

Manaswini

2021



Shivaji College

ACCREDITED WITH GRADE "A" BY NAAC
UNIVERSITY OF DELHI



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Manaswini



Women's Development Cell

Manaswini

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*My mother sensed a war in her womb,
and so she raised me to fight.*

— *Hafsa Atique, 'Birth of a Daughter'*

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*Brave women are not born from comfort zone,
they are made in the fire.*

— Cheryl Hale

From the Editorial Desk

Independence and self-reliance mean differently to different people. When gender dynamics come into play, then these words take on an added note of gravity, because for women, they have been attained with great struggle through history. Independence of thought, action and ideology are values we espouse at Shivaji College. This spirit is embodied within the Vision and Mission of the college, which encapsulates inclusivity for all, regardless of gender and background. The Women's Development Cell is an integral committee that constantly strives to be true to the vision of our founders and visionaries. It aims, through the academic year, to keep alive dialogue, discussion and concrete action for gender parity and positive attitudes towards women's role in modern times.

The compilation of this book has been a heartening journey as well as a challenging one because not only did we attempt to capture the egalitarian, progressive values of the institution but also the struggles of specific heroic figures during the crisis times of pandemic. Each chapter of this book is a tribute- to extraordinary men and women who, by virtue of their noble work at grass root level towards women's welfare, are recipients of the Jiajabai Achievers' Awards instituted by the college in 2010. It also brings out the journey of those who have faced the pandemic and contributed to society by keeping alive courage, fortitude and knowledge.

We invite you to join us in perusing these inspiring stories, collected by us and dedicated to you as well as to each and every individual who believes in an equitable society.

Dr. Sunita Singh
Dr. Antara Bhatia

*The most dangerous woman of all is the
one who refuses to rely on your sword to
save her because she carries her own.*

— R. H. Sin

Message from Chief Guest

ARIF MOHAMMED KHAN
GOVERNOR OF KERALA



RAJ BHAVAN
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM-695 099



02 September 2021

I am happy to know that the Women's Development Cell (WDC) of Shivaji College, University of Delhi is organizing the **Jijabai Achievers' Award Ceremony**, on 03rd September, 2021 and that a volume entitled **Manaswini** would be published to mark the occasion.

It is commendable that Shivaji College, which is now celebrating its Diamond Jubilee, has been honouring those who work to create a better environment for women, by presenting the Jijabai Awards.

I congratulate the five Jijabai Awardees, Dr. Binish Desai, Mr. Sobhan Mukherjee, Ms. Sonal Kapoor, Ms. Swetha Sudhakar C., and Ms. Aarti Naik, and hope that their success stories will inspire the young Shivajians to work towards wiping out gender inequality.

My best wishes for the success of **Manaswini**, and the Award ceremony.

[Arif Mohammed Khan]

*Give a woman pain and she'll turn it into power.
Give that woman chaos and she'll create peace.*

— R. H. Sin

Message from Former Principal



The notion of men working towards uplifting women in the society may seem like a new world order. The WDC committee at Shivaji College makes constant efforts to engage both male and female participation in the WDC. I feel we grew up in a society where we are taught that it is usually women who talk about women's rights. But if such activities are carried in co-ed colleges then more effective impact can be seen. We realise that in order to empower women, we must change the mind-set of men so that we make a better society. I think attending various programmes organised by WDC throughout the year help in changing the attitude of young boys towards their sisters, mothers and women in general. In Indian society boys are always told that your sister or mother is your responsibility and unconsciously that responsibility transforms into an undue authority. We have to teach our young boys to change their mind-set. We teach our girls to be smart but equal opportunities are not made available to them. The opening of the gates of Sainik Schools for women of India is a big step towards women empowerment. Congratulations to the entire team of WDC and especially its convener Dr. Sunita Singh for working effortlessly during the pandemic to carry out various gender related activities meticulously in virtual mode.

Shivaji College believes in gender parity and has instituted Jijabai Achievers' Award, one of its kind in the University. Such institutional recognition contributes in strengthening the ethos of inclusivity and gender sensitivity. It is commendable that this year as well Shivaji College has made an attempt to bring their work into public domain in the form of this coffee table book that young students can see, learn and emulate. The documentation also motivates, inspires and creates aspirations. Shivaji College Principal and WDC team deserves appreciation for their sincere efforts to recognise such extraordinary people for this award. My best wishes for all the Jijabai Awardees. Keep it up Shivaji !

Dr. Shashi Nijhawan

*A woman with a voice is,
by definition, a strong woman.*

— Melinda Gates

From the Principal's Desk



It is a matter of great pleasure that the Women's Development Cell (WDC) is publishing a coffee table book *Manaswini*, in the year when the college is celebrating its Diamond Jubilee. WDC is a highly dynamic society of the college, which aims at creating awareness and imparting knowledge and practice amongst students about gender parity. The Cell also brings its message to the forefront of the society through outreach programs and various seminars organised on gender parity and women's welfare. Most notably, the Cell honours activists of both the genders, who have contributed significantly towards betterment of women in the society, through the Jijabai Achievers' Award. This award of high prestige, instituted by the college in honour of Chhatrapati Shivaji's mother, Rajmata Jijabai, is conferred each year on the occasion of the annual event of WDC. The ceremony is accompanied by the release of WDC's annual publication - a coffee table book, titled as *Manaswini* this year.

The first half of the book narrates the journey and experiences of the Jijabai awardees selected for this year - Swetha Sudhakar C., Dr. Binish Desai, Ms. Sonal Kapoor, Ms. Aarti Naik and Mr. Sobhan Mukherjee. The second half sheds light on challenges faced by women, and the teaching-learning community during the current pandemic Covid-19. The second segment begins with experiences of frontline workers who combated the disease head on despite the most severe risk of contracting infection at first hand, and other non-health professionals whose relentless efforts managed to keep hopes alive amongst many victims, who suffered in one or another way from the pandemic. The next *Manaswini* part highlights the challenges of women, in the form of difficulties in managing house, financial crisis and job-losses encountered amidst lockdown implemented, and the very outcome of these challenges that manifested as rise in domestic violence and divorce cases at national scale. The education sector also

encountered a major shift; teachers and students had to interact over online platforms for academic and extracurricular activities. The shift brought many technical, physical and psychological hardships at both the ends. Stories of teachers as well as students are included in seminal segments of the book.

I hope this book will be able to enlighten and inspire readers towards gender parity and will sensitise them towards hardships faced by women and other sections of society amid pandemic time.

Prof. Shiv Kumar Sahdev

Principal

Message from the Convener's Desk



It is rightly said "Women are the real architects of society." The Women's Development Cell (WDC) of the College aims to create a world free of gender discrimination, sensitize students towards gender parity, inculcate within them the awareness of women's empowerment and encourage participation of NGOs working in the area of women's development in the activities of the cell. This year as well the committee has made significant efforts to promote awareness of gender equality and women's issues by organizing webinars, online orientation and interactive sessions.

The WDC members have worked hard through this pandemic period to identify the individuals working at grass root level for the empowerment of women in society. This year the awardees will connect virtually and will be felicitated during the momentous Jijabai Achievers' Award Ceremony. The WDC of the College has been conferring this award for the last ten years to those individuals who have worked with determination and passion towards bringing about gender equality. This award was instituted in 2010, in honour of Rajmata Jijabai, Chhatrapati Shivaji's mother, a woman who was the epitome of courage, independence and warrior spirit.

This year's Coffee Table Book *Manaswini* will be released by Hon'ble Governor of Kerala, Shri Arif Mohammad Khan. The book is a testimony to the unsung heroes and highlights their path-breaking contributions towards women empowerment. It has been a heartening effort and a work of love collectively by faculty and our students. I thank the previous Conveners of the WDC as it is owing to them that the cell has reached such great heights and become an integral part of the Vision and Mission of the college. Our former Principal, Dr. Shashi Nijhawan, a leader and an empowered woman who leads by example, has been an seminal part of the Women's Development Cell and her contribution has been an inspiration for all.

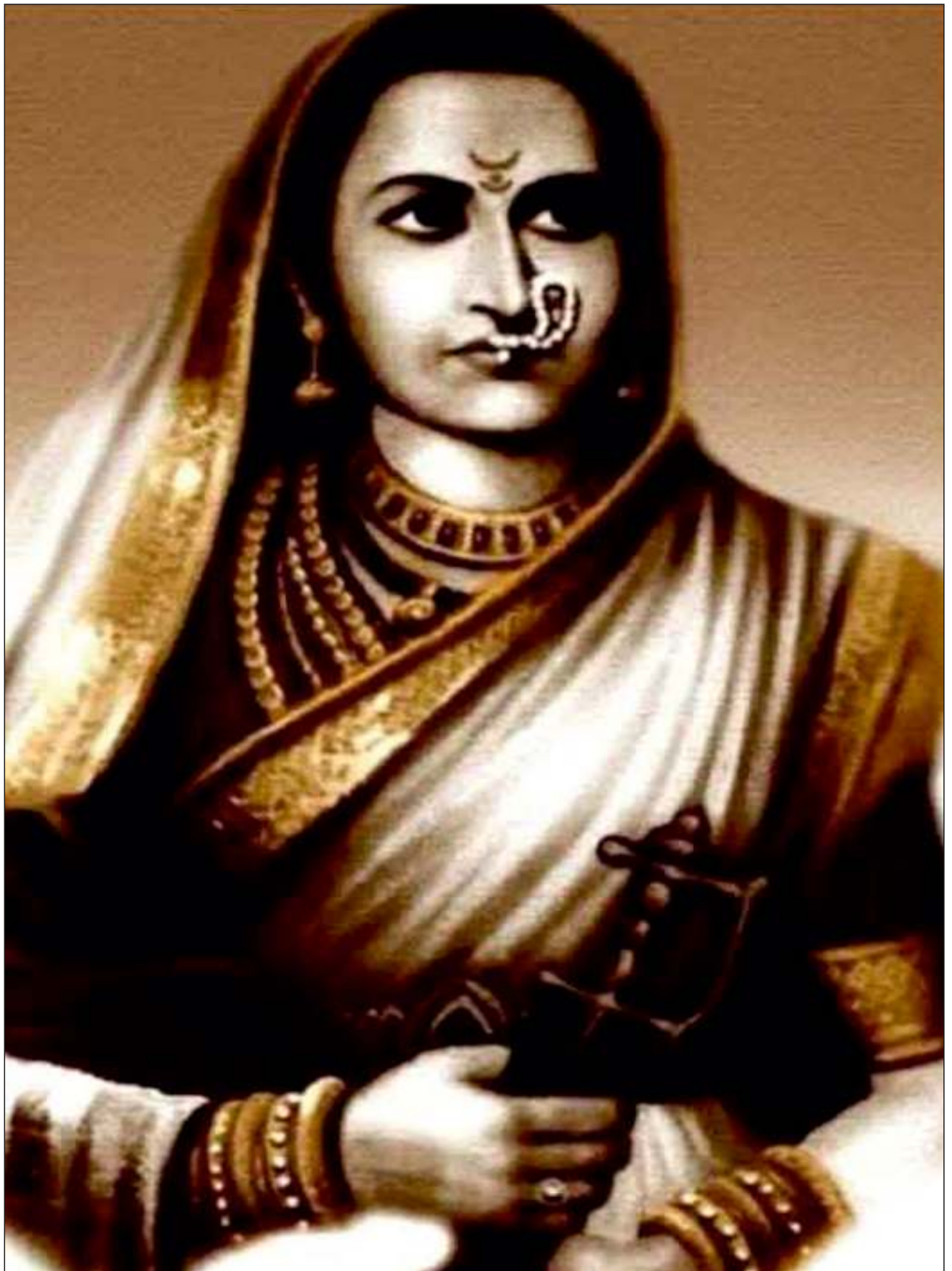
My heartfelt thanks to our Principal Prof. Shiv Kumar Sahdev, whose constant support, motivation and active involvement in all the college activities has been phenomenal. He has worked tirelessly since he took over as Principal despite all odds and has provided encouragement and guidance for conducting all scheduled events smoothly.

My sincere thanks to everyone who has been part of the writing of this book. I further extend my best wishes to all the Jijabai Awardees of this year and wish them success.

Dr. Sunita Singh

*I raise my voice not so I can shout,
but so that those without a voice can be heard.
We cannot succeed when half of us are held back.*

— Malala Yousafzai



Jijabai Achievers' Award

The Jijabai Achievers award is named after the honourable Jijabai Shahaji Bhosale (12 January 1598 - 17 June 1674), mother of the great Indian warrior Chhatrapati Shivaji. She sowed the seeds of patriotism in Shivaji and moulded within him the values necessary to be an ideal leader. We believe that lessons of a mother mark the beginning to every great man or woman. Hence empowering the woman would create a ripple effect and better the society as a whole – with gender parity, equal opportunity and mutual respect.

In keeping with this philosophy, Shivaji College instituted the Jijabai Achievers' Award in 2010 to felicitate those extraordinary individuals who have been change makers in the lives of women and enabled them to attain their true potential at the grassroots level.

The WDC team, comprising of faculty and students, is involved in identifying such exceptional persons, interviews them and confers on them the award in a humble attempt to applaud their efforts annually, through the Jijabai Award Ceremony. WDC through these events and awards acknowledges and honours the contributions of visionary individuals in redefining traditional contours. WDC also brings out a coffee table book annually, recording individual stories of these awardees. This year, the book is titled *Manaswini*

Jijabai Achievers' Awardees of 2021

- Swetha Sudhakar C
- Dr. Binish Desai
- Ms Sonal Kapoor
- Ms. Aarti Naik
- Mr. Sobhan Mukherjee

“No country can ever truly flourish if it stifles the potential of its women and deprives itself of the contribution of half its citizens.”

— Michelle Obama

Chapter 1-5

Jijabai Achievers' Awardees of 2021



Swetha Sudhakar C

Swetha Sudhakar. C, the Founder & Director and CEO of Born2Win Social Welfare Trust, is an award-winning social reformer and writer. She did her Bachelors in Public Administration in 2010 and Masters in Sociology from University of Madras in 2012, and holds a Diploma in Counselling.

Initially she joined the Trust as a peer group leader and later moved up the ranks to become Outreach Executive, Community Counsellor, Monitoring and Evaluation Officer and at present, serves as Program Manager.

She has worked as Program Manager for several HIV/AIDS Projects including TANSACS (NGO- Project in 2013) and BROSIGA (NGO-Project from 2013-19). With an experience of almost a decade in HIV/AIDS projects in India with regional, national, and international NGOs, she has spearheaded several projects successfully in her continuing tenure as Program Manager. She managed all aspects of the project including people, allocation of funds, community outreach, counselling and managed the team well by ensuring that employees are motivated and attrition is low.

She served as Capacity Building Specialist for RTU SAKSHAM -TISS. Being a Master Trainer in NACO/TISS/TANSACS, she has led training across various states of Southern India. The training has comprised of HIV/AIDS and MSM/TG/FSW/IDU Awareness and also Capacity Building Specialist for Tamil



Nadu Health Work Counsellor, and advocacy relating to transgender issues.

As a child, Swetha- born Sudhakar- recognized her feminine traits, kept them hidden in a closet from her family, and continued to lead a dual life until even today. Being a transgender woman, despite everyday struggles faced by her, she quotes "I spot more than one beacon of hope all around me. I hope the beneficiaries of this trust will develop positive thinking and achieve their dreams."

Founded in February 2012, the Born2Win Social Welfare Trust is a registered organisation started by trans youth and former sex workers. It was created with the bottom-up vision of empowering trans people through education and employment. This welfare trust arranges for employment opportunities and secures funds for education and vocational training for many trans people.

The Trust's mission is to create a platform for

the integration of the trans communities with the mainstream. This is done by recognizing achievers among trans/gender and non-conforming communities in Tamil Nadu. It aims to create positive role models for the trans community and they have been successful in

creating 450+ role models. The Trust has secured funds for education and vocational training, which has generated employment for many of them. Further, by providing trans people the platform to showcase their talents and realize their latent potential over time, it



facilitates the process of turning this potential into a skill to boost employability.

In addition to rehabilitating members of the community, the team provides facilities for the elderly, destitute women, adolescents and children from less privileged backgrounds, and HIV-positive individuals. The ultimate vision of the Trust is to be a medium of integrating marginalized gender non-conforming individuals/groups with what is considered to be “mainstream” society.

Swetha worked with the “Auto Raja” team to educate auto-drivers and recruit them to sign up for their services. She served as a Project Director for the 6 month long SWAM Pehchaan Project supported by Alliance Francaise, Chennai. She also did a Project Survey for Availability & Accessibility of TN Govt. Welfare Measures for Transgenders by Loyola College.

She helped spread awareness and advocacy for IAS and IPS Officers, Inspectors, Sub-Inspectors in Tamil Nadu. She was a Master Trainer for NAZ Foundation International and has visited 9 cities in Tamil Nadu for conducting multiple trainings. She was also a Master Trainer for STRC – TANSACS training representatives from 74 NGOs. She was a facilitator among HIV AIDS and Trans Community and TB Research Centre in Chennai, HIV Counsellor Contact Training National Level, Corona Awareness Program in South Chennai and HIV/TB Virtual Counsellor Contact Training National level. She also spread awareness and advocacy of Corona Community Intervention Program GCC-Chennai. With her continual growth and progress, she gave words such as improvement, achievement, and success a new meaning. She achieved the Best Social Activist - Vivekananda Award, Best Human Being







Award – Engalin Sangamam – 2016, Empowered Woman Award – 2016, Best Activist SIBA Award 2019, WOW Best Award 2020, Best Social Worker Abdul Kalam Award –2017, Chennai NGOs Leadership Award – 2017 – Chennai NGOs, Dream Achievers Award 2019 - Dream Zone Chennai, Gandhi JI Award 2020 - NDSO, LifeTime Achievers Award 2021 – International Lions Club, Working Woman Achiever Awards – 2021 Ooruni Foundation, Woman Achiever Award 2021 – International Lions Club 324A5 and TAGORE Woman Award 2021 - TAGORE Medical College. She not only has the hope or wish, but a keen pulsating desire which transcends everything. She achieved the title of Best Program manager

in MSM/TG–TI-Project Tamil Nadu, Best Facilitator/Master Trainer in NACO – STRC, Best Trainer in FSW Project TANSACS -2016, Best Social Activist 2017, Best Empowered Activist 2018 – DORAI Foundation and Triumph World Record 2019–SIBA.

She is an avid reader and has a brilliant mind with purpose. She aspires to inspire people to uncover perspectives that they haven't seen before and to be a driver of a tangible change that reshapes a better tomorrow through her words and actions. She writes Tamil poems and songs. She loves to explore the art of dance and has choreographed dances and fashion shows. She enjoys being at the center of any cultural activity.

Dr. Binish Desai



“There is a way to do it better-find it out.”

— *Thomas Alva Edison*

Dr. Binish Desai is a fine example of finding better ways of doing things, and his actions have proved to be beneficial to society, humankind and the environment.

Known as the Waste Warrior or the Recycle Man of India, Dr. Binish Desai is an innovator and a social entrepreneur working on industrial waste recycling. So far, he has recycled and managed more than 917 tonnes of industrial waste. Dr. Desai can be seen as a born environmentalist because even at the tender age of ten, he was carrying out home-based experiments. The idea formed in his mind through his favourite childhood cartoon

characters, Captain Planet and Dexter from *Dexter's Laboratory* and soon, he created the first P-block bricks using industrial paper. By the age of sixteen, the teenager had founded B-Dream, an eco-friendly and waste management company.

Dr. Desai was born on August 12, 1993, in Valsad, Gujarat. His grandfather, Shri Bhupendrabhai M. Desai, was one of the most distinguished chartered accountants in Valsad. He had a privileged childhood with adequate resources, but he showed strong environmental consciousness. He studied at St. Joseph's ET High School, Valsad, and went to Waukegan High School, USA, for Higher Secondary education. He completed his undergraduate

studies in Biotechnology from Veer Narmad South Gujarat University, Surat, Gujarat, and post graduate in Environmental Engineering from KEISIE Graduate School of International Education, USA, and South Korea. He was awarded a Ph.D. in Environmental Science and Engineering (Honorary Causa) from KEISIE International University, USA, for his contribution to industrial waste management.

In 2016, he founded Eco Eclectic Technology, a lab that centralizes cost-effective, eco-friendly technologies and solutions for various industrial wastes and uses them for social impact. He envisioned a plan to siphon off industrial waste from landfills and put it to utilitarian purpose. As a result of his vision and grit, his company has reduced carbon emissions by 1300 metric tons. Dr. Desai has also invented P-block bricks made from the waste produced by paper mills. He uses forty-nine different kinds of waste materials to create building materials. By 2019, he had successfully built over 70 homes and 1000 toilets for indigent citizens in slum areas of India using these bricks, thereby changing lives for the better.

Dr. Desai has also invented eco-friendly lamps and chandeliers, which are contrived of secondary paper sludge waste. They are called Eclectic-Mini. Every Eclectic-Mini that his company produces, seven kilograms of what is called waste, is turned into a piece of art. Other inventions of his creative mind





SH DESAI
MAN OF INDIA



include paver blocks made from metal, textile and paper waste, and soundproof panels made of fabric lint. Till date, he has developed over a hundred and fifty eco-friendly products at Eco-Eclectic Technologies in India.

One of his aspirations is to make India clean and green and thus he is a key leader of Swachh Bharat Abhiyan, launched by the Honourable Prime Minister of India, Shri Narendra Modi in 2014. He is credited for bringing the concept of 'waste' into the public domain by emphasising the fact, 'Waste is generated by human consumption, not by nature.' Thus, it is the responsibility of the community to recycle it sustainably. “There is nothing useless in this world. What might be a waste to you is someone else's asset” are his golden words.

Dr. Desai is a recipient of many awards for his social service and has been felicitated with

several national and international recognitions. He was titled the 'Social Innovator of the Conclave' by News 24 at Jashan-e-Youngistan. He has also been conferred with the JCI Valsad Nagarratna Special Citizen award. At the international stage, he has been honoured with the 'Rotary International Alumni Humanitarian of the Year' award for South Asia. He was featured in the 'Forbes' 30 Under 30, Asia (2018) List of Successful Social Entrepreneurs'. In addition, he is honoured as a 'Paul Harris Fellow'.

Dr. Desai was also invited to speak at the YEO Pre-convention of the RI Convention in Toronto, 2018. He has also been an invited speaker to several TEDx events at TEDx Sayajigunj, TEDx Laxmi Vidyapeeth, and TEDx Gateway on converting waste into economical assets.





He has also initiated the Eco Light Studio to empower women in India. He aims to provide jobs to women in the nearby villages. His wife, Dhriti Desai, is the CEO of Eco Lights Studio and runs the women empowerment centre in partnership with the Rotary Club of Vibrant Valsad. Their organisation allows women to sit in their backyards and create products like bathroom wares, lamps, clocks, bringing light and life to the homes of consumers and financial security to the creators, thus providing financial independence to these women.

The story of Dr. Binish Desai is undoubtedly inspiring, and can be beautifully explained with the words of the humanitarian, Dr. Huzaifa Khorakhiwala, “Bin-ish means without darkness and he lives by the meaning of his name and spreads the light of knowledge and smiles everywhere he goes.”



JIJABAI AWARDEE



Sonal Kapoor

Ms. Sonal Kapoor is the Founder-Director of Protsahan India Foundation, a child rights organization based in Delhi. Translated as 'encouragement', Protsahan works with the vision of providing girls who are living in vulnerable circumstances with access to education, healthcare and a gender-equal space free of abuse and violence. Towards this objective, Protsahan developed a unique empathy-based model, called the Heart Model-Holistic Healing (for abuse and trauma) covering areas such as education, art, skill enhancement training, rehabilitation and psychological support for children and adolescents at risk. Under the stewardship of Ms. Sonal Kapoor, Protsahan strives to break the cycle of abuse and violence in society. Since its inception, the foundation has been

able to rescue 928 girls and successfully mainstreamed them into formal schools, and annually reaches out to 72000 girls through its various programs in India.

Ms. Sonal graduated in Microbiology from Delhi University and earned an MBA degree from Symbiosis Institute of International Business (SIIB) and Indian School of Business. Sonal is a member of the expert committee on anti-child trafficking (Delhi Commission of Women) and member of CSO Coalition to End Child Marriage in India.

The idea of Protsahan was born in 2010 when Ms. Sonal, then only 24, encountered a pregnant woman during a film shoot who already had 6 daughters and was ready to strangle her new-born if it is going to be a girl child. She also said that she had to send her 8









year old daughter to a brothel so that she could feed the rest of her family. After listening to this, the idea of starting a unique creative school had begun to take shape and three weeks later a small feasibility study in the area was initiated. Thus, Protsahan started as a one room creative arts and design school in one of the darkest slums of the country, in the heart of the capital city of New Delhi to rescue that one child and many more like her from systemic, intergenerational poverty and abuse. Protsahan provides creative education and entrepreneurial skills training so that they can break the extreme cycle of poverty and abuse.

The NGO does this with the help of the '5-Pillars of Creativity Model, which includes design, art, digital stories, photography, technology and cinema. To borrow the words of

Ms. Sonal, “We use simple techniques, but with a difference. We use Scrabble to teach them English, cartoons and photographs to keep the interest alive, game and art-based education, digital storytelling to make teaching a fun process. Our sole mission is to encourage creative education and skill development through creative design thinking approaches. Thus, was born the teaching pedagogy using art and technology. We are compiling all our approaches and releasing them under open source soon. Our team comprises the best brains from across India — ranging from students from IITs, IIMs to youth from well-known companies in Johannesburg, Singapore and New York, and those in the creative industry. We believe that working with one child, and transforming her in entirety, has to be



done right”.

Since its inception, the members have been working towards helping children in difficult circumstances. The core philosophy behind empowering girls has been that literacy alone is not enough for gender justice and that they need to be provided with a holistic environment that encourages academic growth, self-worth, leadership qualities, resilience and acquisition of key life skills. These are provided through Protsahan's Girl Champions Program that includes Adolescent Girls Education Program, Adolescent Girls Health Program, Art for Gender Justice and Healing, National Child Protection Program, STEM and Life Skills Program for girls' training and research. Through its efforts, Sonal and her team has rescued and mainstreamed many

underprivileged girls with the help of over 10,000 teachers and social workers and over 3600 counsellors and caregivers. The organization not only ropes in legal and government institutions but also involves the community through film making, theatre, storytelling and festivals among many others to reach out to individual and society to create awareness against child abuse and protecting adolescent girls from gender injustice.

In addition to working in the field, Protsahan India Foundation publishes literature on ways to prevent child abuse, stories of resilience among survivors of abuse and others pertaining to women's rights and empowerment, legal provisions and international mechanism towards gender justice. In its over decade long crusade against child abuse, Protsahan from its

humble beginnings of 23 students in a single classroom, has transformed massively into an institution today which has been partnering with numerous national and international governmental, non-governmental, philanthropic and community organizations. The organisation today is a robust institution with centres in different areas of Delhi working among vulnerable sections through its team of dedicated individuals from different walks of life.

Since 2020 with the pandemic setting in, Protsahan has been working with children, especially girls orphaned due to Covid, as well as widows, focusing on their mental health during lockdown. Under Ms. Sonal's guidance, the NGO has done extensive work on spreading awareness about the POCSO Act, rescuing children facing abuse at grassroots and strengthening the advocacy against child-trafficking.

Ms. Sonal's decade-long work in strengthening



the global child protection system has been recognized in the form of several national and international fellowships, scholarships and awards. She has also received several national and international acclaims for her work with vulnerable children across the country, most prominent of them being Vodafone Woman of Strength Award, Indian Television Academy Award (Child Welfare Category), United Nations Women Singapore-Mastercard Project Inspire Award etc.

Ms. Sonal was chosen to represent India at the World Bank- IMF, Annual Meeting 2011 in Washington DC. She blogs for the World Bank and has spoken at several TEDx conferences. She has been a delegate to the Australia-India Youth Dialogue and on the education panel of several high profiled international events. She often engages with students from colleges across the world on the issue of social entrepreneurship and raises awareness to fight against child sexual abuse.



A close-up portrait of a young woman with dark hair pulled back, looking slightly to the right. She has a bindi on her forehead and is wearing a red top with a grey shawl. The background is blurred, showing some greenery and a building.

JIJABAI AWARDEE

Ms. Aarti Naik

'Padhegi beti tabhi toh aage badhegi beti' is one of the most common sayings in society.

Education ensures independence and self reliance for women and hence it is essential to spread awareness about this issue, particularly in rural and slum areas. However, most often, girls living in slum areas cannot afford even basic education. To support this cause, Ms. Aarti Naik, founder of SAKHI, provides education to the slum girls and enhances their primary education.

Ms. Naik is herself a slum based resident from Mulund (W), Mumbai, who changed her destiny and is now determined to change the destiny of other slum based girls.

She is the change maker of Mumbai, who is on a

mission to educate girls living in slums by creating learning spaces for the community. It's been almost 12 years of the Sakhi Foundation and more than 300 girls have access to learning space inside their own slum community.

Ms. Naik struggled for her education in class 10th, as her father was not financially stable enough to support her studies. So she decided to earn for her education by making necklaces in the slums through which she used to earn ₹9 per day, and it took three years to earn enough money to support her parents and studies. After clearing her 10th exams, she worked hard for more years and enrolled herself into an Undergraduate Programme in Sociology from Yashwantrao Chavan Maharashtra Open







University. When she was in class 12th, she realised that many girls were dropping out of school as their basics were weak. This motivated her to help other girls strengthen their basics, which led to the launch of Sakhi Foundation.

“If you have a dream, then make it happen.”

— Ms. Aarti Naik

The foundation not only provides education to the slum girls but also provides them with breakfast and encourages them to save money into their piggy banks to pursue further education, starting with as little as 1 rupee. They also distribute books to girls in order to inculcate the habit of reading. Through the Girls Book Bank, they have distributed books to more than



350 girls and confer an Education Scholarship to the Girls Book Bank leader. Ms. Naik is so

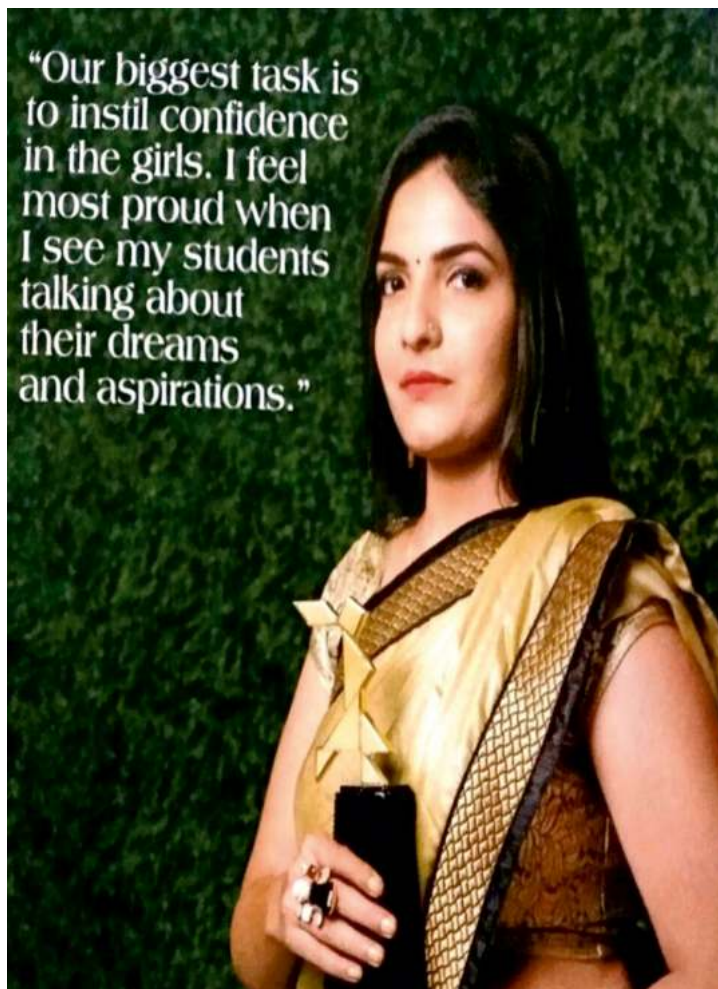


determined to bring a change that even the novel virus COVID 19 couldn't stop her. She has started many new initiatives via SAKHI to educate girls amid lockdown such as:

Audio Storytelling Project, India (April 1, 2020): To share a new inspiring story every day with girls and their mothers in slums and rural areas.

Girls Digital School (June 20, 2020): To bring valuable opportunities to girls to access online learning activities at home.

Rural Girls School (July 24, 2020): To build and spread education amongst adolescent girls in slum and rural areas.



Girls Health and Nutrition Project (August 15, 2020): To ensure that every girl in slums leads a healthy life and gets access to quality nutrition and awareness of menstrual healthcare.

My Reading Bag (August 25, 2020): To provide storybooks to girls in slum and rural areas to develop their reading habits during this challenging time.

Academy of Audio Speakers, India (October 25, 2020): To provide inspiring audio content every week to girls in rural areas to enhance their English language skills.

Girls Audio School (February 14, 2021): To build up girls' confidence in reading skills with perfect



pronunciation in English and mother tongue.

Girls Life Academy (March 8, 2021): To inspire and educate girls from slum and rural areas through the power of positive listening.

Aarti Naik's only mission in life is to encourage girls to continue their education confidently with quality learning. She has faced many challenges in her life, but she has still chosen to move ahead positively to continue giving girls the education they deserve in the slum areas.

Her life story Educating and Empowering Hundreds of Girls has been selected as one of the top three 'Tell Her Story' finalists and she was invited for the same by the University of

California, Berkley, USA.

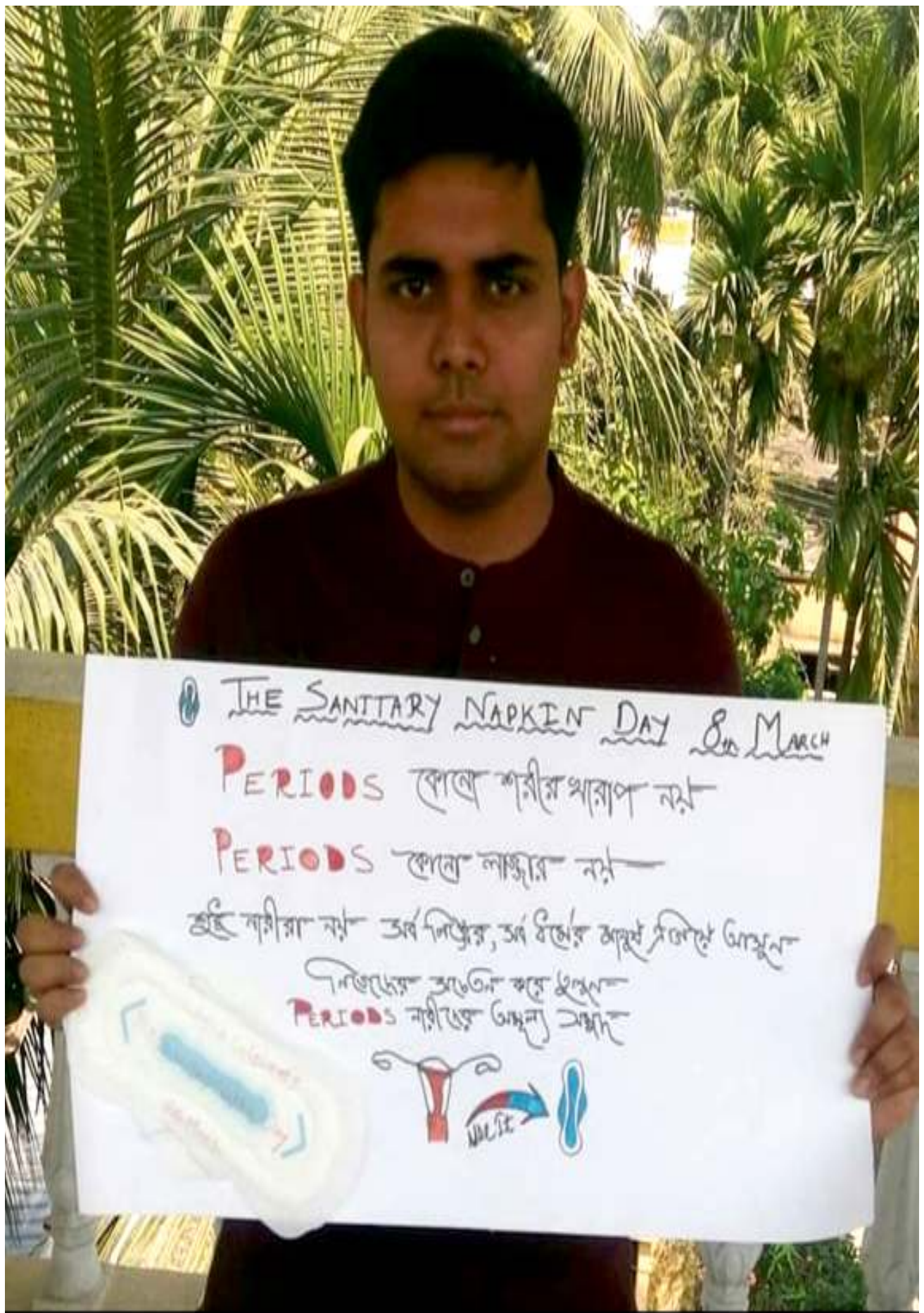
Aarti Naik is indeed a true SAKHI for slum girls who is determined to guide and motivate them for their education. She is the change maker of Mumbai who is never going to stop and will look forward to bring more and more changes in the lives of slum girls. Her efforts have made a tremendous contribution to the empowerment of girls in underprivileged areas. She has motivated many towards the goal of higher education and employment.

“Everything is possible, be positive, never give up and move ahead confidently.”

— Ms. Aarti Naik



Sobhan Mukherjee







"Some people live their life just for themselves, and then there are some who live to help and change others' lives"

When the world waits for Akshay Kumar's next film, a 21-year-old young boy plays the role of a real padman.

Sobhan Mukherjee, who is doing his MSc. in Geography, is also currently working with an NGO called CINI (Child In Need Institute) and covering rural areas to teach them more about menstrual hygiene and healthcare. He has been installing Bandhan sanitary napkin boxes in the public toilets of the Bansdrani, Golpark, and Naktala areas of Kolkata. He envisions a situation where women don't have to locate a chemist during an emergency or while travelling. In this spirit, he conceived of an initiative to make sanitary napkins available in public washrooms.

At present, he is at the helm of two initiatives; Tridhara and Bandhan. During his graduation years, Sobhan Mukherjee was the founder-editor of a magazine called Kabi Kolom. This magazine focused on marginalized people's untold stories and this was where the notion of Tridhara was incepted. He came to a realization that no one wrote about transgenders and theirs was an unheard voice. Laws were passed for transgenders but not implemented. He felt very disturbed by the fact that transgenders were not even provided basic amenities like toilets, and thus in August 2017, he initiated another section in public toilets in addition to the male and female ones-





the Tridhara section. This news was published in the Times of India, and Kolkata became the first city to have transgender washrooms.

Tridhara is thus centred around providing facilities for transgenders. He has initiated many school awareness camps and invited transgenders to schools. He believes that if a genuine and accepting space is provided for the transgender community, they can receive the best opportunities for education and employment. Sobhan's idea is that sensitization programs can be conducted through informal and friendly discussion, irrespective of the venue. Interactions can take place on the streets, in institutional campuses, auditoriums, or even while travelling across cities.

The second initiative, the Bandhan project, focuses on easy accessibility to sanitary

napkins. He thought of the idea in 2017 when one of his classmates could not attend a meeting because she got her periods. “She told me that she had got her monthly cycle and that she didn't have a sanitary napkin. Hence she had to go to the chemist. I found this incident very disturbing. This was when I thought, if some sanitary pads could be stocked in public toilets, it would provide relief to women,” says Sobhan.

The Bandhan box is a useful container for storing sanitary napkins in public toilets. “This is an affordable and useful solution to replace or upgrade the existing sanitary pad vending machines. There are multiple problems with these. At times, they don't function at all and at other times, the stock is not adequate. We hope Bandhan will make some difference in the lives



of women. We are using social media, making videos, creating posters to create awareness amongst women about these boxes, which can come in handy during emergencies or for women who can't really afford expensive sanitary napkins.” Sobhan believes in the extreme importance of hygiene awareness. He travels to varied places and remote corners of the country, such as Sunderban tea gardens. In these places, as he remarks, it is very difficult to maintain hygiene and using pads is unaffordable. When asked how to spread awareness in these areas, he makes a very pithy and relevant point. He believes that it is imperative to make friends and build relationships with those visiting the camps. His motto is “Dosti karo” and according to him, that is when they will confide their problems. Currently, he has an agreement with a

manufacturing unit in maintaining Bandhan boxes, where pads are sold at a discount to him. On posting about Project Bandhan on social media, many friends and acquaintances have lent their enthusiasm and support for the project. Sobhan hopes that Project Bandhan will be effective nationally so that women across the country can avail easy and convenient access to sanitary napkins in public toilets.





Sobhan has been the youngest person to receive the National Foundation for India Award for his work with building transgender washrooms, and Ananya Samman Award from Zee Network for his Bandhan sanitary pad initiative.

When asked about his future goals, Sobhan discussed a beautiful memory. He shares a dream with his mother, who has recently passed away. She advised him that he should continue the good work he has started and must give his support to others who wish to make a contribution towards the betterment of society.

He suggests ways to inspire students towards awareness and sensitization, through camps and drives. More importantly, he believes that a change of mindset is needed. He urges students to be sensitive towards the transgender community, move beyond gender identity and look at the person within. When asked for his message to the public, he says “Don't care about what people tell you.” He remembers when he used to set up vending machines in ladies' toilets, others would make derogatory comments about his sexual orientation. He has been disrespected many times for working in this area. People would think he was too young and thus would question his abilities to achieve a task that even the government had not been able to carry out. He faced many initial difficulties with receiving government funding. But that did not affect his determination towards his project. None of these obstacles deterred him from his goal. According to him, “Disparaging remarks are nothing but a group of nonsense words that judgmental people speak about others. So don't listen to them and don't allow them to pull you back.” This is the greatest lesson of his life.



Chapter 6

Frontline Healthcare Workers in Covid-19: Heroes without Capes

The corona virus pandemic is upending lives on a global level. The highly infectious “CORONA VIRUS DISEASE 2019” (COVID-19) is caused by “Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2)” and its outbreak was in Wuhan, Hubei, China, where it was first identified and reported in December 2019. After almost 3 months, on March 11, 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) recognized it as a pandemic



considering its significant ongoing effect in multiple countries all around the world.

While on one hand, people around the globe are largely confined to their homes with businesses and educational institutions all shut down in an attempt to contain the virus spread, on the other, doctors, health care workers and medical staff members are leading the battle against Covid-19 on the forefront. With healthcare workers

putting their lives at risk with the selfless determination for the sake of saving others, they truly deserve to be called as our heroes in these challenging times.

The assessment of a fight against an enemy has to be context dependent and Covid-19 being a pandemic of unprecedented magnitude, makes the prevention and recovery a challenging task.

When the history of Covid-19 pandemic will be written, credit would be given to many for battling the virus but the maximum space would perhaps be devoted to the frontline workers; doctors, nurses, hospital staff, public health workers, community health workers (majority of them are women), sanitation workers and everyone who worked directly with those who were infected or could have been infected in the line of duty. They have truly been the backbone of the healthcare



system of the country. In one of its official statements the government acknowledged that in the fight against Covid-19 in India, by the end of May 2021, around 1500 doctors have died. The data for other frontline workers is ambiguous but it is estimated to be much higher.

There are numerous real life instances where the frontline healthcare workers have put their life at risk and even lost while saving others.

Fifty-six-year-old **Dr. Asheem Gupta** was an anesthetist working in Delhi's Lok Nayak Hospital. A passionate and dedicated doctor, he was involved in fighting Covid-19 from the very beginning. When on May 3, 2020 the Indian Air force showered flowers over Covid-19 Hospitals across India, a very pleasant Dr. Gupta told a news channel that though the working conditions are different it is the passion to save lives that keep him and his fellow health staff motivated. He succumbed to Covid-19 at the end of June 2020.

Ambika P.K., a 46-year-old nursing officer at a private hospital in Delhi, contracted and succumbed to COVID-19 in the last week of May 2020 while many members of the nursing staff contracted COVID-19, have recovered and returned back to their duties.



Dr. Zahid Abdul Majeed, wearing a fully covered Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) was with a patient who was being transferred to the intensive care unit (ICU). Suddenly he noticed that the intubation (a procedure in which a tube is placed in the trachea in the neck of a person to ensure breathing) pipe had been displaced. This could have been life threatening for the patient. The PPE along with the face cover blurred his vision, which was not good enough to conduct a complex procedure to reposition the intubation pipe. Dr. Majeed took

off his protective gear and re-intubated the patient. This was in the line of his duty, where he risked his own life to save the life of a patient.

He was sent for a mandatory isolation of 14 days as per the procedure. His story is the story of the thousands of health workers fighting every single day not only in India but also across the world.

Dr. K.K. Aggarwal was a renowned physician and cardiologist who was President of the Confederation of Medical Associations in Asia and Oceania (CMAAO), President of an NGO; the Heart Care Foundation of India (HCFI); and the National President of Indian Medical Association (IMA). In 2010, the government of India honored him with a Padma Shri. Dr. Aggarwal's popularity grew over the last year as he frequently posted



From Health V in COV



BRavery
Nurses
Paramedics
Frontline
Emergency Serv
Po
Paramedi
Fire

Frontline Workers COVID-19



DOCTORS
FOR YOU

24/7
Emergency Services
Doctor.
Emergency Services
Healthcare Worker.
24/7
Emergency Services
Thank You
Emergency Services
Military
Emergency Services
Fighters





videos on social media platforms in which he answered Covid-19 related queries and held talks about the aspects of the disease and its management. Dr. Aggarwal died on May 17, 2021 in New Delhi while being treated for Covid - 19. In one of his last videos he said, “Picture abhi baaki hai: The show must go on”. His organization HCFI, now headed by his wife, promised to continue his legacy and will further try to keep up their efforts to help those in need as he would have done if alive.

Doctors For You, a small non-governmental organization ensured that volunteers as well as doctors and nurses were available wherever needed. They collaborated with the government for setting up isolation and quarantine centers in a few cities and states in India. Community based organization such as Lok Swasthya Sewa Trust and Ekjut: Non-Profit Voluntary Organisation of India continued to work during the lockdown and afterwards, with women at the grassroot level

and the rural population to generate awareness about diseases, address mental health issues and to facilitate access to health services.

We have seen the images of Covid-19 patients in a happy mood, sitting comfortably in Covid-19 facilities and playing a game of chess while at the same time we read stories of doctors, nurses, police personnel and other frontline workers returning to their duties just after recovering from the illness; personal tragedies, challenges and struggles notwithstanding.

All of us can do something for each other and this is how the pandemic is being fought by everyone. There are heroes all around us, thousands and millions, who just don't wear capes. There are people from all walks of life who are working to defeat the virus and stop the pandemic. All we have to do is to recognize these “heroes without capes” and give them their due respect and recognition every single time and always.

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Chapter 7

The Female Voice in Lockdown: Challenges within the Home

A new virus called SARS-CoV-2 was detected in the city of Wuhan, China in the year 2019. The disease caused by the virus, called as Covid-19, became reason for the global pandemic. Higher mobilization of people and its airborne nature were major reasons for its rapid spread. To break the chain of infection many countries posed restriction on citizens' mobility, besides adopting other public health measures. India was not exempted either; a nationwide lockdown was announced in the wake of this pandemic for 3 phases spanning the period from March 25 to May 31, 2020. People were restricted to their homes; all kinds of transport activities were stopped; educational institutions, industries, commercial enterprises and hospitality establishments came to a standstill. Activities for only a few of essential and emergency services were exempted from the lockdown norms. After May 31, lockdown restrictions were released gradually in stages.

Shutdown of government and private enterprises led to job losses among masses and financial crunch in families. Moreover, these restrictions in this situation of crisis led to social and psychological complications within

homes. This chapter discusses such issues that arose during lockdown with a focus on adversities faced by women which led to issues like divorce. It also focuses on the problems of women in rural areas.

Adversities of women during lockdown

In spite of being taken largely for betterment of the masses, a strict measure like lockdown resulted in other complications in society. Besides bringing economic slowdown at national level, the brunt of lockdown was felt directly at the level of family as the members encountered job losses, financial crisis, and were confined within their homes. Because of this, an estimate depicted that 30% of employed people lost their jobs in a span of one year from March 2020 to March 2021. Women faced the brunt of job loss by 17% in comparison to their male counterparts. "According to the estimates of Oxfam India, the economic loss for women who lost their jobs during the pandemic is about \$216 billion, knocking off 8% of the country's GDP". This situation clouds women's already poor economic outlook in the country as India ranked 112th of 153 countries in offering equal opportunities to women and men in the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Index

2020, and most of the time women didn't have the same access to medical care and education as their male fellows.

Strained job situations translated into financial and psychological stress which manifested in daily life of married couples. In a study, almost half (45%) of financially stressed couples were reported to face new stress factors in their relationship. Reduced income may induce conflict between couples over prioritising types of consumption in the home. Not being able to earn hits men's self-esteem which may manifest in the form of psychological problems such as anxiety, anger and frustration. In all, financial misery transforms into the poorer quality of relationships between couples and often women are at the receiving end of the consequences. Sometimes, the suppression

reaches to a level that it translates into divorce.

Condition of women in job market was not fair even before lockdown. They were represented and paid lesser than their male colleagues at the workplace. Unpaid household work of motherhood along with caregiving to the family keeps women away from labor force and under-represented. Reports suggest that Indian women spent 351.9 min/day on unpaid work as compared to an average of 51.8 min/day being spent by men. Caregiving hours have increased during lockdown and schools' activities of children through online classes have made it harsher. The scope for venting out mental stress in the form of socialization and outings to public places also got narrowed. Responsibility of the main caregiver to her family and society, taking a back seat in family



Figure 1: Woman is considered the main caregiver of the family. This unpaid and multitasking job overburdened them amid lockdown as all the family members were stuck at home for twenty-four seven; 'Work from home' made it further tedious for working women. Adapted from <https://indianexpress.com> by P. Chakrabarti, 2020, retrieved from <https://indianexpress.com/article/express-sunday-eye/why-women-are-struggling-to-balance-home-and-work-during-the-pandemic-6565804/>

power relations, doing low paid jobs as compared to their male counterparts, working more in the informal sector, less social security, less access to health, judicial and financial help make them a vulnerable section in the society.

Incidences of Domestic Violence

The already prevailing suppression faced by women at multiple fronts of her social and family life became intensified during the Covid-19 pandemic. The lockdown situation has also led to domestic violence (DV) i.e., abuse of dependents inside their homes. United States Department of Justice Office on Violence Against Women defines domestic violence as a pattern of abusive behavior in any relationship that is used by one partner to gain or maintain control over another intimate partner. Abuses include physical, sexual,

emotional, economic and psychological harassment along with threatening, stalking and cyberstalking in one or another way.

Analysis of complaints received at National Commission for Women (NCW) from 558 out of 640 districts also found a pan-India rise in DV cases during May 2020 – February 2021. It was the highest figure in complaints in the last 10 years registered for DV in the first three phases of lockdown. Total number of registered DV cases were maximum in Uttar Pradesh, while Delhi was on top in terms of cases filed per million women population (Figure 2).

Cases kept on increasing further in 2021, and NCW received highest number of complaints since 2000. More than 2,300 complaints were registered with the NCW between January and May in 2021.

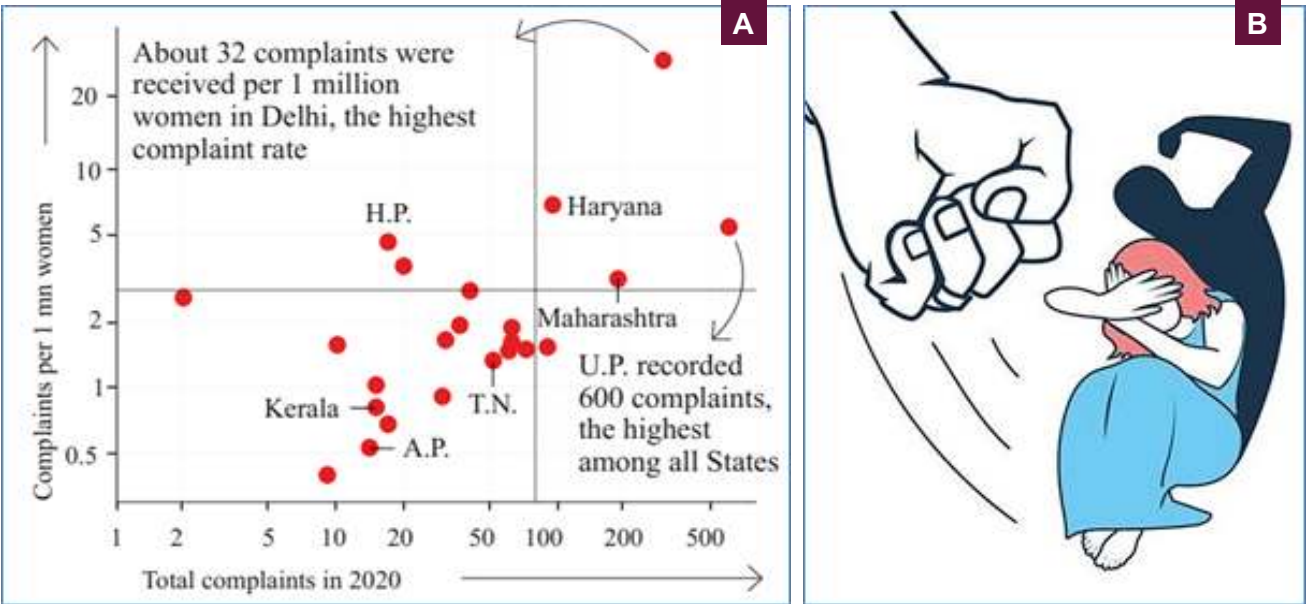


Figure 2: (a) High number of cases of domestic violence were filed during lockdown in various states (represented by dots in the graph) of India. Reprinted from <https://www.thehindu.com>, by V. Radhakrishnan, S. Sen & N. Singaravelu., 2020, retrieved from <https://www.thehindu.com/data/data-domestic-violence-complaints-at-a-10-year-high-during-covid-19-lockdown/article31885001.ece/>. (b) domestic violence adapted from <https://www.thehindu.com>, by S. Sen & J. Nihalani., 2021, retrieved from <https://www.thehindu.com/data/data-domestic-violence-complaints-received-in-past-five-months-reach-a-21-year-high/article34877182.ece>

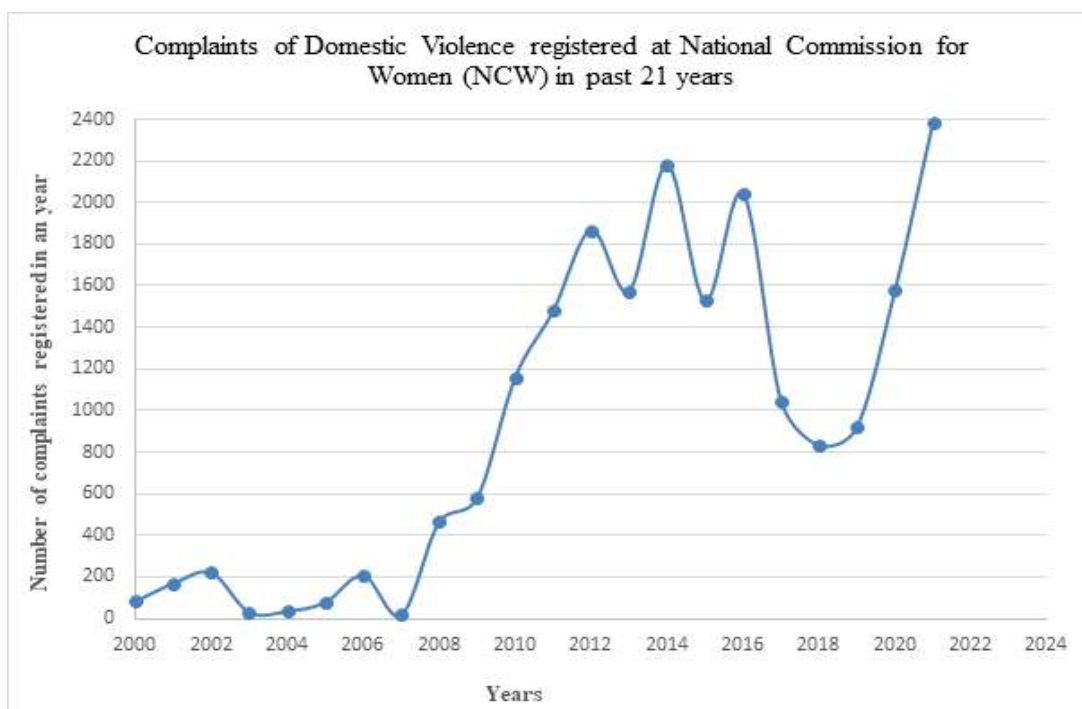


Figure 3: Domestic violence was highest in 2021 since past 21 years. Adapted from <https://www.thehindu.com>, by S. Sen & J. Nihalani., 2021, retrieved from <https://www.thehindu.com/data/data-domestic-violence-complaints-received-in-past-five-months-reach-a-21-year-high/article34877182.ece>

Though the reported complaints are true in number, but it does not depict the real picture. In fact, reported complaints depict only a fraction of actual incidents that used to happen. Data of Family Health Survey (2019-20) collected from some major states,

particularly, Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Gujrat, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Telangana, and West Bengal, reveals that more than 70% victims of physical violence didn't seek help, nor told anyone (Table 1).

Table 1: Very small proportion of victims of physical domestic violence tell someone.

States	Never sought help and never told anyone	Never sought help but told someone	Sought help
Andhra Pradesh	82.8	9.6	7.7
Bihar	84.3	6.8	8.9
Gujarat	74.7	9.9	15.4
Karnataka	70.8	12.6	16.6
Maharashtra	78.8	7.8	13.4
Telangana	73.0	8.2	18.8
West Bengal	79.7	8.5	11.9

Note: All the figures given are percent of women who were victim of physical domestic violence. Adapted from <https://www.thehindu.com>, by S. Sen & J. Nihalani., 2021, retrieved from <https://www.thehindu.com/data/data-domestic-violence-complaints-received-in-past-five-months-reach-a-21-year-high/article34877182.ece>

Table 2: Tiny proportion of small victims of physical domestic violence reach out to relevant authorities seeking help.

State	Doctor/medical personnel	Police	Lawyer	Social service organisations
Andhra Pradesh	0	10.4	0	2.1
Bihar	4.8	0	0	1.5
Gujarat	0	0	0	0
Karnataka	14.3	14.3	14.3	14.1
Maharashtra	0	1.9	0	0
Telangana	0	6.1	0.5	0.6
West Bengal	0.9	3.6	0	7.4

Note: All the figures given are percent of women who were victims of physical domestic violence. Adapted from <https://www.thehindu.com>, by S. Sen & J. Nihalani., 2021, retrieved from <https://www.thehindu.com/data/data-domestic-violence-complaints-received-in-past-five-months-reach-a-21-year-high/article34877182.ece>

Out of those who sought help very few reached to relevant authorities, such as doctors, the police, lawyers or social service organisations (Table 2)

Usually, they don't express the incidence of DV to anyone or sometimes they convey it to a close one but don't reach out for any legal help.

There are many reasons behind the hesitant behavior of victims towards lodging of complaints of DV, however, attitude of the perpetrator, and the victim towards this crime is of serious concern. A district-wise analysis during lockdown (May 2020) observed statistically significant increase in the number of DV complaints in red zone districts where husbands believed beating wives righteous. Conversely, if a greater proportion of wives believed it justified to get beaten up by their husbands, the district received fewer complaints. Another study found out that nearly half of the victims of DV don't bring it to their consideration; as 43% of them opt for

yoga or meditation to cope with the stress.

Reasons for Rise of Domestic Violence

A study pointed out that “domestic violence goes up whenever families spend more time together, such as the Christmas and summer vacations”. However, the lockdown amid the Covid-19 pandemic was worse than the usual family gathering in many ways, such as, many family members were facing an economic crisis. Some had lost their jobs, caregivers were overburdened, homes turned into office or online-classroom for many. In an analysis of existing literature, nine main conditions were identified which arose/modulated amid pandemic-time and were responsible for violence against women and children directly or indirectly “(1) economic insecurity and poverty-related stress, (2) quarantines and social isolation, (3) disaster and conflict-related unrest and instability, (4) exposure to exploitative relationships due to changing demographics, (5) reduced health service

availability and access to first responders, (6) inability of women to temporarily escape abusive partners, (7) virus-specific sources of violence, and (8) violence perpetrated against health care workers”.

Long-Term Consequences of Domestic Violence

The effect of short-term violence in homes during lockdown might proceed into a long term physical and psychological trauma. Women and children exposed to such trauma suffer for a longer duration and this may result in violence at the societal level in the long run. “According to the research of WHO women facing

violence/abuse “are twice as likely to have an abortion, and the experience nearly doubles their likelihood of falling into depression”. “In some regions, they are 1.5 times more likely to acquire HIV, and evidence exists that sexually assaulted women are 2.3 times more likely to have alcohol disorders”

Rise of divorce cases during lockdown

One may expect that lockdown might strengthen relations between married couples owing to the extra time they would spend together, but this was not always the case. A pan-India rise in divorce cases was observed during lockdown. Mumbai witnessed the highest number of

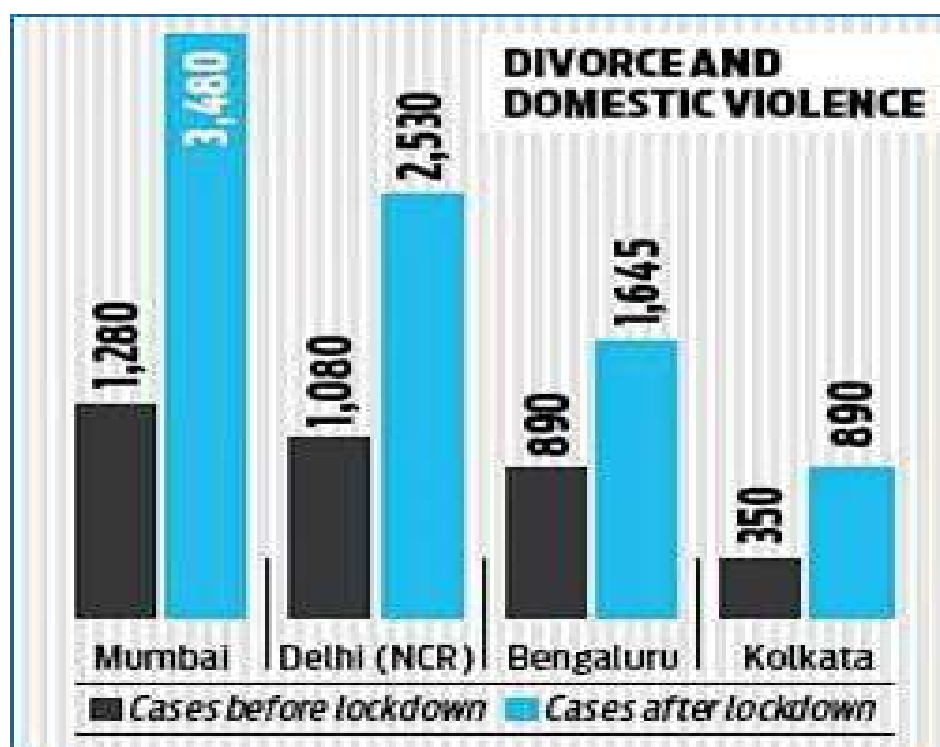


Figure 4: Cases of divorce plus domestic violence were high in first tier cities during lockdown which could be correlated with number of Covid-19 cases therein. Strangely, cases almost elevated two-three time after the relaxation of lockdown norms. Reprinted from <https://www.newindianexpress.com> by K. Sarda, retrieved from <https://www.newindianexpress.com/nation/2020/jun/08/lockdown-impact-divorce-child-custody-cases-spike-across-country-mumbai-tops-chart-2153644.html>

COVID-19 cases as well as divorce cases during the lockdown. After the release from lockdown, there was an upsurge in cumulative cases filed for divorce plus domestic violence (Figure 4) according to data recorded city wise.

Another study found that 60% of calls made to lawyers were about divorce. Besides, marriage counselors also witnessed a 20% spike in divorce-related sessions. Incidences of failing marriages were encountered on a global scale too. For example, divorce applications and break-ups climbed sharply across the UK, where a law firm logged a 122% increase in enquiries between July and October 2020 as compared to the same period last year. There has been a similar pattern in China, which had gone through one of the world's strictest lockdowns at the start of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Divorce cases were not peculiar to one specific class; instead, they were prevalent across all classes. However, experiences which made women proceed for divorce were different from one family to another; some faced excessive pressure and responsibilities, some lacked support and communication from spouses, others encountered violence in homes. Some couples clashed over ideologies as they had more time to spend together which worsened their relationship status.

Another observation during lockdown was an exceptional rise in divorce cases filed by newly wedded couples. For Times of India, Sulogna

Mehta wrote that work from home culture brought families together, but also created discord. Citing lawyers' data, she pointed out a 30 to 40 per cent rise in petitions filed for divorce cases in Visakhapatnam. A major proportion of such couples were newly wedded ones. This rise was mainly due to restrictions on movement, the situation of work from home and frequent friction with in-laws.

The pandemic did not cause divorces to rise in a typical sense. Pre-strained marriages suffered more strain as compared to those of healthy relationships. Marriages of happy couples bloomed as they got sufficient time to spend together in personal space. Court closure during lockdown also hindered proceedings of divorce cases which led some couples to consider arbitration or separation. But on the flip side, relationship experts also say that even happy couples who managed healthy in-home-routines during the pandemic were also prone to breakups as many were unable to resolve their issues. It was expected that the sudden rise of divorce cases will fall after the pandemic is over and the economic health of families will improve. However, fear also exists that an improved economic situation may facilitate divorces among some couples who postponed their breakup due to practical reasons during the pandemic (Figure 4).

Experiences from rural women

Women in rural India faced distinct issues in contrast to their urban counterparts as their



Photograph Credit : Dr. Harsh Wardhan

nature of jobs, responsibilities, societal and cultural setup were different. Kamlesh, a rural woman from Punjab and her daughter remained the sole breadwinners in the family as the male members, her husband and son, lost their jobs in the lockdown. Both were employed as drivers. She said, “Lockdown has been hard for the family, but we managed well with my income, and my employers bought us

ration”; on the other hand, financial crisis for her neighbor, Sulochna, was more aggravated. She could somehow handle the crisis with help from her neighbors and ration received from the Panchayat. Women in rural India faced a lot of problems related to food essentials. The prevalence of malnutrition in rural women became dreadful as more mouths were to be fed and that too more frequently amidst financial



Figure 5: Women in rural India had walk for extra miles to fetch water in the COVID-19 lockdown. Percent of total households in rural regions of various states are depicted in picture wherein women had to put extra effort to fulfill the need of extra water requirement in the midst of pandemic. Reprinted from <https://en.gaonconnection.com> by S. Gupta, 2020, Retrieved from <https://en.gaonconnection.com/40-women-in-rural-households-work-harder-to-fetch-water-in-the-covid-19-lockdown-gaon-connection-survey/>

crisis. Additionally, rural parts of our nation are deprived of technical solutions, community internal management, and water contamination from agricultural chemicals, industry, and garbage and rural people have limited access to clean drinking water.

Many rural regions of the country still face severe problem of water scarcity, at least during summer. And, we know that frequent and thorough handwashing is the most fundamental frontline protection against the transmission of COVID-19 in the present pandemic. As a result, it is fair to assume that the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated hundreds of rural women's water problems. A survey conducted across the country revealed that many rural women had to walk extra miles to fetch water for their family (Figure 5).

In addition, with all of the family members at home during the pandemic situation, women's responsibility for cooking, cleaning, child and elderly care became magnified, which left them psychologically and physically weary and put them at a higher risk of contracting the virus.

Besides lack of common amenities, the rural sector was also hit badly owing to halt of economic activities in the country. Especially, members of deprived section who were working in cities as migrant laborer had come back homes in villages after losing their jobs. Financial crises originated as a consequence got further magnified in families which were aided by earnings of female members, also



Photograph Credit : Dr. Harsh Wardhan

suffered job-loss. Women were informally employed in agricultural as well as non-agricultural sectors in rural regions. However, agricultural production and marketing operations continued despite the COVID-19 issue, but it could not sustain employment opportunities in equal proportion. Family labor was favored over paid labor by farmers. A greater number of family members present at farmer's homes due to lockdown could fulfill the need for paid labor. Besides, tabooed fear of infection-spread kept paid laborers away from agricultural field. Agriculture allied sectors like animal husbandry, fishing, and floriculture were also hit badly. Women made money by selling milk to dairy cooperatives, which

dropped during the lockdown. Men were unable to go out to sea and collect fish, while women were unable to sell fish and fish products.

Besides working in agricultural field, a section of women was employed in big cities as migrant-laborer earning on daily basis in informal sectors, such as garment manufacturing units, food and processing industries etc. Such industries, hard hitters in the pandemic, proved detrimental to women employees; 71% employed women and a comparatively lesser (51%) men were forced to leave their jobs. This was revealed in a survey conducted by Azim Premji University on 5000 employees belonging to 12 different states of the country. Similar information was released by the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE), suggesting that rural women had to lose more jobs than men in April 2020 as compared to April 2019. Faced with such a difficult situation many women chose to walk back home, often going without food, water and lack of means of travel.

National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MNREGA) was a healing factor to reverse-migrated laborers, but many women were quite often unaware of such schemes. The financial crisis, loss of jobs and being stuck at home caused setbacks for women's condition during the pandemic. The gap between wages paid to women in comparison to men is highest in the agriculture sector. Women's physical and

mental well-being will deteriorate due to the reduced incomes and tightened budgets. Rural women who are already subjugated to higher levels of malnutrition will get aggravated as families will have lower food intake. These kinds of factors when combined will surely result in diminishing the decision making power and financial independence of women.

Conclusion

The Covid-19 pandemic has affected many aspects of an individual's life and society. However, each community has faced it in a slightly different way according to their socioeconomic status. Women, as a community, have their challenges at the personal, family and societal levels. Previous experiences show that women's sovereignty is arbitrated during any health problem, so the Covid-19 pandemic was no different. The pandemic may not discriminate by gender but the impacts of the pandemic have been gendered. Challenges were further distinct for women of urban and rural areas. Rural as well as urban women struggled with financial challenges posed in the form of job losses for them and their family members. A simultaneously implemented situation of lockdown made family members restricted in homes which magnified women's responsibility as caregivers. Personal and professional spaces of family members were merged because of work- and schooling-from home situations. Frequent conflict between

personal and professional spaces amalgamated with externally imposed stress and led to discord. Many couples were not able to resolve a new kind of multifaceted challenge. As Indian women are culturally placed low in power relations at family as well as at society level, they faced the brunt of the pandemic at the synergistically magnified level. Women in rural India too encountered issues generated due to financial crunch and lockdown. Women of rural areas struggling with pre-existing issues of low per capita income, low pay and infrequent job opportunity available mostly in the agricultural or poorly organised informal sector, scarcity of basic modern resources encountered the pandemic in a more suffocating way than their urban counterpart. The gendered implications of the pandemic have not been taken into consideration while making policy decisions to tackle the illness. It's high time that there is a need for gender-sensitive policies.

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Chapter 8

Digital Educators: Keeping Knowledge Alive During Pandemic

COVID-19 pandemic has been wreaking havoc across the globe, upsetting our lives and livelihoods. India has been particularly affected, with the second highest number of cases in the world. Our educational institutions have remained closed for more than a year, thus making online education the only alternative to ensure the continuity of education. This unexpected pandemic has forced schools, colleges, institutes, and universities throughout the world to shift from physical classrooms to online classes.

In a country like India, which acutely faces a digital divide, regular online education is still out of the reach of many students in our schools, colleges and universities, who have limited or no access to computers and internet connectivity at home. We still do not have any data on how many students have access to broadband internet, 4G smartphones, tablets, laptops or desktop computers and other technologies absolutely necessary for online classes.

Several online platforms supported by the Central Board for Secondary Education (CBSE), Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD), the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT), Universities and the Department of Technical Education have

focused on enabling online education in India. Amidst the crisis, teachers and educators have switched to various digital platforms to ensure that their students continue the process of learning. Several examples are in front of us which clearly show that teachers are more than just conduits for knowledge. They are not leaving any stone unturned to reach in rural areas as well.

The question remains; are we prepared to utilize these substitute means of providing education in our country without diluting the quality of education to be imparted to our students?

First, we must admit that face-to-face interactions between teachers and students along with vibrant and healthy debates amongst peers within the classroom and outside are integral to quality teaching. Second, having said this, we have to understand that, when, for any reason — be it a pandemic or any other unforeseeable reason, classroom learning is not possible — online education may be a viable alternative provided:

- i. Adequate public financial resources are allocated for providing access to online educational facilities, in particular, for the students belonging to the economically weaker sections in order to overcome the prevalent digital divide.

- ii. Necessary arrangements are made for stable broadband facilities throughout the country for quality online learning.
- iii. Educational institutions, not only in metropolises, but also in smaller towns and rural and remote areas are equipped with state-of-the-art ICT (Information and Communication Technology)
- iv. Adequate arrangements are made for imparting online education to differently-abled students.

The fulfilment of the above essential conditions would be able to create a sustainable alternative method of imparting quality education to make it more relevant to modern times. The COVID-19 pandemic is a test for India and the world, but also can be seen as an opportunity to turn this crisis into a driving force for achieving India's aim to provide quality education to all.

Japjit Sabharwal and Arundhati Dutta of St. Vincent's High and Technical School, Asansol, India shared their experience. "Unprecedented times call for unprecedented measures. The present scenario came as an emergency which threw us overboard as we tried to find measures to tide over the turbulence. Hence, I feel that we should keep ourselves abreast with the latest technological developments so that we may be fortified to fight any battle in the future. Technology has now come to our rescue and virtual classes have been introduced with the help of applications like Class Dojo, WhatsApp, Zoom, WebEx which have enabled us to share videos, images and also conduct live online

classes for the benefit of our students. Interdepartmental faculty meetings have helped to keep us connected and provided clarity in regards to mode of further action and strategies of implementation. The times have created the absence of one-to-one interaction with teachers and peers alike, which, is the essence of the teaching process. However, family bonds have strengthened, understanding and compatibility has increased as family members spend quality time with each other. There has been a close interplay of the three goals of Edmund Rice Education Australia (EREA) that is Presence, Compassion and Liberation in the self-growth of individuals. One can never replace the one-to-one interaction but we are going to make the best of what is available and make it work.

Because it is always better to use a candle than curse the darkness. We are taking practice tests too. Not all parents are tech savvy and some do not have access to digital devices. Holistic education has been curtailed."

Similarly, Mithu Pal and Edwin John L D Gama of St. Joseph's College, Kolkatta and Nainital respectively mentioned how the school is trying to reach out to students- with lessons in document, audio and ppt formats – resources made by the teachers themselves. "As teachers we should be happy and give quality education with the updated resources available to us. After all, we have to prepare the pupils under our care to be strong global citizens. A paradigm shift in education has taken place because of this unprecedented lockdown."



Digital Educators

Keeping Knowledge Alive During Pandemic





Problems Faced by Students and Teachers During Online Education Due to COVID-19 and How to Resolve Them

Pre-covid, we were in the face-to-face system of education but now when educational institutions are inaccessible, dependence on technology is inescapable. However, technology has ensured ease of connectivity and continuity in education.

But many problems still persist. The biggest issue is connectivity and poor network quality. To understand the issue of internet connectivity, a survey was conducted with 160 people. In this, a t-test, statistical hypothetical test, was conducted. In the context of government schemes and online education, 93% of people claim that it's important to have good connectivity to go fully digital. The major solutions to the problem concluded from this research were:-

1. Making technology or connectivity cheaper, so that more and more strata of people from varied income levels can gain access to online education.
2. Having access is not the only solution, but to use it to its fullest advantage, there should be skill centres to teach people how to utilise all the given resources.
3. Self problem-solving skills should be involved to make people efficient in using technology so that they do not need to contact the service provider every time a minimal problem arises.
4. Once you enter a digital arena, privacy and piracy are very important factors affecting

your ease of use, so provisions should be made and followed to make sure the work goes smoothly.

If we start with ourselves and help others, we might achieve great team success in unity.

Difficulties faced by teachers while shifting to online learning amid Covid-19 pandemic

There are countless stories of underprivileged children whose studies got affected because of the pandemic due to minimal or no access to gadgets to be a part of the new normal, digital classrooms. Even if they had minimal support, that did not fulfil the requirements of the upgraded system. As a result, the percentage of dropouts rose during the pandemic, despite innumerable government schemes and aided programmes. Like every coin has its two sides, new normal digital classrooms were of great help for keeping records of everything, and also had flexible classroom timings and ease of connectivity. For maintaining minimal gathering, schools did open but with super strict guidelines. However, this is not a majorly viable plan as the chances of getting infected are much higher. Whether we like it or not, this blended mode of studies is the new normal.

What teaching is like during the pandemic—and a reminder that listening to teachers is critical to solving the challenges the coronavirus has brought to modern education

The blog “Teachers: Leading in crisis, reimagining the future”, portrays the true essence of 'teaching' during the times of

pandemic. If not a front-line worker, teachers have proved to be witnessing the closest changes in pandemic.

Ms. Welshans works as a special education liaison at Middle Years Alternative School in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. She states the effects of lack of technology on semi urban and rural area students due to transition to digital classrooms. This majorly impacted the underprivileged children whose parents are full time workers who possess one or no gadgets. This not only affects students but teachers also as they have to spend more time contributing to education to make sure all the content and study material is available to all students by all means, whether digitally or otherwise. But at the same time, it is difficult for the teachers to reach out to every student.

But it's not the time to give up but it's time to fight and be a proud front-line worker.

Teaching and Learning During the COVID-19 Pandemic: Stories from Educators Around the World

Despite all the challenges arising due to pandemic, shutting down of schools, digital classrooms, gaps in education and increase in dropout ratios, educators rose to meet the exceedingly difficult challenges and emerged as saviors for the future of the nation. They adapted to a new education system, especially for the underprivileged children who have minimal or no access to technical gadgets.

María Elena: Were Uruguayan Schools Ready

to Fight the COVID-19 pandemic? - Despite being a small-town country, in 2017, the government has already made digital classrooms compulsory there. Their policy 'one laptop each child' made things easier when they were struck with COVID. Having being given free access to wifi, even before COVID, it was easy for students and teachers to cope with the new normal digital classroom.

Veli: Facing the COVID-19 Challenge in Turkey- the situation there was also same. Teachers and students faced the same problem arising from COVID but they had the Ministry of Education providing a TV channel for all their education purposes and a website which had everything stored. Teachers also felt incomplete for not being able to get in touch with their students in person but these measures helped reach out to students in the present scenario.

Catherine: COVID-19 and School Leadership in the USA- the problem arose very rapidly and the staff got hardly any time to plan and adjust accordingly. No level of experience or education can prepare you for immediate and intense change. She says that she is thankful for all the support their staff and students have provided while dealing with the situation. Navigating the financial needs of school was more difficult as most of the finance was going to cleaning and hygiene supplies.

Amidst COVID, every day is a new challenge but with constant support of each other, students and teachers can overcome these

challenges and rise high!

Education provides us knowledge of our society and environment and hones our skills to change them for the better. Education also helps us to develop our own perspective of looking at our lives, prepares us to have our own points of view and form our own opinions on different facets of life. Education today is not the process of gaining information. Any willing person can have access to immense data and information nowadays through different websites and e-based platforms. But, can information be transformed into knowledge without education? Only education can train us to interpret different issues and events in our lives.

A Maharashtra teacher, Balaji Baburao Jadhav who hails from Sangavi village under Renapur tehsil of Latur district in central Maharashtra, has been selected for the Honey Bee Network Creativity Inclusive Innovation Award 2020. He is a Zilla Parishad teacher at Vijayanagar in Maan tehsil of Satara district and won the award for his teaching through "conference call" method. He adopted the idea of conference calls to conduct classes from April onwards and taught 10 students at one time. All these students belong to rural areas who do not possess computers, laptop, smartphones and have internet connectivity problems.

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Chapter 9

Sudden Shift to Virtual Classrooms: Boon or a Bane?

Introduction

The entire world was sent into an unprecedented frenzy with the outbreak of a pneumonia like disease in the Wuhan City of China in late 2019. On January 30, 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared the outbreak of Coronavirus as a Public Health Emergency of International Concern and a pandemic on March 11, 2020.

The first case of COVID-19 infection in India was reported on January 27, 2020 [1] and on the evening of March 24, 2020, the Government of India ordered a nationwide lockdown for 21 days to control and counter the spread of COVID-19. This step taken by governments all over the world led to immediate shutting down of industries, offices, markets and educational institutions. Not even in the wildest of dreams someone could have expected that after some months, this virus would grow to be the subject of every conversation, the main theme of every newspaper headline and social media post. Speculations were made that the virus will lose its severity with the onset of summer because it could not withstand high temperature. But summer opened the Pandora's box. Rather than coming to a halt, a surge was seen in COVID cases like never before. COVID-19 affected a

large population across the world, irrespective of caste, creed, colour, gender or religion.

The Online Teaching Learning Process: Impact on Students

Universities, schools and other centres of learning have been shut for over a year which has led to the sudden shift in the nature of the teaching learning process. Physical shutting down of the institutes forced the decision makers to come up with an alternative so as to minimize impact on students' education. All schools and universities switched to online classrooms such as Google Classroom, Zoom, MS Teams to maintain the interaction with students in real-time; a very new initiative in such tough times in a developing country like India. Board exams have been cancelled, admissions delayed, competitive exams postponed and open book exams conducted in colleges. Among the various victims of the Corona onslaught, students have been one of the most severely affected groups [2] with the pandemic infecting over 60% of world student population [3]. Various challenges accompanied this model of online education for teachers and students alike, especially the ones with special needs and learning difficulties. Many students of higher education belonging



to poor families could not realize their dreams due to lack of resources to adapt to this new normal of online education. Electronic devices apart from being expensive, are also a major source of distraction for children who use them for surfing the internet. Poor connectivity in various regions leads to loss of attention during the class and the concepts cannot be understood. Even though ICT modes of teaching are gaining success, they can never

the eyes of students. Being locked up at home has anyway made way for a sedentary lifestyle with no physical activity and would eventually lead to obesity and a state of inactivity [4]. Since coaching institutes have been shut, the students preparing for competitive examinations are anxious, the ones expecting placements in dilemma. Students of all age groups have subconscious frustrations due to sudden change of lifestyle and hence employed



(Source-<https://www.compasselfstorage.com/blog/how-college-students-can-make-living-at-home-stress-free/?hcb=1>)

replace the traditional modes of blackboard teaching. Since the classes are being attended in the home environment, the atmosphere can be chaotic due to family members around which may be a big source of distraction as well.

The loss of experiencing the freedom of college life has not only been a major source of disappointment for students but has created a negative impact on their health as well. Classes are online for a long duration that leads to increase in screen time, which is detrimental for

procrastination, avoiding new opportunities and denial as unconscious psychological mechanisms to reduce anxiety.

The Online Teaching Learning Process: Impact on Teachers

The transition to virtual classrooms have not only impacted students but teachers have been affected equally. Digitization of nation has been the dream of our Hon'ble Prime minister Shri Narendra Modi. A smooth transition would have required training sessions for the teachers

to familiarize them with various aspects of technology and the use of virtual classrooms. However, the entire Indian educational system has been suddenly forced into virtual classrooms since March, 2020 due to the pandemic. Many teachers lack the required knowledge, skills and tools to design online teaching content [5]. A survey reported that 84% teachers faced challenges in delivering lectures through online mode. Half of these teachers faced issues due to internet

Physical Distancing Leading to Changes in Social Behaviour

The pandemic has not only impacted the teaching-learning process but also affected social behaviour. Being under a lot of pressure to perform academically, the students have become prone to mental health issues. The physical classrooms were not only the source of education but also the hub of healthy socialising for these students. The interactions with their peers and co-curricular activities



(Source: <https://en.ccunesco.ca/idealab/education-and-covid-19-challenges-and-opportunities>)

connectivity and data expenses. The issues are grave in states like Uttar Pradesh, Chhattisgarh and Bihar where the teachers do not have proper devices to take classes or have not been oriented about this new mode of education [6]. Maintaining classroom etiquette and discipline also becomes difficult in the virtual world [7]. Moreover, over 60,000 teachers have lost their jobs with a few lakhs facing salary cuts in 90% of schools in Maharashtra [8]. All these factors have led to rise in stress levels and mental health issues.

served as a source of buffering their stress. Reduced social interactions, lack of social support and pressure of academics have affected the psychological well-being of young people. A survey carried out by Elmer et al., 2020 [9] showed that the lockdown and reduced social interaction have had a negative impact on the mental health of students. Moreover students find it difficult to concentrate and long hours of screen time has led to fatigue and stress. The young students have been found to be increasingly irritable.

Hybrid mode of learning will soon need to be the new norm for education. The educational institutes will however need to include a separate time for physical interaction with students which would also manage their mental and academic issues.

The teachers have also faced several difficulties since there is no distinct personal and professional time. Often the teachers have been seen managing their family and taking classes at the same time. This has also resulted in additional burden on teachers, compromising their mental health. Re-entering the physical classrooms will also lead to increased anxiety about contracting the infection. The usual warmth of classroom will be replaced by constant anxiety of being in close contact with peers and teachers.

Even though the struggle with the new normal is on, combatting the second wave of COVID-19 was extremely taxing and the light at the end of the tunnel is quite far. Government has taken positive steps as well, such as fee waivers for students who have lost both parents to the pandemic. If this hybrid model of teaching has to be made successful in the coming times, the system needs to be a little more creative and make it a landscape of better opportunities for students from all strata of the society.

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*“A world full of empowered women isn't one
where men are marginalized.
It's a world where everyone thrives.”*

— Purnima Mane

President and CEO of Pathfinder International

Chapter 10

Migrant Workers During Lockdown

Introduction

“There was a living, there was a livelihood”.

Before the Pandemic era, life was running on the normal track. Specifically, for the migrant workers & small stockholders, whatever little they were earning, they at least had one day's basic meal. 90% of the workforce comprises the unorganized sector of the Indian economy and migrant workers are an integral part of it. In terms of basic amenities, they didn't have much even before lockdown, but it's well said- 'Something is better than nothing.'



Image 1: Migrant workers working in field. (Source: pinterest.com)

The turning point that was unfortunate for everyone & was worst for these migrant workers came with the nationwide lockdown on March 25, 2020.

For the migrants, they had to leave everything

behind & their life changed drastically. But the concern was- What next?

Suffering at various levels

Just imagine, over the night, you are asked to leave your house. The Indian migrant workers went through the same. With factories & workplaces shut down due to the lockdown, many of them & their families went hungry. Millions of them then began walking back home, with no means of transport due to the lockdown [1]. Then the biggest danger was of Covid 19 itself.

On 26 March 2020, the Central Government announced a relief package of 1.7 trillion rupees to provide food and cash transfers to the highly vulnerable migrants. It was also ensured that the vulnerable section of people are being given proper sanitization & social distancing is being followed. But to the other perspective, there were still major numbers of workers who were far away from these facilities [2].

As of June 9, 2020, India had a total of 266 598 confirmed cases and 7471 confirmed deaths. In a population of more than 1.3 billion, the COVID-19 pandemic has had far-reaching consequences.

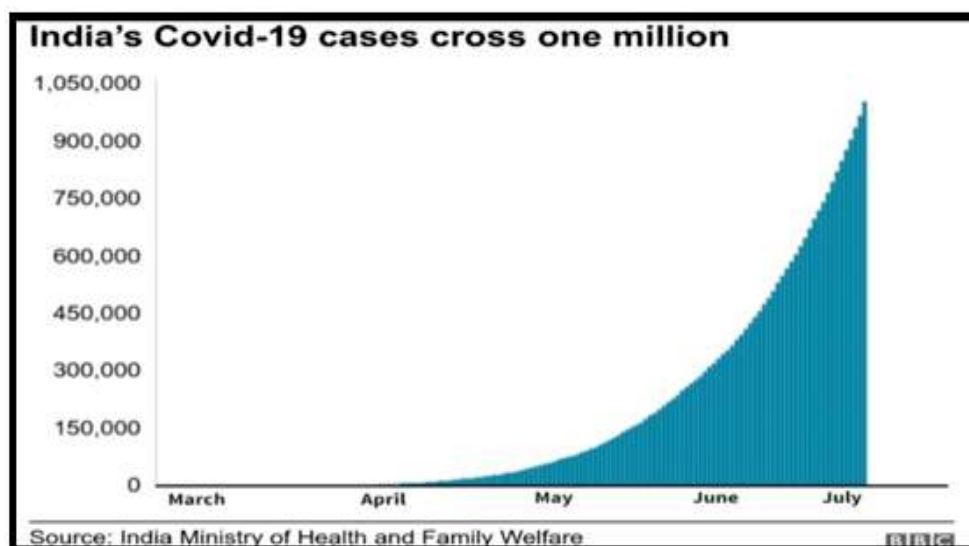


Fig.1: Covid 19 cases; March 2020 -July 2020



Image 2: Migrant workers crowding on road. (Source: iimb.ac.in)

In an interview, economists Amit Basole & Rosa Abraham focused the importance of putting in place support systems for migrant workers before the declaration of a lockdown. “The most important lesson from last year was that the lockdown hurt the poorest the most,” they stated [3].

Income? Food? Livelihood?

The COVID-19 pandemic led to a dramatic loss of human life worldwide & it presented an unprecedented challenge to public health, food systems & work. Millions of people were at risk of falling into extreme poverty and the number of undernourished people.



Image 3: Migrant workers at food distribution. (Source: news 18.com)

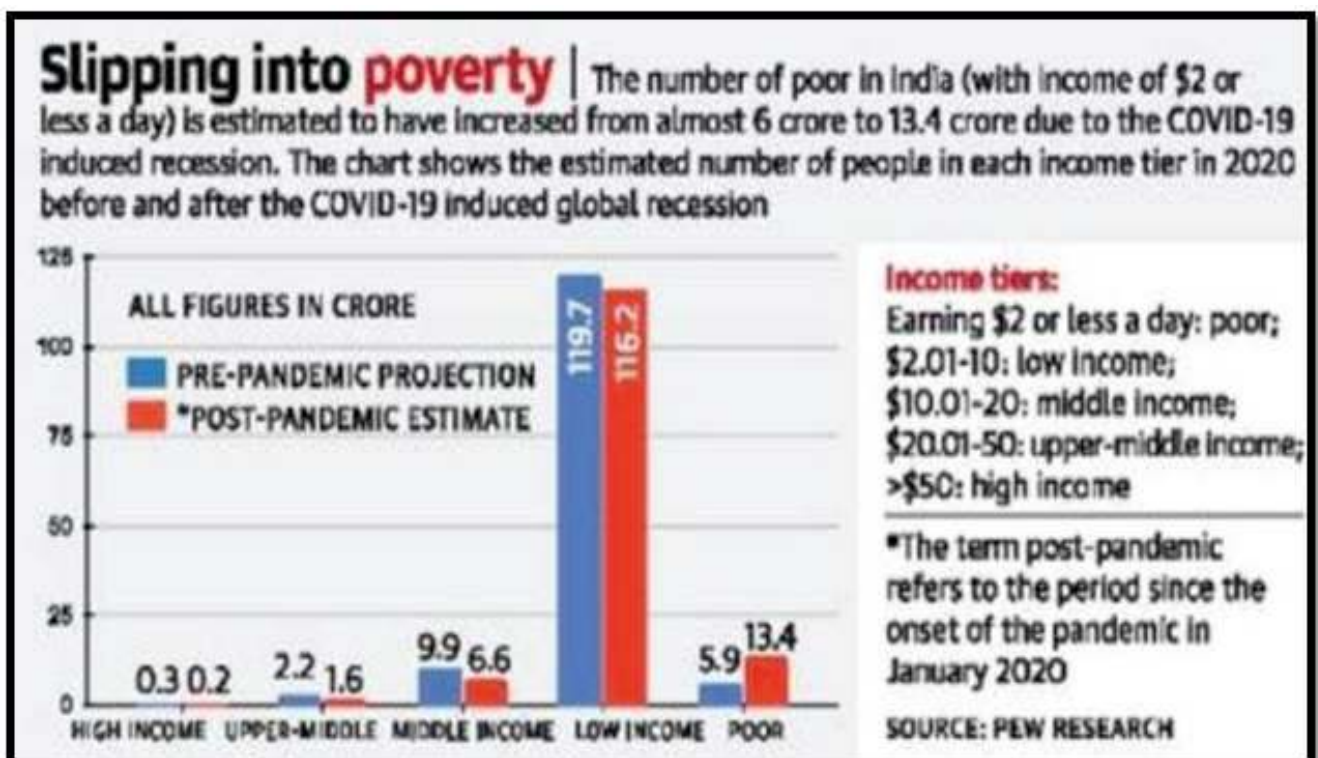


Fig.2: Number of poor in India (pre-and post-pandemic)

In the Covid 19 crisis, Even in the agricultural sector, millions of agricultural workers –

waged and self-employed, regularly faced high levels of working poverty, malnutrition & poor

health. While undergoing income loss, one heart-wrenching thing was the increase in Child labor [4].

Not only this, even international organizations like Amnesty International also showed their concern for the same by saying that- 'the public health risk of migrant workers by mentioning very common issues such as overcrowded accommodation that compromises social

social media posts were filled with the headlines reading "16 migrants killed in Aurangabad Train Accident". It wasn't just an accident, it was something which gave TV News channels a break from their 'Pakistan-Khalistan' debates and forced them to take a peek into issues like the 'Migrant crisis' [6].

Most of the Indian labour force comes from the states of Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh



Image 4: Migrant workers waiting for bus. (Source: thehindu.com)

distancing norms.' The unfortunate reality check is that their situation does not only put this group at COVID-19 risk but also at the next big 'hunger pandemic'. The International Labour Organization has predicted that around 400 million workers will fall into poverty as a result of the loss of job [5].

Migrant movement problems

When India woke up on the morning of May 8, 2020, the news channels, newspapers and

and Chhattisgarh. But when the industries were shut down and construction works were restricted, these labourers were forced to migrate back to their native place due to shortage of food and income. But the challenge was to travel thousands of kilometers by foot.

But then the problem was that states were not allowing people from other states to come back, so they were stationed at state borders for several weeks.



Image 5: Migrants workers walking on road. (Source- news18.com)

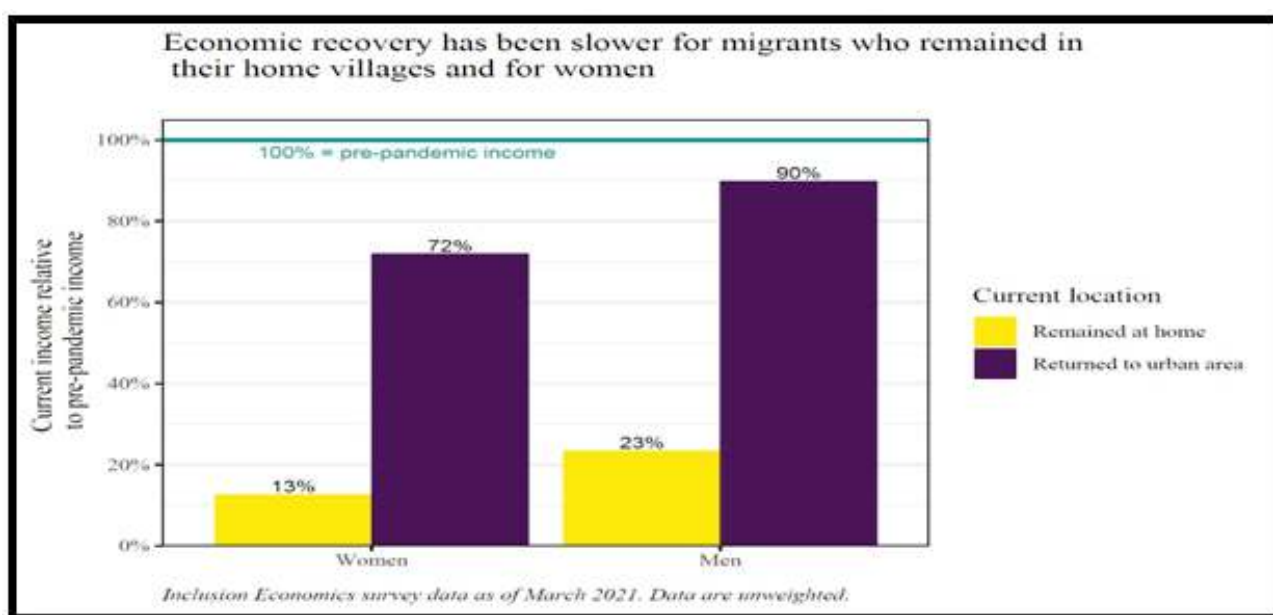


Fig.3 Economic recovery of migrants
(Source-<https://egc.yale.edu/sites/default/files/inlineimages/Economic%20Recovery.png>)

Impact of Labour Migration on Other Activities

Indian GDP suffered a lot due to the lockdown, and one of the major reasons for it was the

unavailability of labour. In states like Punjab, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh, unavailability of labour for harvesting crops led to a decline in production. In Industrial states like Gujarat,

Maharashtra, and Tamil Nadu, the industrial production suffered due to the migration [7].

Covid cases also rose due to crowds accumulating at bus stands, railway stations and movement in close vicinity totally a nightmare.

After a lot of deliberations, fortunately the situation is now getting better and we can hope for a good future.

Measures Taken by the Government to Aid the Migrant Workers and the Efficacy of these Steps :

The government took steps to create employment opportunities for migrant workers heading towards their native homes by increasing the range of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MNREGA) scheme, 2005. Nevertheless, the scheme had its limits, and not everyone could find jobs – in fact, there were several reports of tussles for jobs, between already registered laborers working in villages and migrant workers who had returned to their native homes.



Image 6: Migrant workers going to their native place. (Source-<https://cms.qz.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/migrantpopulation1586207940666.jpg?quality=75&strip=all&w=1600&h=900&crop=1>)

Migrant workers were one of the groups worst impacted by the global pandemic. The government aid provided to them via schemes was insufficient, and the implementation of these schemes was not even near successful. In addition, these schemes, which were designed to help migrant workers, were full of loopholes and discrepancies.

On March 29, 2020, the Indian Home Ministry did order companies to pay complete wages to employees, during the lockdown period, but the order found no implementation at all – as when it was challenged in court, the government decided that the employers and employees must find a mutual settlement on the matter on their own. In a survey in which 11,000 migrant



Image 7: Migrant worker with his child.
(Source-https://assets.irinnews.org/s3fspublic/styles/responsive_large/public/india-covid-migration1.jpg?ia8AV9f1xqPnURftJ8kGHkK_1mOxeYL1&itok=RFsJpRk1)

workers participated, it was found that 89% of migrant workers did not receive any payment from their employers during the lockdown [8]. The government assured that food would be

provided to all during the lockdown and promulgated the doubling of aliment ration quota per person for all the poor people enrolled under the Public Distribution System (PDS).



Image 8: Migrant workers at railway station.
(Source: <https://static.toiimg.com/thumb/msid-75515402,width-1200,height-900,resizemode-4/.jpg>)



Image 9: Migrant child. (Source: economictimes/photo.jpg)



Image 10 : Rajan and his family. (Source: bbcreport)

The implementation of this took an awful amount of time; of 11,000 migrant workers stranded from their native home, who participated in a survey; 96% said that they didn't receive any rations from the government,

and 70% said that they didn't receive any cooked food [9]. Moreover, the Shramik (Labor) Special Trains instituted by the government to help migrant workers were found to be another conglomeration of loopholes.



Image 11: Omprakash talking to the reporter. (Source: ndtv)



Image 12: A migrant family. (Source-<https://images.app.goo.gl/nfzVZsufUs1dW6RC9>)

In conclusion, migrant workers were extremely marginalized during the COVID-19 lockdown, and their concerns were overlooked by the government.

Societal Attitudes Towards Migrant Workers, Their Treatment by the Police and the State of the Shramik Trains

Conventionally, migration is not seen

positively in India, and the people who do migrate do it due to poverty, unemployment, family movement, regional disparities, natural calamities, and marriage. Migrants face issues regarding language and cultural adaptation, health care issues and practical barriers.

Most of them depend on daily wages and face immediate concerns regarding food, shelter, disease, unemployment, concerns about family, anxiety, and fear.

When the lockdown was declared, only a mere four hours before its implementation – all the trains were stopped, and migrant workers were left with no way to reach their abode. "Stay safe, stay home" was the slogan in circulation, but these migrant workers had no home to go to and no shelter to protect them from the novel coronavirus. On April 29, 2020, more than a month after implementing complete lockdown, the government issued orders to permit the migrant workers to return home by bus or train.

The Shramik (Labor) Special Trains, started by the government to facilitate the movement of migration workers, turned out to be another disaster. To travel by these trains, the following was needed: (1) a medical fitness certificate from a government hospital; the expense of which was to be borne by the individual themselves, (2) the migrant worker had to fill an online form; which proved to be another significant barrier, as lack of knowledge, (3) and a peregrinate pass from the local police state was also required; the attainment of which faced significant operational difficulties. Moreover, even though

the government publically claimed that it would bear the cost of travel [10].

While on the other hand, upper-class people could travel inter-state via Premium Rajdhani Trains, by simply buying a ticket online and being thermally screened at the railway station. Here, the migrants' rights were clearly violated as instead of receiving equitable treatment, more strict laws were imposed upon them [11].

The government was dependent on the police and paramilitary forced to implement the lockdown, who at times became too harsh towards migrant workers.

The global pandemic, was a time of extreme peril for migrant workers, during which they should have received sympathy, they were left alone to deal with social, economic, physical and mental challenges.

Narrative 1- “I wish I had gotten tickets”

Rajan, a snack vendor came to Mumbai a decade ago with his wife in the hope of a bright future. He was earning well before the lockdown but as soon as the dark phase came, he was desperate to move to his village. But he couldn't get the tickets in the migrant train and decided to accomplish the journey in his tuk-tuk, which he bought recently to add more to the family income. When they were just 200 kilometres away from their village, all their hopes and excitement turned into tragedy when a truck bumped into their tuk-tuk, claiming the lives of Rajan's wife and daughter. Now Rajan wishes that he could have got the train tickets.

Narrative 2- “ I have only 10 rupees left in my pocket.”

Omprakash is a resident of chapra, Bihar. He started his journey from Greater Noida and reached Lucknow Agra expressway by truck and had to pay rupees 400 to the truck driver.

When asked about the money left with him, he gave a pitiable answer and said that he has only ten rupees. He has no Food with him but just half a bottle of water and still he has to go more than 600 kilometers.

Post Covid Situation of Migrant Workers.

A recovering economy and cities reopening are providing favorable conditions for the migrants to return back to their work. Most of the migrants have already returned and started earning their livelihood. Though they are earning less than what they used to earn before lockdown. According to an estimate, they are earning only 51% of their previous incomes. Though the situations are normalising but will take a long time to achieve the pre lockdown lifestyle and income.

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*A feminist is anyone who recognizes the equality
and full humanity of women and men.*

— Gloria Steinem

Chapter 11

Women and Healthcare Issues During Pandemic Times

“It's up to you today to start making healthy choices. Choices that are not just healthy for your body, but healthy for your mind also.”

Even if the fatality rate has been twice as high for men than for women, the Covid-19 pandemic has affected women more than men, both as frontline workers and at home. The pandemic imposed restrictions of movement, because of which staying at home was the only option. Though this step might have protected us from the deadly coronavirus but it deteriorated the mental peace at home on account of lack of personal space. There was also excessive interference of all family members into each other's life, resulting into serious situations like stress, tussle, domestic violence, and divorce in a lot of cases. Mental health, especially of women, became a serious issue as a consequence of this.

During the pandemic severe health problems arose among women. The whole responsibility of the household and other family members fell on women's shoulders. Moreover, the care and upbringing of children was already in the woman's domain. She was expected to take care of them and ensure that her children have a

proper routine and adjust to this new normal of studying through online mode. This led to exhaustion and severe physical and mental health issues. The problem of PCOD, hormonal disorders and other menstrual health problems like premenstrual syndrome due to lack of physical activity and mental stress have also increased in women. Also, many women have lost their livelihoods during the pandemic, and this led to feelings of fear, hopelessness, loss of identity, anxiety and depression. Self-reliant or working women were expected to strike a balance between her work and household responsibilities, causing mental stress, irritation, anxiety, mania, bipolar disorders, and depression. In severe cases, anxiety and depression also led to the development of suicidal tendencies among women.

Women and their Pregnancy Issues

There were increased problems in pregnancy and childbirth. Preparing for birth is a joyful, exciting and mesmerizing experience and one of the best feelings in the world is to give birth to a child. But the pandemic restrictions disrupted many women's prenatal care and forced some mothers to deliver their infants, without partner or family support. Others faced

separation from their newly born immediately after birth due to infection. Expectant parents also missed out on many celebrations and rituals that commemorate the transition into parenthood like baby showers, neighbours dropping by with a meal, or grandparents traveling to meet the newest family member.

During the pandemic, complications in pregnancies were increased. Continuous staying at home led to stress and boredom among pregnant women. Mental stress leads to insomnia, migraine and other health issues leading to prenatal issues. Pregnant women who got infected with the coronavirus developed fear of contracting the infection to their child and other neonatal problems. Also, in some cases women leaned towards smoking, drugs etc. that had severe consequences during pregnancy and otherwise.

There was a constant loop of dilemmas as to whether the couples should plan a baby or not as the consequences could have been serious. Even after this, according to official data, over 20 million females faced unwanted pregnancies during the lockdown. Thereafter, due to restricted movement, women's health got impacted. They even failed to get proper medicines and timely treatment. Rumours and speculations were doing the rounds regarding foetus' health and chances of it having contracted the virus. There was constant fear regarding baby's health even after birth. Postpartum depression, also known as 'Baby Blues' is observed in females after childbirth.



Figure -1: Adverse interpersonal traumas in lockdown have put women at higher risk of ill-mental health (<https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2016/07/05/survey-counseling-center-directors-finds-anxiety-and-depression-are-top-issues>)

This got worse during lockdown as staying 24 hours inside a 4-walled cage brings depression and anxiety.

Lockdown Impact on Physical, Mental and Menstrual Health

The pandemic has resulted in both physical and mental health concerns among women during lockdown. Physical health issues like obesity, joint pains and osteoporosis have increased among women due to lack of physical activities like exercise, yoga, jogging etc. There was



Figure -2: Mental problems ranging from anxiety to suicidal thoughts were experienced by women (<https://unsplash.com>).



Figure -3: Eating well, physical exercise, getting adequate sleep, and caring for our mental health not only improves our general health and wellness but also make us more resilient throughout COVID-19 (<https://health.mil/News/Articles/2020/05/22/COVID-19-lifestyle-tips-to-stay-healthy-during-the-pandemic>).

increase in screen time as everything went into online mode, leading to sleep deprivation, low back pain, eye strain, headache and so on.

Besides this, mental health has greatly suffered. Multitasking, which is usually thought of as an 'Art', has proved disastrous for women. Staying at home seemed easy on the surface but the reality was totally different. There was mounting pressure both in the personal and professional lives of people, especially women. Women were expected to work from home while simultaneously caring for their children and doing housekeeping. Moreover, a lot of

women lost their jobs bringing in a sense of insecurity, aggravating the already grave situation. In a few cases, serious mental problems ranging from anxiety to suicidal thoughts were reported.

One of the primary reasons for mental illness is due to domestic violence incidents at home which are generally left unreported. Globally, domestic abuse reports have surged during the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown. UN-Women has referred to this violence against women as a "Shadow Epidemic". Domestic violence complaints to the National Commission for



Figure -4: Mental health practitioners are under a lot of stress, and demand for counselling services is at an all-time high (<https://www.google.co.in/amp/s/amp.heralddemocrat.com/amp/6824675002>).

Women have increased dramatically from 2,960 in 2019 to 5,297 in 2020, the year of the Covid-19 lockdown when most people were confined to their homes.

In one of the incidents reported in Kerala, a member of the State's Women Commission got a phone call from Chennai begging for assistance from a man who claimed that his sister and her daughter, (residents of Idukki district), were hiding in the forest as his sister's husband had thrown them out of their house. The matter was investigated, and the spouse was arrested. (April 26, 2020, Hindustan Times). Besides this, there are a lot of cases that

have been either repressed by the police or haven't been reported at all.

Menstrual health of women, a rarely discussed topic, demands much attention. Physical and mental illness of women has been largely responsible for their irregular menstrual cycle, hormonal imbalances, and early menopause. Moreover, menstrual hygiene got badly affected due to shortage or unavailability of sanitary products like tampons, menstrual cups, reusable napkins, and pain relievers, especially in backward areas. Even female frontline workers have suffered a lot of menstrual health issues.



Figure -5: Victims of domestic violence
(<https://m.thewire.in/article/women/domestic-violence-india-reporting/amp>)

Some Steps to Overcome Menstruation Problems

- Maintaining a calm state of mind is the key. Regular exercises and meditation greatly reduce physical, mental, and menstrual illness.
- Stress loop can be greatly reduced by maintaining an optimistic mindset.
- In critical conditions, medical assistance and reassurances from experts will greatly help.

Conclusion

- The rise in violence against women requires immediate action, and measures such as economic support and stimulus packages

that address the seriousness of the problem of women who face multiple challenges.

- Shelters and helplines for women must be deemed vital services in every country, with dedicated financing and extensive efforts to raise awareness about their availability.
- Helplines, psycho-social support, and online counselling should be expanded, with technology-based solutions like SMS, online tools, and support networks being used to reach women who do not have access to phones or the internet.
- The police and court systems must mobilize to guarantee that cases of violence against women and girls are given top priority, with perpetrators facing legal consequences.

- Most importantly, women must stand for themselves and raise their voices.

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Chapter 12

Students Speak

Experiences as Women in Modern Society

Issues of Discrimination



No doubt, our country has evolved vastly. But still, some loopholes need to be addressed.

The era which we live in is well modernized. Besides, there are various issues for which our society still doesn't understand the essence of gender equality. I, myself have faced countless repercussions associated with the same. Although, my family is a modern one in most aspects, I still face some issues by which I don't feel that equality. Particularly, these are a few

instances where I felt the gender divide:

At first, when I decided to study outstation, my family was a bit reluctant by the thought that how will I be able to take care of myself in a place like Delhi, where the crime rate is extremely high. If it would have been my brother's case, they wouldn't have been worried.

Then, I had to make efforts to help them understand the significance of studying in a reputed college of DU. In fact, being in Delhi has impacted me very favourably. The various experiences and opportunities which I gained, helped me to enhance my skills and personality, which in turn built up my confidence.

I felt fortunate at that time because my family understood the motive behind my efforts. However, some boundaries have been set, such as forbidding me to go out of the PG/Flat after a particular point of time at night, which I think wouldn't be set for a boy.

Apart from that, as we all know that India is a country where an average number of people are brown. The majority of the people have started accepting this fact and have normalized this. But still, there are many places where people

are humiliated/ discriminated against on the basis of skin colour. I too neither have a very fair complexion nor very dark, just an average one. Although I never faced discrimination based on colour, a few years ago an elder member of my family used to say that you should do something for your skin. Back then, his/her concern seemed wrong to me. But, as time went on, this comment overshadowed my mind. As the result, I became under confident as a person, especially in front of fair-complexioned people because I started to think that they will judge me based on my skin colour. After some time, I realized that some people don't judge me on that account and I'm not the only person who doesn't have a fair complexion. There are many more and they are confident enough to face everything. This realization levelled up my courage and boosted my confidence again. Also, the awareness of "I'm good enough for everything" helped me to gain a new dimension to my attitude.

These are some particular incidents which do not matter for many people but can have a huge influence on someone's life.

Himansi Shadeja

B.Sc. (Hons.) Mathematics

Comparing Gender Dynamics in Ancient and Modern Times

Men and women both are equally important for society. If either of them is lagging behind the other, then development is not going to take

place. So, it's very important to give equal opportunities to both of them. Talking about Gender Dynamics we can say that it is something that includes the relationship and interaction between both genders. Women have been suffering a lot for many decades. They didn't get the place and respect they are entitled to. But during the last few years, we are seeing a good change in their condition. Perhaps now we are going to realise their value.

The reported statistics show that the situation of women in society is improving through each passing decade in domains like domestic violence, mortality rate, health and sanitation, rate of education and employment and sex ratio. Seeing this progress of women, I talked to my grandfather. He became very happy and told me that women have achieved all these heights after



so many decades of struggle. He spoke about the time when there was a "SATI SYSTEM" in our society and this is the time where women are independent. He let me know that during his times, women were hardly allowed to go outside for jobs but nowadays there is nothing like that. If a girl gets proper education, then she is not a burden on her family. Now the mentality of people is also changing as they are ready to accept changes in gender dynamics to make life much easier and better. That's why the whole country enjoyed the victory of Mirabai Chanu and many more. The gap between a boy and a girl is becoming narrower. Now we are ready to accept girls in the armed forces and boys in the kitchen (i.e. Sanjeev Kapoor).

Rupali Kumari

B.A (P)

Women in Modern Society

Since ancient times, we have witnessed the dowry system in weddings. But in this modern world which believes in gender equality and even in our school days in primary education, Social Science books used to mention dowry as a social evil.

I believed that it had vanished from our society but I was totally wrong. I have been a beholder to it. This happened when my cousin sister was getting married recently. She is well off enough to be called an independent woman and was asked for dowry of 15 lakhs. She is successful



and can handle her financial situations herself and also holds a Master's degree. But she has been asked to provide dowry just because her fiancé has a government job and a lavish home which is ancestral. But still my family got ready to pay the dowry. My other sister who got married recently also has paid 2 lakhs as dowry. On asking my family, why is it that even after being well settled, independent and successful, a girl is asked for dowry. Is it a kind of deal for life security?

I got an answer that it is a ritual and we are actually not paying dowry but it is our gift to our beloved daughter that will help her in future.

I was extremely shocked hearing such statements from my family. I realised that the evil still persists in society and is even justified by people. I perceived discrimination in the name of culture. When it is said that marriage is

the association between two individuals who love each other and between two different families, then why is there a need to bring out discrimination in the name of ritual or culture? I believe that this mindset is inherent in society through previous generations. But definitely it will not pass on to next generation, as we are well educated and aware to take legitimate decisions which will be free from any kind of discrimination and undefined rituals.

Ritika

Bachelor in Business Economics

Grandmother Compares Gender Dynamics in Earlier Times and Now

Indian society has seen a great change in the past few years in the context of marriages at a young age. My grandmother remembered that



having periods was the sign that the girl is now an adult and is ready for marriage. She talked to her mother about it as lack of education and knowledge made her fear periods as a disorder or disease. During her time, if a family had an unmarried girl of age 20 -22, the family was very concerned about it and considered it as “tension”. Girls who were forced to marry as a child often became pregnant while they were still young, which increased the risk of complications in pregnancy as well as childbirth. She also added that this practice has isolated girls from their families and added a great burden to their physical and psychological well-being. Education has played a major role; now girls get proper education about health, menstruation, and even their rights. They are encouraged to talk about periods, reproductive disorders, and diseases to their family and friends. Technology has made it easier to reach out and gain knowledge. Now age is not an issue for marriage. People emphasize on getting a more educated son-in-law or daughter- in law. Thus, educated partners are the foundation of a strong and supportive marriage.

Kalash Gupta

B.Sc. Life Sciences

Remarriage of Women in India

One fine day I was sitting in a park talking about usual things with my friend and suddenly heard a



group of middle-aged women gossiping about a lady who remarried at the age of 38. As expected by our society they were just talking ill of her. In between phrases like "How shameless", "what will her son think of her? Such a bad mother", "she definitely will be tortured", "she is after money", one voice was raised.

One lady sitting there highlighted the point of how a 45-year-old shop owner, whom they all knew very well, also remarried recently because of the death of his wife due to cancer. Another lady abruptly interrupted and said "Marriage is just like grafting. A man is a rootstock and a woman is a scion. Scion is replaceable; each time you bind a different kind of scion as per your need and result, the whole plant grows, but what will you do with a single scion? It is always dependent on rootstock for its growth. Same as a woman. So, remarriage of a man is as acceptable as grafting."

I felt so bewildered after hearing such a speech from a woman about another woman, and how logical she was thinking she sounded at that point. In our society, it feels like a crime for a widow to remarry. What to expect from another

gender when our own is criticizing us for doing what we love?

It is so common for a decently earning middle-aged to old-aged man to remarry a young or middle-aged woman, who belongs to a poor family and society appreciates this by saying, "he must be feeling lonely", "who will take care of his kids?" and whatnot. But do we hear such things for women?

Once I heard about a man whose wife died because of depression as he used to beat her. She committed suicide due to this mishappening but what happened? He got remarried to his late wife's cousin and surprisingly not many people found it disturbing. He is the ideal stock root of our society.

There are many people who support women equality but majority of the population has objections about most of the things related to women and one out of this list is 'Women's Remarriage'. Therefore, women should be treated equally and remarriage of men and women should be seen with the same eyes.

Sanskriti Dimri

B.Sc Life Sciences

We Need to Speak

In my life thus far, I've found most people to be respectful and kind. In other words, I can confirm from my own experience that I feel the burn of discrimination. I come from an ordinary joint family. As a child, I would always hear my uncles tell my mom that my parents would have



to pay a lot of dowry to have me married. My brother always got the best food and clothing. He was the center of my mom and dad's lives. I have always wondered why he received such special treatment. When I asked my mother, she always said: "You are a girl. You will get married and leave us one day. When we are old, your brother will be around and take care of us. After we die, he will carry out the sacred rituals."

My paternal uncles would embrace any opportunity they had to humiliate my mom. Sometimes, during an outburst, they would fling the food she served to them. My mother would quietly clean up the mess. The mental

agony was too much for her, and she suffered from severe anxiety for years. My cousin sister and I were also humiliated at times. Many times at lunchtime, we would hear our family members complain. Whenever I fell ill, my mom would take us to the doctor. But when my brother was sick, my father took him. From this conditioned reflex, I have a constant sense of guilt. I believed I was a burden on my parents. Not knowing how to fight this, I used to cry myself to sleep every night. I never asked my parents for food, clothes or toys; I just accepted everything given to me with great gratitude. Today, as I look back, I feel a sense of achievement, and I have a message I would like to share with all women: "Have a voice. Speak up. Never compromise on your dignity, and live with a strong mindset". I look forward to working with women's organizations to help others lead independent lives, as I have done so far. Because today, despite the beliefs my family members tried to instill in me, I have a sense of pride in being a woman.

Simran Rathi

BA Programme

*I am a warrior in the time of women warriors;
the longing for justice is the sword I carry.*

— *Sonia Johnson*



Women's Development Cell

Shivaji College

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