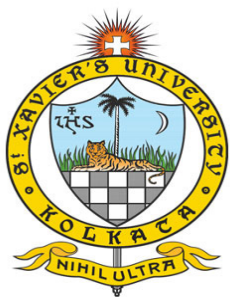


Xpression



“Where the mind is without fear and the head is held high”





Insignificant to Significant

Manasi Das

Born on 14th April 1891, Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar was the 14th child of Ramji Maloji Sakpal. Belonging to the “untouchable community” of the Mahar caste, he witnessed discrimination in society from a very early age.

With time and education, Ambedkar morphed into a man of radical thoughts and rose to be known as the father of the Indian Constitution. He rigorously worked towards the upliftment of the Dalits and campaigned against social discrimination faced by them. One of the landmark events to set up the norm of equality, defining the social evil of untouchability and reclaiming of the public places for the Dalits took place on March 20, 1927, when Babasaheb led thousands of Dalits to drink water from Chavdar Lake in Mahad, Maharashtra.

Besides criticizing the Hindu social order for their apathy towards the socially backward classes, he also

staunchly pointed out that there was no recognition of equal need, equal work, or equal ability in it, as the basis of reward for labour.

Hence, to eradicate this injustice and inequality mentioned in the Shastras, he wrote, “Make every man and woman free from the thralldom of the Shastras, cleanse



Illustration by Manasi Das

their minds of the pernicious notions founded on the Shastras and he or she will inter-dine and inter-marry” in his book -Annihilation

of Caste. According to him, inter-caste marriage, education, and inter-dine are the paths to eliminate the regressive caste system and structured patriarchy.

Dr. B. R. Ambedkar introduced many laws for the benefit of women labourers. He fought for three years to pass the Hindu code Bill, which proves to be a remarkable step towards women’s empowerment. From reducing working hours to laying the guidelines of RBI, Babasaheb’s contribution is immense.

Though Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, one of the most significant figures of our nation, experienced humiliation and prejudice at every step during his childhood, he did not remain silent. Not only did he fight for himself but also worked towards the growth of an entire country. With the commandment “Educate, Agitate, Organize”, Babasaheb strategically provided the base for development. However, his words, “We are Indians, firstly and lastly” are yet to be recognized by many.

Women journalists: loud and clear

Ananta Banerjee



Women journalists voicing opinions (Source: Google)

As an aspiring woman journalist, it is disheartening to read and see articles on so many women journalists who are made to feel quite conscious about their gender whenever they are out for reporting, especially in a country like India, where many women journalists face bombardment of online abuse, explicit rape threats and also death threats just for sharing their opinion. Where does lie the Freedom of Expression that too in the 21st century? Today more and more women journalists are involved in building and nourishing a representative, translucent and accountable government. Though despite having some remarkable advances on communication technologies that have simplified and expanded the possibilities of women to actively participate in political, economic and social life, still it has been seen that women face obstacles and malpractices that exclude them from public debate and also prevent them from employing their right to express their ideas, opinions and thoughts publicly and to receive information on an equal support with men. Where we get to see some of India’s most influential and respected journalistic voices are now female, and that is indeed hard for a patriarchal society like India to digest. Even we notice that the attacks on women journalists are not even confined to the online world. There are several reports of them who were and are getting physically attacked and sexually harassed while out reporting. Because of all the violence, many women journalists in India fear of getting trolled online which leaves them censoring their thoughts and opinion. They are often seen voicing out their attacks that they suffer which are not paid enough attention or their experiences of the attacks are not taken seriously enough. These threats, attacks, online abuse on women journalists should be recognized as an attack on the Freedom of Speech and Expression and strict actions should be taken against these threats.

Freedom of Speech and Expression: A Boon or a Bane?

Akanksha Vijay

As the words of Ivor Jennings, a British lawyer, and educator, “Without freedom of speech, the appeal to the reason which is the basis of democracy cannot be made”, highlights the importance of one of the most basic fundamental rights an Indian citizen is entitled of. The Constitution of India under Article 19(1)(a) provides every citizen The Right to Freedom of Speech and Expression. However, the right comes within certain limitations under Article 19(2) which allows the state to put reasonable restrictions on rational grounds.

The right to freedom of speech and expression empowers every individual to express themselves. However, in the contemporary Indian scenario, this right is shifting towards nothing more than a misused privilege.

The constant heap of slanderous and defamatory statements being released in the public sphere by none other than the media itself, also known as the fourth pillar of our democracy, under the shield of this right, causes violence, chaos, and significantly affects public opinion.

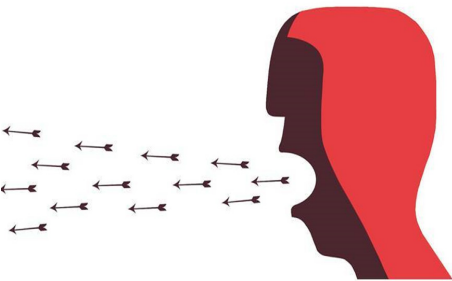


Illustration by C R Sasikumar (Source – The Indian Express)

Unfortunately, the proliferation of media has led to increasing TRP’s by ignoring its sole duty to disseminate factual information to the masses. Therefore, adopting

unethical methods of journalism results in more fake news, paid news, and harsh media trials. The recent media trial conducted on actress Rhea Chakraborty for the SSR death by suicide case in 2020, based on disinformation and false assumptions is a prime example of the current degrading scenario.

The character assassination by the media destroys the moral life shamefully, affecting an individual’s mental health. Khurshid Anwar, a social worker, a former J.N.U Scholar was one of the victims who committed suicide in 2013 after facing a media trial for two days.

This finally leaves us with the question that whether freedom of speech and expression is truly being treated as an empowering fundamental right or just a mode of shelter for the media to conceal their immoral set of practices?

Free speech bounds to trolling!

Celeste Sanjana Gomes

Internet offers us all with the freedom of expression without any legal restrictions; with its low start-up cost it enables anyone to speak and be heard across the world as well as hear others. Internet has become the voice of grassroots i.e. not controlled by any media organizations and has greater impact than the speech through ordinary media.

Internet has the potential of uniting and interacting different people around the world and enable them to add their own information or support a cause.

Few such instances when internet acted as public sphere and became a communication tool for social movements are instances like 'BlackLivesMatter' and 'Nirbhaya' movements, where social media hashtags ignited actions in the real world. But in the past few years it has been noted that the platform of free speech is being misused by people termed as "Internet troll", who relish this online freedom by pranking to harassing to sending violent threats to people. The 2016 reboot of Ghostbusters

starred 4 women instead of men made the trolls furious and they targeted the film's black co-star Leslie Jones, her twitter account was filled with racist and sexist threats. Trolling has expanded to anything and everything, from video games to clothing ads, which is done by a person or a group of people to attack people whose thoughts are different from theirs and create a culture of fear with horrendous threats, effectively suppressing their own voices.



Freedom at the expense of harassment
(Source: Boomlive.in)

Today, trolling is an enterprise of its own. It's now funded by the government and organizations to voice support or argument on social media or to subdue any opposition through slander and profanities. Therefore, this leads to misinformation and forces public to self-censorship. But to control trolling we cannot impose law on the free speech of internet, which might make it easier for the government to monitor what is going on social media rather people should resort to self-regulation, ignore the trolls and relish the online freedom.

Freedom over the top

Ahana Basu

The consumption of digital content has become a norm in the past half decade due to the availability of different contents on platforms like Netflix, Disney Hot star, Amazon Prime etc. This massive growth has been noticed due to the exponential growth of the OTT (Over the Top) platforms having a huge diversity of media content. The existence of such platforms is itself an example of creative freedom and expression, providing a global stage to the content creators and viewers.

The Indian government has always been very instrumental in putting bizarre bans in the wake of "public interest". But who is to decide what is in public interest? Are the 'public' being taken as 'mass' with no opinion of their own? Recently, the new area of control has been shifted towards the surveillance of the OTT services owing to its ever increasing popularity. The boom of the OTT platforms substantiates the fact that many filmmakers take the route of these to prevent piracy of movies. Moreover, a large number of artists don't have enough money to portray their creative thoughts through the cinema and this medium becomes viable for them. Even though majority of the people above 40s



Courtesy: Deepali Bhandari and Abhigyan Tripathi (Source: Google)

are supporting the censorship, one of the strongest arguments against such censorship, is the existence of Subscription on Demand - viewers have the choice to pay and select what to watch. Adding to that, platforms like Netflix have clear distinction about the users - the actual user and 'children'. Hence, an element of 'parental guidance' is very much present there.

In recent past, a lot of controversies and debates have taken place regarding the content of OTT platforms. Consequently, following the footsteps of 'Islamophobia', the term 'Hinduphobia' has come into existence. In many Islamic countries, the contents of OTT platforms are subject to strict censorship. Will such steps lead us to more 'self-regulated' contents? Will it succumb to the fundamentalist authorities relinquishing its freedom? Let's wait and watch!

Revisit to fearless journalism: From Orient to Occident

Ibtisam Fayaz Khan

Journalism is no white-collar job rather a profession that requires zeal to take risks and work under strenuous circumstances to stand for the truth. Freedom of expression and information being the world's most basic yet principal right is successfully followed today all around because journalists decide to go beyond boundaries to provide us with facts and knowledge that keeps us awake.

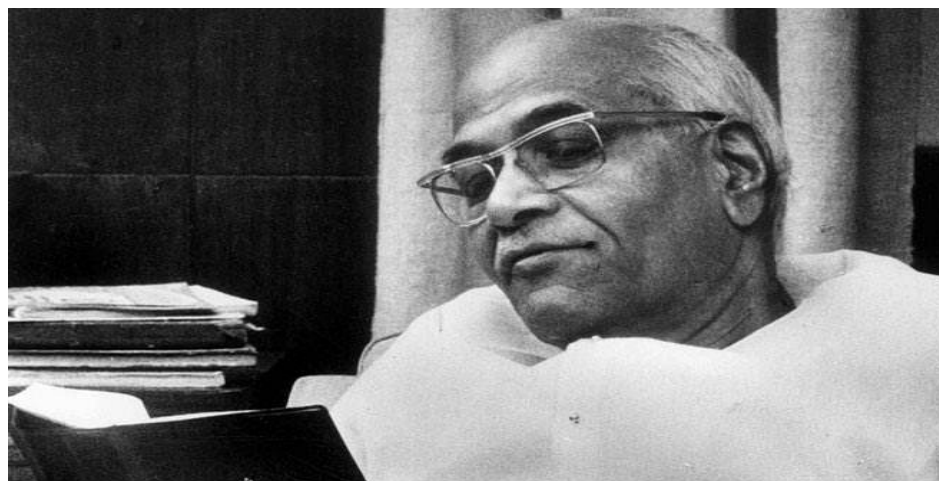
A blank editorial

During the Emergency-1975 in India, fundamental rights (including press freedom) were suspended. The government implied censorship and forced the press to act as mouthpieces. The breakthrough event took place when Ram Nath Goenka (Publisher of The Indian Express) directed his editors to carry a blank editorial as a mark of protest refusing to let

down his profession. The courage Goenka showed during the Indian media's darkest hour is a souvenir for the current times and will always remain so.

Watergate scandal

In June 1972 few miscreants broke into the Democratic National Committee headquarters leading an investigation that revealed the misuse of power by the Nixon administration. Five burglars who were linked to Nixon's party not only stole copies of some very confidential documents but also tapped the office phones. Watergate became one of the momentous investigative stories of all time solved by two reporters of the Washington Post -- Carl Bernstein and Bob Woodward who were unstoppable in digging the truth. Much of the information was contributed from a whistle-blower known as "Deep Throat" --- later



Ram Nath Goenka

(Source: Facebook/ Vasanthakumar Vengadessane)

revealed as Mark Felt, a former associate of the FBI in 2005.

Ten days in a Mad-House

In 1887, Nellie Bly from Pittsburgh broke the glass ceiling through her path-breaking investigative journalism. Her real name was Elizabeth Cochrane Seaman. To prove her mettle, she went undercover for an assignment on the women's lunatic asylum on Blackwell's Island. By pretending

to be insane, she reported the grimmest realities where women were given rotten meals, icy cold baths by coarse water of other people, cruel medical faculty, and innumerable types of maltreatment for any misbehavior.

After her release from the asylum in 10 days, she exposed the horrors of the place by publishing a book "10 days in an Asylum", which ended up becoming a huge hit of that time.

A woman's voice concretized in a man's mind

Trisha Nandy



(Left) Madhabi Mukherjee; (Right) Raima Sen
(Source: Womens Web)

‘For we Women are not only the deities of the household fire, but the flame of the soul itself’ as said by Tagore in his novel “Ghare Baire”. Society always known women as artisans of family, imparting their life for the spirit of harmony in the home, that they build. Social regulations often don’t allow women to address the lack of freedom, in comparison to that of a man. Hence, in the battle of life, the grievances of a woman are gradually silenced.

Rabindranath Tagore, the Indian Polymath and one of the greatest reformers during the 19th century ushered a greater revolution through his literary works. Women in Tagore’s story were dauntless, talented, empowered and fought for coequality. Giribala from “Manbhonjan” was a woman who didn’t confine herself into the house when her husband eloped with another woman. She regained her power by breaking the passivity of wifehood and controlled her own life by joining a theatre production. Tagore birthed women who challenged social evils and stood for their education, intellectuality and patriarchy at large. From Kalyani of “Aparichito” to Mrinal from “Streer Patra” both of them stood to preserve their dignity. Kalyani decided to be unmarried while Mrinal broke the shackles of fifteen years of marriage to nurture her intellectuality. Tagore’s heroines also challenged the rigid caste system, untouchability and evil practices in every step. Kusum and Sumanta from “Tyaag” embraced their love over their caste difference while Nirupama of “Dena Paona” sacrificed herself for the abominable practices of dowry. On the other hand, Bimala from “Ghare Baire” caged out from the traditions of the society embracing the then Swadeshi Movement. Tagore even created Gora and his lover Suchitra who became the mouthpiece of nationalism.

Tagore portrayed the idea of freedom and wanted to give them an equal sky in the world, amongst the clutches of patriarchy that prevailed during the 19th century.

Raja Ram Mohan Roy: Pioneer to modern day journalism

Damini Basu

The power of the freedom of speech and expression from the time of independence was very much vouched for by our prominent freedom fighters, especially against the British. Raja Ram Mohan Roy was a very prominent voice for this freedom.

Roy’s social, political thoughts were interrelated and provided a blueprint for Rule of Law and political freedom. Roy’s notion of Rule of Law consisted of his ideas on political freedom, which were integrally related to the concept of Freedom of Press. He said that the freedom of press is necessary to reflect the educated Indians’ views, ensure development of public opinion in legislation and protect individual rights and democracy. But this perception often suffers from elite bias, which can be prevented by effective and fair implementation of laws by an open-minded ruler as per Roy. To secure this important object, the unrestricted Liberty of Publication is the only viable means that can be employed. The Liberty of Publication is unfortunately a big prisoner with regard to press freedom in India. Roy fought for its



Raja Ram Mohan Roy

(Source: Google)

ease. The free flow of information, argued Roy, was imperative for good governance. A wise ruler will only encourage his subjects to inform him of maladministration from various parts of the country, so that they could be corrected by his government. The words and works of the modernist are compellingly relevant to the crisis caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. Instead of treating the Journalists as valuable assets to contain the pandemic quickly and effectively, many governments were

undisguisable hostile towards them but couldn’t subdue many fearless journalists and news sites. However, the situation is still bleak than it was during the Emergency period, Indian newspapers are often subjected to the Spiral of silence.

Had this great modernist been alive today, he would have been prompted to write a fresh petition on the subject to those in power – which would most likely be met with silence, or perhaps even with an FIR charging him with sedition.

A Bittersweet Taste of Freedom



Children at Bergen-Belsen concentration camp.

(Source: The Times of Israel)

Shreya Banerjee

The book ‘The Handmaid’s Tale’, authored by Margaret Atwood penned down a character that shows how there can be more than one kind of freedom existing in a society -- freedom to and freedom from. Now imagine both being snatched away from someone. That’s what the people from Auschwitz, Buchenwald, and many such concentration camps felt for more than a decade. The atrocities on the Jews began in 1933 and went on to early 1945 where they waited to be grasped by the hands of death. The foggy

morning of January 1945, unveiled the news of their freedom that they never thought of. A boy named Gene Klein was walking around the barracks with his friends in striped pajamas when they caught an unusual sight of Russian soldiers who came as news bearers of liberation. After years of torture, they were finally free. The three boys ran with their skinny legs to every barrack in the vicinity and informed everyone about their liberation. There was a sudden glimmer of hope to live, to breathe peacefully without the fear of death. However, their excitement

for overcoming the long-lost hope of freedom was crashed as they would never reunite with their dead friends and families. Agnes Kaposi, another holocaust survivor, broke down after recalling that day. They were happy to escape death, some kissed the soldier’s feet in awe, some cried in happiness and some in memory of the families lost.

In the snow after the death march, a 16-year-old boy Solly Ganor laid half dead, when Clarence Matsumura, the American Japanese soldier touched his shoulder gently and said ‘You are free boy, you are free now’. He remembers the touch and the sound that brought him back to life. For someone like Henry, another survivor, the freedom restored his faith in God.

The survivors in 2020 returned to Auschwitz as it marked 75 years after liberation. They still want to share their stories with the world so that something like the holocaust never repeats itself. Their concept of freedom was based strictly on survival.

Revisiting Bengal Renaissance through the eyes of Vidyasagar

Sagnika Das



Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar
(Source: Google)

All individuals are equivalent and should be provided with equal rights to communicate and express their opinions freely without any fear or restriction. Sound too good to be true, right? Although Article 19(1) (a) of the Indian constitution assures us to believe in equality, the prevalent sexism and racism reflect the imbalanced structure of our society.

Although the condition in the past centuries were far more pathetic, the 21st century is still lagging behind. Society is still ruled by dominant upper-caste male figures who are unaware of what the minorities go through on a daily basis. They made rules without even considering the experiences of the downtrodden

sections of society. And their rule was unchallenged for ages. Around the 19th century, the ongoing deprivation of freedom and equality for centuries led to the emergence of prolific social reformers and among those visionaries, was Ishwarchandra Vidyasagar whose benefactions could never be forgotten.

Pundit Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar (1820-1891) is one of the eminent figures of the Bengal Renaissance who vigorously supported women's rights by standing up for women's education and widow remarriage in the 19th-century orthodox Hindu society. He believed in educational upliftment and strived to provide equal education to all men and women irrespective of social status, caste, religion, and gender. He endeavored to raise the status of women in society fighting all odds of the traditionalist system into which he was born.

Legalizing widow remarriage (in 1856) to set up three dozen schools for women, we will be forever indebted to pundit Vidyasagar for his never-ending contribution in the field of female emancipation.

Needless to say, the freedom we are enjoying today could never exist without his bold moves to incorporate changes in the social system. It is absolutely necessary to acknowledge his struggle and persistence in changing the mindset of a nation.

Women's struggle for self-definition in poems of Kamala Das

Ankita Chakraborty



Kamala Das Credits: Shruti Yatam
(Source: Google)

One of the central concerns in Kamala Das's poems is a women's struggle for self-definition in a traditional patriarchal society. Her poems are a protest against the patriarchal propensity of stereotyping women into a fixed gender category. It is an attempt to explore the multifaceted personality of women that a male-dominated society disregards.

Kamala Das, is a fresh voice in Indo-Anglican poetry with a Victorian objectivity. She broke the conventional mode in her autobiography *An Introduction*, where she confessed about her trauma of being exploited sexually after being married to K. Madhava Das at the premature age of fifteen. She exposes the shocking impact of a woman's first awareness of her sexual identity in a society of repression and inhibition. The poet describes how the trauma of being sexually exploited has embittered the entire perception of her life, which ironically had occurred with the sanction of the

social institution of marriage.

According to sociological thinkers and radical feminists, one of the primary reasons for female oppression and subordination is their sexual and reproductive role in a family, compelling them to occupy a subjugated position. Das depicts this power of misbalance between men and women in *An Introduction*. Das discloses that on the path of determining one's gender identity, women often come to detest their femininity as it is intrinsically associated with sexual exploitation. In her initial protest Das cross-dresses as a male using her brother's clothes to prevent herself from further becoming a victim of male lust, for which she is accused of being schizophrenic and nymphomaniac by people with patriarchal notions. Das tries to convey the significance in determining a woman's identity to her readers.

Being a social rebel, Kamala Das has zealously opposed all accepted social conventions from the time she has felt empowered to do so. A woman's quest for identity in a patriarchal society has been a familiar theme in literature ever since the eighteenth century. The poems of Kamala Das extend the quest further to deal with women's sexual identity and freedom with greater directness than her predecessors.

Xpress to Impress - A Delightful Freedom

Avishikta Das

The word freedom has always been very closely associated with the Indians as always. The happiness of living in an artistically and culturally rich country take us to another level of joy. India being a colorful and creative country gives us major happiness in every aspect of our life. In this busy hectic life, there is a simple, yet creative medium of happiness which is called "Dancing". Dancing is an energetic, engaging sort of activity which gives us positive vibes with lot of happiness.

Dancing is a freedom of expression in a dignified way. From classical to western, from hip hop to

contemporary every form is unique in its own rhythm. The perfect balance of rhythm is so encouraging



Enlighten the art of dancing

that it soothes us internally. The original form of dancing came into existence in third millennium BC, when Egyptians used dance as a crucial part of their religious

ceremonies. Dancing is form of intoxication with some rhythmic movement. It is considered as a best form of entertainment as it is free from all societal bondage. Dancing itself is a freedom of expression which enhance and glorifies the creativity of human being.

According to a study, Dance interconnects the mind and heart of the human being which helps in releasing happy hormone called "Endorphin".

People express themselves freely with some creative expression. There is a huge connection between personal freedom and dancing. Even though, our society is a bit stigmatized about the ancient art and culture like dancing, according to a study, if the citizen of India can really focus and work hard, they can contribute a great part in the country's GDP through dancing. Near about 30-40% people are really praising the quality of this beautifully presented human emotion with lots of love and hard work. Dance is a mixture of dedication and cooperation. It is the creative boon for the pressurized society.

Anti-Tobacco Day: Drop now or rue tomorrow

Harshita Kumari

The World Health Organization and universal collaborators marks 31st May as “No Tobacco Day” every year. It is a stratagem undertaken by WHO to impart knowledge about the ill effects of tobacco, the core purpose is to make the world free from tobacco, nicotine and thoughts like inhaling smoke is modish, spiffy, charming; it propagates cognizance about the use of tobacco.

WHO is focusing on sustainable development and an encouraging environment this year to create an understanding about the epidemic and qualifies the tobacco users to “quit and win” act as this year’s theme for World No Tobacco Day is “Commit to Quit”. To enhance the



Let go of smoking ahead, it finishes you

(Source: Google)

campaign’s effectiveness the global organization will be felicitating people and organizations who are constantly endeavouring to abide by the policy and making the world free from this global growth.

The World Health Organization rigorously fights against the usage of tobacco and educating people the value of health, lifestyle and their duty to safeguard the oncoming generations. Approximately 6

million people pass away from tobacco every single year and stats signifies its growth up to 8 million by 2030. The Sustainable Development Agendum intends to take the edge off the mortality rate from non-transmissible diseases and diseases related to tobacco fall under this list. If the initiative succeeds in achieving its aim – the world will not only be free from tobacco, nicotine and smoke but also people will be free from tobacco related diseases too.

“World No Tobacco Day” is the day for smokers worldwide to set themselves free from the thought of using tobacco to lead a healthy life and realize lively lungs. Further 31st May is a good day to set oneself free from this universal malady.

Children’s perspectives go beyond crayons and cartoons



Freedom of expression being rightly exercised by children (Source: Reddit)

Oishi Basu

A child is perceived as a lump of clay by the whole society, who is moulded in a certain shape to be presented as per the standards as they grow up. Elders often fail to understand that children have a mind of their own and a different outlook of the world. Children expressing themselves are often subdued because of their age which later on stunts their perception of the world. With the world heading towards a progressive change, this is also a discourse that we as a society need to look into.

Children regard the happenings of the world through a rose-tinted glass without an input of critical thinking. Which gives them the freedom to string along their thoughts and expressions with a touch of simplicity. They have the power to unravel the most twisted situation with an innocently bizarre solution, which makes us ponder over how inquisitive their little minds are. The

current scenario of the world puts every child in a comprehensible position and urges them to put their thoughts and comments about the various issues out there. How our very own Licypriya Kangujam, a 9yr old girl from Manipur, India, braved every situation and stood her ground for the government to acknowledge her worry about the ongoing deterioration of climate. Her reasoning might have been as simple as wanting to survive on this planet longer and sustain but it was appreciated to such an extent because it was coming from a little child with such a large soul in her.

With this one can see that all a child needs is encouragement and support of people to grow and express themselves. Lastly, there needs to be a rise in the revocation of the stigmatized thought that children are not capable of thinking anything beyond cartoons, chocolates and playground.

Woman like me

Nabamita Sinha

Women are one of the best gifts of nature. They are the first person we ever see after being born, in the role of a Mother. When we hear the word, “Mother” we think of someone we can rely on, someone who feels like home. For many years women have been said to be inside the house and do household chores like cleaning, washing, cooking and raising the children. Though they never complained and find immense pleasure in the little things at home, with the emergence of women empowerment movements, women who were restricted within the



“We Can Do It!”, American World War II wartime poster (Source: Wikipedia)

Working mothers or house wife doesn’t change the fact that there are a lot of roles women had to play in the modern society. Mothers are the pillars of every household. With working mothers, they are now becoming the role models for their children too, especially the girl child, who often aspire to grow up to become like their mothers.

Women also play another important role in the household and that is of the wife. It is said that,” Behind every great man, there is a great woman”. The notion of the perfect wife” priorities on the wife to be fully devoted to her husband and his needs. Women are stepping out of their homes,

walking and working shoulder to shoulder with their male counterpart, they are achieving success on their own terms. They are working side by side with their husbands the balance both financially and marital stays equal. So, whether women are inside the house or outside they are creating a world where every young girl would be proud to say, “I want to be like my mother.”

LGBTQ portrayal in Indian cinemas

Rohini Ghosh

India has come a long way since decriminalizing homosexuality three years ago and stories of the LGBTQ community are surely gaining the limelight in Indian cinema. Ayushman Khurana starrer “Shubh Mangal Zyada Saavdhan” is a recent example of Bollywood’s representation of queer love story. The film deals with the repercussions of being openly gay in Indian society with a slight tinge of humor and comedy. This is not the first time that Bollywood has come out of the closet. However, Bollywood’s portrayal of homosexuals on the big screen is full of stereotypes with little or no understanding of their identity. The term “gay”, often used as an insult simply highlights the deep-rooted homophobia in society. Transgender characters in Indian cinema are either used as a source of comedy or are vilified against like in *Laxmi* (2020). The film is extremely transphobic and problematic.

Few classic and modern films have been able to get the LGBTQ representation right in Bollywood.



Poster of the film “Fire” by Deepa Mehta

(Source: Google)

‘Fire’, a cinematic brilliance, released in 1996, is a story woven around a homosexual relationship between two women. The film was way ahead of its time not only for its queer depiction but also because it portrayed female desire and intimacy. Though it received criticism from the heteronormative society, the film managed to open up space for LGBTQ representation in mainstream cinema. The 2019 film, “Ek Ladki Ko Dekha Toh Aisa Laga” is noteworthy. Ghazal Dhaliwal, a transwoman, penned down the story from her own

experience of belonging to the LGBTQ community.

With the prejudice, discrimination, and stigma against the queer community still prevalent in today’s world, Bollywood needs to change the narrative and stop making a mockery out of their struggles. The LGBTQ community needs to have both on and off-screen representation. Cinema not only liberates one’s thought but also acts as a beacon of hope for the oppressed gays and trans people of the society.

Identity

Anik Bose

From being young to a teenager to an adult, in this transition of life, we often come across with our likes and dislikes, of what we want and what we need, not just to survive but to see us become a personality. We plan out things of what is best for us. But this very life of ours means something more, it involves something deeper than just wondering about how our life is going to turn out. Cultivating ourselves is the true path, where you welcome all circumstances, a path that is unpredictable, a path that is unknown, and let it reveal to you what your potential is. This complex engineered anatomy is meant for greater things, a human can achieve anything of what he or she desires but it reveals its true self only if you accept to identify who you really are.

As every person has two lives, the second one starts when they realize that they have only one. The realization of having just one life makes you rethink how you spend your breath, how you spend your time on building a better version of yourself. Finding oneself is a process of self-evolving and a step closer to freedom and reveal one’s true identity.

Journey of women from reel to real

Rupsha Putatunda

“For we women are not only the deities of household fire, but the flame of the soul itself” – Rabindranath Tagore.

At a time and age, when women were still seen as mere ornaments decorating a man’s life, great men like Rabindranath Tagore and Satyajit Ray dared to be different. Tagore and Ray did not rally for women rights, organize morchas or help pass bills in their favor. Their process was more peaceful and deliberate in nature. Their choice of weapon was art and literature. The stories yarned by Tagore and the tales brought to life by Ray offered a fresh perspective in a world that refused to look beyond the traditional.

Tagore birthed bold characters like Charulata and Binodini, who never shied away from pursuing their romantic interests or sexual desires. Mrinmoyee – an animated, loud and “tomboyish”

girl; Mrinal – a progressive woman who fights for her freedom were all his brainchild, who denied the imposed patriarchal norms at all steps. They were strong,



The freedom to be. A still from Satyajit Ray’s *Mahanagar*. (Source: Amazon.in)

independent and unapologetically themselves. Satyajit Ray’s films portrayed women like the ever-inquisitive Durga in *Pathar*

Panchali or working wife Arati in *Mahanagar*, who broke free of their subservient roles to become themselves.

Art and literature may come under the guise of entertainment but their effects are profound and long-lasting. Tagore and Ray’s feminist women were revolutionary in nature, who fought to have their voices heard above the din of a regressive society. The mere existence albeit fictional of such brave-hearted female characters has enlightened the lives of many Indian women. They have time and again been influenced by the resiliency, spirit and bravado of these fictitious individuals. Ray’s films are evergreen and his narrative never failed to inspire the modern woman to even this day. In more ways than one, Rabindranath Tagore and Satyajit Ray have been the pallbearers of modern feminism across the nation.

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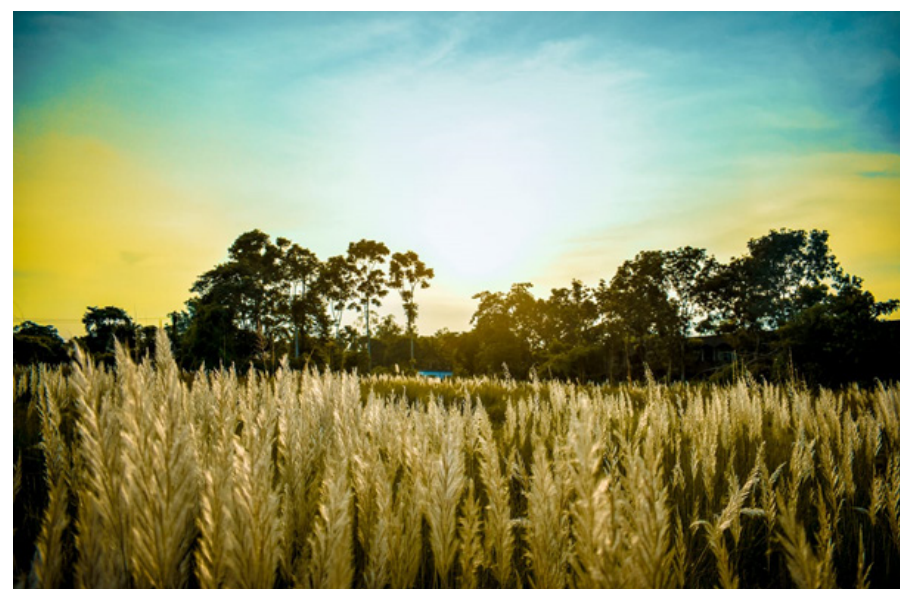
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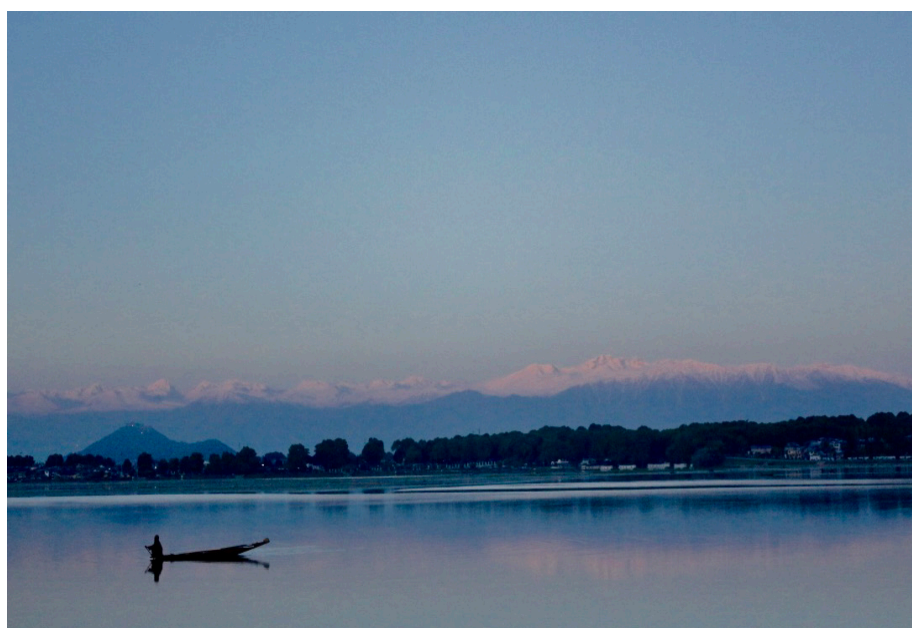
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