

THE INDIAN WOMAN.



Feminism often comes to be talked about as pompous parading and slogans preaching equality for all. It finds its definition in letting women have their place, without having to make it repeatedly. And I think that is right certainly. But there's ought to be a different sect for feminism that caters to the average Indian woman, especially ages 35-anything

Feminism, started as a movement but today it's a bone of contention for many. Possibly only those who don't understand what it is altogether. It is many stories weaved into one blanket. Because a million threads are harder to hold on to than a single blanket. Despite the globalisation of feminist ideals being a great thing in terms of adding weight to the issue- the recognition of the different shades of the feminine experience, largely influenced by culture, remains important. Womanhood looks different on everyone. If it can be outwardly looked at all. Being born and growing up solely in India, living in

a multigenerational household has given me personal and vicarious scenarios to work with.

Womanhood in the Indian context is not something universally unique or groundbreaking, but the Indian culture is restrictive towards women, perhaps not the most, but somewhere on the extreme. Its misbalance between huge amounts of scrutiny and judgement in competition with embracing the individuality of each woman as her own is reflected young. The distribution of gender roles amongst children of opposite sexes is clearly what lays the foundation of a lifetime of entitlement vis a vis servitude to come. Pretty early on, tasks like- caretaking, nurturing and chores are an unsaid assignment to women and activities like being the breadwinner are necessarily the responsibility of men. While this dynamic finds itself changing for the better with time, there is an air of silent expectation to comply around every woman I have ever met, and every woman who has ever met me.

I hardly recall seeing women who do not show reluctance to express themselves beyond what others want. This is not a personality trait, for it exists in almost every woman I have met, nor is this something that you just build up in a day. This takes years and years of being conditioned to think about everyone else before yourself. It exceeds all virtues of selflessness and necessarily presents itself as self-ejection. This could reflect in things as little as never cooking your favourite meal because no one else in your family enjoys it, to something as big as quitting your job or the pursuit of education just because you are asked to. But why can you be commanded to do something so big by someone else? Who is my grandmother beyond her family and children and responsibilities? What could she have become if she ever educated herself and gotten a job? Will I ever know? Does she know?

This is all about how things are, but I do have a very honest take on why things are the way they seem to be. And it is simple- upbringing. I see this as an issue that ranges generations, each layer seems to peel away only to reveal that the older generations were even more restrictive on women. And perhaps that's a good sign, that this continues to descend in the newer generations, but it's hard to eradicate fully. People with this thought process- though less in number, exist even in newer generations, likely to have their own reasoning. Perhaps if women weren't raised in the anticipation that they will be responsible for the well being of everyone around them, they'd give more importance to their own selves, or at least to what they want in sync with what people around them do.

Is this largely an Indian socio-cultural issue? Absolutely. Is this only an Indian issue? No, and it never will be.

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