**Inside the newsletter:**

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**Wish you all happy 2018!**

“The world of Humanity is possessed of two wings: the male and the female. So long as these two wings are not equivalent in strength, the bird will not fly.” - *Abdul L Baha.*

Generally it is seen that the bird is not able to fly as the female wing is made weaker by the other wing and the world breaks down. Women have been subjected to one or other form of suppression the world over. No doubt India slipped 21 places on the World Economic Forum’s Global Gender Gap index to 108, behind neighboring China and Bangladesh. The Global Gender Gap index is a grim reminder of the condition of women in India and should be a wake up call for us that we still have a long way to go.

Even 2017 has been a year full of violence against women. Girls at IIT Kanpur campus were harassed on 27 September 2017, a girl in Churu (Rajasthan) was kidnapped and raped repeatedly, hackathons are closed to women, even film actresses all over the world are subjected to sexual violence. Women feel dishonored, discriminated and scarred. Main reason is the patriarchal and chauvinistic attitude of men.

But the picture is not all that dismal also. According to Merriam Webster dictionary ‘Feminism’ is the ‘word of the year’. It got impetus specially after the Women’s March on January 21, 2017 in Washington DC and the # Me Too campaign. No doubt that Time magazine picked the # Me Too ‘Silence Breakers’ as the Person of the Year. On the national front the 5C judgements regarding the entry of women at Sabarimala Temple and the scrapping of ‘triple talaq’ are a welcome move in this direction.

But to root out the problem and to raise India’s rank in Global Gender Gap index we need to end the disparity between men and women. For this we need strict and stringent laws for perpetrators of violence and rapists. Moreover, women should be made strong and courageous. Women should realize that they are respectable, able, intelligent, strong and competent. Be bold for change ladies. Let not your story become The Handmaid’s Tale but let it be the story of a Wonder woman with ‘wonderful and strong wings’. So let us # Press for Progress on all fronts.
Life Skills among Girls

The literacy rate of India as per 2011 census is 74.04%, which has improved by 9.21% since 2001 when literacy rate of India was 65.46%. However, the girl’s drop out is one of the greatest concerns in the Indian school education sector especially in educationally backward states and districts. Girls belonging to a socially disadvantaged section or living in remote rural areas or urban slums are more likely to drop out of school. Failure to complete high school not only produces a negative outcome for the girls but also widens the existing social and economic inequalities. As compared to 18.17% increase in the overall enrolment of boys, the enrolment percentage of girls increased by 40.52% during the decade. The corresponding growth surely reflects the changed mindset of male-dominated Indian social setup towards the girl child. Even, the average annual dropout percentage of girls remained better to that of boys, as the girls recorded a corresponding decline in their dropout percentage by 3.53%, while as in case of boys the dropout percentage declined by 2.54% annually. Despite all these positives, the discouraging part is that compared to 57.39% boys, 60.39% girls dropout by or before reaching the upper primary level as against 78.40% boys, 81.72% girls dropout by or before reaching the secondary level.

It has been proved by the interventions of several civil society organizations working on child rights and education that life skills education provides numerous benefits to the quality of life of school going girls. If girls are provided with skills that determine valued behavior and include reflective skills such as problem-solving and critical thinking, personal skills such as self-awareness, and interpersonal skills, the likelihood of their drop out is less. Life skills are those psycho-social skills which strengthen individuals themselves to deal with the demands of life. The World Health Organization (1997) defines life skills as “abilities for adaptive and positive behavior that enable individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life”. Life skills education is an effective tool to reduce girls’ dropout rate in educationally backward districts of India. IIIHMR has recently assessed life skills among girls of grade 6 in 48 schools of Uttarakhand, Chattisgarh and Delhi. The purpose of the study was to measure a range of life skills among girls of grade six from participant schools of Girls Education Programme of Room to Read and non-participant schools. The Life Skills Assessment also intended to contribute to Room to Read ability to measure progress towards developing girls’ life skills and improve the programme for long-term outcomes.

The results represent that there is a considerable number of girls (more than 50%) who need strengthening of their attitude and skills especially in the areas of critical thinking/decision making in adverse situations. Also, there is a substantial number of girls (almost 40%) who find it difficult to cope with the big difficulties and keep working on the task. An ability to remember and expression of feelings was a dimension which was found lacking in almost all the girls. Likewise, almost 60% girls have shown understanding other’s feelings but did not know how to provide an emotional support to others. When it comes to coping with stress/anger/nervousness, almost 40% found it difficult to deal with these situations. Around 40% said that they do not feel confident talking in front of a group. Regarding relationship with their friends and adults in their life, 40% said that they could not share their problem with their friends and 70% cannot talk with an adult about their marriage. Also, a higher percentage of girls had low understanding and awareness about menstrual health and hygiene.
World-wide women experience a higher burden of visual impairments than men, which increases with age. Apart from influencing the visual impairment risks directly, gender dynamics also influence health status via these social determinants of health. A study conducted in Indian Sunderbans, West Bengal, uses an intersectionality approach to explore how gender cross cuts with other social determinants of health, like age, poverty, education and risky behaviours, to influence the prevalence of visual impairments among women and men 50 years and above. Following mixed method approach, interviews with 442 visually impaired individuals, 24 in-depth interviews with elderly individuals aged 50 years and above were conducted. In the study region, compared to elderly men, women were more likely to develop eye problems. However, in comparison to old women, old men were less likely to develop eye problem. In addition to these two factors, other social determinants like religion, family type, perceived poverty status, employment and food habit came out as significant predictors for developing visual impairments. In terms of intersectionality factors, poor men were found less likely, whereas non-poor women were more likely to develop eye problem. This implies that just being non-poor does not ensure better eye health until and unless gender factors are not considered. Men again use their better education to prevent eye health, while women actually fail to do so. In case of gender and risky behaviour, compared to women, men with or without risky behaviour were less likely to develop eye problem. In spite of lesser number of women with risky behaviours found, this result reports existence of gender dynamics that need further exploration. The study not only points out the strong gender bias in prevalence of visual impairment, but also succinctly brings out further vulnerability of women in coexisting disadvantages, poverty, illiteracy and risky behaviour. Lower access to eye health care associated with significant gender bias within the patriarchal society pushes women in the trap of vulnerability and hence calls for immediate policy orientation towards better provisioning in a typical developing country.

**Gender in Research**

Gender in research requires actions related both to the participation of women in research and addressing the gender dimension of research (both women's and men's realities).

Addressing the gender dimension of research implies that gender is considered a key analytical and explanatory variable in research. If relevant gender issues are missed or poorly addressed, research results will be partial and potentially biased. Gender can thus be an important factor in research excellence. To support this process, it is also essential to devote research resources to specific gender research. Key steps are:

- Formulate gender-responsive research question
- Choose a gender-sensitive methodology
- Create a gender-sensitive team and collect gender-sensitive data
- Value women's and men's work equally
- Analyze data using gender-sensitive indicators and use gender impartial language
Gender and Development – Teaching Module for Rural Management Students
Nutan Jain and Ratna

Under the School of Development Studies at IIHM University, the first and second year MBA students were taught the module “Gender and Development” during August 07–18, 2017 and June 19 – 30, 2017 respectively. The students were exposed to the gender-focused organizations like Gender Cell, Rajasthan State Commission for Women, One Stop Crisis Centre, and Mahila Police Thana.

Session on Rights Based Approach to Family Planning in International Training Program on Family Planning and Reproductive Health Commodity Security
Nutan Jain

UNFPA Asia Pacific Regional Office identified IIHM to have the potential to act as a Regional Training Centre for capacity building in Reproductive Health Commodity Security and Family Planning (RHCS/FP). In continuation this year also, a session on “rights-based approach to family planning” was allocated more time and two sessions were conducted on October 24, 2017 with the participants of various countries.

Signature Campaign for Gender Equality at IIHM University by Gender Champions
Gender Champions

On the occasion of Foundation day of IIHM, the Gender Champions put a question before the staff, “Are you prepared to embrace this new way of thinking and doing work? If so, sign the Gender Equality Pledge and show commitment to ensuring equal opportunity for all. We pledge to ensure that all male and female employees, students and workers on campus will be afforded equal opportunities, regardless of their sex, gender, marital status or pregnancy.” The Chairman, the President and the small IIHM family signed the pledge.

A total of 55.2 per cent women (78.8 per cent urban and 47.9 per cent rural), aged between 15-24 years, use hygienic methods of protection during their menstrual period.
Gender-sensitization of the Staff at Transcorp International

Transcorp International observed the International Women’s Day 2017 by organizing gender sensitization workshop at its campus. Dr Nutan Jain facilitated half-a day interactive session using various methods of involving the participants and making it interesting. At the end of the session, the participants signed the signature wall paper to show their commitment towards girls and women’s rights and empowerment.

On International Women’s Day 2017, the staff members celebrated womanhood. The President reflected on feminism and why people should be feminist. He stressed upon the importance of gender equality and its value over culture. He strongly appealed for a fresh perspective, different approach, and different mindset to be brought in addressing gender equality in this century. Actually, structural inequality manifests in our day-to-day life, e.g. gender pay-gap, which exists everywhere, even in sports world and the fact that Serena Williams started getting paid equally as Roger Federer only in last 2-3 years.

Percentage of men age 15-49 who consider that a husband has the right to “get angry and reprimand her” (17.7%); “refuse to give her financial support” (10.6%); “use force to have sex” (9.2%); “have sex with another woman” (9%) when a woman refuses to have sex with him when he wants her to (NFHS, 2015-16 India)
Harmful Superstitious Beliefs

Vidya Bhushan Tripathi

According to the 2015 National Crimes Record Bureau report, 2,257 witchcraft murders have taken place across India from 2000 to 2013. Witchcraft - a peculiar form of female victimization leading to extreme psychological problems.

Be Aware of Power Structure

"Witch" means a woman, locally known as "Dayan", "Dakan", "Dakin" or otherwise, who has been identified by any person or persons believing her to be in possession of, or as having, any evil power for causing any harm to any person or property;

"Witch craft" means use of supernatural or magical power with evil intention to call up spirit or cast spell or discover the whereabouts of stolen goods and includes such other similar practices which are known as "Tona-Totaka", "Tantra-Mantra", "Jadu-Tona", "Jhad-Phunk" or the like;

"Witch doctor" means a person (in majority of cases MEN) who is locally known as "Gunia", "Ojha", "Tantrik" and claims that he has supernatural or magical power to control or cure a witch or performs any ritual purportedly to free a woman from evil spirit.
"We wish they could show us when they are lonely or in the darkness, the astonishing light of their own being." Some phrases are so captivating and so beautiful that they directly reach to the ventricles of our heart. "We wish they could show us their wings, the light within themselves, the demons they have"... But wait... Who are they?? Whom are we addressing? They are the “women of our century, girls of our generation, the girl power of India” How amazing it is to watch the flame of their soul rising every second!! The increment in the urge of achieving their dreams... wow, we are carving a modern India and hopefully we'll be reaching on the highest cliff... a cliff higher than Kanchenjunga, in fact a cliff higher then Mount Everest??! Do we have a cliff higher than Mount Everest?? No.....then are we talking about a practically impossible thing?? ... Maybe. Even the smoothest roads have the speed breakers as a part of it. So, we are humans after all and we do have some barriers. And if we are girls, the number of barriers is more. The number of endangered girls is more than the number of endangered species of India. The rising crime petrol seasons are a proof to it. The increasing level of crime is directly proportional to the extra precautionary concern of a family. Therefore, they are not allowed to go out to a different city for pursuing their dream life. They are like birds and so migration is a part of their life in order to have a better living, but they are restricted because they are “girls”. Hence all their dreams come to an end. A full stop to them. "We care for you, we are concerned about you” said the dear family. "I know but this’ll never bring the same opportunity for me, or for my dreams” numerous of feminine hearts must have whispered this under their breath.

But we do have examples of those who have proved themselves and have turned their barriers into lessons. They were those who have realized their true self, those who have realized what is it to be modernized.

Modern means wearing fine short apparel with the freedom of being a part of all those drinks and hookah bars... Modern means coming home late at night or being well trained in making those smokey eyes and the smokey rings as well or going against your parents and doing whatever you want to do because that's what makes you classy and presentable in the modern Indian society.

I think... modernization is not an act... it is a state of mind. Being modern is achieving your dreams with your values intact. Because you are known for your values... your values are your treasure. Achievers are those who have already realized their ability of succeeding in their life. They are those who have got their own wings.

**WHY I AM NOT A FEMINIST: A FEMINIST MANIFESTO BY JESSA CRISPIN**

Why I Am Not A Feminist is a radical, fearless call for revolution. It accuses the feminist movement of obliviousness, irrelevance, and cowardice—and demands nothing less than the total dismantling of a system of oppression.

The more money we have, the more we are able to buy our way out of patriarchy. The notion that equality is about living the way men live is not radical – we have to reset the values and dismantle the whole shebang.

Are you a feminist? Do you believe women are human beings and that they deserve to be treated as such? That women deserve all the same rights and liberties bestowed upon men? If so, then you are a feminist... or so the feminists keep insisting.
Talaq Talaq Talaq: A Girl’s Perspective

Huzefa Wahid
MBA-HM

Triple talaq or talaq-e-biddat, is an instant divorce being practiced among some of the followers of Islam religion to break a marriage by simply pronouncing the word ‘talaq’ three times by the husband. The use of triple talaq has always been a subject of controversy and debate in India. It faced opposition from Muslim women and some of them filed a public interest litigation (PIL) in the Supreme Court against the practice. The petitioners asked for Section 2 of the Muslim Personal Law (Shariat) Application Act 1937, to be scrapped, describing it as being against Article 14 of the Constitution i.e. equality before law. After much discussion across the country, a multi-faith bench heard the controversial case in 2017 and held that it was unconstitutional, by barring the practice by 3-2 majority.

I personally believe that triple talaq was a wrong practice since it not even leaves a woman emotionally weak but also clueless as to which direction to move further in life. It did not take into account the intricacies of human nature governed by sudden emotional outbursts in the heat of the moment. This practice was not only a chauvinistic and paternalistic one but it also infringes the Right to Equality (Article 14).

Also, it is gender discrimination as basic and human rights can not be exploited on the basis of gender. Muslim women are willing to speak out against this gender injustice and find ways to challenge structures of power and authority within the community and at the state level.

Women who were often underestimated and disempowered are now perfectly articulating and fighting for their right to be an equal citizen. Thus, their multifaceted efforts have started serious debates on social reform and gender justice within the community.

How women brought attention to the issue, which was a very wrong custom being practiced since ages, is highly commendable and inspiring for the world.

Triple Talaq in Bangladesh

Dr. Mahbub Hossain
JHSPH and IIHMR MPH Student, Cohort 4

A 2004 report by the Center for Reproductive Rights discussed marriage and divorce laws in Bangladesh. This states that “there are several variants of divorce that are technically recognized in Sharia. These include talaq (unilateral action by the husband), mubarat (mutual consent) and khula (at the initiation of the wife, provided that she agrees to forgo her financial rights, such as her dower).” The report states that in Bangladesh “the Muslim Family Laws Ordinance regulates the procedure for seeking a divorce. Under the ordinance, men may seek divorce by pronouncing talaq and giving written notice to the chairman of the union parishad or other appointed official and a copy to his wife. The chairman is then bound to constitute an arbitration council charged with the task of attempting reconciliation between the parties. If such efforts fail, divorce is generally effective after iddat – a three month period that must pass before the divorce becomes effective – or, if the wife is pregnant at the time of talaq, at the end of her pregnancy, whichever occurs later”

Source: https://www.justice.gov/sites/default/files/eoir/legacy/2013/06/11/muslim%20divorce.pdf
Dr. Zubeda Hasan (Albeligal)
MBA-HM

Ends everything? May be, Yes for some but for some it can be a beginning.....
The historic judgement of supreme court on 22.08.2017 brought a revolutionary change in the lives of many women. The instant talaq system, which was being practiced despite of holding no valid place in Islam, got nullified. I appreciate the efforts of the five women namely Shayra Bano, Gulshan Parween, Aafreen Rehman, Ishrat Jahan and Atiya Sabri who fought for the women’s rights and justice.

Entire India hailed the decision whole heartedly. Some even tried to take it as a political issue. How much I applaud the decision, I apologize too to differ in opinion, I would like to bring your attention on the other side of the story. I agree that instant talaq was devastating but what’s more perplexing is, “can anyone force a man to stay in a relationship where he doesn’t want to? Is the talaq only about husband and wife, what happens to the children of such broken marriages”. A man who denies to take care of his own kids, I guess it’s better for the woman to free herself from cage of such marriage and do it on her own with authority, self-respect, without wasting a single second further on fake hopes.

For a woman like me, who too received messages and phone calls of talaq, I was glad that instant talaq was making it easier to have clarity in my life. As the practise wasn’t approved even before supreme court’s judgement, it still didn’t help in my case. To state the fact, a minimum of 90 days is considered before dissolving marriage Islamically. We all are well aware of the women cell which helps in cases of dowry, domestic violence and other chaos. But I have seen women fighting for their rights and ultimately tearing off the official papers on the table there because the only thing which changed after filing F.I.R, was the date, month and year but no assistance which they were seeking for. The men didn’t turn up on the dates issued by the women cell incharge, and dates kept postponing. Weeks, months, years passed, files closed. But not the torments.

I believe we need a change. A change which ensures lesser number of days being spent to fight these cases, to lessen the physical, psychological, financial stress on either parties (men and women). Let their be one law for divorces of any religion. That would be the day of real celebration. That day would be the one to tell the tale of truth triumphing.

Talaq Talaq Talaq: Men's Perspective
Danish Ahmad

I believe gender equality and justice is one of the fundamental human right issues that should be a matter of concern for men as well as women. Before getting into the details, I would like to mention that in Holy Quran, nowhere mentioned the instant triple talaq. However, talaq with certain procedure still prevails and I firmly believe in it. Triple talaq is the practice under which a Muslim man can divorce his wife by simply saying “talaq” three times. It is prevalent among Indian Muslim community majority of whom follow the Hanafi Islamic school of law. This method of divorce is not prevalent among Muslims over the world, the same number of other Islamic schools of thought lean toward the divorce procedure to be conceded, as a rule over a time of three months.
Triple talaq has already been banned in more than 22 Islamic countries. Ignorance and misquotation of the Quranic verses by the Indian clerics try to justify instant triple talaq. It should be condemned by the rational Muslims. However, there is no Quranic verse which support instant triple talaq, and therefore, the decision has purely given the safeguard to the women while maintaining the equality and justice to the women of Muslim community.

Therefore, I am of the view that the honorable supreme court has given very important and unprecedented judgment considering the sensitivity of the issue, whereas Muslim community needs to be liberated about the actual saying of the verses of Quran in the matter.

#Me Too Campaign

Piyusha Majumdar

I am no bird; and no net ensnares me: I am a free human being with an independent will – Charlotte Bronte

In the month of Halloween of this year, social media platforms like face book and twitter have been flooded with #me too messages which is an awareness campaign that talks about the horrendous experiences of women across the globe who faced sexual harassment at any point of their life but never get a chance to speak about this with their near and dear ones.

At least, we should be relieved, and all credit goes to age of social media that something has come up that encourages women to talk about sexual harassment experiences publicly. The magnitude of campaign can be ascertained by the data given by Wikipedia that # Me Too phrase has been used more than 200,000 times and tweeted more than 500,000 times in October 2015 and 2016. On facebook the hashtag has been used by 4.7 million people in 12 million posts during the first 24 hours. Messages are flooded with emotional outpours and traumatic details that are still fresh in the minds of victims.

But, if we talk about Indian context, I wonder about those helpless women/girls who regularly face sexual misconduct/harassment/ abuse but unable to say this two-word phrase. The reason being either they do not have access to digital world or internet or social media or they are not aware of the fine line between normal conduct and harassment. How can they say and spread the message to the world “Me too # Me Always# Me Silent#?

They remain silent and bear the atrocities without being able to share it with anyone. #Me too initiative would become successful only when each women /girl/mother/sister/daughter of our country could stand up and shout with their heart out # Me too

I think we need to find ways, create opportunities, avenues and sensitize the silent voices who have all the right to be heard.