sexual assault victims are asked a variety of questions. Some of them include, "What were you wearing?" and "Were you drinking?" When things like this are asked, it perpetuates harmful stereotypes and shifts blame from the person committing the act to the victim themselves.

### Gender Dynamics: Change and Need for More Change

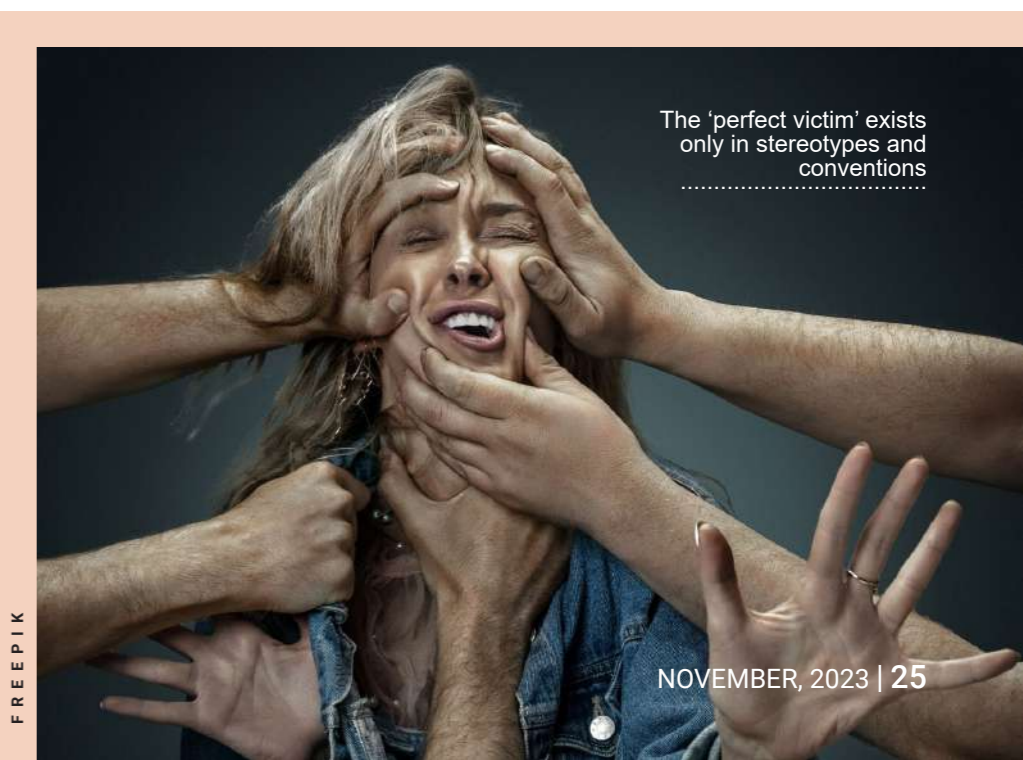
We've shifted towards a more equitable and inclusive set of gender roles that has allowed victims of all genders to come forward with their stories and receive the support and empathy they deserve.

Both women and men can be victims. Just because someone is a man doesn't mean they can't be harmed, and this shouldn't surprise anyone. For example, men who have experienced domestic violence find it difficult to speak out since it challenges the idea of masculinity in a society where men have to be tough.

### Social Media: Misinformation and Shaping Victim Narratives

While promising to empower, social media also fosters an environment where misinformation can spread at an alarming rate. The conspiracy of 'Pizzagate' is a striking example of the harmful consequences of misinformation. The fake theory on social media falsely accused a pizzeria in Washington DC, of harbouring a child sex trafficking ring that involved even political figures. This incident even led to an armed individual entering the pizzeria to 'investigate'.

This chapter, interwoven with several issues, is a reminder of the need for ongoing support and understanding for victims and for us to consider the absolute need for change, regardless of their situation. Raising the disturbing question: Have we really changed, or is it all just a show of progress?

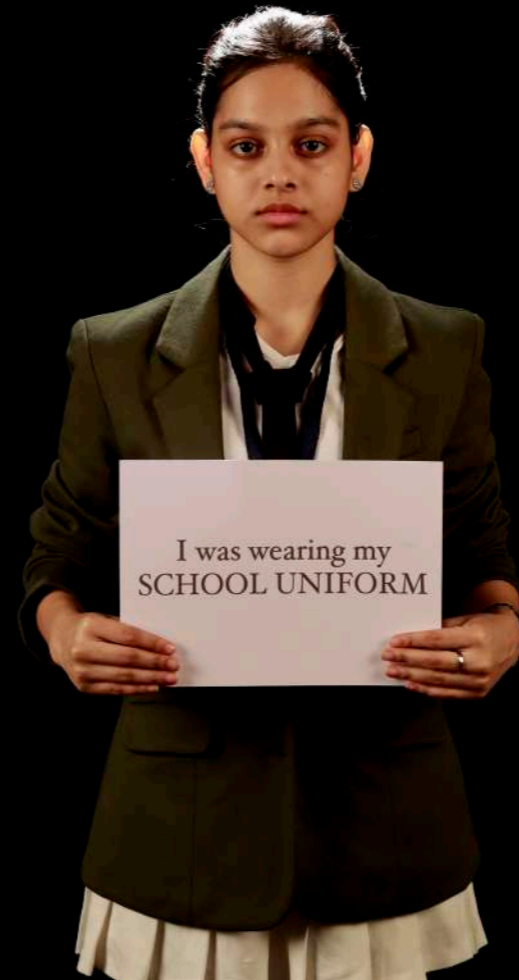


The 'perfect victim' exists only in stereotypes and conventions

# What Were You Wearing?

The rhetoric of 'what were you wearing' has remained constant through the decades. Be it a school uniform or a burqa, a saree or a dress, victim blaming has been blind to the onus of the rapist. This enables gender-based violence, and silences the victims. With the aim to upend the question, a story in photos.

Concept: Aiema Tauheed  
Stylist: Shresth Jha  
Inspired by: Rise's Survivor Fashion Show (11.09.2023)





Dowry related matters accounted for the lives of 19 women every day in 2020, the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) data has revealed

## Floating Myths that Rain Agony

*Dive into the superstitions which have plagued the lives of women in an Indian, patriarchal society.*

- ‘Can’t you see her baby bump isn’t low?’
- ‘Her cravings certainly tell she’s carrying a girl.’
- ‘There’s no need to give her milk or fruits now, we can’t afford it and it isn’t as if there’s any hope of good fortune.’

If these sayings sound familiar to you, welcome to Asian-brown male-dominated society. A woman’s worth in India, to my dismay, is not more than a shoe. These casually uttered sayings, often devoid of any remorse, not only perpetuate a culture of harassment towards pregnant women but also, contribute to the alarming issue of female infanticide in the context of Indian patriarchal society. Bringing up a girl is expensive they say, but why? Why must it be the women to give dowry when we invest only in the son’s education? Why must it be the victim of physical and mental abuse be women?

It was a relative’s family. In the aftermath of her marriage, a woman was subjected to mental abuse following the untimely demise of her father-in-law due to a heart attack. Tragically, an unjust burden of guilt was placed upon her, attributing the

family’s misfortune to her presence. This incident is a prevalent manifestation of the deep-rooted misogyny in our country.

My aunt does not wish to marry her son in Bengal because myth brands Bengalis as practitioners of witchcraft. A community as sweet as rasgulla is scorned upon because of an absurd myth. Being a woman, my heart sinks to think of the trauma a woman might go through if she is branded a witch. In certain villages, not only does the society mentally torture them but even murders them for false allegations of witchcraft.

Another very popular myth, I have witnessed in my relative’s family is- ‘Shaadi kara do, phir sudhar jayega!’ and when that doesn’t work, -‘Bacche honge, zimmedari aayegi toh sudhar jayega’.

I don’t harbor the slightest sense of guilt asserting that anyone with such an opinion is indeed a fool. I have seen the look of terror and helplessness in the eyes of that woman who is supposed to worship her husband. The husband returns home late, drunk, and dangerous. Not only is the woman’s entire life is thrown down the lane but also the child who carries the responsibility to change his father. They say love changes people but I believe even if love had the power to change, a person who drinks and disrespects women, physically tortures them, is not a man who can ever love.

Women endure mistreatment during menstruation. They go through sexual harassment, and oppression for dowry in silence. Other women also contribute to the social evils when they uphold patriarchy. Finally men, in a male-dominated society play a vital role in perpetuating these evils. And of course, not all men are the same but one bad apple spoils the bunch.

- By Alia Hossain

# Silencing Society’s Echo

*Nurus Saba explores the ongoing relevance of the age-old phrase ‘Log kya kahenge?’ and sheds light on its effect in our lives, which often remains concealed behind closed doors.*

In the whispers of society’s ancient song, Lies a phrase that often does us wrong, ‘Log kya kahenge?’, they constantly ask, A weight on shoulders, an unending task.

In the tapestry of life, woven so fine, This rhetoric lingers like a shadow’s line. A burden carried, often by our queens, In the name of honour, in the name of means.

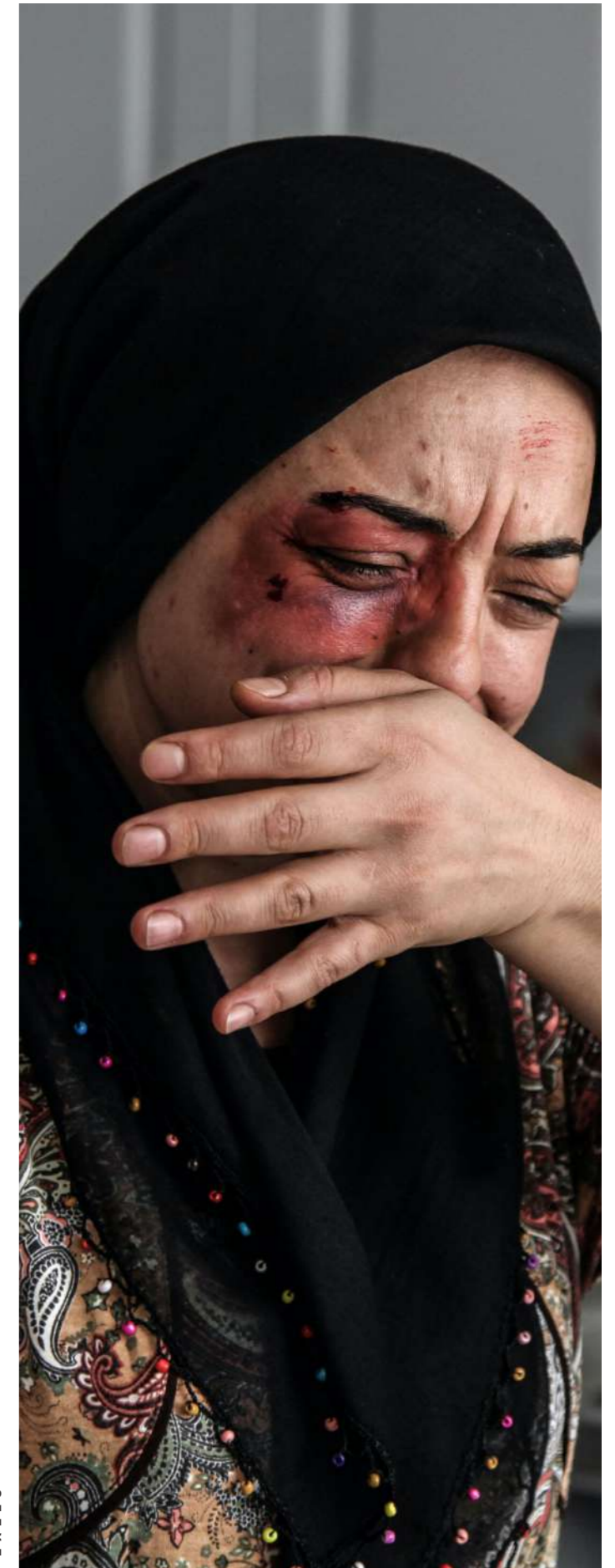
But beneath the surface, behind closed doors, The pain, the tears, the silenced roars, In the name of tradition, customs, and norms, Gender-based violence takes alarming forms.

Yet, in the hearts of those who bear the strain, A fire ignites a resilient flame. They break the chains, defy the decree, Seeking a world where all can be free.

For in the strength of voices, loud and clear, We find a path to quell the fear. ‘Log kya kahenge?’, they’ll no longer heed, A brighter future is what they’ll lead.

Let love and equality brightly shine. In a world where every heart can intertwine, No more shackles, no more silence; let’s pledge, To break the cycle, where all find their edge.

In this quest for change, let us unite. And shatter the chains of the old, dark night, For a world where love and respect are key, ‘Log kya kahenge?’ is no longer a decree.



According to a recent study by the UN Women, less than 40% of the women who experience violence seek help of any sort

# Overheard in College

Everyday conversations shape our culture. We choose what we wish to condone, normalise and perpetuate. Some snippets from regular conversations overheard in college:

Chakka s\*la.

**Bro I look so raped in this picture!**

Ladkiyon ko toh badan dhakke chalna chahiye.

She looks exactly like a cabaret dancer.

**Ladka ban jaa, gay s\*la.**

Ye wars and all toh chalte rehte hai, chor na.

Taad ke aata hu.

I forbid you from dating him.

At least she has got a stalker.

**College ke baad ladki uthayenge.**

**I wear sunglasses to check girls out without getting caught.**

Joote kahin aur baandho, seedha khadi ho aur hato yahan se, mujhe cleavage nahi dekhna.

**Is baar fashion show mein waisa maal nahin hain**

Hijra hai kya?

Tui tulbi ki aami?

**Hahaha you look like a molester!**

Ye dekho, I have a screenshot of her story jab wo bikini peheni thee.

**Shaadi ke baazar mein tumhara koi price nahi hai.**

**Kitne mahine ki pregnant ho?**

What the hell?!

How can he date a fat and dark girl?

**Uske [breasts] chote hai**

Mujhe nahi fark padta, mujhe ye pronouns nahi samajh aate.

**Come fast, I can see her undies.**

Ye sab baat-cheet and camera wale kaam ladkiyon ke bas ke nahi hai

**5 bochchor er bachha aache? Perfect MILF toh, bhai!**

I want to talk about BDSM, now that we're talking marital rape.

Muslim areas are filthy.

# Beyond the Closet Door:

रोहन की कहानी नहीं  
उसकी जुबानी

**Embark on Rohini's poignant journey through a heteronormative society, exposing the turmoil faced by the queer community in its struggle for acceptance.**

- By Rupkatha Biswas

अलमारी के चार दिवारी में कैद आवाज़ हूँ मैं,  
दिल को जलाते हुए होठों तक ना आने वाले अलफ़ाज़ हूँ मैं।  
अपने आप को ना समझ पाने पे खुद को कोसने वाली नादान हूँ मैं,  
दुनिया ज़माने की बंदिशों से आज हारकर बिखरने वाली राज़दान हूँ मैं।

Just like the mesh of a spider's cobweb, in the intricate tapestry of life there are threads of challenges, scandals, and societal norms that sometimes weave a complex narrative. As we delve into a story of resilience, self-discovery, and societal expectations, it is time for you to meet Rohini, or rather, Rohan – a soul navigating the maze of stereotypes. In the realm of hushed whispers and judgment, Rohini faced the storm of societal norms head-on. Rohini's journey began in seventh grade when she acknowledged a truth about herself – an attraction towards individuals of the same gender. Lost and perplexed, Rohini struggled with the weight of her revelation.

At home, Rohini's distressed demeanour caught her mother's attention. With concern, on enquiring, her mother had to come face-to-face with a truth that shattered societal expectations – Rohini, who always had been a rather 'tomboy' identified herself as a 'Lesbian', drawn to females rather than males. The disclosure left Rohini's mother grappling with dreams ingrained by societal norms. In a heart-wrenching moment, she issued an ultimatum

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According to a recent study by the Williams Institute at UCLA School of Law, 61% of people from the LGBTQIA+ community attempted suicide within 5 years of realising one's sexual identity

– 'marry a man or face your own demise'. Rohini, torn between love for her mother and the authenticity of her identity, faced an impossible choice. Unable to bear the mental anguish and societal pressure, Rohini contemplated the unthinkable. The weight of conformity and the looming question, "लोग क्या कहेंगे?" drove her to the precipice of ultimate despair!

Rohini's story is not an isolated one; there are countless untold tales echoing similar struggles. In the face of societal expectations, we often overlook the silent battles waged by those navigating the complexities of identity. As this narrative is shared, let us foster a space for understanding, empathy, and acceptance. The journey towards an inclusive society begins with acknowledging and respecting individual choices, every "Rohan's choice".

# क्योंकि लोग क्या कहेंगे

- By Alia Hossain

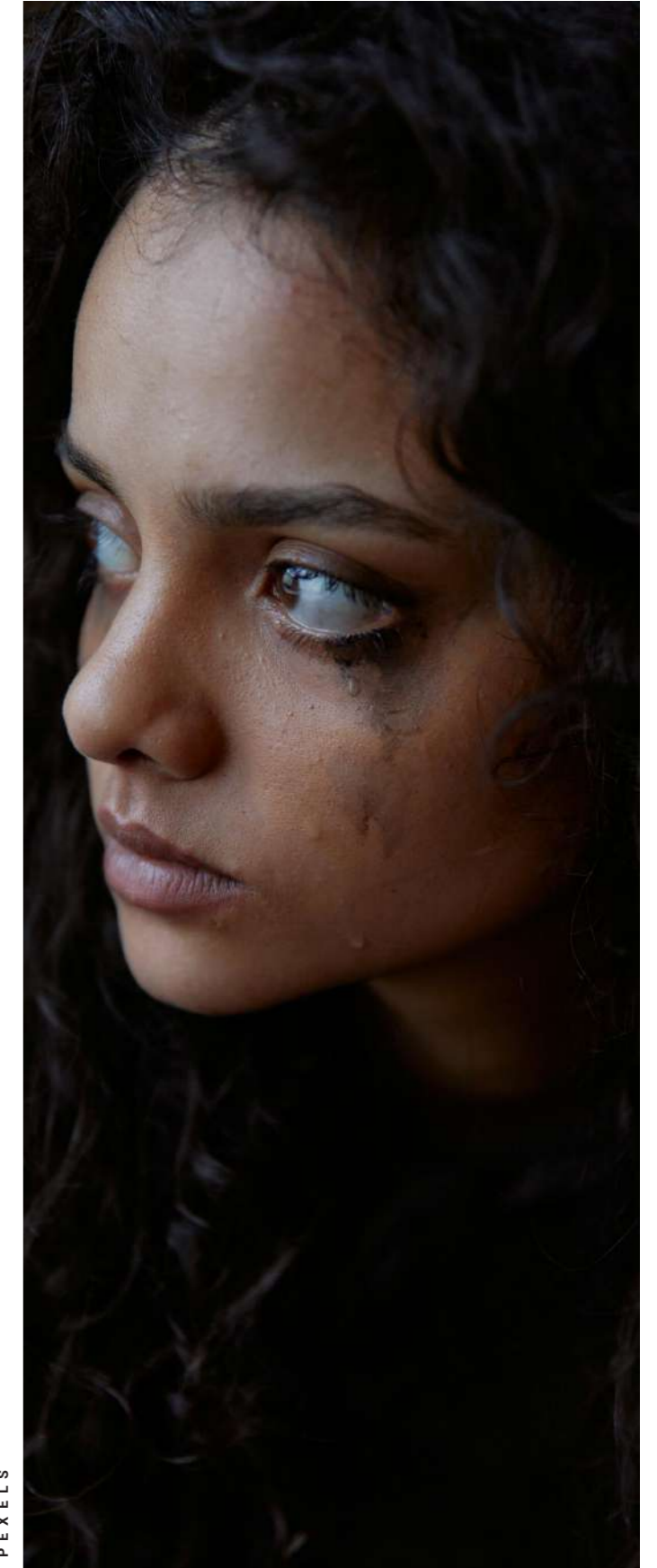
बाबा के तरह वकील  
बनने का सपना दफना कर  
उस कब्र को तकिया बना लेंगे,  
घर के चौखट के भीतर  
हाथों में छाले पड़ा कर  
हम खामोशी के गीत गा लेंगे।

छुप कर किताबें फिलमें देखने की  
ये सज़ा आन पड़ी कि हम  
चुनरी के लाल दाग छुपाएंगे,  
आसमान में उड़ती पतंग देख  
मुर्दे सपने भी फड़फड़ाते  
पर हम बेबसी का निवाला उतार लेंगे।

दहेज का आँचल ओढ़ के  
घर की दहलीज़ पार कर  
अपनों को पराया और परायों को अपनाएंगे,  
नए परिवार के ताने सुन कर  
जुल्म के निशान बदन में लपेटे  
चंद सोने की कीमत में बिक जाएंगे।

लड़के कि उम्मीद में मिला लाड  
बेटी की आहट ने चुरा लिया  
इस अन्याय इल्ज़ाम का बोझ भी उठा लेंगे,  
आँखों में मुस्कान लिए  
बच्ची की जान सवार कर  
हम खुदको दाव पे लगा देंगे।

शरीर पे घाव की मेहंदी की  
दिल में दबे चोट से तुलना नहीं  
हम औरत हैं जनाब! सब कुछ सह लेंगे,  
चार दीवारों में दम घोट कर  
हम यहीं उमर बिता लेंगे  
क्योंकि लोग क्या कहेंगे  
क्योंकि लोग क्या कहेंगे।



PEXELS

बंदिशों का पिंजरा तोड़कर एक दिन हम भी उड़ेंगे

# Breaking Society's Chains

*'Log Kya Kahenge' perpetuates gender-based violence, influencing the lives and choices of countless individuals. Primarily targeting women, its impact extends to men and the LGBTQIA+ community.*

- By Bipasha Mazumdar

The phrase 'Log Kya Kahenge' (What will people say) is deeply ingrained in the social fabric of many societies, especially in South Asia, where it is used to police and control individuals' behaviours and choices. While this cultural norm may seem harmless on the surface, it significantly contributes to gender-based violence, impacting people of all genders, including males, females, and LGBTQIA+ individuals. In this article, we will explore how the 'Log Kya Kahenge' rhetoric perpetuates gender-based violence, transcending gender boundaries.

'Log Kya Kahenge' is a phrase that enforces societal norms, often to the detriment of individual autonomy and personal expression. It acts as a tool to maintain the status quo, reinforcing traditional gender roles and expectations. While it is primarily directed at women, men and LGBTQIA+ individuals also feel its oppressive weight, albeit in different ways.

## The Impact of 'Log Kya Kahenge'

- Perpetuating Domestic Violence**

In a heterosexual relationship, a man may endure physical violence from his female partner because he is afraid of being labelled as weak or unmanly if he seeks help. Similarly, a woman may tolerate emotional abuse from her male partner because she is worried about societal judgement. These situations demonstrate how the silent 'Log Kya Kahenge' fuels violence by making individuals reluctant to seek help or escape abusive relationships, regardless of their gender.

- LGBTQIA+: Struggling for Acceptance**

LGBTQIA+ individuals face a unique set of challenges when dealing with 'Log Kya Kahenge'. In many societies where traditional norms are deeply ingrained, coming out as LGBTQIA+ can result in severe consequences, including familial rejection, discrimination, or even violence. This societal pressure to conform to heteronormative expectations exacerbates the struggles faced by LGBTQIA+ individuals, both emotionally and physically.



Societal stigma creates systemic shortcomings

## Challenging the Norm: Empowerment and Change

- Education and Awareness**

Promoting awareness about the consequences of 'Log Kya Kahenge' is the first step towards change. Educating individuals about the harmful impact of societal expectations and norms can empower them to question and resist these norms.

- Support Networks**

Creating supportive communities and networks where individuals, regardless of their gender or sexual orientation, can express themselves freely and without judgement is crucial. These safe spaces can provide emotional support and a sense of belonging.

- Legal Protections**

Enacting and enforcing legal protections against gender-based violence is essential. Laws should be inclusive and address the specific needs of all genders, including females, males, and LGBTQIA+ individuals.

- Encouraging Open Dialogue**

Promoting open conversations within families and communities can help break the silence around gender-based violence and the 'Log Kya Kahenge' mentality. Encouraging individuals to share their feelings, experiences, and fears can create a more accepting environment.

'Log Kya Kahenge' is a silent accomplice in perpetuating gender-based violence across all genders. Only by challenging and changing this deeply ingrained mentality can societies create a more inclusive and just world for everyone, regardless of their gender or sexual orientation. It is time to break the chains of 'Log Kya Kahenge' and build a more compassionate and accepting society for all.

# Celebrating Women

*Tribute to five unsung heroes*

- By Saheli Goswami

## Kate Sheppard:

*Paving Way for Voting Rights for Women*

In 1893, New Zealand made history by becoming the first self-governing country to extend voting rights to women in parliamentary elections.

The suffrage movement in New Zealand was characterized by determined and persistent activism. Kate Sheppard, who is often celebrated as a leader of the cause, along with many other suffragists, organized petitions, delivered speeches, and engaged in tireless advocacy to persuade lawmakers to change the existing laws.

Born in England, she moved to New Zealand with her family in 1868. As the editor of The White Ribbon, New Zealand's first woman-led newspaper, she wielded her skills in writing and rhetoric to effectively champion women's suffrage.

Two of her notable pamphlets, "Ten Reasons Why the Women of New Zealand Should Vote" and "Should Women Vote?" played a significant role in advocating for women's suffrage. She is a respected figure in New Zealand's history. In 1991, her picture was put on the front of the New Zealand ten-dollar bill, replacing Queen Elizabeth II's portrait.

The success of the movement had a profound impact on New Zealand's society. Women's suffrage marked a significant step toward gender equality. It empowered women to engage in public life, take part in political processes, and make their voices heard. Women were not only able to vote but also eligible to stand for election and participate in policymaking.

New Zealand's decision set a precedent for gender equality and women's rights, leading to further advancements in women's suffrage across the globe.

Some of the countries that followed New Zealand in granting women the right to vote include:

**Australia:** South Australia was the first Australian state to grant women the right to vote and stand for election in 1894. Other Australian states, such as Western Australia and New South Wales, also followed suit in the years that followed.

**Finland:** Finland became the first European country to allow women to vote and stand for office in 1906.



Kate Sheppard (1847-1934), the trailblazer who paved the way for women's voting rights

**Norway:** Norway granted full women's suffrage in 1913, following a series of incremental reforms.

**Denmark:** Danish women gained the right to vote in parliamentary elections in 1915.

**Canada:** Some provinces in Canada, including Manitoba and Alberta, allowed women to vote in provincial elections in the early 20th century, and eventually, the entire country granted women's suffrage in federal elections in 1918.

**United Kingdom:** Women in the United Kingdom over the age of 30 were granted the right to vote in 1918. The voting age was lowered to 21 in 1928.

**United States:** The 19th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution was ratified in 1920, granting women across the country the right to vote.

## Hansa Mehta:

*Introducing Gender Neutral Language at UN*

**H**ansa Mehta, born on July 3, 1897, belonged to a Jain family from Gujarat. She was the granddaughter of Nandshankar Mehta, the author of the first original Gujarati novel, "Karan Ghelo".

In 1918, she earned a degree in Philosophy. She also studied Journalism and Sociology in England.

Hansa Mehta was among the 15 women who played a vital role in the Constituent Assembly responsible for drafting India's Constitution. She served on the Advisory Committee and the Sub Committee on Fundamental Rights, where she ardently advocated for equality and justice for women in India. Her influence extended beyond India's borders. In 1946, she represented India on the Nuclear Sub-Committee addressing the status of women.

However, it was her role as the Indian delegate to the UN Human Rights Commission in 1947–48 that left an indelible mark. She was responsible for a significant change in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, transforming the phrase "all men are born free and equal" into the more inclusive "all human beings are born free and equal". She argued passionately that the declaration must reflect the rights and dignity of all individuals, regardless of their gender.

Hansa Mehta's tireless efforts sensitized the drafters of the declaration to the importance of using inclusive language, marking a victory for gender equality on a global scale. In 1950, Hansa Mehta she became the Vice Chairman of the United Nations Human Rights

Commission. She also contributed to the executive board of UNESCO. Hansa Mehta's journey was a testament to her unwavering commitment to gender equality, not just in India but worldwide.

**“All human beings are born free and equal.”**



Hansa Mehta (1897-1995), a pioneer in promoting gender-neutral language at the UN

## Judith Heumann:

*Mother of the Disability Rights Movement*



Judith Heumann (1947-2023) was a pioneer and mother of the Disability Rights Movement

**“In 2010, she was appointed by President Barack Obama as the Special Advisor on International Disability Rights for the U.S. State Department.”**

**B**orn in Philadelphia to German Jewish immigrants, Judith Heumann faced adversity from an early age. When she was 18 months old, she contracted polio, which left her reliant on a wheelchair throughout her life.

Heumann's battle for an education was a continuous struggle. Her local public school initially refused her entry, citing concerns about her inability to walk, deeming her a "fire hazard". It was her mother, Ilsa Heumann, a dedicated community activist, who challenged this decision. Her determination led to Judith attending a special school for disabled children in the fourth grade.

Despite city policy dictating a return to home instruction for high school, Judith's mother, along with other parents, successfully pressured the school to overturn this rule. As a result, Judith entered high school in 1961.

In 1970, Heumann encountered discrimination when the New York Board of Education denied her teaching license, believing she and her students could not safely exit the building during a fire emergency. She filed a lawsuit against the board. Eventually, the case was resolved, making Heumann the first wheelchair user to teach in New York City. She went on to teach elementary school for three years.

However, it was her advocacy work for disability rights that truly defined Judith Heumann's legacy. In the 1970s, she played a pivotal role in the Section 504 sit-in, where disability rights activists demanded equal access and non-discrimination in federal programs. This historic event resulted in the signing of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, a significant milestone in the fight for disability rights in the US.

Internationally, Heumann's influence continued to grow. She became a leading voice on disability issues and held the position of the World Bank's first Adviser on Disability and Development, contributing to global efforts to promote inclusivity. Judith Heumann also served in the Clinton Administration as Assistant Secretary of the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitation Services at the United States Department of Education from 1993 to 2001.

In 2010, she was appointed by President Barack Obama as the Special Advisor on International Disability Rights for the U.S. State Department. Throughout her life, Judith Heumann has been a tireless advocate, working to ensure equal rights and inclusion for people with disabilities.



Sarah Chapman (1862-1945), the driving force for change, leading the charge for gender equality in the workplace

## Sarah Chapman:

*Leading Towards Gender Equality In The Workplace*

Sarah Chapman, an unsung hero of the late 19th century, played a vital role in women's rights and better working conditions. She was born in 1862 in England. Working in the hazardous Bryant and May match factory in London, she experienced terrible conditions and low wages.

The workers at the factory had to work straight for 14 hours a day starting from 6:30 am. A considerable number of workers were minor aged only 13. Any unscheduled toilet break was also deducted from the wages of the workers. Making matchsticks also involved health hazards. It required dipping poplar or pine wood sticks into a mixture containing phosphorus, potassium chlorate and antimony

sulphide. The presence of white phosphorus in varying percentages made production highly perilous. It resulted in a severe condition known as 'phossy jaw,' an excruciating bone cancer caused by phosphorus exposure, leading to severe facial disfigurement.

In 1888, Sarah, along with her fellow 1,400 women workers, sparked the Matchgirls' strike. They demanded fair pay, safer conditions, and an end to unjust fines. This strike was a turning point for women's labour rights.

The strike's impact was significant. It not only improved conditions at the Bryant and May factory but also set an example for other industries. It showed that women could unite, make a stand, and effect change.

Sarah Chapman's leadership in the Matchgirls' strike illustrated that women could be leaders in fighting for better working conditions and equality. Her courage inspired the broader struggle for gender equality in the workplace.

In 2022, the Netflix film, 'Enola Holmes 2', provided an account of the Matchgirls' Strike. The film ended with the disclaimer - "The Match Girls' Strike, led by Sarah Chapman, was the first ever industrial action taken by women for women. It improved their working conditions for ever".

## Durgabai Deshmukh:

*Mother of Social Work*

Durgabai Deshmukh was born in 1909 in Andhra Pradesh. She was married off at the age of 8 but walked out of the marriage at 15. After the Civil Disobedience Movement, she was arrested by the British. Post her release from jail, she completed her BA and MA in Political Science and went on to complete her law degree from Madras University. She was a practicing advocate at the Madras High Court.

She left school at 12 to protest against the new English-medium education. Later, she started the Balika Hindi Paathshala in Rajamundry to promote Hindi education for girls.

She was one of the 15 women who were members of the Constituent Assembly that drafted the Constitution of India. Some of the issues that she debated on included the property rights of women under the Hindu Code Bill and the importance of keeping the judiciary independent. In her autobiography, she mentions about moving about 750 amendments, either independently or in collaboration with other assembly members.

She also founded the Andhra Mahila Sabha in 1938. Today it stands tall as India's largest and oldest charitable organization serving women and children. It runs multiple schools, colleges, vocational education centres, hospitals, women's hostels, home for senior citizens, respite home for mentally challenged women, legal aid centre for women along with a literacy house that is visioned to act as a 'nodal agency for providing resource support to literacy'.

She was also later nominated to be a member of the Planning Commission. In this role, she gathered support for a national policy on social welfare, which led to the establishment of the Central Social Welfare Board in 1953. As the Board's first chairperson, she worked with voluntary organizations to run programs focused on educating, training, and rehabilitating women, children, and the disabled in need.

During a visit to China in 1953, she realized the importance of setting up separate Family Courts. She discussed this idea with the then Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru. Later, the Family Courts Act was finally enacted in 1984.

She also served as the first chairperson of the National Council on Women's Education, established by the Government of India in 1958. In 1965, UNESCO invited her to prepare draft Asian Model for educational purposes. She was also awarded by UNESCO for her contribution in the field of literacy. In 1975, she was conferred with the Padma Vibhushan by Government of India.



Durgabai Deshmukh (1909-1981), the remarkable visionary who served as a catalyst for social change

“ She was one of the 15 women who were members of the Constituent Assembly that drafted the Constitution of India. ”

# Picture it Right

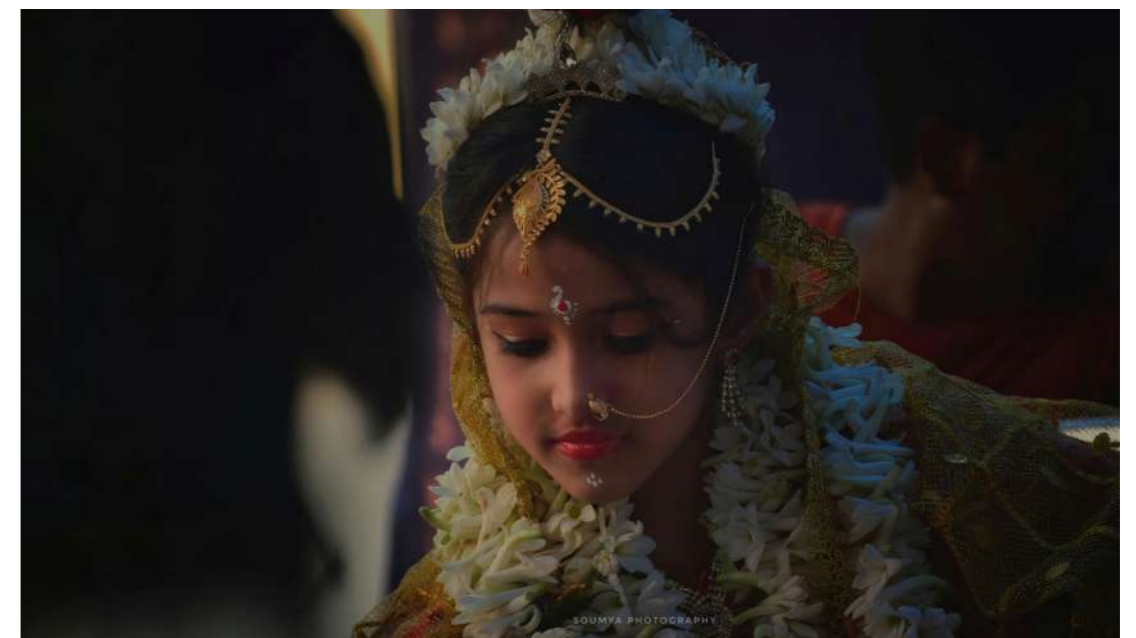
From behind the lens, iLEADERS harness the power of photography to fight gender-based violence and the decay of human rights.



Soumyajit Dutta. *Human rights.* 2023



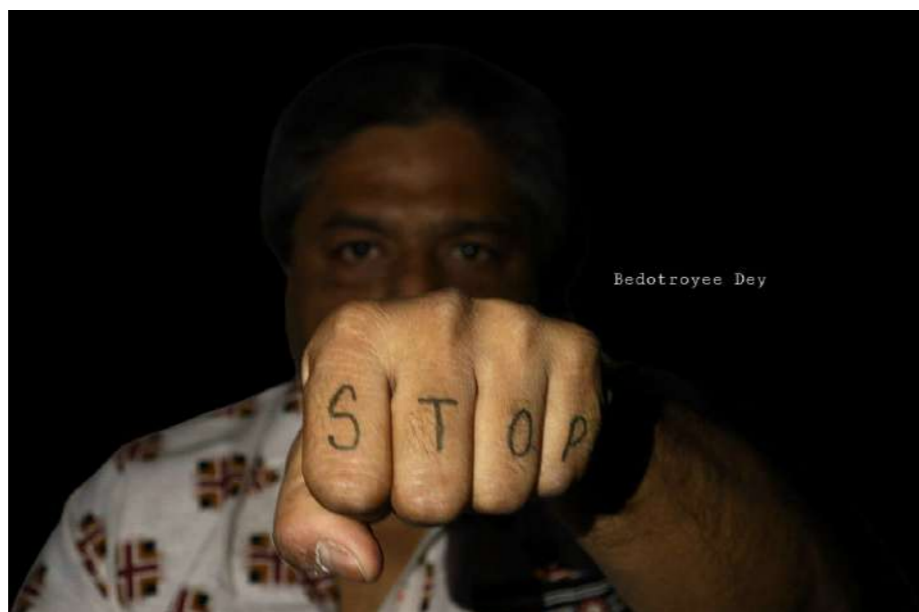
Namrta Gupta. *Life's Not The Same For Everyone.*



Soumyajit Dutta. *Child marriage.* 2023



Bedotroyee Dey. *Silent echoes of eroding human rights.*



Bedotroyee Dey. *Breaking the silence, fostering change.*



Bedotroyee Dey. *Unmute Yourself.*



Anupa Bagchi. *The Tinted Glasses of a Society.* 2022

# Unjumble, Unwind, Unpack

## 1. RECTALI14

**Hint:** "The State shall not deny to any person equality before the law or the equal protection of the laws within the territory of India."

**Answer:**

## 2. SIIELTV CBLIERIT

**Hint:** The six fundamental rights of India.

**Answer:**

## 3. AWP2050DV

**Hint:** Civil law aimed at providing relief to million of women including wives, mothers, daughters and sisters affected by violence in their homes.

**Answer:**

## 4. ODCEIGEN

**Hint 1:** The erasure of an identity, ethnicity, a people.

**Hint 2:** Adolf Hitler

**Answer:**

## 5. SEIOTNLOAM

**Hint:** The crime of engaging in sexual acts with minors, including touching of private parts, exposure of genitalia, rape etc.

**Answer:**

## 6. 3202 10TH REECMDEB

**Hint:** Human Rights Day

**Answer:**

**Answers:**

1. ARTICLE 14, 2. CIVIL LIBERTIES, 3.PWD-VA 2005, 4.GENOCIDE, 5. MOLESTATION, 6. 10th DECEMBER 2023.

# Let's Debunk

## 1. Myth:

**Men and boys can't be sexually abused.**

### Fact:

According to the US Department of Justice, around 9% of males have been sexually abused worldwide.

## 2. Myth:

**Most sexual assault allegations are fake with the purpose of damaging the perpetrator's reputation.**

### Fact:

According to the figures from the National Crime Records Bureau's (NCRB) Crime in India report 2020, more than 92% of all cases under investigation for sexual assault were found to be 'true'.

## 3. Myth:

**A person cannot sexually assault their spouse.**

### Fact:

According to the recent National Family Health Survey (NFHS) data report, among the ever-married women 83% of the women claimed their husbands to be the perpetrators.

## 4. Myth:

**Sexual assault and sexual harassment are the same thing.**

### Fact:

Sexual assault is a direct, non-consensual act of a sexual nature, involving physical contact or coercion. For instance- non-consensual sexual touching. Sexual harassment involves unwanted, inappropriate behavior or comments of a sexual nature, creating a hostile environment.

## 5. Myth:

**Gender equality in the sphere of education has been achieved.**

### Fact:

According to a report published by UNICEF, only 49% of countries have achieved gender parity in primary education. At the secondary level, the gap widens: 42% of countries have achieved gender parity in lower secondary education, and 24% in higher secondary education.

## 6. Myth:

**The queer community doesn't face sexual assault.**

### Fact:

According to a new study by the Williams Institute at UCLA School of Law, LGBTQIA+ community is nearly four times more likely than heterosexual individuals to experience violent victimization, including rape, sexual assault, and aggravated or simple assault.

# The Survivor's Playlist



## Gloria Gaynor- I Will Survive (1978)

I Will Survive is a classic disco and empowerment anthem which has continued to save marginalized people a spot on the dance floor. It continues to be a global anthem for those who have felt politically oppressed, physically challenged or otherwise pushed to society's margins. That includes survivors of domestic violence.



## Martina McBride-Concrete Angel (2002)

Released on September 11, 2002, the song was a part of her album Greatest Hits. The song is a poignant ballad that tells the story of a child suffering from abuse and neglect, shedding light on the harsh realities that some children face in abusive environments.



## Rihanna- Man Down (2011)

The song tells a story of a woman who takes matters into her own hands after experiencing sexual assault. It addresses themes of violence and self-defence, raising awareness about these issues while also sparking discussions about the complex emotions that survivors may go through.



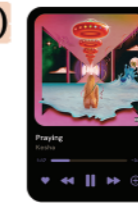
## Martina McBride-A Broken Wing (1997)

A Broken Wing is a country song by Martina McBride, released on her album Evolution in 1997. The song tells the story of a woman who finds the courage to break free from an abusive relationship, symbolising empowerment and resilience.



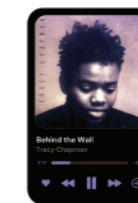
## Lady Gaga-Til It Happens To You (2015)

"Til It Happens To You" is a song written by Diane Warren and Lady Gaga. It is a deeply emotional song that addresses the traumatic experience of sexual assault. It highlights the emotional and physical pain that survivors endure. It urges the listeners to stand in solidarity with the survivors.



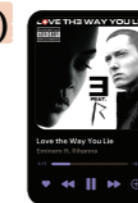
## Kesha -Praying (2017)

The song is a deeply personal and emotional track in which Kesha addresses her experiences of emotional and psychological abuse. It reflects her journey toward healing and self-empowerment. It has become an anthem for survivors of abuse and a symbol of resilience and strength.



## Tracy Chapman- Behind the Wall (1988)

It's featured on her self-titled debut album, Tracy Chapman which was released in 1988. The song is a haunting and emotionally charged ballad that tells the story of an abusive relationship, painting a stark and honest portrayal of domestic violence.



## Eminem ft. Rihanna- Love the Way You Lie (2009)

This 2009 song serves as a powerful portrayal of the cyclical nature of abuse and its impact on individuals involved in such relationships. It raises awareness about domestic violence and the struggle of trying to break free from a toxic, abusive relationship.



# Must-Watch Watchlist



*Sriparna Ghosh curates a compelling list of seven films that you must watch during the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence and Human Rights Day.*



## The Colour Purple (1985)

This film tells the story of a young African-American girl named Celie Harris and shows the problems African-American women experienced during the early 20th century, including domestic violence, incest, child sexual abuse, poverty, racism, and sexism.



## Boys Don't Cry (1999)

This film is a dramatization of the real-life story of Brandon Teena, an American trans man who attempts to find himself and love in Nebraska but falls victim to a brutal hate crime perpetrated by two male acquaintances.



## Khoon Bhari Mang (1998)

In this film widowed Aarti falls prey to Sanjay's vicious plan of getting married to him. Later, with the help of her best friend Nandini, he drowns Aarti and seizes her wealth but she survives and seeks revenge.



## The Accused (1988)

This film tells the story of a young African-American girl named Celie Harris and shows the problems African-American women experienced during the early 20th century, including domestic violence, incest, child sexual abuse, poverty, racism, and sexism.



## Provoked (2007)

Provoked is based on the true story of Kiranjit Ahluwalia, who killed her rapist and abusive husband to save her own life. It is based on the true story of an Indian woman incarcerated for murdering her abusive husband who had her conviction overturned in a case that changed British law.



## Thappad (2020)

Starring Taapsee Pannu in the lead role, serves as a lesson to take a stand against domestic violence. It showcases the journey of a loving wife and husband and how a slap changes everything around them.

# Home is where the hurt is

**Sukanya Das writes about why it is important to not only own up to but own one's identity as a survivor of domestic violence. From her experience. First-hand.**

“It can never happen to me. I love him too much. He’s educated. I am educated. He doesn’t want to become his father. I will NEVER become his mother. He chose me, right? I chose him, didn’t I?”

Can’t happen, can it? Wouldn’t happen again, would it? Didn’t happen, did it?”

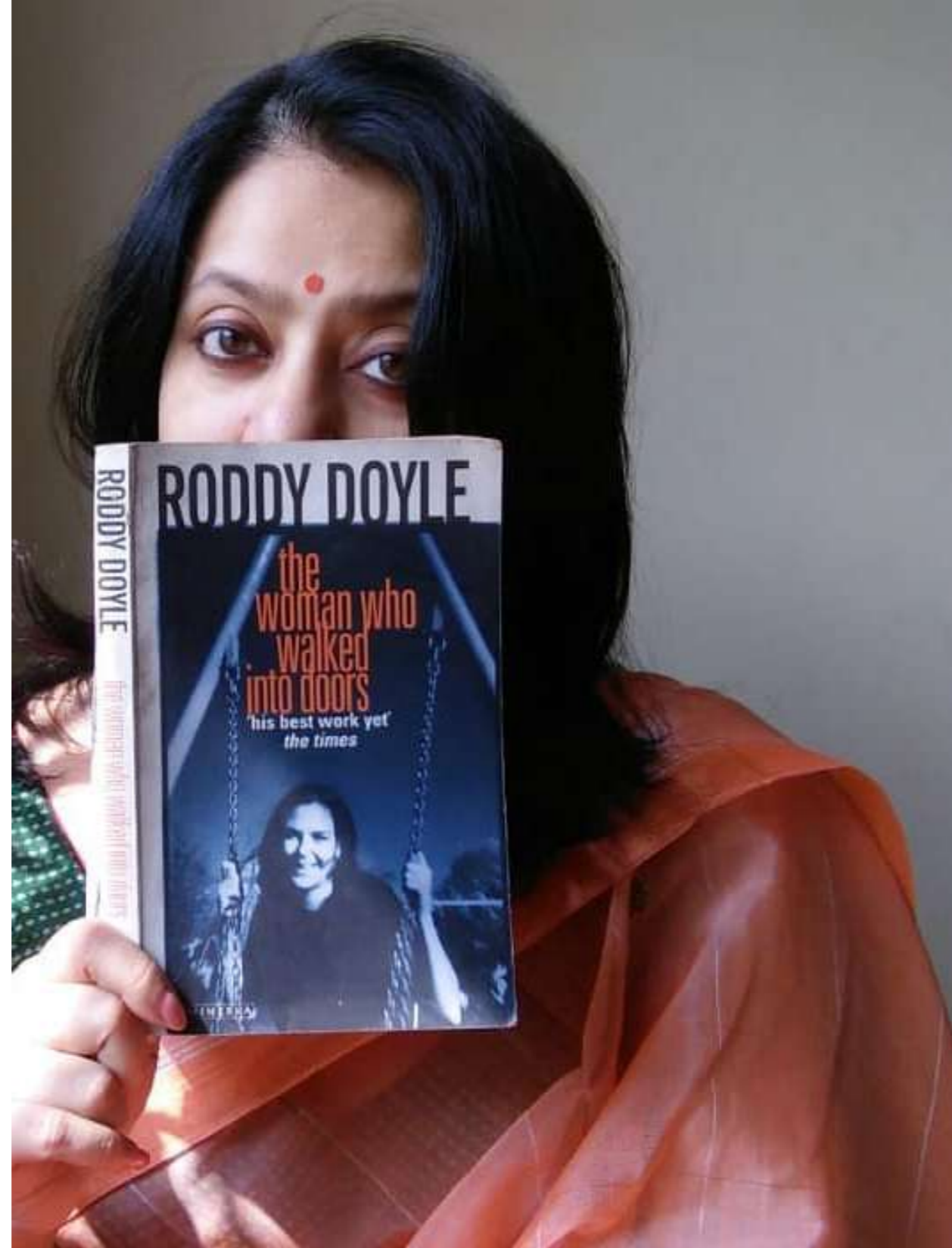
She wrote these words on 20th March, 2005. And then, shared them on the Bell Bajao (Breakthrough) site on 25th November 2013, her 15th wedding anniversary. Which is also the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women.

What better day to shrug off years of denial and acknowledge that she had been a victim of domestic violence? And, what better day to celebrate that she was now on a journey to becoming a survivor instead?

In the next few days that year - the official 16 Days of Activism - she wrote about the journey she was on. A journey with red flags she had missed, and red flags she had chosen to miss. A journey also with milestones she crossed.

Today, eight years on, she has crossed several more milestones. But, there are many more challenges to face before she is home with her safety and security intact.

The fight was - no, is - not just that of a wife. It was that of the mother of a son. A mother who did not want her son to grow up thinking that violence - physical, emotional or psychological - was ever okay. Who also had to watch him experience things no child should have to. But who is convinced that all this will ensure at least one less victim of toxic masculinity.



The writer with Roddy Doyle’s seminal novel about a survivor of domestic violence, *The Woman Who Walked Into Doors*

It has not been easy, and it won’t be for quite some more time. Reclaiming yourself never is. But, it needs to be done.

And she is needed to be heard. Whether you believe her or not. Whether you judge her or not. Because, she is not alone.

Domestic violence is a reality. A harsh

one. One that we just do not want to face up to. But, till we do, it won’t stop.

They ask me all the time, “Why do you own up to your survivor status in public?” And they whisper behind my back, “All attention-seeking!” Some have even said, “She leaves no opportunity to talk about this!”

And to those who ask why, I say, “Be-

cause it’s not a private issue. It is a social issue that I, as an individual, have had to fight and am still fighting. This is not a question of discord between two individuals but one of violence. Hence, it belongs in the public sphere.”

And the public sphere needs to face up to this collective turning away, this collective spectator syndrome, this collective failure.

I do want attention. And I do NOT leave out any opportunity to talk about this.

Because, this issue – the everyday of so many of us - desperately needs everyone’s attention. It needs everyone’s awareness. And it needs everyone’s action.

Because, I am not the only one. I am not even the minority. Every other day, as I walk the corridors of colleges I teach at, there will be a student and sometimes, even a teacher, who will walk up and in a supposedly casual conversation, slip in the fact that they live in an abusive home. Sometimes, that they are in an abusive relationship.

I know why they talk to me. Because, they know I know what it is like. They know I will not deny their reality. And together, we form a community of the once-broken. One that will break patterns.

Orange - the hue of hope - is the designated colour of the United Nations Women’s initiative to end violence against women. Every year, during the two weeks between November 25 and December 10, landmark buildings and monuments all over the world are lit up in orange, as is the Niagara Falls. The initiative is called ‘orangethe world’ and calls on governments, communities, and citizens to wear orange and send out the message that violence against women needs to be acknowledged. And fought.

We will be wearing orange. We will be – and am – talking about it. We are – and will be – fighting against it in whatever way we can. We hope you do, too. Because, home is not where the hurt should be.

*Sukanya Das is a communications professional with over 28 years of experience in organisations such as Outlook India, The Telegraph, B.K Birla Group and Gameplan Sports. She has been teaching various aspects of Media in Practice at institutions such as BITS Pilani, NIFT Kolkata, Jadavpur University, iLEAD among others. She devours books by the dozen and is passionate about dance, textiles and mountains, not necessarily in that order.*

“Can’t happen, can it? Wouldn’t happen again, would it? Didn’t happen, did it?”

## All you wanted to know about Domestic Violence but didn’t know whom to ask

Domestic violence, also called domestic abuse or intimate partner violence, is any pattern of behaviour that is used to gain or maintain power and control over an intimate partner. It encompasses all physical, sexual, emotional, economic and psychological actions or threats of actions that influence another person. This is one of the most common forms of violence experienced by women globally.

Domestic violence can include the following.

### Economic violence

Economic violence involves making or attempting to make a person financially dependent by maintaining total control over financial resources, withholding access to money, and/or forbidding attendance at school or employment.

### Psychological violence

Psychological violence involves causing fear by intimidation; threatening physical harm to self, partner or children; destruction of pets and property; “mind games”; or forcing isolation from friends, family, school and/or work.

### Emotional violence

Emotional violence includes undermining a person’s sense of self-worth through constant criticism; belittling one’s abilities; name-calling or other verbal abuse; damaging a partner’s relationship with the children; or not letting a partner see friends and family.

### Physical violence

Physical violence involves hurting or trying to hurt a partner by hitting, kicking, burning, grabbing, pinching, shoving, slapping, hair-pulling, biting, denying medical care or forcing alcohol and/or drug use, or using other physical force. It may include property damage.

### Sexual violence

Sexual violence involves forcing a partner to take part in a sex act when the partner does not consent.

Source: unwomen.org.

# Far Right Authorities and Gender Activism

Mr. Soumya Suvra Das delves into the nexus between the far right authorities and gender activism.

Gender has always been a point of great concern for the right-wing and the far right-wing, or to be precise, fascism. Fascism, coined by the Italian dictator Benito Mussolini as early as 1919, has made a brilliant come-back after 2010, even after the world thought that fascism as an idea had been buried permanently with the fall of the Third Reich. The rise of the neo-Nazis and other forms of fascist

associating LGBTQIA+ rights and education with pedophilia and totalitarian cultural politics.” It also mentions similar trends in countries like Poland, Romania, Hungary, US and UK. “The attacks on so-called ‘gender ideology’ have grown in recent years throughout the world, dominating public debate stoked by electronic networks and backed by extensive rightwing Catholic and evangelical organizations,” Butler clarifies. We already know, thanks to Butler’s seminal work *Gender Trouble*, that gender is a social performance, and is not ‘assigned at birth’ contrary to the popular notion and belief. Butler in her interviews reflects how the conservative and fascist societies unleash their rage and violence on gender activism in recent times.

A new version of feminism, TERF or Trans-Exclusionary Radical Feminism, is a sub-group that “is an ideology or movement that opposes what it refers to as gender ideology.” According to Butler, TERFs “have allied with rightwing attacks on gender.” Thus, they “will not be part of the contemporary struggle against fascism.” In recent times in Kolkata, we have witnessed how a transgender student from Jadavpur University was thrashed by the far right agitators when the concerned transgender person was a part of a procession protesting on the streets regarding the alleged murder of a first year student at the same university. Curiously, the passage where Butler criticized the TERFs in another interview was omitted by *The Guardian*, stating that the interviewer’s question on the topic “did not meet its journalistic standards.” Whether it is Israel’s apartheid policy, electoral bond of India or countering gender activism, we are at a conflict point where the far-right authoritarianism is strangling the voice of the people who strive for change and challenge the status-quo.

Mr. Soumya Suvra Das is the associate professor and head of the department of Media Science at iLEAD, besides being a filmmaker. His expertise lies in Film Studies, Documentary Films, Script Writing, Contextual Studies, New Media, Critical Studies, Literature, Marxism and Theatre Studies, Feminist Film Theory.

Judith Pamela Butler is an American philosopher and gender studies scholar

tendencies have been observed to manifest itself in official ways across the globe in an unprecedented way. Whether it is India, United States, Hungary or Israel, or even various religious intolerant nations, the formal ideas disseminated from the national authorities are always hetero-normative in nature, gender intolerant and does not accept any idea that is flexible in terms of gender. Just like the world of new media is a site of cold war between Intellectual Property Laws (IPL) and the idea of the commons and peer-to-peer sharing (P2P), society at large seems to be at a violent war regarding ideas and activism based on gender. We do not have to go far to pick instances; the criticism that is hurled at Pride Parades and Slut Walks, liberal and public universities (like Jadavpur University that is considered to be best in West Bengal) are condemned and shamed on records on live TV, public and social media forums.

In a published article on *The Guardian* on October 23rd, 2021, Judith Butler says, “In June, the Hungarian parliament voted overwhelmingly to eliminate from public schools all teaching related to homosexuality and gender change,

# REVOLUTION

The revolution that I’ve known  
Isn’t draped in flags or flying in capes  
Not celebrating war crimes nor harbouring some danger  
Not seated in a king’s castle nor in a minister’s chamber.

She’s taking pills after pills day in and day out  
One for fairness, one for immunity, one for the ovary;  
You’ll see her ordered to smile, to stand still or even pout  
At a bunch of strangers huddled on a sofa in her own house.

She’s told her ambitions must stay “within limit”  
For she’s a damsel waiting upon her man’s holy permit;  
She can’t work or marry against her father’s will  
For she will lose her value in the market - you know the drill!

She’s told she can’t sit with her legs spread wide apart  
She can’t laugh aloud, or study math, or travel alone  
She can’t wear what she likes, and can’t cover how she wants  
Quiet, but her flesh is boiling in rage - her hair to the finger bone.

She’s told not to protest against her husband’s regular thrashing  
No one wants to hear her speak because she is “perpetually PMS-ing”  
Only lauded when “fitting the society’s standards” (the ones without cause)  
Churning inside her soul, she grows - the rebel without a pause.

She’s the house bride, the husband’s trophy, the ideal mother  
Her brother’s pride, her family’s honour and all that clamour;  
We’re only taught to ask and ask from her without any return  
She is made to be drained: her loving heart can never turn.

Hiding behind her concealer, compact and layers of makeup  
Are victorious Gorgons screaming: “That’s enough, we’re fed up.”  
So she’ll try sometimes raising her voice, expressing her opinion  
But her folks don’t care, that’s just her hormones “acting up”.

What about her choices, whims, fancies and dreams?  
Have you ever imagined how loud her mind screams?  
So often we forget that she thinks, she feels, she fights  
Not a damsel in distress, she’s usually her own upholder of rights.

Behind acid attacks, marital rapes, mental abuse, female infanticide,  
Even more through domestic violence, wife beatings, and honour killings,  
“Nip the evil in the bud”, they said as another soldier of war fell  
Poor darling, she should’ve known that a broken hymen doesn’t sell...

So many stories hidden behind the skirt, baggy pants and her dark kohl  
The smashed lipstick, the ruffled sari, the all black veil and her saffron stole...  
So many defiled, silenced, and killed by their own because they didn’t “do well”  
How do I know their stories? Shall I ask them but I’m not sure if they’re alive to tell?

Thinking of revolutions in distant lands with kings proclaiming “lost and found”,  
“Enough now!” she says to herself in the mirror, her scars profound,  
How long can she take the silent sacrifices, sitting and wishing for miracles?  
She’s hurt, haunted, agitated, and spiraling down the society’s vicious cycles.

And then she rises like a Phoenix after rounds of disaster  
Paving her way through a lover’s betrayal, a broken friendship and her folk’s treachery  
Who will tell her that sometimes it is beauty enough - no picture, no films, and no poetry;  
Just living, laughing and moving in the moment, she’s the lighthouse of memory.

So I must tell her: “the revolutions that I’ve known  
Aren’t draped in flags, flying in capes, but those unknown  
They’re heads held high, hearts of gold and bodies of stone  
Who have been born and battered, fought and conquered often alone.

I bear witness to these stories from far and beyond  
In languages and emotions - sweet, sour and forlorn  
One, two, three and all the revolutions that I’ve known  
Are more than often, closer home.”

- By Maariyah Siddique

*[Dedicated to women around the globe whose stories go unreported and under-reported: For me you are not numbers, you are women with names For me you are not stories - You breathe and live as ‘revolution’]*

Maariyah Siddique is a journalist with over 9 years of experience working with *The Telegraph*, *The Asian Age*, *UNICEF India*, *Twocircles.net*, etc., sharing her first-hand experiences in media institutions as Guest Faculty. She has written for *The Quint*, *The Wire*, *The Foreign Policy*, *Twocircles.net* among others.

Her hobbies include watching documentaries and reading Arabic, English, Hindi, and Urdu literature. When not watching a documentary or reading, Maariyah enjoys making politics, religion and history ‘unfun’ for fanatics.

# Veil Unveiled

- By Amreen Izhar

The will to be in veil,  
The veil to be unveiled.  
The myth about my stance,  
The veil that you glance.

The fact that I do stare,  
The farce that I scare.  
The life that I do fare,  
Things that I do care.

A title that I so possess,  
A name that people assess.  
I am for that, a name,  
Forlorn and disdained.

I do laugh and cry,  
For a veil isn't always dry.  
Never meek or weak,

But with a veil to peek,  
I do seek, an identity- unique.

In a world where modesty worn  
Is an anti-social form.  
Why doesn't one question,  
About it being wrong?

The veil for me,  
Is an expression of dignity,  
The pride of being ME.

For I am veiled in ears, tongue and the heart,  
But it's thee who's veiled,  
In thought process,  
and shrouded in hypocrisy.

*Mrs. Amreen Izhar is an alumna of IIMC, New Delhi. She heads the Event Department at iLEAD. She has been working in the media industry for almost a decade.*



In the 21st century, 28–44% of women feel discriminated against for wearing a hijab

# Financial Freedom: A Step Towards Life Without Domestic Violence

*Ms. Pampa Sarkar underscores the link between financial literacy, dependency, and domestic violence. Read further, to unlock financial empowerment in the year 2024.*

- By Pampa Sarkar

Domestic violence is a serious and widespread problem that affects people of all ages and can have long-term negative effects on one's physical, mental, and financial well-being. When it comes to domestic abuse, survivors who want to leave abusive relationships and start over may face major obstacles due to their financial dependence and lack of financial literacy. Financial empowerment is a critical first step towards obtaining safety, independence, and healing for survivors of domestic abuse. It also highlights the complex relationship between financial dependency, financial literacy, and domestic violence.

It's important to recognize that addressing domestic violence is a multi-faceted endeavor that requires a comprehensive approach encompassing social support, legal protections, economic empowerment, and cultural shifts. Understanding the intersection of financial dependence, financial literacy, and domestic violence is a crucial step in developing more effective strategies to help survivors escape abusive situations and move towards lives free from violence. Reaching financial independence can provide victims the tools they need to escape abusive environments, get help and services, and take back control of their life.

Here are a few strategies to get your finances in order, for the year 2024:

- #From the first pay check, begin investing.
- #Set financial goals for your life. Sort them into the short, medium, and long term categories.
- # Invest in accordance with the goal-



Unlocking financial independence is a key step towards mitigating gender-based violence.

based investing theory. Don't invest at random. Align every life goal with your investments.

Commence an in-depth analysis of your spending habits using the needs and wants hypothesis. Be sure you aren't spending too much money on wants.

# Set a monthly saving rate and create a budget for it.

# Follow Income - Saving = Spending formula instead of Income - Spending = Saving

# Don't limit your investing alternatives to fixed and recurring deposits because they aren't necessarily inflation-hedged after taxes.

# The only asset type that can produce inflation-hedged returns over the long term is equity. The stock market should not be viewed as a Satta Bazar. Instead, think of it as a location where you can succeed with patience, measured risk, and luck.

# Don't invest only in real estate and gold. These assets lack liquidity.

# Avoid taking a huge debt by purchasing a home at a relatively early stage in your career. Have a foundation of financially liquid assets in hand before considering

physical goods.

# Insurance and investment should never be combined. Avoid purchasing typical insurance policies from insurance companies if you need life insurance.

# Avoid purchasing insurance policies in the names of minors for educational purposes. Get higher returns and liquidity by investing in mutual funds.

# Get enough health insurance for oneself, all family members, including parents, in addition to the employer-provided health plan. Do not view the cost of health insurance as financial waste. Choose a health plan when you are in good health.

I've long believed that with a solid grasp of personal finance and a steadfast commitment to long-term investment, individuals can pave the way to financial prosperity and a stable future.

**May knowledge and discipline lead you to financial peace.**

*Ms. Pampa Sarkar, with 15 years of experience in the education sector, is currently working as a faculty of finance in the management studies department at iLEAD.*

# DESPAIR'S ECHO

A Lament. By Sana Nawaz.

What was my fault,  
I often wonder,  
Or my father's?  
Or my mother's?

In the land we called our home,  
We thrived,  
Now it's all rubble,  
Dreams did not survive.

Why should I be blamed,  
Forced out my own door?  
Now I am unable to rise,  
My feet will touch the floor no more.

Days cloaked in gray,  
No second spent without fright,  
Flames from the sky  
They rain down, every night.

My voice doesn't reach you, I'm just a child after all,  
Too feeble, too weak,  
Or is it something else,  
That I can't comprehend at all?

I once danced in joy,  
Life's dreams unconfined,  
To heal, to save,  
To a future defined.

Now I dream of one last glimpse,  
A fleeting chance,  
To see my family's faces,  
In this mournful dance.

No light to guide,  
No hand to hold.  
Broken, empty streets,  
Stories left untold.

My hands grow colder,  
This world of dread,  
Innocence fractured,  
A silence widespread.

I see dead faces around me,  
Pale and still,  
Invisible to most of you,  
An unspoken chill.

This haunted reality,  
Where nightmares come true,  
Unbelievable,  
Until it happens to you.

Sana Nawaz is an alumna of iLEAD. She has worked at the The Telegraph and TOI. A true Potterhead. She is an aficionado of art, sarcasm, and the wonderfully weird world of humour.



In 2020, the United Nations verified a total of 26,425 violations against children in conflict situations across the globe

# THE GENDER OF LOVE

Akshita Singh unpacks the nuances of masculinity, men and domestic violence, as she speaks of 'The Gender of Love.'

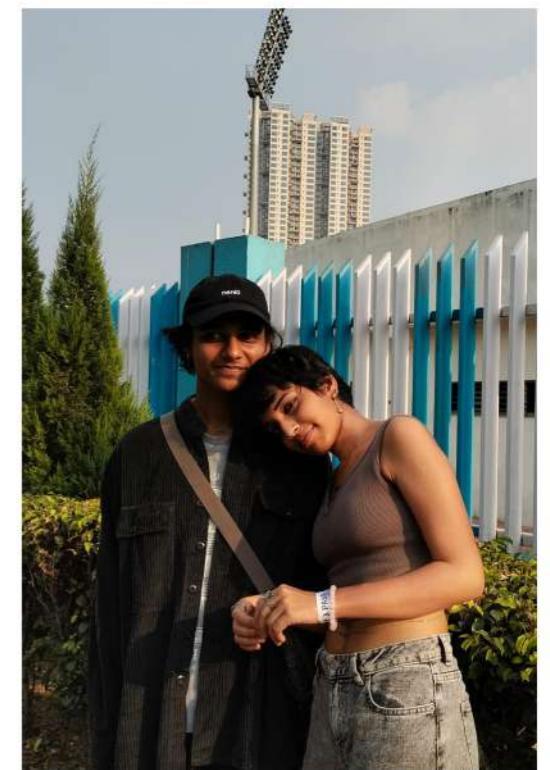
As a child, I was hyper in every sense of the word. It was almost like someone had done a terrible job at babysitting and let me eat way too many candies, except there was no sugar in the picture. Now, I'm twenty-one. In this journey of turning old enough to have access to liquor legally and all things adult, it's safe to say I learned more about men and the fragility surrounding their identities, than about all the new "mature" things I could explore.

Growing up, I saw men failing time and again. Beginning with my father who was a failure in every sense of the term. I consider myself lucky as I was too young to remember much of the abuse he singlehandedly managed to inflict on the women of my family, but merely hearing the morbid tales from my mother and sister have been enough to give me nightmares for weeks. I have seen men gentler than dandelions; I have met men who generously throw their wrath around like thunder. And I have seen men who can only be compared to Zeus, with zero to no control over their drive to fight tooth and nail to fulfill their lustful desires, men whose actions would have Asmodeus ashamed. This constant haphazard web of interactions I have had with men has left me confused. I can't help but be on guard when I'm out with female friends, overcome with the need to compensate for all the times I couldn't protect my mum from my father. At the same time, I can't help but simply exist when I'm around the men I've been blessed to call friends in this lifetime—the soft, kind men, who have held me through tough times.

Nothing pleases me more than sorting my thoughts into cute little baskets that I can arrange in neat rows in my mind in an attempt to keep my OCD satisfied. If I could do the same with my opinion towards men and their behaviors, maybe then it would have been so much easier to conclude this article. I feel like the saddest thing in the world that we live in is that unless an individual is directly affected by the pains inflicted upon others, we can choose to ignore whatever makes us uncomfortable. But

what is equally sad is that the little balance that weighs men's intrapersonal relationships and the way they choose to treat women, somehow has the scale broken. As a woman, nothing saddens me more than knowing that the men around me, good and bad, are neck-deep in waters that constantly make them question their masculinity on the basis of the way they choose to express themselves. What's even worse is that nine times out of ten, these men choose violence, for somehow love seems far too emasculating. And the idea of genderizing something as simple as love says a lot more than this whole article has said in a little over five hundred words.

Akshita is a growing artist and designer. She works with graphics/interiors and dreams to follow her passion of connecting people by making music.



Akshita speaks dearly of the "soft, kind men" who have held her through tough times

# iLEAD Event Gallery

Explore the Spectrum: Diverse, exciting, educative, engaging - iLEAD's tapestry of academic and cultural events.

## Orientation 2023

### School of Business

Dr. Deepak Vohra, Mr. Sanjeev Nandwani and Col Vinit Bajpayee SM, visited iLEAD School of Business for an Orientation session on August 2nd, 2023.



**Independence Day:**  
Flag hoisting ceremony on 76th Independence Day



**World Tourism Day:**  
Ms. Rowan Aniswoth, Australian Consul-General in Kolkata, and Ms. Sumana Banerjee, Project Manager for UK Research and Innovation- Global Challenges Research Fund, visit the campus

### School of Creativity

Dr. Deepak Vohra, Mr. Sanjeev Nandwani and Lt. Col Vidisha Gupta, visited iLEAD School of Creativity for an Orientation session on August 3rd, 2023.



**Spotlight:** iLEAD's Cultural Club ignited the stage with their dazzling event 'Spotlight'



**Desi Videshi Diwali:**  
iLEAD celebrates Diwali with a Videshi twist

### School of Science and Technology

Dr. Deepak Vohra and Major Samar Pratap Singh Chhetri, visited iLEAD School of Science & Technology for an Orientation session on August 4th, 2023.



## Celeb Visit



Divya Khosla Kumar and Yash Dasgupta at iLEAD for Yaariyan 2 promotions



Revamping Heritage Tourism at Murshidabad with Prof. Tapas Chakraborty (VC, MAKAUT), Zarina Wahab, Chaiti Ghoshal, and Chiranjeet Chakraborty

# Seminars and Workshops



Session on Optometry with Dr. Debapriya Mukhopadhyay from Lenskart



Session on Critical Care Technology with Dr. Safi Iqbal Siddiqui, Consultant Neurosurgeon at ILS Hospital and MD at RINS Superspecialty Hospital



A workshop on Fashion Photography with Mr. Shubham Paul, media faculty at iLEAD



A workshop on content with Mr. Soumyabrata Rakshit, Content Head at SVF



VFX Workshop with Mr. Asutosh Banik from Prime Focus



A session on Shaping Young Entrepreneurial Minds 2023 with Mr. Abhirup Banerjee, an HR Coach, International Keynote Speaker, and Advisor



A workshop on Business Management with Mr. Aswini Bajaj, CEO of Leveraged Growth



A session On Hospital Management with Mr. Subhranath Maitra, Joint General Manager at ILS Hospital

# Field Trips



Field visit to the Newtown SmartCity



Visit to Medica Super Speciality Hospital



Fashion & Interior Design Students visit to Indian Museum



Visit to TV9 Bangla news channel



Photowalk at the College Street



Visit to The Sports Authority of India (SAI)



Visit to Rajbari Bawali



A session on Digital Marketing and Blockchain Technology at the Rotaract Bhawan

# I Am Angry

A call to speak out, speak loud.

- By Aiema Tauheed

I am angry.

I am angry, because you are silent.

I am angry because globally, 736 million women—almost one in three—have been subjected to violence at least once in their lives. Because more than five women or girls are killed every hour by someone in their own family. Because 88 rape cases are recorded every day in India. Because the COVID-19 pandemic shed light on an ongoing shadow pandemic of domestic violence in India. Because the victim is still asked ‘What were you wearing?’ Because male victims of sexual violence have to act tough, so we know of only 9% men who have undergone sexual abuse globally. Because political violence increased substantially in 2022, as demonstration activity fell. Because countless Mahmoud Darwishs cannot hear the sound of music over the sound of war planes. Because all my girlfriends have a story of sexual

assault to share. Because at the age of 21, I have a curfew to remain safe. Because no matter what I wear, I am met with lustful gazes. Because having agency over my own life is a privilege. Because I come from a place of shared trauma as I write this.

I am angry because we are not angry enough.

Annually, the globe is bathed in orange for 16 days, marking a civil society-led initiative known as the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence. Commencing on November 25, the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, and concluding on December 10, Human Rights Day. The movement is spearheaded by the United Nations. This edition is an endeavor to advance the cause of 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence, while upholding human rights.

This issue is as political as it is personal. As my graduation day approaches, this could be among the final editions I produce. With that said, this edition is the culmination of dedicated effort and working against tight deadlines, as every contributor poured their heart and soul into it. India has slipped to the 161st rank in terms of press freedom out of 180 countries, calling a spade a spade is truly a battle in the times that we live in. So, these pages are made up battles, mental and emotional labor and lived experiences. This edition is a stark reminder that your silence is an accomplice to injustice. Your silence translates to another perpetrator’s win, to Nirbhaya’s disappointment, to a rise in death tolls of innocent civilians, to you standing on the wrong side of history.

So yes, your voice can stop violence, end wars and calm oceans. Act wise. Be angry. Be loud.



In times of injustice, silence is complicity



BY AIEMA TAUHEED

## A CASE OF TOXINS IN POSITIVITY (TOXIC POSITIVITY) IN TIMES OF DISTRESS:



- BY AIEMA TAUHEED

PS.- THIS PAGE CONTAINS BADLY DRAWN ART THAT MAKES YOU THINK, THE NEXT TIME. HAPPY THINKING.

# Mark Your Calendar

Upcoming days of observance for Human Rights and Gender-Based Violence Awareness.

International Day for the  
**Elimination of Violence**  
against Women

25  
11

01  
12

16 Days of Activism Against  
**Gender-Based Violence**  
Campaign

Human  
**Rights**  
Day

10  
12

18  
12

International  
**Migrants**  
Day

International  
**Human Solidarity**  
Day

20  
12

11  
01

National  
**Human Trafficking**  
Awareness Day

International  
**Day of Education**  
(Emphasizing education  
as a human right for all)

24  
01

27  
01

International  
**Holocaust**  
Remembrance Day

International Day of  
Zero Tolerance for  
**Female Genital Mutilation**

06  
02

14  
02

**V-Day**  
(V-Day is a global activist  
movement to end violence  
against women and girls  
started by author and  
activist Eve Ensler.)

World Day of  
**Social Justice**

20  
02

