

as per these set standards or are affected by some form of disability? Are they not beautiful in their own respect? Are they not capable humans? Are they not successful humans, professionally as well as at home? Are they not good, caring mothers and efficient wives? Why are they made to feel

wanting as humans by these closed minds? Why such narrow conclusions on the 'perfect' woman? What is needed to shape up the closed mind of man, to break him from his shackled notions of so called 'perfection'?

## 'On the Women's Day'

By Ms. Preeti Monga

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In the wake of 'International Day of the Woman', follow remarks like "I wish there was a day for men too!" or "You women are always waging war against men" and so often many of the opposite sex go to the extent of accusing women of wanting to adopt a superior role in the society.

These remarks are completely uncharitable. This kind of talk only lets us in on a feeling of insecurity which most men nurture deep under the He-Man front portrayed and by them and thus wish to ridicule women in every possible way.

As I see it, there is no need for men to feel threatened. On the other hand, if they stop for a moment setting aside their defensive attitude, the need for having a day marked for women would not arise. As per data, half of the world's population consists of women. By giving equal rights and opportunities to women obviously the positive growth and potential will double. Both men and women will strive towards the betterment of the planet with united strength. At present most of us, the women, are wasting this precious resource in trying to get basic human rights and most men

are unnecessarily pressuring themselves to keep women a step behind.

Discrimination against women has become a second nature with men. It is normal to pull a long face when your first born is a girl. "Never mind, next time we will have a boy", reassure people around. The family plunges into mourning. Urges to try again begin even before the new born is a day old. And now with technology providing us with insight into the sex of the foetus it has become extremely simple to get rid of the sorrow that follows a female child's birth. One just gets rid of the helpless little girl before she can see the light of day. She is mother, she is sister, she is wife and then she is daughter. Can you see what we are doing? Destroying all these. Ultimately killing the human race altogether.

I am sure, we are all aware of the status of women and girls in our society. We can not deny this, as we all are a part of it. I concede that things are trying to improve bit by bit. With more and more women being educated and with a large number of social groups coming out and working towards the upliftment of women, the

gloom is getting lighter. And yet, here I would like to draw your attention to a segment of women who have been completely overlooked and left out. We are women alright, but with added disadvantages. We are the DISABLED WOMEN.

We have all the discriminations against us that women have and also suffer from the disadvantages of being disabled. We are expected to be privileged if our families don't do away with us. We are supposed to be grateful for getting two meals a day, a roof over our heads and a few clothes to cover us. Those of us who are enjoying these above mentioned privileges should consider ourselves the pampered lot. "What more do you want?" is the general comment. But do you think that is all that is to living?

Here let me give you a small glimpse into the horrors that normally are a part of a disabled females' life. I worked as a social worker at a school for the blind, and this is what a little girl of about 12 years related from her own PAST;

"I have two brothers and I am the only sister" she said. "I used to sit in one corner of a room all the time. My mother used to come sometimes and used to give me something to eat but that too when I had cried for a long long time. When ever I wanted to answer a call of nature, I had been taught to crawl to the other corner of the same room and use that corner as my toilet. Then one day both my brothers vanished from home", she continued, "Madam then brought me here."

I asked her if she was happy here? She smiled and danced about me and said a big yes. "I think I would have died at home, NOW I know there is so much that I can do. So what if I can not see? I am learning to read and write and also make things with

my hands. At least I will be able to earn some thing and feed myself and not have to cry for hours before I get a dried up bit of chapatti."

The painful part of the story lies in the fact that the two brothers of this little girl were also blind, and they had been sent to school. The school authorities then discovered that a blind sister also existed and sent a person to fetch her. When questioned , the parents revealed that they did not feel the need to waste effort and time on taking their daughter to school. "She is useless anyway," they said, "first of all she is a girl and on top of that she is blind, we can never marry her off, she is going to remain a liability always, her father and her brothers will feed her enough to keep her alive as long as she lives, so why bother?"

This is just one incident. One can go on for ever with cases of this kind. There are ten schools for the blind in Delhi and out of which only one and a half cater to girls. Why? This has to change. As mentioned earlier, things are beginning to show improvement, with women coming out. Why then should the issue of disabled women be completely over looked? No, I am not complaining. I am also going to try and answer my own question.

The reason that women became aware was that a few generations back girls began to get educated. Once educated they stepped out of their homes and went to earn a living. As they got economically independent and educated they realised how low had been the status of women. They got into social groups and the uphill climb to improve the situation began. Going was more than tough, but the gloom was lighter. Unfortunately disabled women were not taken into account. May be because these women's groups took it for granted that whatever gains the women got would

obviously go to the disabled women too-as we are women too! Or may be, they too didnot think it necessary that a disabled woman was worth pulling along. I don't know which of the above is true but the plight of disabled women remains sordid.

Today a handful of disabled women have realised the urgent need to be given to at least basic human rights. So we disabled women have formed a Committee of Blind Women which would look into this long overlooked issue for ourselves. The Committee is chaired by Mrs. Anuradha Mohit of the National Association for the Blind , New Delhi. Our first and foremost wish is to forge alliance with the already

existing women's groups. To reinforce the same members, this newly formed group participated in a group at the Ajmal Khan Park on the 8th of March. Girls and women were there in full steam with white canes and on wheel chairs. This in itself is a sure sign that we are women first and disabled later. We support all the issue concerning women and also urge that the added concerns of our being disabled women are taken into consideration. We should be included in all activities and programmes by the concerned persons. We, disabled women would appreciate cooperation and are more than willing to support the entire issue concerning women.

## The Five Suppression Techniques

by Ms. Kicki Nordstrom

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A common way to discriminate against certain groups is to use various suppression techniques to minimize the value of the group concerned. The following description of "the five suppression techniques" is intended to enable women to overcome at least five common suppression strategies. These suppression strategies are certainly not just used against women but also in general terms, against persons with disabilities.

These strategies are:

1. Making you invisible
2. Expose you to ridicule
3. Withholding information
4. Damn if you do and damn if you don't
5. Heaping blame and putting to shame

### 1. MAKING YOU INVISIBLE

This occurs when women are forgotten, overlooked or ignored. It robs them of their identity and serves to remind them that they are inferior, insignificant and have no influence. Women are not seen, heard or notified.

#### Actions to be taken:

- Learn about women's history, we have indeed existed long!
- Learn meeting techniques.
- Support and praise your fellow-sisters, in both small groups and bigger assemblies.
- Prepare yourselves before a meeting, make-up your decisions beforehand and