



ISSUE 002 | AUGUST 2025

THE *Gal sight* MAGAZINE

EVERYTHING FROM FEMINIST WIT TO GRIT.

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RABARI— P. 06*

*FEMISIST BINGO
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EDITORS

As I reflect on this issue of *The Galsight*— A feminist magazine, I keep falling back on words famously quoted by Mark Twain, “Continuous improvement is better than delayed perfection.” Not only do I wholeheartedly agree with this, but I also think this quote perfectly captures the essence of the magazine, more specifically, this issue.

I have always been a weary perfectionist, turning every simple hobby into a goal and unsuccessfully striving to meet my own skyscraping standards. With *The Galsight*, the vision was to reflect growth and not perfection. So, here's presenting, to our wonderful readers, an evolved imagination of the same feminist flame, Issue 002. We have continued with all the segments from Issue 001, with an added coat of creativity and honesty, along with a few new segments that I will introduce to you briefly. *@thegalgalala*

Issue 002 brings you personal insights, a facet without which, feminism is a shell of a movement. Stories of courage, evolution, and resilience from fellow feminists and women are what will accelerate and enliven us to further ourselves as women and queer individuals, and as activists within the movement. Keeping this in mind, we have introduced the following segments in this issue— *SHEvolution*, *Me v/s She*, *She.E.O Spotlight*, *VotHer Corner* and *Herbatim*. From personal to political, these are stories you don't want to miss! They add a certain literary and socio-political depth to our feminist narratives, pushing our feminist understandings beyond popularly permitted barriers. Together, they add to a holistic feminist reading experience, and I hope you thoroughly enjoy all of them!

And remember, leisure is feminist too. So we have not forgotten to feature a game, a crossword, a movie recommendation and cartoons for your lazier days. Here's to casual, laid-back feminism! Overall, expect equal parts inspiration, information, politics, activism, entertainment and cognisance in this issue, which we so fondly concocted over the past few months.

A huge shoutout to our regular contributors; your consistent engagement with the magazine is a testimony to your genuine feminist aspirations. We are also immensely grateful to our newest contributors, without whom our team and story would be bitty and unfinished.

Wishing all of you an exhilarating read ahead!

Joono
Editor-in-chief
The Galsight Magazine

glosshery

Mannat Kaur

ANDROCENTRISM (n.)

(an-droh-SEN-tri-zuhm)

Androcentrism refers to the tendency to make the male gender or masculinity the social norm, influencing how people view themselves, other people, and the world. The term is derived from the Greek terms *andros* (man) and *kentron* (centre), which means putting male experiences, values, and perceptions at the centre of culture, society, and intellectual life. Charlotte Perkins Gilman first proposed it in her 1911 book, *Our Androcentric Culture or The Man-Made World*, in which the idea chastises how male viewpoints permeate our Weltanschauung, suppressing the voice of women. Androcentrism originated with ancient Greece, where male philosophers Plato & Aristotle established systems of knowledge. Enlightenment thinkers like Rousseau and Kant cemented this bias with the insertion of men as heroes of reason and women as personifications of emotion and irrationality.

CISNORMATIVITY (n.)

(sis-nor-muh-TIV-i-tee)

Cisnormativity is the presumption that everyone is cisgender, which means that their gender identity matches the sex they were assigned at birth. It was first coined in a 2009 paper in the Journal of the Association of Nurses in AIDS Care, which described it as "the assumption that everyone is cissexual."

Cisnormativity is described by The SAGE Encyclopedia of Trans Studies as an expression of the idea that society is expected to align with binary gender allocation. In practice, this can lead to transgender individuals being excluded from gendered spaces, misgendered in official documentation, or denied appropriate medical care. It is evident in day-to-day speech, legal contracts, educational policy, and health care procedures, frequently resulting in erasure, pathologisation, & discrimination against trans people. Schools might be enforcing binary gender roles, for example, and medical forms failing to account for non-cis identities, leading to rampant systemic exclusion and unequal treatment.

From Carrying Water to Carrying a Legacy: The Rise of Pabiben Rabari

In the age of fast fashion, where speed and profit often overshadow ethics and sustainability, it becomes important to ask—who makes our clothes, and at what cost? The story of Pabiben Rabari is not only inspiring but deeply revealing of the quiet revolutions taking place in rural India. Pabiben is an unconventional artisan from the Kutch region of Gujarat. She has overcome the restrictions imposed on her due to the intersecting identities of being tribal, a woman, and having low educational qualifications. She changed her cultural legacy rather than merely preserving it. She is the mind behind the unique Hari Jari style, and by launching her own brand 'Pabiben.com', she carved out a space where tradition meets innovation and where arts, empowerment and entrepreneurship thrive together. Her work now travels all over the world and helps dozens of women. Pabiben's story challenges us to reconsider what real development looks like a society that frequently ignores the hands that create the masterpiece.

Background & Personal Story

The stories of change often begin in the most ordinary of places—with a bucket of water, a quiet struggle, or a childhood responsibility. For Pabiben, it began by helping her mother carry water from the village well, earning just a rupee for the task. That single coin was more than just money. It was her first experience of labour, dignity, and contribution. She was only five when her father passed away. As the eldest daughter,

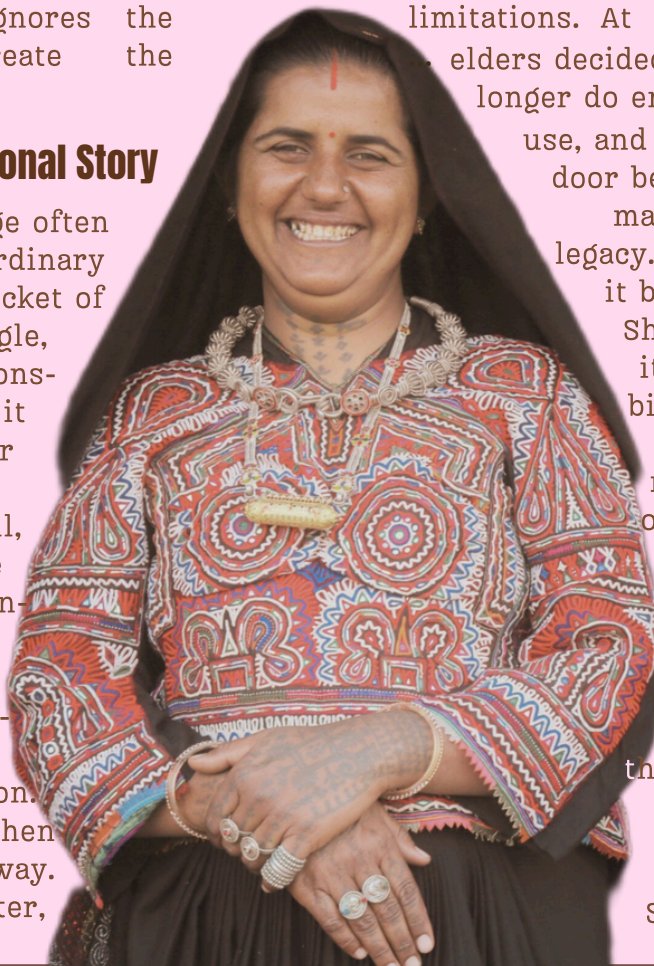
she watched her mother shoulder the entire weight of the household. School ended for Pabiben after the fourth standard, but her desire to live differently never faded. In an interview with The Better India, she said, "*Mujhe pata tha ki main apne liye kaise zindagi chahti hoon, ek aisi zindagi jahan main azaad hoon aur apne pairon par khadi hoon.*" (I knew the life I wanted for myself. A life where I am free and firmly standing on my own feet). These weren't just words. They showed her unwavering strength and the silent promise she made to herself to rise above her struggles and build something of her own.

@thegalgalala

Pabiben was born and brought up in the Rabari community, where embroidery was their lineage and was passed down from one generation to another. However, there were several limitations. At one point, the village elders decided that women could no longer do embroidery for personal use, and it felt like yet another door being closed on her. For many, it was the end of a legacy. For Pabiben, however, it became a turning point. She reimagined the craft itself, which led to the birth of Hari Jari, a new machine-based style rooted in tradition, yet open to transformation.

Journey of Pabiben.com and Hari Jari

Pabiben.com didn't start with her using sewing machines. But through it, she saw a ray of hope. What began as hardship turned into a transformative vision. She gave a desi twist to



From Carrying Water to Carrying a Legacy: The Rise of Pabiben Rabari

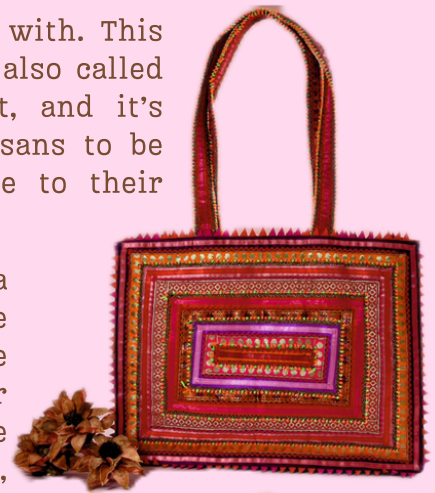
the traditional Rabari embroidery she had grown up with. This new desi style later became known as Hari Jari. It is also called “Bijli” work (electric-style) because she initiated it, and it’s faster than traditional embroidery, enabling the artisans to be more efficient in manufacturing, while staying true to their traditions.

With this method, she made her very first product—a colourful, handcrafted bag adorned with the unique embroidery she invented. Earlier, she didn’t realise that this bag would become a source of change in her life and simultaneously touch the lives of many more women in her village. The bag, known as the Pabi Bag, caught the attention of visitors and tourists. People were excited to see the combination of modernity and traditional touch in her patterns. It was not just the piece of cloth- it was their determination that turned into empowerment, showcasing the beauty of their rich culture, people and their identity. *thegalgala*

However, selling bags wasn't the only thing that made Pabiben successful. She realised that the actual power of her job rested in sharing possibilities with others. She established an artisan club in her town in 1998 to give other women a means of making money using their own abilities and hands. This marked a sea change. Women who had long been bound to their houses were now contributing to their families, standing on their feet, and feeling seen.

Her influence increased along with her business. The organisation now consists of over 60 women who are working to improve their own futures while simultaneously preserving their culture. They are not merely craftspeople. They were seen as role models, primary earners, and at the same time, they had the autonomy to make their own decisions and have a voice of their own.

Pabiben has played a significant role in the revival and modernisation of traditional Rabari embroidery throughout this period. She has created something wholly original while remaining loyal to its origins. Her work now includes bags, garments, and home decor that are loved not just in India but around the world. Her craft rises from local, and extends to global. Today her company’s turnover is ₹20 lakhs, but she still remembers the time when she earned just one rupee per day.



Product images from pabiben.com.



pabiben.com

From Carrying Water to Carrying a Legacy: The Rise of Pabiben Rabari

Impact

When we look at the impact Pabiben has created, it can be understood through three key lenses-

Image sources hyperlinked.



Social Impact: Pabiben questioned societal norms from a young age. When local elders imposed restrictions on traditional needlework techniques, she created a new embroidered style. Many other women were motivated to follow their own paths by her resolve to establish their own identities and become financially independent.

Economic Impact: She provided a stable income and financial independence to other women in her village by opening doors to employment for them. Her designs have brought pride to India on a global scale and are fierce rivals to international brands, many of which are infamous for stealing styles, abusing labour and damaging the environment. *@thegalgala*



Cultural Impact: From a decolonial perspective, she chose to unapologetically portray her roots and culture, instead of glorifying and copying global brands and trends that are rooted in the coloniser's reality.

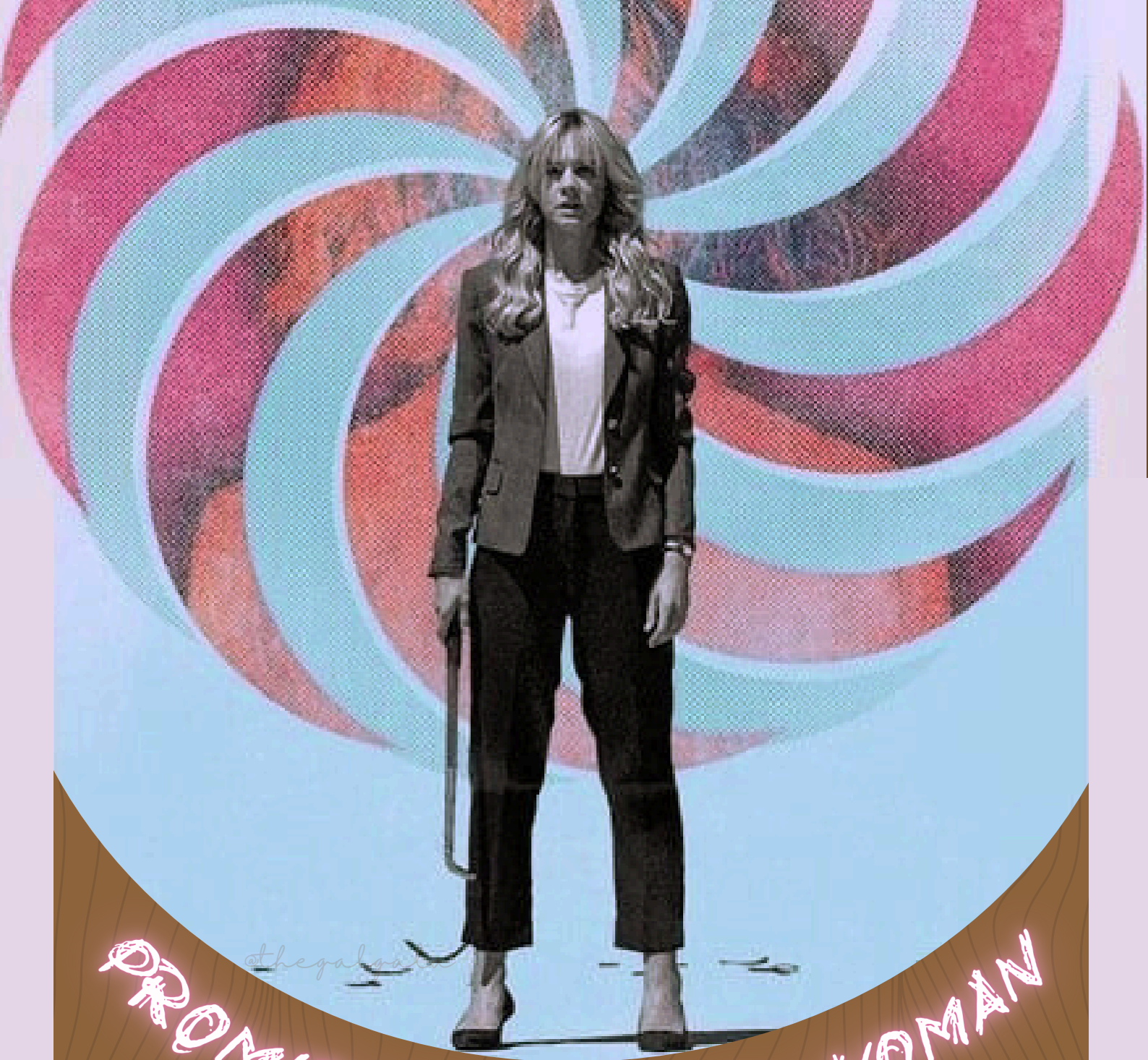
Conclusion

Pabiben Rabari's legacy continues to grow. Her products are not just pieces of art—they are symbols of empowerment, culture, and strength. Through her work, she has shown that tradition and progress can go hand in hand, and that the power to create change often lies within our own communities.

Her journey, which began as a water carrier in her early years, has now evolved into appearances on Shark Tank, TEDx talks, being crowned Queen of Kutch, and receiving recognition from the Prime Minister of India. She embodies the saying that if you have the will and courage, there is definitely a way for you.

Pabiben's story has inspired us to rethink the word craftsman. Why must it be gendered? This male-centred term erases the women who have long remained anonymous behind such artistry. It's time we say craftswomen or craftspersons—because creativity isn't male by default. Stories like hers urge us to reimagine leadership and to uplift the women quietly transforming business and lives.





@thegalsight

PROMISING YOUNG WOMAN

RECOMMEND'ART

DEBOPOMA BHATTACHARJEE

⚠Content and Spoiler Warning⚠

Images used from: "Promising Young Woman (2020)"

How often have we heard of a case where the rapist is pardoned because he is a promising young man with extreme potential? "Promising Young Woman" (2020) plays into this exact rhetoric and serves as a fantastic satire on those who perpetuate this harmful rhetoric. The title of the film is a wonderful and ironic tribute to those women who have lost their future and their dreams to an unfortunate incident, whereas their perpetrators walk free and fulfil their dreams. *@thegalgalala*

The film sets its feminist stance right at the beginning, with close-up shots of men dancing at a club, focusing primarily on their sexual appeal and objectifying them. This disturbs the audience, whereas the same thing, when done to women, even if it incites anger, doesn't really disturb us. This inversion of the gaze highlights how extremely abnormal objectifying women truly is, and overtly critiques the male gaze. This subversion, thus, becomes a powerful tool that creates the perfect setting for the pivotal argument that the film wishes to convey.



DIRECTOR: Emerald Fennell

CAST: Carey Mulligan, Bo Burnham, Chris Lowell, Laverne Cox, Jennifer Coolidge

RELEASE DATE: 25th December 2020

STREAMING: Prime, Hotstar, Zee5

OUR RATING: 9/10 ★★★★★★★★

The main character, Cassie Thomas, is a 30-year-old medical school dropout who lives with her parents and works in a coffee shop, which makes her days mundane. It is during the nights that she pretends to be drunk in bars, waiting for men to take her to their apartment in the guise of helping her. Right before they can harm her, she drops her act, imposing a destabilising and castrating effect on them, subverting the power dynamics and thus, compelling her 'victims' to contemplate before doing the same to other women in future. Cassie's dull life is constantly underscored, aligning with the title, incessantly drawing our attention to the objective loss of her potential. However, to her, it has transformed her into this unparalleled entity with a different but formidable objective. In multiple scenes, we find her with a halo over her and posed similarly to Jesus' crucifixion, to highlight the sacrificial role that she embodies on those nights. The reason behind Cassie's peculiar hobby is the loss of her best friend, Nina Fisher, to suicide after a popular guy at college raped her. The authorities hadn't believed her, and the defendant's lawyer pressurised her to drop the charges till she ultimately killed herself. Nina's life was gone, and so was Cassie's, her dreams and potential, rotting away. She shrunk her life into her job and her 'hobby' and became an empty shell without Nina. Both of these women and others, by extension, have been given a place of power through the inversion in the title.

The dramatic action is pushed to its inception with the introduction of Ryan, a med-school classmate of Cassie's. Ryan, unlike the other men portrayed in the film, is portrayed as the epitome of "the good guy." He's funny, quirky, and admits his romantic intentions to Cassie. They soon start going out, and for Cassie, Ryan symbolises a hope for a 'normal' future—a life that does not hold her back from the night she lost her best friend. It is through Ryan that she comes to know that Al Munroe, Nina's rapist is getting

married. This felt outrageous to Cassie, and so she orchestrates a plan for revenge not just on Al, the main perpetrator, but also on the others who were complicit in the horrifying act.

She starts with Madison, their common friend, who hadn't believed Nina in the past and blamed her rape on her drinking habits. Cassie sets up a meeting with her, and upon confirming that Madison does not regret her victim-blaming stance, Cassie gets her drunk and hires a man to take her to a room at a nearby hotel. She instructs him simply to sit by her till she wakes up to trick her into thinking she was raped. *thegalala*

Cassie then targets Elizabeth Walker, the dean who had dismissed Nina's case. Walker, being a woman herself, iterates the harmful rhetoric of not being able to take "every such accusation seriously since that would ruin young boys' lives". Walker justifies her actions until Cassie tells her that she has just dropped her daughter off at the dorm room where Nina was raped. Terrified, Walker finally admits her complicity and inaction, which leads Cassie to reassure her of her daughter's safety. Rape against a young woman isn't an abstract concept for Walker anymore. This is how the scene shows us how useless the "innocent until proven guilty" comment, mostly used to exempt violent men from taking accountability, is. The fact that Cassie did not actually harm her daughter is what makes her end the cycle of violence while also arousing accountability and empathy within the ones perpetuating 'rape culture'. Her actions are far from vengeance; they're retribution. She makes both Madison and Walker go through the same horrors they themselves had dismissed, aiming to bring about accountability rather than fear.

What distinguishes Cassie from other characters organising a revenge plot is that, despite her portrayal, she still has hope that people regret and change, giving her previous targets a chance to

repent before humiliating them. Therefore, when the lawyer who had protected Al breaks down and asks for forgiveness because he was consumed by guilt for what he had done, she no longer executes her plan against him.

In the meantime, Cassie grows closer to Ryan, and they gradually become inseparable. This chunk of the movie feels like a quintessential rom-com, but we are forced to watch it through the troubled lens the film has imposed on us right from the beginning. This brings out the underlying red flags already predominant in Ryan's character, who embodies qualities of a stereotypical "nice guy", a commonly represented problematic trope in mainstream media. This is particularly apparent when he disrespects her negation and acts as if he is entitled to her affirmation.

The plot twist is introduced when Madison, as a sign of penitence, passes on an old phone with a tape of the night Nina was raped. The tape reveals that Al had committed the gruesome act in front of his friends, where she recognises Ryan's presence, laughing, almost encouraging, yet not hindering, acting as an enabler. This is the moment when Cassie reverts to her troubled mindset. The bare normality that she tried to imbibe her life with is now stripped off. She confronts Ryan, but he never takes responsibility. He utters the overused phrase "we were just kids" to excuse his behaviour, instead of taking accountability and apologising. She blackmails Ryan to extract information about Al from him to continue her previous plan for revenge against her final nemesis, Al.

Posing as a stripper at Al's bachelor party, Cassie drugs the attendees, which we later find is something Al and his friends had done to multiple girls throughout medical school.

Here, Cassie subverts her adversaries in

the same way they once displayed power again. She uses her sexuality as a weapon and a tool to achieve her goal. She takes Al up to his room and handcuffs him to his bed, victimising and putting the antagonist in an extremely vulnerable position. Here, she's almost like a sexual and physical threat to him, which is exactly what he had been to Nina- again, an inversion. As she reveals her identity, the conversation that follows represents the exact verbatim of our society- Al says, "It affected me too, you know, I mean it's every guy's worst nightmare getting accused like that." to which Cassie smiles coyly and utters, "Can you guess what every woman's worst nightmare is?". Al, although guilty, justifies his actions instead of being humane enough to admit his malicious deed. The scene quietly enunciates how it is a nightmare to live as a woman under the patriarchy.

Cassie lunges at Al in an attempt to carve Nina's name upon Al's body, and what starts as defending himself gradually turns into wilful murder as he eventually suffocates her with a pillow, leading to her death. From the moment Cassie is buried under the pillow, we do not see her face again; from that point, she is just a body. This is an element of reification where she has been reduced to body parts. The film thus presents the reality of attempting to transgress patriarchy violently. Fennel wanted us to get a realist peek into the narrative and not simply a revenge fantasy. We are then presented with a scene with Al lying next to the dead Cassie, in a sacrificial Christ pose, underscoring her sacrifice to hold Al accountable under the eyes of the judiciary. After the incident, Al and his friend burned her body and resumed his nuptial ceremony as if Cassie's existence held no significant meaning.



This is where the plot takes another turn. Before leaving for Al's bachelor party, Cassie had sent the information about her whereabouts to the lawyer. In a letter, she had requested that the lawyer and her parents alert the police if she had been somehow harmed by Al and hadn't returned. The film ends with Al being arrested for Cassie's murder and a scheduled message from Cassie to Ryan ending with "*Love, Nina and Cassie*".

While the ending may be unsatisfying, Cassie proves her victory despite her material nonexistence. By sacrificing herself, she finally got justice for Nina as well as the other implied girls that Al had allegedly hurt. Hence, Cassie's sacrificial pose, which has been repeated throughout the film, is essentially pivotal since the entire narrative ends in her sacrifice. However, the tone with which the film ends is not just one of loss or mourning for the main protagonist, but rather this awe and unsettling satisfaction arising from Al finally getting what he deserved. It all comes full circle, with Cassie and Nina finally being together. *@thegalgalala*

This film is thus an impressive condemnation of not just men, but everyone involved in furthering the social structures, language, and inaction meant to harm women. It almost mocks the viewer into submission, into admitting their own dismissive or harmful actions, and questions them. It is an impressive satirical horror on people in general, constantly reminding us, in a non-polarised way, how people truly act in the face of violence against women.

SHERO CHRONICLES

Sanjana Ghosh



Malati Murmu

Tribal woman, Malati Murmu, has converted her mud house into a classroom for 45 children, offering free education without any funding. A native of Purulia, West Bengal, she teaches mainly in the Santali language, alongside Bengali and English. Students love to attend her classes for personalised attention and cultural connection. This initiative began in 2020, and through community help, the initial mud hut classroom was eventually converted into a permanent clay structure. Her story is an inspiration for women-led grassroots movements bridging administrative and development gaps.

Rajitha N, Muskan Ahirwar

Rajitha N and Muskan Ahirwar were felicitated with the Shikshagraha Awards 2025 in March in Bengaluru.

Rajitha is a supervisor at the Women & Child Development Department in Karnataka, who works to improve early childhood education in remote tribal areas. Her culturally-sensitive strategies and technology-driven interventions have significantly increased preschool enrollment.

Muskan, at the age of 17, has established 'Kitabi Masti' library for underprivileged children in the Durganagar slum of Bhopal. It offers free access to books and learning opportunities.



thegalgala

SHERO CHRONICLES



Hari Chandana

IAS officer Hari Chandana has been appointed as the District Collector of Hyderabad on June 13, 2025—making history as the city's first Dalit woman in this role. Her appointment marks a milestone in inclusive governance under Telangana's Congress-led government headed by CM A. Revanth Reddy. Known for her innovative and people-centric approach, Chandana has earned acclaim as an “Eco Warrior” for her sustainability efforts. Her impactful initiatives include waste recycling, women's empowerment during COVID-19, and telemedicine programs.

Jackielynn Pradhan

In May 2025, 21-year-old Jackielynn Pradhan became the first transgender woman to be crowned Miss Universe Sikkim 2025, defeating 45 participants to achieve this feat. This was a historic milestone in inclusivity and representation for the LGBTQ+ community in Sikkim. She will also represent the state at the Miss Universe India pageant.

the galsight **Gopika Govind**

Gopika Govind has become the state's first tribal air hostess after a persistent journey of 12 years. The 24-year-old from the Karimbala tribal community in Kerala is the daughter of daily-wage labourers. She initially pursued a BSc in Chemistry due to financial constraints. Eventually, she joined a government-funded aviation diploma program, which offered a ₹1 lakh tribal support scheme. She joined Air India Express. Her first flight on duty was from Kannur to the Gulf. Gopika's story is a reflection of how targeted government support can benefit marginalised communities.



SHERO CHRONICLES

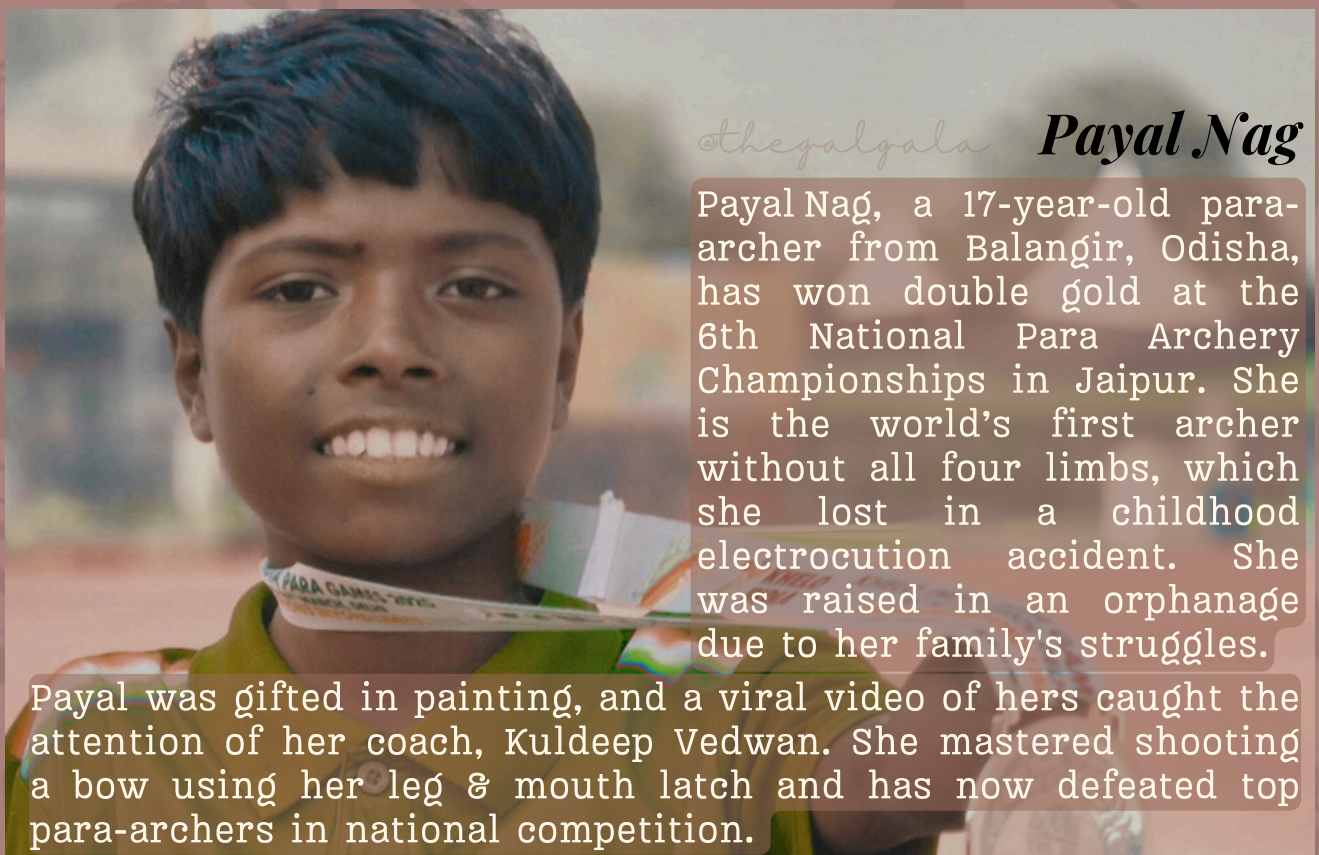
Varsha Deshpande



Indian women's rights activist Varsha Deshpande was awarded the 2025 United Nations Population Award in the individual category. She is the founder of the Dalit Mahila Vikas Mandal, focusing on issues of gender, gender-based violence, and discrimination. Varsha works to empower grassroots women by developing their vocational skills and fostering financial independence. Programmes led by her include ones addressing child marriage safeguarding the rights of women in the informal sector, and promoting joint property registration to boost women's access to assets.



@thegalgalala Payal Nag



Payal Nag, a 17-year-old para-archer from Balangir, Odisha, has won double gold at the 6th National Para Archery Championships in Jaipur. She is the world's first archer without all four limbs, which she lost in a childhood electrocution accident. She was raised in an orphanage due to her family's struggles.

Payal was gifted in painting, and a viral video of hers caught the attention of her coach, Kuldeep Vedwan. She mastered shooting a bow using her leg & mouth latch and has now defeated top para-archers in national competition.

SHERO CHRONICLES

Sabitri Majhi

Sabitri Majhi, a 95-year-old philanthropist from Odisha, has donated five acres of her ancestral land to establish a permanent sports playground in her community, resolving the community's long-standing struggle to host events like the Budharaja Cricket Cup, giving the village, known for its vibrant cricket, football and kabaddi culture, a dedicated space for youth athletes. Majhi, whose past contributions include land for schools and a temple alongside her late husband, has sparked community calls for the government to upgrade the site into a formal stadium.

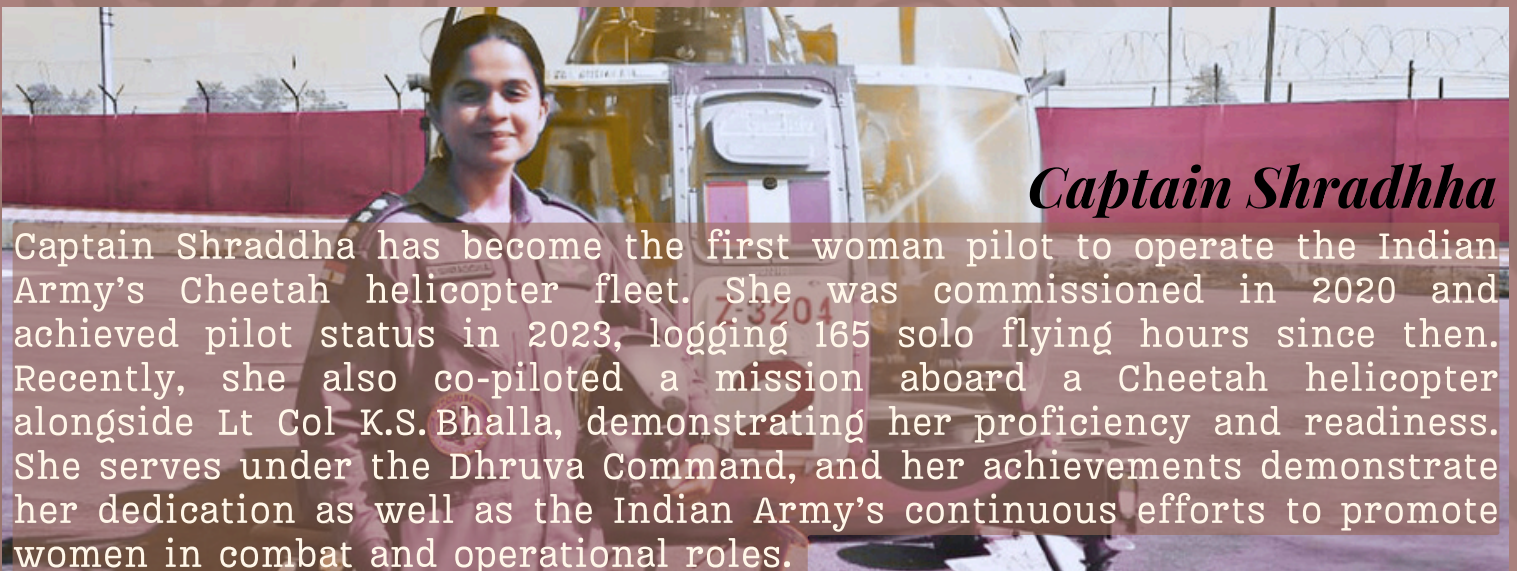


Rainbow Habba 2025



On 28th June 2025, Bengaluru saw the grand organisation of Rainbow Habba, a celebration of gender & sexual diversity. It featured remarkable people from the queer community, such as Jaanu, India's first transgender ventriloquist, and Ani Mangalore, a trans woman and gym trainer.

Siddapa Hukkeri, who has secured a government job through 1% reservation for transgender individuals, was felicitated. The event also highlighted the efforts of the Sangama Foundation, which filed a PIL for reservations for transgender minorities and others for community upliftment. *thegalgalala*



Captain Shraddha

Captain Shraddha has become the first woman pilot to operate the Indian Army's Cheetah helicopter fleet. She was commissioned in 2020 and achieved pilot status in 2023, logging 165 solo flying hours since then. Recently, she also co-piloted a mission aboard a Cheetah helicopter alongside Lt Col K.S. Bhalla, demonstrating her proficiency and readiness. She serves under the Dhruva Command, and her achievements demonstrate her dedication as well as the Indian Army's continuous efforts to promote women in combat and operational roles.

SHERO CHRONICLES



Sonajharia Minz

Sonajharia Minz, an Oraon from Jharkhand, has become India's first tribal woman UNESCO Co-Chair. She was appointed in 2025 to lead the Chair on Transforming Indigenous Knowledge Research Governance & Rematriation. Despite facing educational discrimination from an early age, she gradually earned a PhD in Computer Science from JNU, served as its professor, and became the first tribal woman Vice-Chancellor of Sidho Kanho Murmu University in 2020. In her UNESCO role, she aims to promote indigenous rights, preserve tribal languages, and develop AI-based platforms to securely document tribal knowledge systems.



Satyasha Leuva

Satyasha Leuva is a 25-year-old Dalit lawyer from Gujarat, who has been elected sarpanch of Vadvasa village. She is associated with the Students' Federation of India (SFI), often linked with CPI(M), which has minimal influence in Gujarat. She is a science graduate with a law degree. Leuva has risen through student activism to become the state secretary of SFI and vice-president at its All-India conference. She works on mobilising the youth on issues such as caste and pandemic relief, focusing on development priorities including roads, lighting, healthcare, and waste management. *@the_galsight*

SHERO CHRONICLES

Sunita Choudhary

Sunita Choudhary is the first female police constable from her village in Rajasthan. She was married at the age of 3, and despite these traditional barriers, she attended school and became a constable at 19. She has also battled stage-2 ovarian cancer, enduring six months of chemotherapy. Sunita is dedicated to community service and has educated over 1000 children on safety and self-defence in rural schools. Her work extends to advocacy against child marriage as well, having faced it herself. She is affectionately called “Policewali Didi”.



India's women's cricket team achieved a historic milestone in July 2025 by winning their first-ever T20I series against England. They secured a 3-2 victory during their tour of England on English soil. Indian spinners Radha Yadav, Shree Charani and Deepti Sharma played crucial roles in restricting England, while openers Shafali Verma and Smriti Mandhana provided a strong chase. The defining moment was a convincing six-wicket win in the fourth T20I, winning the series with 18 balls remaining.



Indian Women's Cricket Team

@thegalgalala Banu Mushtaq

Banu Mushtaq, a 77-year-old feminist activist & lawyer from Karnataka, has been awarded the 2025 International Booker Prize for the book Heart Lamp. It is a translated (Deepa Bhashti) collection of 12 short stories originally written in Kannada. This is the first Kannada short-story collection, and the first by an Indian Muslim woman, to receive this honour. The stories are drawn from Mushtaq's decades-long engagement with women's rights, caste & religious justice, offering vivid and emotionally resonant portraits of Muslim women's lives.

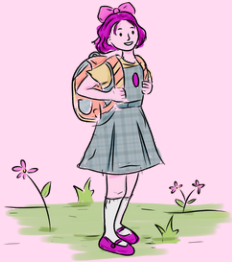


THE *Galsight* MAGAZINE FEMINGO

FEMINIST BINGO: SCHOOL EDITION

Mannat Kaur

SKIRT=
CHARACTER
REPORT
CARD



HAIR
DOWN,
LECTURE
ROUND

TOLD
"BOYS
WILL BE
BOYS"

BOYS=
GAMES,
GIRLS=
AEROBICS

PAD
PASSED
LIKE IT'S
DRUGS

PTM=
PUBLIC
TRIAL OF
MORALITY

LIP
BALM=
MAKEUP

PUBERTY
PATROL
EXCLUSIVE
FOR GIRLS



BRA STRAP
SHOWS,
MORALS
LOW

TRUE
SISTERHOOD
LIES IN
WASHROOM



PERIODS?
THAT'S A
LAME
EXCUSE!

BOYS +
PERIODS=
UNEASY
QUESTIONS



CRUSH ON
TEACHER
GONE
WRONG

NEW
HAIRCUT=
NEW
RUMOURS

SMART?
DO
OTHERS'
HOMEWORK

MALE
FRIENDS?
MUST BE
LOOSE

NO
FRIENDS?
MUST BE A
BITCH

TEACHER'S
CONSTANT
UNPAID
TARGET

NAIL
CHECK ☒
POLICE
CHECK
POINT ☒



CALLED
"TOO
MUCH" FOR
SPEAKING
UP

*Take a screenshot of this page, mark all those you relate with,
share the image on social media and tag us @thegalga!!*



ME VS. SHE

Urbi Bhandary



The word-for-word translation of the popular Bengali saying, “*Ap-ruchi te khawa, por-ruchi te pora*”, is “one should eat according to their own taste, but dress according to others’ preferences.” This sentiment reveals a deeper social pattern, especially for women, of being scrutinised for their behaviour, personality, and most intensely for their clothing. *thegalala*

Growing up in rural Bengal, I was always conscious of what I wore, though I never gave too much thought to it. Not because I did not care, but because I had been taught to care in a very particular way. There has always been a fine line of difference between what is considered respectable versus inappropriate. And the most confusing of it all is that one could be fully covered and yet find oneself on the wrong side of it. I’ve often heard that covering up isn’t enough, and I should dress “modestly.” But what is modesty, really? Who defines it? And who gets to enforce it? I return to these questions often, though they weren’t always questions to me. Once, they were just rules of “not inviting attention,” passed down by those who had themselves been moulded by the same patriarchal gaze. And I sit back to wonder if modesty is in the length of the sleeves of my kurti, the pleats of my skirt, or my backless top? The concept seems to boil down to a “more covered” look, and this isn’t a new or different way of dressing for many women, including myself. As a child, wearing a mini-skirt or a low-cut top was never my thing. But now that I live away from home, I find myself dressing differently. I dare to make choices I wouldn’t have been allowed to in my village. I wear sleeveless kurtis, bold prints, and choose lipstick in a shade that feels loud. Not to “invite attention,” but for myself, for my comfort, and expression. Yet, there’s a trace of guilt when I look in the mirror. A silent shame that clings to the white needle-strap one-piece that feels “too revealing and short.” Sleeveless and short. How could I?

I make these choices, but I still hear a voice in my head that isn’t entirely mine. She tells me to pull the strap a little higher, to pick the duller colour, and to think twice before stepping out in a short dress. I used to mistake her for my conscience. Now I know she’s a patchwork of all the warnings I’ve grown up with. She’s made of my mother’s caution, my father’s “don’t you have another dress,” and the sighs I’ve learned to notice on the road. Yet, she is also me, or rather, the version of me that learned to survive by pleasing others before myself. And thus, every time I wear something that feels like me, it becomes a quiet negotiation between who I was allowed to be and who I am still becoming.

Maybe that’s where it gets complicated, as the voice that tells me what is acceptable doesn’t feel quite external. This is the trickiest part. Over time, being socialised this way, we begin to believe that what we’ve been taught is what we want. Obedience and obligation start to feel like preference & choice.

ME VS. SHE

We say, “I feel more comfortable in this,” without asking who taught us to feel comfortable this way in the first place. I used to think I was just someone who preferred “decent” clothes. But now I wonder, who taught me what decency looked like?



Amartya Sen calls this adaptive preference. It refers to the phenomenon where people come to accept and even desire the conditions they’ve been shaped by, simply because they haven’t been allowed to imagine anything different. Sen writes that individuals “adjust their desires and expectations to what they unambitiously see as feasible” (Sen, 1999, p. 62). He draws from Simone de Beauvoir to show how women, in particular, internalise inequality so deeply that it starts to feel natural. That’s how we end up saying “I’m just more comfortable like this,” when what we really mean is “this is what I’ve been told is acceptable.”

That idea has stayed with me. It explains why I sometimes hesitate before wearing something I love. But this hesitation doesn’t emerge in a vacuum. It is part of a larger social system. Modesty culture doesn’t simply impose its rules, but it operates as a global grammar of control. It governs, shames, and justifies, all at the same time. It shifts responsibility, telling survivors they “invited” the assault. It reframes violence as a consequence, moving the question from why he did it to what she was wearing. And this shift is deeply consequential. The more we frame modesty as protection, the more we turn non-conformity into grounds for blame. In Amartya Sen’s terms, this is an objective illusion when the internalisation of patriarchal constraints begins to feel like personal choice. *thegalgala*



And this isn’t uniquely Indian or rural. I’ve read Western critiques of how modest fashion places the burden of morality on women’s bodies, frames cleavage as “temptation,” and offers covering up as a promise of safety. And I find myself nodding, lips bending into a rueful smile, as I realise that even in a completely different spatial context, I’ve carried that same weight. The setting may change, but the structure remains eerily familiar. The problem is, this logic preaches that modesty protects women and guides men; that what we wear determines what we deserve. I recall being told to dress modestly to not “invite attention.” I wonder if modesty is just another way of telling a woman to shrink and make herself smaller, until she becomes easier to digest.

Modest fashion often presents itself as a choice. But as an idea, it is rarely value-neutral. The way of mental conditioning differs, but the message remains the same. It is almost always gendered, directed at women and feminine-presenting people, tied to the belief that her clothing determines her worth, and her safety is conditional. So, she learns to be cautious, and over time, she begins to call that “comfort.” Over time, we start to believe that safety is comfort and comfort is choice. As the writer behind Lipstick, Lettuce & Lycra puts it, modest



ME VS. SHE

dressings is about the burden of appearing appropriate, regardless of context. It suggests that women are responsible for their own conduct as well as for others' responses to them. It reinforces what feminist scholars call the morality-surveillance nexus, where how a woman dresses becomes shorthand for her values, dignity, even her right to protection.

That said, modest fashion isn't always about submission. It may also be thought of as an act of reclaiming visibility on their own terms. It's not about hiding from men, but rather about refusing to be styled for them. Some argue that tight or revealing clothing is often designed to cater to the male gaze, framing women's bodies as objects to be admired, consumed, or judged. In this view, modesty can also be regarded as a way of power dressing. This makes the label itself complicated. Perhaps, the problem isn't modesty but how it has been weaponised. As quoted in Tiina Rosenberg's work, Shehnaz Suterwalla describes this deliberate visibility as a feminist strategy of being seen on one's own terms. But even here, choice is layered. Saying "I feel comfortable this way" might express freedom, but it can also reflect what one has been conditioned to feel safe in. *@thegalgalala*

In theory, modesty was never meant to be gendered. The original Latin root modestus or modus has its origin from Proto-Indo-European med, meaning to take appropriate measures. But like most things, it narrowed and now, it scrutinises women. In the Indian context, the contradictions only deepen. On one hand, in cities, people organise Slut-Walks and wear bikinis in protest. On the contrary, in villages, women are still stripped in public to "teach them a lesson". A woman in a saree is seen as backwards in a party, and harassed in a sleeveless top on the street. We're expected to be modern, but not "too" modern, modest but not "Behan-ji". This again leads back to the male gaze, which we slowly but surely internalise. Even when we're alone, we become our own looking glass self, watching ourselves through the eyes of others. But when we think for ourselves, it becomes an act of reclaiming something we didn't even know we had given away. For me, it's in purchasing a back-cut dress, and in the softness of my cotton midi skirt. However, the fear lingers. As I upload a picture, I wonder if someone from home will see it and think I've become "too much." Maybe I have, at least by the rules she was taught to follow.

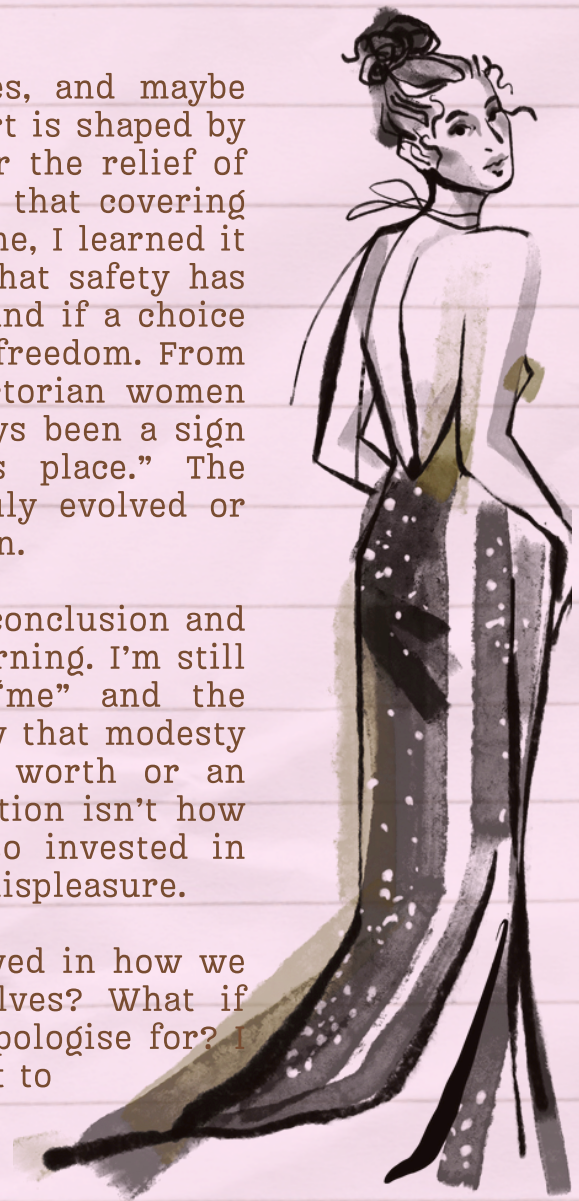
There's something else I can't shake off either. Modest fashion is now a billion-dollar industry. Runways, fast fashion chains, and even luxury brands now sell longer hemlines and looser silhouettes as stylish and empowering. And for some, they surely are. But I can't help wondering, what happens when empowerment becomes a product? When expectations are rebranded and sold back to us with a tag that says "choice," but without the freedom to refuse it? There's something uneasy in how fashion reinforces this as aesthetics. Style is personal, but it's never apolitical. Whether it's a turtleneck layered under a dress or a scarf wrapped in a certain way, clothing becomes a language. It becomes increasingly difficult to tell where comfort ends and conformity begins.

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Many say they feel “better” in modest clothes, and maybe they do. But I wonder, how much of that comfort is shaped by praise? By the safety of not being stared at, or the relief of not being conspicuous? Growing up, I was told that covering up would protect and keep me safe. But over time, I learned it doesn't. If we really think about it, we'll see that safety has never depended on how “modestly” we dress. And if a choice only protects us by shrinking us, then it isn't freedom. From Greco-Roman goddesses draped in robes to Victorian women wrapped in layers, covering the body has always been a sign of humility, obedience, and “knowing one's place.” The question remains whether this notion has truly evolved or merely been repackaged for modern consumption.

As I write this, I won't pretend to have a neat conclusion and know all the answers. I'm unlearning and relearning. I'm still negotiating between the comfort of being “me” and the conditioning “she” had to endure. But I do know that modesty should never be the measure of a woman's worth or an excuse for violence or control. Maybe the question isn't how much a woman covers, but why we're still so invested in watching her cover herself to the point of her displeasure.

What if honour wasn't so fragile? What if it lived in how we treat each other, not in how we hide ourselves? What if freedom didn't feel like something we had to apologise for? I may not have all the answers. But I know I want to keep asking the questions. And maybe, for now, that is enough. *@thegalgalala*



FEMININKED —Maitri Dore

Originally on Youth Ki Awaaz



LEGAL DEVELOPMENTS

SC: Maternity Leave is a Constitutional Right

May 2025

On May 23, 2025, the SC decided that maternity leave is a constitutional right under Article 21. It reversed a Madras high court order that had refused to grant leave to a teacher, K. Umadevi, to have a third child from her second marriage.

According to justices Abhay S. Oka and Ujjal Bhuyan, the maternity benefits cannot be curtailed even if the state has a policy restricting maternity benefits to two children only. The court observed that every woman has the right to reproduce & maintain dignity and equality in the workplace.

Rape Conviction Upheld by SC Based on Victim's Testimony

March 2025

A case involving a rape conviction in 2010 was upheld by the SC. According to the ruling, the clear and credible testimony of the victim was sufficient to produce a conviction, without any other evidence. The statement given by the victim was bold and consistent, even though it was asserted that there were no injuries. The judgment was authored by Justice P.B. Varale and Justice Sandeep Mehta on the bench. The court ruled against the appeal of the accused, arguing that the testimony of the victim was reliable.



Bail Granted by Allahabad HC in Rape Case with Insensitive Remarks

March 2025

A postgraduate student reported that she was raped, accusing Nischal Chandak. He was granted bail by the Allahabad HC. Justice Sanjay Kumar Singh said that the victim invited trouble by drinking in the bar and agreeing to go to the house of the accused. No definite data on sexual assault was found by the court. Later, SC criticised the Allahabad HC for giving insensitive observations.

Rape Case Dismissed by SC After 16-Year Consensual Relationship

March 2025

On March 6, 2025, the SC quashed a rape case against a man who had been accused of raping a woman on a false pretext of marriage. A bench of Justices Vikram Nath and Sandeep Mehta held that a 16-year consensual live-in relationship between educated adults was not done by force or deception. The woman lost her claim as the relationship turned sour when the man married another woman.

● Herdicts & Schemes

Chhattisgarh HC: Child Adoption Leave is a Fundamental Right

May 2025

Chhattisgarh HC, on 5 May 2025, provided a 180-day child adoption leave to Lata Goyal, an employee of IIM Raipur. The court upheld the right of motherhood as one of the fundamental rights under Article 21 of the Constitution and clarified that depriving her of leave amounts to infringing her constitutional rights. On November 20, 2023, Goyal had adopted a two-day-old girl, but the HR policy of IIM Raipur did not provide adoption leaves. Justice Bibhu Datta Guru used Rule 43-B of the Central Civil Services (Leave) Rules, 1972, to make sure that she is entitled to it.

Gang Rape Conviction Based on Common Intention by SC

May 2025

On May 1, 2025, SC held that in a gang rape case where one person is proved to have penetrated, all of them can be convicted upon all being found to have had a common intention. Raju was also convicted by the court in this 21-year-old case, even though he himself said he never did penetration. In the case, it was held by Justices Sanjay Karol and K.V. Viswanathan that the gathering of common intention, which was depicted by abduction and confinement, was enough under Section 376(2) (g) of the IPC.

Madras HC: Same-Sex Couples Can Form Families

May 2025

On May 22, 2025, the Madras High Court decided that same-sex couples are entitled to the formation of families even in the absence of a formal marriage. Justices G.R. Swaminathan and V. Lakshminarayanan, of the court, directed the release of a 25-year-old lesbian woman detained by her family. It acknowledged the rights of the LGBTQIA+ community to form a chosen family, relying on the principle of personal liberty under Article 21.



SC approved UGC Regulations to Combat Caste-Based Discrimination

April 2025

On April 24, 2025, the Supreme Court, led by Justices Surya Kant and N. Kotiswar Singh, allowed the University Grants Commission (UGC) to finalise and notify the 2025 Regulations to combat caste-based discrimination in higher education. The ruling responded to a petition by the mothers of Rohith Vemula and Payal Tadvi, who died by suicide due to alleged caste bias. The court clarified that rules to mandate Equity Committees, grievance redressal cells, etc., will work alongside the National Task Force's recommendations.

● Herdicts & Schemes

Telangana HC: Muslim Woman has Right to Khula Divorce

June 2025

The Telangana High Court on June 24, 2025, held that a Muslim woman is free to apply to a court for Khula divorce without the consent of her husband. Justices Moushumi Bhattacharya and B.R. Madhusudhan Rao directed that the right of Khula by the wife does not need to prove any justification kept by the religion or religious authority. The court only has the mandate of ensuring the legitimacy of the divorce.

Allahabad HC: Adult Woman has the Right to Marry a Person of Choice

June 2025

Allahabad HC made a ruling of June 13, 2025, that a woman of 27 years is entitled to be married to an individual of her choice under Article 21 of the Indian Constitution. The court criticised the objections by her family as "despicable" and restrained their arrest in an FIR, according to which they had threatened to abduct her. Justices J.J. Munir and Praveen Kumar Giri directed that protection be provided to the woman, under which her father and brother were prohibited from interfering in her life or coming into contact with her.

SC: Secret Call Recordings in Divorce Cases are Allowed

July 2025

On July 14, 2025, the Supreme Court of India upheld that secretly voice-recorded telephone conversations between a married couple may be admissible as evidence in divorce proceedings. The decision herein reversed decisions held by the Punjab and Haryana High Court. The court has provided that such recordings do not infringe privacy and can be used as evidence before the matrimonial courts on the genuine condition. *@thegalgalala*

Kerala HC: Wife Can Claim Maintenance Despite Agreement

June 2025

The Kerala HC ruled on June 2, 2025, that a wife can claim maintenance under Section 37 of the Divorce Act or Section 125 of CrPC, even if she waived it in a compromise agreement. The court stated that such agreements are invalid if the wife is unable to support herself. Justice A. Badharudeen ordered the Family Court to review the case, "Sheela George v. V.M. Alexander", allowing both sides to present evidence. The court must decide the case promptly.

● Herdicts & Schemes

Andhra Pradesh HC: Transgender Women are Women

June 2025

On June 16, 2025, the Andhra Pradesh High Court, which consisted of Justice Venkata Jyothirmai Pratapa, declared that trans women are legally considered women in India. The court dismissed several arguments that it is the capacity to bear children that qualifies one to be a woman, thus granting trans women the right to bring cases under Section 498A of the Indian Penal Code for marriage-related cruelties. Trans women in heterosexual marriages are granted equal rights to protection against domestic violence and harassment over dowry.

Bombay HC: Abortion at 25 Weeks for Unmarried Woman

June 2025

On June 26, 2025, the Bombay High Court permitted an unmarried young woman to end her 25-week pregnancy. The court identified her reproductive rights and mental health issues arising out of extreme grief over the failure of contraceptives. The judges, Revati Mohite Dere and Dr. Neela Gokhale, decided that the pregnancy was a detriment to her psyche. The court permitted abortion in a tertiary care institute due to preterm complications.

Kaithal DC: Honour Killing Condemned as Attack on Society

July 2025

The Kaithal District Court in Haryana on July 19, 2025, sentenced brothers Sunil and Dilbagh to life imprisonment in the murder of their sister in law Balinder Singh in 2017. The court referred to honour killings as an assault on civilised society. The killing was premeditated since the brothers did not support their sister's love marriage. The punishment is a rejection of such crimes by society, as said by Judge Dr. Nandita Kaushik.

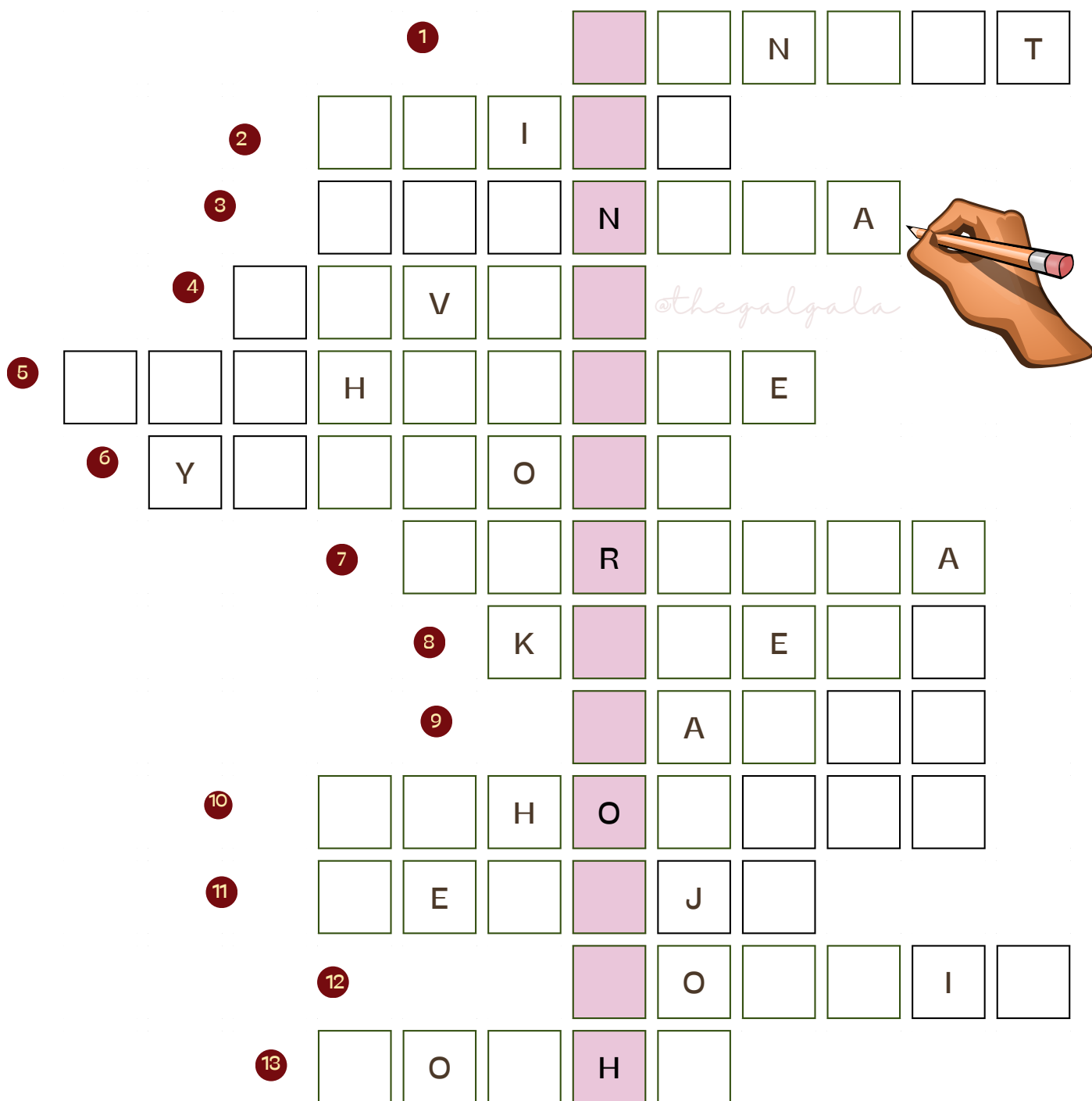




FEMiNEWS CROSSWORD

Kritika Bhatia

Crack the clues, catch the headlines! Solve this crossword using clues on the next page related to news about women and feminism. After completion, the coloured column will reveal a new word that you can add to your dictionary!





FEMiNEWS CROSSWORD

- 1 Who launched the Women in Film India at Cannes 2025? - Monga Kapoor
- 2 Who is the first woman CEO and MD of Hindustan Unilever? Nair *the gal gala*
- 3 Who is the only Indian woman on Time's Women of the Year 2025 list?- Devi Barman
- 4 Who became the first Indian woman to win the FIDE Women's Chess World Cup 2025? - Deshmukh
- 5 Who has become the third Indian to win the United Nations Population Award in the individual category? - Varsha
- 6 National Commission for Women (NCW) has launched this to increase women's participation in AI, Cybersecurity, and digital safety. - AI
- 7 Who has become the first female loco pilot to operate the Vande Bharat Express in India? - Yadav
- 8 Who became the first Indian woman to enter the FIDE Women's World Cup semi-finals, 2025? - Humpy
- 9 Who made history by becoming the first Indian woman to set up a mutual fund business - Lunawat
- 10 Who became the world's first visually impaired female climber to scale Mount Everest? - Angmo
- 11 She was awarded the Padma Shri for her contribution to the detection, prevention and management of Cervical Cancer. Who is she? - Dr. Bhatla.
- 12 Who is set to become the first woman to be a fighter pilot in the Indian Navy? - Sub Lt. Aastha
- 13 Who has become the first Indian to win a gold medal in Classic Slalom at the Asian Roller Skating Championships 2025? – Shreyasi

ANSWERS:

1. Guneeet 2. Priya 3. Purnima 4. Divya 5. Deshpande 6. Yashoda 7. Surekha 8. Koneeru 9. Madhu 10. Chhonzi 11. Neerja 12. Poonia 13. Joshi



Fashion and Identity: The story of The Guy In A Skirt

Khushboo Dandona

Clothing style is more than just comfort or convenience; it is a powerful form of self-expression. Fashion serves as a primary means for exercising or demonstrating freedom (Daniel Yim, as cited in Wolfendale & Kennett, 2011, p.6). Clothing style not only reflects our preferences, personality, and mood, but it is also linked to religion, caste, class, culture, social identity, and socialisation within societies. Socialisation often relies on the strict division of bodies into male and female, with clothing acting as a visual indicator of gender differences. *@thegalgalala*

Fashion can be both liberating and a meaningful form of self-expression, especially for marginalised communities like the LGBTQ+ community. One such example is "The guy in a skirt," Shivam Bhardwaj. He is a gay man born in Meerut into a middle-class family. Despite living in a joint family and a society with strict and rigid gender roles, his story reflects the joy of fashion and self-expression from a young age. From childhood, he enjoyed wearing his cousin's skirts. He was told that boys don't wear such clothes. He recollected being bullied by his schoolmates for his walk and gestures, and thinking of ending his life at the age of 16. His father disapproved of his passion for fashion and kicked him out of the house. He moved to Gurugram and began working in a BPO. One day, he decided to wear a skirt and post a video, which became a turning point in his life. He became "the guy in a skirt." While he enjoyed the privilege of his parents supporting and accepting him as a gay man, they opposed his passion for makeup and skirts. Coming from a middle-class background, most parents wish their children to become doctors, lawyers, CAs, or government officers.

The story is similar to many other individuals who belong to the LGBTQ+ community or try to challenge the heteronormative gender roles. The story highlights the bullying both online and in person, cross-dressing, and fashion as a form of self-expression. His choices made him a target of harassment as he challenged society by his non-conformity to gender roles. In this essay, I will critically examine issues such as bullying within the LGBTQ+ community and cross-dressing over time, drawing on Shivam's personal experiences shared on [Josh Talks](#) [transcribed].

(Cyber)bullying and harassment

With globalisation and liberalisation, there is a shift to digitalisation, creating media spaces and the internet. While digital platforms have often reproduced the dominant narrative, they also provide alternative spaces for those who remain invisible and whose voices remain unheard. It is a powerful tool for resistance, self-expression, and visibility. However, one of the major drawbacks of these platforms is cyberbullying, especially of the LGBTQ+ community. Among the 25 countries, a study conducted among the youth concluded that LGBTQ+ individuals face a higher rate of online bullying. In India, 53% of people from this community faced such harassment. They often received comments like *chakka*, *meetha*, *hijra*, etc. The comments commonly include rape and death threats. Online bullies hide themselves under anonymity. However, online bullying is associated with offline or in-person bullying. In Shivam's case, people in real-life interactions also called him with these names.

The whole community is vulnerable, but the youth are at higher risk. Shivam, from his childhood days, shared the experiences of bullying, which extended to molestation. He narrated (in Hindi) that:

[@theguyinaskirt](#)

“

...In my later years in school, people began teasing me about why I walked like that. For me, it was because I always had this fancy walk. I used to think that the school lobby was like a runway where I wanted to perform a fashion walk. Gradually, this bullying turned into molestation. I was sitting in a classroom with 56 students. Some students came up to me, and one of them put his hand inside my T-shirt. He then pulled out my vest from under my T-shirt, tearing it completely...They tore my vest and started playing with it, while everyone in the class was laughing. That trauma would not have become so deep if someone had come to help me at the time. Not even the teachers punished or asked me what happened. That was the moment I decided to end my life.

[@thegalgalata](#)

”



Globally, around 45 per cent of gay, lesbian, and trans youth report being bullied in school. This includes physical, psychological, and sexual harassment, especially in changing rooms and washrooms. Peers do not solely do this, but by teachers and school administrations, which often include punishment, suspension, etc. The bullying and harassment lead to an increase in school dropout rates among the community and harm their mental and physical well-being. This often results in suicides, depression, anxiety attacks, sleep and eating disorders, etc. Due to a lack of formal education, most of them, in their later life, were pushed into sex work, with some of them becoming survivors of human trafficking.

This demonstrates that bullying is not an isolated phenomenon but a reflection of a broader pattern of institutional failure and societal prejudice against the community. *thegalgalala*

Cross-dressing across time

Fashion is associated with cost, mood, preferences, style, and comfort. There is a new wave of trends every day. In contemporary times, aspiring fashionistas have many opportunities to mix and match trends, showcase their creativity, and become their own stylists. This enables the individual to break out of the conformist, dominant narrative, much like the guy in a skirt does.

For Shivam, fashion has always been more than just clothing; it has been his lifeline and a ray of hope. As he narrated (in Hindi):

...I got an opportunity to do a fashion shoot, and I have been interested in fashion from the beginning because I've been wearing stylish clothes since childhood... The problem was that I didn't have any money at the time, so I started texting everyone and arranged a barter collaboration. This opportunity gave me the courage, and I decided that day to tell my mom that I wanted to pursue something in fashion. My mother used to give me small amounts of money from the ration money, which my father provided. However, I realised that my mother couldn't give me money every time, so I decided to buy a phone with my own pocket money and start making videos... But my father only has one idea: either become a businessman or do an MBA, and succeed, or follow the same typical options available for boys from middle-class families.

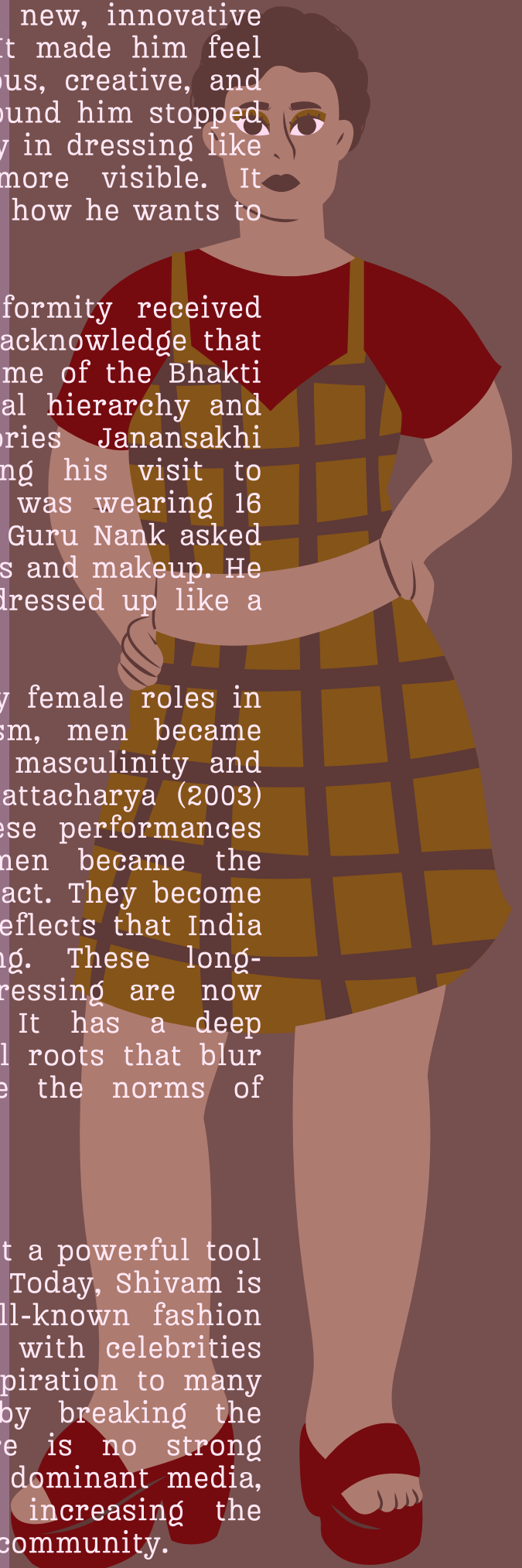
Experimenting with wearing skirts in new, innovative ways helps him to express himself. It made him feel like himself. The act is more rebellious, creative, and less conformist. Even when people around him stopped him from wearing a skirt, he found joy in dressing like that. Fashion helps him become more visible. It provides a way to reclaim control over how he wants to look.

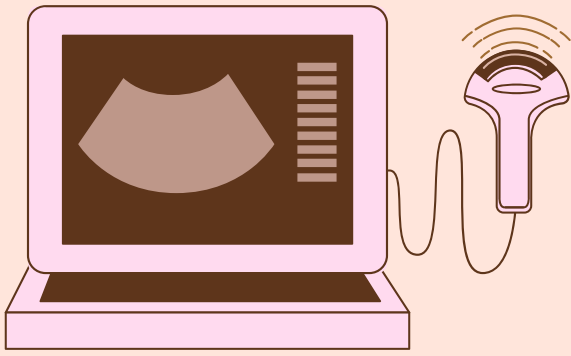
While these new trends of non-conformity received hate and criticism, it is important to acknowledge that this is not new. Historically, at the time of the Bhakti movement, which challenged the social hierarchy and heteronormativity, one of the stories Janansakhi narrates is that Guru Nanak, during his visit to Baghdad, met the Sheikh Saraf, who was wearing 16 adornments that women usually wear. Guru Nank asked why he had dressed in female garments and makeup. He replied in search of his beloved; he dressed up like a bride. This is not the sole example.

Traditionally, male actors used to play female roles in theatres and dances. With modernism, men became conscious of their respectability and masculinity and stopped these practices. However, Bhattacharya (2003) and Hansen (1999) highlight that these performances were admired, and some of the men became the definition of how women behave and act. They become the ideal symbol of femininity. This reflects that India historically celebrated cross-dressing. These long-standing historical roots of cross-dressing are now seen as a reform and revolution. It has a deep connection with spiritual and cultural roots that blur the gender boundaries and redefine the norms of fashion and self-expression.

Conclusion *@thegalgal*

Clothing is not all about aesthetics but a powerful tool of identity, resistance, and expression. Today, Shivam is not just a guy in a skirt but a well-known fashion content creator who has collaborated with celebrities and walked the runway. He is an inspiration to many others, earning public recognition by breaking the norms with confidence. While there is no strong representation of gay men in popular dominant media, their presence in digital space is increasing the visibility of the invisible and silenced community.





Ultra sound

Ultrasound, also known as sonography, is an imaging process that utilises high-frequency sound waves to create images of various internal organs, tissues, and other bodily structures. Before its invention, diagnosing internal conditions, especially in women, often relied on invasive and painful procedures like exploratory surgeries and blind pelvic exams, leaving room for massive ethical violations. The invention of ultrasound helped reimagine gynaecology as a respectful, patient-centric and noninvasive alternative for women's healthcare. However, it has also created a series of newer ethical issues for pregnant people, ironically, including loss of bodily autonomy & the medicalisation of pregnancy, posing the question: Is ultrasound a feminist invention?

FEMININVENTIONS

Kanishka Rastogi and Joono

How it Began

The story of ultrasound began in 1794, when an Italian physicist experimented using sound waves to locate objects. In 1801, Thomas Young was the first to introduce the concept of “Phase Shifting” while working with light waves— a technique now implemented in ultrasound phased array systems to manipulate the wave front and generate 3D images.

The application of ultrasound in medicine began in the mid-twentieth century, developing from experimentation during World War I. Sonar, created during World War II to detect submarines, piqued the interest of physicians. In 1947, Austrian scientists Karl and Friedrich Dussik tried to apply ultrasound for brain imaging. The breakthrough occurred in 1958, when Scottish obstetrician Ian Donald and engineer Tom Brown used the first clinical ultrasound in obstetrics, developing the Dasonograph, which was used for imaging abdominal masses and marked the beginning of a landmark era in maternal health. *thegalgalala*

The ultrasound equipment in its early stages was bulky and technically limited. The pictures generated were freezing and challenging to read. But still, in its early days, ultrasound already offered a safer way to see inside the body than X-rays did, especially during pregnancy. During the 1960s and 70s, electronics and imaging technology quickly progressed to allow for real-time scanning and later enabled Doppler ultrasound, a noninvasive technique to measure the blood flow through the blood vessels. *thegalgalala*

It monitors the movement of red blood cells via changes in the frequency of sound waves as they reflect off circulating blood, known as the Doppler effect, and helps in calculating the speed and direction of blood flow. This allows doctors to see not just fetal anatomy, but also to capture blood circulation. These advances moved ultrasound from test equipment to a standard procedure of prenatal care.

Beyond Science

By the 1980s, ultrasound methods for measuring fetal head circumference, diameter, and femur length had been standardised and were used to determine gestational age and fetal growth. Ultrasound was now at the centre of routine pregnancy surveillance. This transition fundamentally transformed the clinical experience for expectant mothers. The grainy ultrasound image, often framed and cherished in homes, emerged as a cultural emblem for parents-to-be, offering a tangible and visual affirmation of new life. *thegalgalala*

With the advancement of ultrasound technology, its social role has broadened. The application of three-dimensional (3D) and four-dimensional (4D) ultrasound in the 1990s and early 2000s gave people the opportunity to visualise even more detailed and dynamic pictures. These technologies had the effect of making the fetus look almost fully developed and showcased different activities such as yawning, stretch-

-ing, thumb-sucking and making different expressions. Beyond their diagnostic utility in identifying conditions such as cleft palate and neural tube defects, these scans deepened the affective, embodied and symbolic dimensions of how pregnancy is experienced and interpreted. Previously, the fetus was known to the mother through its different activities, such as kicking and felt by the physicians through abstract measurements and heartbeat, but ultrasound made it visually accessible, transforming it from a hidden, internal presence into something observable and documented within medical practice.

This visibility comes with consequences. Feminist scholars have long criticised the fetocentric gaze of the obstetric ultrasound, in which the fetus, as it were, becomes the protagonist of attention, eclipsing the more or less invisible and irrelevant pregnant person and their feelings, pain and social situation. The fetus is typically depicted out of context, floating in a blank space of some kind, as if it is not part of a body or autonomy. In Asian countries like India, this visibility enabled prenatal sex determination, leading to a surge in female infanticide, which, although illegal, isn't uncommon even today.

While ultrasound liberated some, it also brought new questions about who is seen and who remains unseen in maternal care.



Digitisation and Artificial Intelligence thegalgalala

A new layer has been added in recent years– the digital broadcasting and algorithmic alteration of the image. Now that everyone has a smartphone and social media accounts, ultrasound images are commonly shared on platforms such as Facebook and Instagram. A study reported that many pregnant women post ultrasound images to social media and seek pregnancy information. These habits reflect changing norms in how pregnancy is lived, not just as a biological event but also as a socially performed one. The ultrasound image is rendered as a public artefact for announcing, documenting and celebrating gestation. However, there are deep gendered implications behind this turn. In a culture where motherhood is still policed and put on a pedestal, women are increasingly expected to “perform” their pregnancies through visual signifiers: the bump, the glow and now, the scan. Social media puts these rituals on a pedestal, thus inadvertently polishing ideas about what a ‘good’ pregnancy should look like: healthy, wealthy, cheerful and heterosexual. But of course, not everyone’s experience fits this carefully curated mould, omitting transgender parents, people with high-risk or unwanted pregnancies, and people experiencing reproductive loss from the narrative.

More recently, the advent of AI-based tools has emerged to aid in the interpretation of ultrasound, such as those to automate fetal biometrics, anomalies or fetal cardiac assessment.

Artificial intelligence models trained on huge sets of images can pick up very subtle signs of disease that a human might miss. These new technologies envision enhanced accuracy, efficiency, and availability, particularly in resource-limited environments where trained sonographers may be less common.

But AI deployment also brings with it new ethical challenges. One such challenge could be the transparency and explainability of algorithmic decision-making in crucial situations, where doctors need to be able to trust and interpret the recommendations made by AI tools. Secondly, for every app you train on data coming from the Global North, the models could underperform on diverse populations and possibly widen health disparities. Many feminist ethical questions remain—who controls the data, whose experiences are considered valid, who interprets the results, how social inequality is addressed, and whether it challenges or extends patriarchy in a digitalised form. AI is only useful to its utmost capabilities if it's inclusive, transparent and has accountability, but it must remain a tool, not a replacement for human beings.

Daughters Denied Before Birth

Use of ultrasound first came to India in the late 1970s and early 1980s, primarily through private clinics in urban areas. What started as an advancement in the name of safer maternal care quickly adopted a darker side in a profoundly patriarchal society. By the mid-1980s, sex determination had become common as a result of the availability of prenatal tests (obstetric ultrasound and amniocentesis). Instead of being utilised to better maternal or fetal wellbeing, ultrasound was quickly absorbed into a system of sex-selective abortion, giving rise to a gut-wrenching surge in female foeticide. In countries like India, where son preference is deeply rooted, daughters are unfortunately sometimes viewed as a liability or financial burden because of patterns such as the dowry system and the absence of social safety for parents. Since it was now possible to know the sex of the fetus, families could choose to abort female fetuses, using the pretext of routine prenatal care. Across states of Punjab, Haryana, Rajasthan and Maharashtra, clinics were made to offer sex determination under euphemisms such as “male child guarantee”. *thegalgalala*

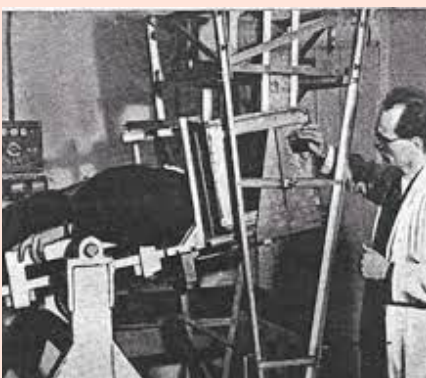
This was not just a medical abuse but a structural problem, a stunning demonstration of how the technological encroachment into unequal societies reinforces systems of violence and control over women's bodies. The social impact was devastating. India, where sex-selective abortion was already resulting in an inclined child sex ratio, recorded a

significant decline. Just 927 girls were recorded for every 1000 boys, a gap that was even further inclined in some areas. As state's answer was the Pre-Conception and Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques (Prohibition of Sex Selection) Act (PCPNDT Act) enacted in 1994 and amended in 2003, to curb and criminalise sex selection and female foeticide. The law prohibited the use of ultrasound and other diagnostic methods to reveal fetal sex, though enforcement has been spotty, and such subterranean practices endure.

The Indian case is a tremendous reminder that technology is never neutral. It has to do with social norms and the demands of capitalism, and cultural values. In a culture where girls are less valued, the ultrasound, an instrument initially used as care, was used as a tool of erasure. It didn't empower women; it denied millions of unborn girls the right to even exist. While ultrasound continues to aid safe pregnancies, it is also deeply entangled in reproductive injustices, making it both a site of medical progress and feminist resistance. *@thegalgalala*

Conclusion

Ultrasound has become one of the most renowned tools in modern obstetrics and gynaecology. Apart from being a technological advancement, it also changes how pregnancy and maternal identity are understood and represented. It has transformed prenatal diagnostics by providing non-invasive care, which helps improve outcomes for both mother and fetus. But despite its unquestionable benefits, it comes with quite some social, technological and ethical implications. As medicine continues to evolve, we can hope for more such innovations, but not without a legal and social framework that protects pregnant people and their bodily autonomy against exploitative politics.



The evolution of ultrasound through 1946, 1960 and 2000s respectively.

1. You wake up on a weekend with no plans. What's your first instinct?

- A) Go for a morning jog or workout to clear your head (3)
- B) Grab a coffee and journal out your thoughts (4)
- C) Call your best friend and plan something spontaneous (5)
- D) Knock out a small task list, you thrive on structure (2)
- E) Dive into a book, article, or niche documentary (1)

2. When someone underestimates you, what do you do?

- A) Let your actions prove them wrong, quietly (2)
- B) Get emotional but use it as fuel (4)
- C) Confront them and remind them who you are (5)
- D) Laugh it off, you've been through worse (3)
- E) Outsmart them calmly (1)

3. Which of these resonates with your core personality?

- A) The survivor who adapts and thrives (2)
- B) The outsider who just wants to belong (4)
- C) The challenger who refuses to back down (5)
- D) The loner who becomes the protector (3)
- E) The fixer who works behind the scenes (1)

4. Your friends would describe you as...

- A) Grounded and dependable (2)
- B) Mysterious and intense (4)
- C) Confident and fearless (5)
- D) Protective and blunt (3) *thegalgalala*
- E) Smart and calculated (1)

CHARACTER
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Answer these questions and add the points allotted to your answers to find out which Marvel super-shero you are!

CHARACTER TEST

Shruti Prasad

Tap on your total points range to know the results!

8-14 points
15-21 points
22-28 points
29-34 points
35-40 points

5. In a group setting, what do you naturally become?

- A) The quiet one observing everything (1)
- B) The emotional glue holding people together (4)
- C) The one who makes big decisions fast (5)
- D) The one who keeps things in check & stops the drama (3)
- E) The organiser who keeps things flowing smoothly (2)

6. What kind of challenge excites you the most?

- A) Something that requires discipline & patience (3)
- B) One that lets you express your creativity & passion (4)
- C) Something bold and risky where you can lead (5)
- D) Something physical or competitive (2)
- E) A mental puzzle or complex problem (1)

7. How do you handle emotional pain?

- A) You compartmentalise it and focus on function (2)
- B) You feel it deeply and need time to process (4)
- C) You push through by distracting yourself with goals (5)
- D) You bottle it up but eventually explode (3)
- E) You analyse it, write about it, or talk to one trusted person (1) *@thegalgalala*

8. What do you value most in your life right now?

- A) Stability and safety (2)
- B) Love and connection (4)
- C) Growth and purpose (5)
- D) Loyalty and respect (3)
- E) Peace and understanding (1)

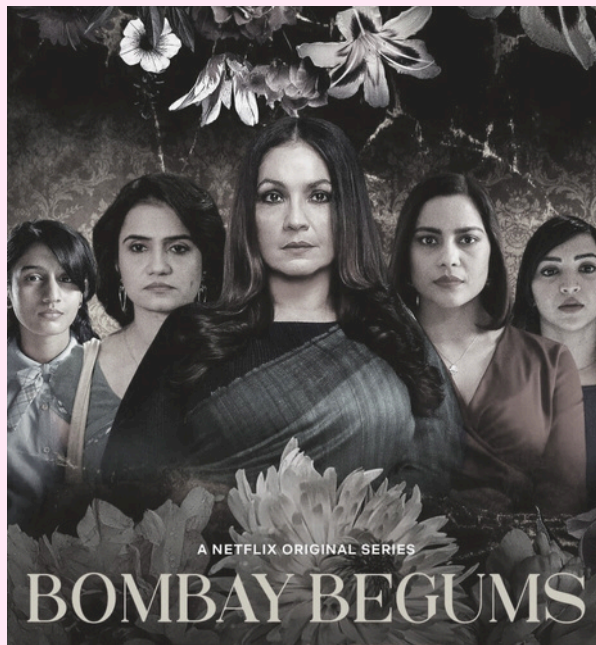
Answer these questions and add the points allotted to your answers to find out which Marvel super-shero you are!

MOTHER CORNER

SUPRATIM H.

In a country where a woman's orgasm can result in more outrage than corruption, two consenting adults kissing can bring more condemnation- the state has taken it upon itself to act as the moral guardian of the "Bharatiya sanskar". This article will examine how the de facto Hindu Rashtra, through its unofficial censorship frameworks like the 2021 OTT content regulations and the CBFC, bravely shields its citizens from the scandal of female pleasure. The state's war on female sexuality is aided by a caste-comfortable feminism that loves a #freedom- one that is "aesthetic" and doesn't question their privilege. Mean-while, the underground feminist films are committing sedition by insisting that women, too, like men, are human beings with sexual pleasure and urges.

TOO HOT FOR *thegalgala* SANSKAR!



When the political leaders can spew hate speech, but a woman exploring her sexual desire on screen causes national distress, one must ask: What is the country terrified of? It isn't corruption, unemployment or ecological collapse- but it's female pleasure. When Lipstick Under My Burqa was denied certification in 2017 for being "lady-oriented" and containing "contagious sexual scenes", the state's moral panic was quite clear- a woman

desiring something for herself. especially her own body, is an existential threat. This anxiety didn't stop at the cinema. Netflix's Bombay Begums faced an official notice for portraying adolescent desire and workplace sexuality. At the same time, Tandav was hounded for its satirical portrayal of religion & politics, especially when women aren't just participants but are politically ambitious. Meanwhile, dystopian films like Leila also hit close to the saffron bone, visualising a totalitarian Hindu nation where women's autonomy has entirely been mechanised. All these cases showed one thing- the panic wasn't about profanity or nudity, but women dissenting, defying and desiring. These cultural flashpoints are situated within the broader project of Hindu nationalist patriarchy, which imagines an ideal woman as chaste, obedient and

reproductive. The state, now, not only wants to know what you're watching, but also whether you're enjoying it in the wrong way.



LIPSTICK UNDER MY BURKHA *@thegalgala*

Morality as Statecraft: Censorship as Governance

In India, morality is less a private matter and more of a public service, dutifully performed by bureaucrats in khadi and ministers who believe cleavage causes earthquakes. The state's investment in regulating female sexuality is its deliberate political governance, where censorship is operating as an ideological mechanism to uphold Hindu majoritarianism, caste hierarchy and gender discipline. The CBFC, often dismissed as a fussy, outdated relic, is, in reality, a moral ministry without a name— an ideological arm of the state functioning to sanitise the public sphere in line with Brahmanical patriarchy. It ignores the glorification of women's

objectification, but is enraged by a woman buying lingerie or pleasuring herself. This selective outrage reveals its political calculus: control the narrative, and you control the nation's mind. This logic also echoes the neo-Marxist theorist Louis Althusser's concept of Ideological State Apparatuses, where the schools, media, and censor boards help reproduce the dominant ideology, in this case Hindutva, under the illusion of neutrality. India's case consists of the ideology where the ideal woman is obedient, heterosexual, Hindu and preferably married before reaching twenty-five. Any narrative deviating from this template not only becomes immoral, but also destabilising. As Nivedita Menon argues, when women claim desire, they unsettle foundational myths of family, religion and the nation.

The logic of censorship-as-governance became more insidious with the 2021 OTT Guidelines, which brought online content under the watchful eye of the state. Under the guise of "self-regulation", the rules effectively deputise platforms to pre-censor content deemed to be offensive to vague ideas like "public order" and "Indian culture". Who defines these terms? Not artists, not citizens, but the same political class that sees a bra-panty as a threat to civilisation.

In effect, the Indian state has outsourced its sanskar project: film boards, legal notices and troll armies; and moral panic headlines now function together as a censorship ecosystem. This system isn't just suppressing content; it's manufacturing docility,

especially among women, minorities and the artists. As cultural theorist Tejaswini Niranjana warns, the state's censorship mechanisms work less to erase than to discipline, making self-expression a terrain of fear. Censorship, then, isn't a cultural concern- it's statecraft. It is about governance through guilt, nationalism through nudity regulation, and social control disguised as sanskar. When morality becomes a national mission, desire itself becomes a subversive act. *@thegalgala*

The Nation's Navel: Desexualising Womanhood in the Hindutva Imagination

If Bharat Mata had a body, it would be eternally veiled, fertile and silent. Her sexuality, like her speech, would be tightly policed, and any expression of pleasure would be deemed anti-national. In the Hindutva imagination, the ideal Indian woman is a womb without desire, a repository of cultural honour, and the biological soldier of a demographic war. This vision isn't incidental- it is central to the political project of Hindutva. Drawing from Savarkar's warning of "Muslim virility" and Hindu emasculation, the Hindutva movement has long tethered national strength to women's chastity. Her role is to reproduce the Hindu nation, not to explore Tinder, pole-dance, or God forbid, masturbate. Sexuality here is not criminal in itself- only when it is female, autonomous and joyful.

Hindutva's cultural apparatus thus works overtime to desexualise womanhood through education curricula that erase sexual health, through film censorship that cuts kissing scenes, but leaves violent misogyny from films like *Animal* and *Kabir Singh* untouched, and through saffronised media that celebrates motherhood but vilifies women who choose otherwise. The result is what eminent feminist scholar Tankia Sarkar calls "spiritualised domesticity"- a model of womanhood bound to the home, the altar, and the delivery ward.



BHARAT MATA

Take, for instance, the repeated attacks upon the aforementioned movies, like *Lipstick Under My Burqa* was banned for "audio pornography," *Bombay Begums* faced backlash for showing a teen exploring her sexuality, and *Leila* was slammed for depicting a futuristic regime that looked too much like a saffron reality. In each case, the anxiety wasn't a naked woman, but a woman thinking, desiring and disobedient.

This logic borrows heavily from colonial and casteist constructions of morality. As Partha Chatterjee's "inner/outer" dichotomy exposes, nationalist discourse often placed women in the domain of the "spiritual inner" home, insulated from the corrupting

material modernity of the outside world. Hindutva simply updates this dichotomy with Sanskrit hashtags and WhatsApp forwards. The ideal woman is a mother, not a sexual being: a Devi, never a debauchee. And yet, this sanitised model collapses under its own contradictions. The same state that wants women to be self-sacrificing mothers also pushes for cosmetic nationalism, where Miss India contests, yoga pants, and 'Nari Shakti' slogans co-exist with moral policing. As a result, Indian womanhood becomes an ideological drag performance- she must be sexy for the state, but never for herself.

When the female body becomes a flagstaff for nationalism, her pleasure becomes treason. The orgasm is not just unspeakable- it's seditious. *thegalgalala*

Underground Feminist Cinema and Resistance

When the state silences desire, underground feminist cinema doesn't whisper- it roars. Those films aren't crafted for CBFC approval or Prime Time dignity. They emerge from the margins- produced on shoestring budgets, shared through digital leaks, WhatsApp links and queer collectives- where pleasure becomes protest and female orgasm a subversive act. These underground media unveil how sexual control is embedded within material exploitation. Silva Federici has argued that capitalist systems have historically depended upon the regulation of women's reproductive & sexual labour- a logic mirrored in India's contemporary policing of women's desires. In *Geeli Pucchi* (2021), the Dalit queer protagonist's suppressed desire is not just a gendered rebellion, but a caste-class transgression.



As Sharmila Rege reminds us, caste must be treated not as an identity category but as a material condition that shapes sexuality and labour.

A radical feminist account will focus on how the body has been the primary site of state and patriarchal control. The desirous, masturbating, loud woman isn't just a threat to morality but to nationhood itself. Films like Payal Kapadiya's *A Night of Knowing Nothing* (2021) merge the erotic with the political- love letters bleed into protest footage, and the female voice reclaims both sexuality and dissent. As Andrea Dworkin remarked, female sexuality is patriarchal and never neutral- it is always regulated and punished. These underground narratives often centre "bad" women- poor, queer, Dalit, Muslim, unmarried, childless- those who refuse to comply with the state's Brahmanical heteropatriarchal script. Their visibility is not granted but seized. And in seizing that space, they embody what Gail Omvedt called a "socialism from below," where feminist struggle is waged not just for representation but against the social reproduction of caste, gender and labour hierarchies.

Thus, underground feminist cinema becomes insurgent cinema. It refuses the curated sanitisation of desire and returns the body to politics- orgasmic, angry and ungovernable.

Conclusion: Who Gets to Orgasm?

In the Indian state's moral universe, female pleasure is a national threat- best avoided, suppressed, or sanitised. The orgasm, when imagined through the woman's body, particularly that of the lower caste or non-conforming, is not just obscene- it is insurgent. Under the garb of "cultural protection", censorship regimes like the CBFC and the 2021 OTT guidelines do not merely regulate films; they regulate who is allowed to desire and how loudly.

Pleasure, here, is political property. The Savarna woman may be allowed a whisper of want, so long as it's wrapped in aesthetics, tragedy and reformation. But when a Dalit woman desires, or when a Muslim girl masturbates onscreen, the response is not critique but crackdown. The state does not fear sex- it fears sex that speaks. Underground feminist cinema disrupts this regime. It refuses to let orgasms be the monopoly of patriarchy and power. In these films, moaning is not pornographic- it is revolutionary. Desire is no longer the subplot; it is the plot. *thegalgala*

Ultimately, who gets to climax? Those who fight for it. Those who film it. Those who refuse to be cut by scissors, be they state-sanctioned or divinely shaped.

FEMININKED —Sudipta Shaw





shevolution



A Girl Who Tried Too Hard: Brown-Skinned, Curly-Haired, and Becoming Kamakshi Srivastava

At the age of nine, I was dropped off at a boarding school with an iron trunk full of clothes, a few books, and a heart full of questions I had no answers to. Just the sentence, “You are here to study and to do your best.” How could I when I didn’t speak English, and in the enclosed world of one of the most elite schools, fluency was status and silence was mistaken for being dim-witted?

My story isn’t new or unique, and that’s what makes it powerful. It is a mosaic of cannon events that have shaped many of us. So many children from middle-class families with both working parents, especially the ones residing in a small town like I was, were parented by ambition.



Me dressed up in my Nani's home, clicked by Nana

I was expected to achieve, to perform, to make the family proud. But nobody teaches us elder daughters how to feel, how to fail, or how to be okay with being mediocre. I experienced what psychologists label as “attachment disruption”. This, coupled with the absence of sound emotional support, often leads to fear of abandonment, anxiety, and hyper-independence. I didn’t have a name for it then—I just thought I was hard to love. This is something I battle with even today. *@thegalgalala*

That said, it is important for me to recognise the privilege embedded in my tale. Boarding school, while emotionally difficult, was still a sign of aspiration. As I grew up, I realised that my parents also became parents for the first time when I was born.



shevolution



As I navigated my life, they were on their first journey to parenthood. My mother, always the one to drop me off at the boarding dormitory, always so composed and stern, would reach home and lock her room so nobody would hear her sobbing. In middle-class households, especially in South Asia, emotional expression isn't usually part of the parenting handbook. Survival is. Education is. Sacrifice is. And my parents did all of those things. They never missed a single school event, even if they had to travel for hours. They gave me what they could, and sometimes more than they had. I had opportunities that many children are still denied. That was love, even though it was hard to grasp at that age.

As a teenager, I craved physical affection, something that was taboo in an all-girls school. "Girls don't hug each other", we were told. But I did, every day. I hugged my friends and thought the world of them for being here with me in this foreign environment. Most teenagers do not understand healthy platonic love, and one of those days, my friend pulled away from me and asked bluntly, "Are you a lesbian or something?"— a question asked not out of curiosity, but judgment. It hurt me, but more than that, it confused me. I wasn't trying to be anything other than loving, but I quickly learned affection between girls was policed or questioned, especially since it did not fall into the stereotype of 'cat-fights' and 'drama fiends'. *@thegalgalala*

Today, I'm lucky to have the most fulfilling and enriching female friendships, spaces where love isn't something to be earned, but freely given; where I am never judged for expressing vulnerability and softness. We hype each other up, cry on each other's shoulders, and send unprompted voice notes that start with "Just wanted to say I love you." That has been one of the quiet triumphs of adulthood— finding people who mirror back the softness I was never wrong to carry.

Colourism was another one of the quieter forms of violence many like me faced— it still hides in compliments like "You're pretty for a dusky girl" and in fairness cream ads that still flood South Asian screens. In India, where over 60% of skin-lightening products are used by women aged 16–35, I was just one among millions taught to despise the skin I was born in.



shevolution



In sixth grade, I was mockingly crowned with a title I never asked for: “the South Indian girl.” Not because I was from the South (I am not), but because of my tanned skin. While all was said in ‘jest’, to many of my classmates and even more of the north Indian population, the identity of being a “South Indian” was shorthand for dark and different in a less than way.

I vividly remember the sound of my cousin’s voice as he stared at my brown-stained lips. “You look like you ate a rat”, he laughed. I threw a tantrum, and later it was water under the bridge, but it left an impact on my psyche. I had probably worn that lipstick to feel pretty, to look like the other girls– light-skinned, more confident, more enough.

I would always complain to my mother, “Why is my skin not like yours? What to do about my curly hair?” and she would always say, “It doesn’t matter.” But it *did* matter– to the child in me who had already begun measuring her worth through the lens of others’ approval. That voice, the one that craved validation, only quietened in one place: my Nani’s home. *@thegalsight*

My Nani and Nana were the most accepting, encouraging, and generous human beings I’ve ever known. Generous with their words, love, consideration, and above all, their kindness. Their home was the one place where I could breathe without explanation. My Nani would dress me up in the most extravagant ways– lehenga, glittery tika, bindi all over my brows, lipstick applied in wild shapes– and all my Nana would do was smile, pick up his camera, and start making an album of me. He was documenting pure joy, and I had never felt so seen.

Now, with both of them gone, I feel the ache of losing not just grandparents, but a safe space. A kind of emotional homeland. A place where I could be weird and dramatic and loved—all at once. Grief doesn’t always scream. Sometimes it just sits quietly in the corners of empty rooms where once someone you loved clapped when you walked in.

People who know me know that I am an emotional hoarder. I look at old photos, videos and my boarding journal, and I ache for the little girl who tried so hard to be accepted. I can’t go back in time, but I try to live in a way that honours her.



shevolution



That girl survives in me even today. She still shows up in my inability to celebrate my own achievements, because my mind tells me they were obligations, not victories. I am a work in progress, but I have learnt to be more

forgiving and perseverant, and I definitely have a better shade of lipstick for that confidence. Through it all, my love for dressing up and being deeply affectionate has never faded.

So, I write this not just for me, but for everyone who ever felt “not enough” in a system that places appearance over authenticity and achievement over emotional well-being.

May we be softer with ourselves and with others. And may we always remember that sometimes, survival is a kind of brilliance.

thegalsgala

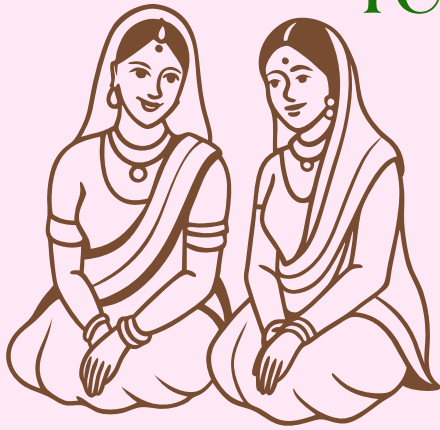


*A stronger,
more
confident
and solid girl*

FEMININKED — Satish Acharya



femprompt *Diaries*



Have you ever felt pressure to conform to traditional gender roles in a romantic relationship?

KISHORI S

Absolutely. Many of my former partners often expected me to set the table and serve them food (albeit when at my place), whereas when I went over to theirs, it was their mother who served me. Turned out, their mothers didn't see anything wrong with it and even thought it was their duty! One particularly insidious former live-in partner even told me, "You're so good at (insert random household chore), maybe you should be allowed to do it the way you like it". Took me a bit to figure things out, but by the end of that relationship, I had successfully built his capacity to clean up after himself. The relationship didn't work out, even though he was a damn good cook. If only he'd done his share of the labour, physical and otherwise. I was tired of being the woman in the relationship. I'm seriously considering dating women now.

URBI BHANDARY

This is not about me directly. But conforming to traditional roles in romantic relationships, or accepting them as norms without any question, is nothing new in the kind of society we live in. I've seen my own family members silently endure it, simply because "that's how things have always been." I've seen them cook single-handedly after returning from work, choose to wear traditional clothes even when they're more comfortable in others, just because that's what's considered 'normal.' I've also heard my friends being told not to wear tops, one-pieces, or skirts because these don't fit the idea of modesty. Even wearing a sleeveless kurti or a kurti without a dupatta is often seen the same way. *@thegalgala*

ATREYI SARKAR

Patriarchy has made it 'mandatory' for men to be the smarter ones in the relationship. While I wouldn't consider myself very intelligent, I love asking relevant questions while discussing a topic. My friends have always been appreciative of this trait but I have had to tone it down for my romantic partners, all of whom were, incidentally, male. They have linked my curiosity to stupidity and have often answered my questions incorrectly but with the air of someone whose ego would break if not agreed with. There were times when I had to agree with ridiculously idiotic answers. Thankfully, I have raised my standards since. It is okay for a man to not know an answer as long as he is honest about it.

TVISHA

I personally have not been in a romantic relationship with anyone, but I've had a situationship, and even there, I could feel the weight to not only behave in a way, but also react to things I may not have always agreed with. That desperate need to be cool, chill, low key and definitely not someone who "catches feelings too fast." I found myself walking on eggshells to avoid expressing my true self because God forbid I request the bare minimum of human decency or emotional development from a man. But the worst part? That instant when the conversation would move to a sexual tone, and all of a sudden, there was an unspoken expectation of me sending nudes, but in sugarcoated words of "just for me" or "don't you trust me?" and the minute I went on to say no, the vibe would switch. Suddenly, I was made to think that I was too emotional and needed to explain why it wasn't okay for me, as though my boundaries had to be justified for a man to be able to understand the basic decency. It felt strange that the old-school gender roles even made their way into modern times. Just as girls are expected to be flirty, but not forward; open, but never emotionally available; always there when a guy wants them around and if you do try to dismantle it and start questioning or taking initiative or just saying no, you are labelled as "too much" and "too difficult". That was a revelation in itself, how messed up that is. *thegalgalala*

FATHIMA LUTHFIYA

Yes, during my school days, I was told not to sit or stand on the tables and manspread my legs like the other boys because it showed a lack of femininity. I remember the boys I would hang out with often had a crush on soft-spoken, traditionally feminine and well-behaved girls of my age. For a long time, "masculine energy" put me in a different kind of unrest—emotionally, mentally, physically & socially, even at my home. I always thought being a boy was much cooler and easier because I was always bombarded with rules and instructions; do this, pick that, cover your body, hair, arms, legs and whatnot. These early gender expectation experiences definitely made me strive for forced femininity, believing that would make others fond of me. But now in my twenties, I'm currently in Delhi, which has provided a lot of insights from my surroundings. I've stopped thinking of others' expectations of me as a partner, friend or stranger. I've embraced my true feminine side for the sake of myself, and I'm loving it every day. Now I'm at peace with my energy.



PRAKRITI BHOWMICK

I started dating this guy from my college in Goa. We started dating when we went for our Master's in the UK. The relationship started as long-distance. Long story short, over the period of 8 months of our relationship, there was this unsaid, invisible but huge responsibility on me of being the more emotionally mature one by ALWAYS being there for him when he was having a tough time. At first, it was okay, until it was not. He would ring me at the slightest inconvenience and start unloading on me about some unpleasant subject he was taking or how his professor was being mean to him. Now I get it, we all have bad days, but it was like I was expected to be the 'mom' in the relationship, always catering to his emotional needs before mine. However, whenever I'd try to vent out, he would just become emotionally unavailable. His excuse would be that he didn't know how to help, and that it led him to feel like walking on eggshells around me. Mind you, I was working part-time, studying and went home around 9 pm daily.

Once, I was walking back home from uni late at night, and my ex rang me up— not to check up on me but to rant about how his professor hadn't taken the time to help him understand something. It was during MY FINALS, I was exhausted, mentally, emotionally and physically, and all this guy wanted was for me to cater to him. When I blasted off on him for being insensitive, he expressed that I was supposed to care for him and that I wasn't allowing him to be emotionally open towards me!!

Another example was when he came over to stay with me for 3 weeks, somehow it was my responsibility to clean the room, cook food and wash the utensils while he stayed over, doing absolutely nothing. Towards the end, I asked him to at least do the dishes, which he did, but horribly. But of course, I didn't complain because at least he did something! I guess what I am trying to say is- if becoming the 'mom' in the relationship - that is, being the only emotionally mature and available one and doing the majority of housework- is considered to be a gender role, then yes, I definitely did feel pressured. I broke up with him after 8 months because, within those months, I realised that he was pessimistic and an anti-feminist in action. @thegalgala

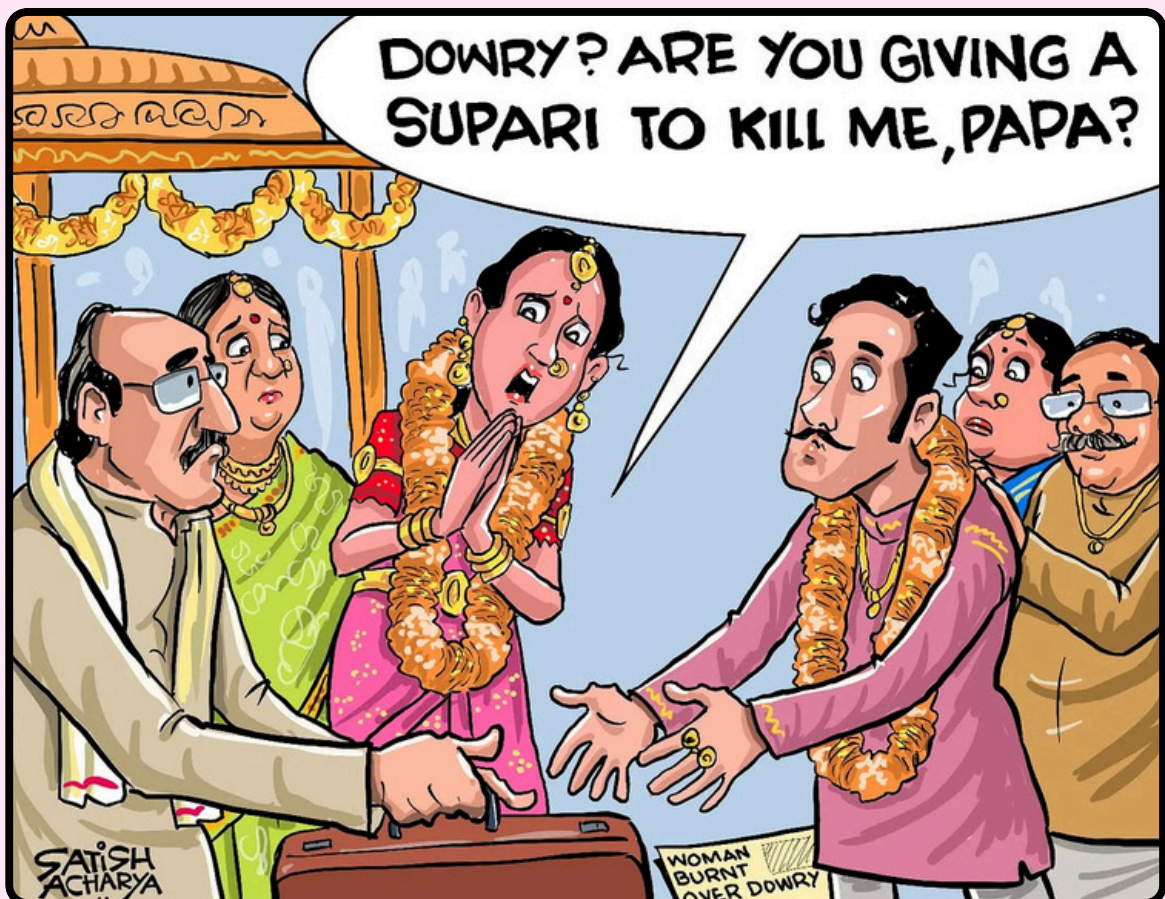


SHRUTI PRASAD

I have not been in a relationship, but I have faced this situation while on dates. For context, I am a masculine-presenting cis queer woman, and I am referring to only wlw relationships ahead. So on restaurant dates, I feel this urge to pay the bill; of course, out of chivalry and to pamper my date, but when I think about it, this specific 'way' of pampering my date is set in my mind because growing up, I saw straight couples and the man was the one spending. More of these instances still govern my life, like having the instinct to be the protector in the relationship and feeling guilty if I have an unexpected flight response during adverse situations; always being the one to see her off, and more. I also do all of this cause I want them to feel good and safe. But in all of this, I sometimes forget that even I am a woman and I can expect these in return as well. But well, every day comes with a new realisation and a chance to grow. I'll still do those things, but I will keep in mind that I don't conform to these traditional gender roles.

Question for next issue: *Are you a “good” girl? Why or why not?*
Send us your answers [here](#). *@thegalgalala*

FEMININKED — Satish Acharya



BEHIND THE

Pages

1

Joono

- Editor-in-Chief
- Creative Director
- Designer
- Editorial Coordinator
- Production Manager
- Content Curator

2

Writers

- Kamakshi Srivastava
- Kritika Bhatia
- Debopoma Bhattacharjee
- Supratim H.
- Shruti Prasad
- Shataghnee Chanda
- Khushboo Dandona
- Sanjana Ghosh
- Sana Ansari
- Kanishka Rastogi
- Mannat Kaur
- Urbi Bhandary

3

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Hidden word in **FEMiNEWS CROSSWORD**

GYNANDROMORPH (n)

/juh-NAN-droh-morff/

an organism, especially an insect, that has both male and female physical characteristics

late 19th century: from Greek gunandros 'of doubtful sex' + morphē 'form'. *thegalala*

(via Collins Dictionary & Oxford English Dictionary)

Bibliography

1

Shero Chronicles:

- Malati Murmu
- Rajitha N & Muskan Ahirwar
- Varsha Deshpande
- Jackielynn Pradhan
- Hari Chandana
- Gopika Govind
- Captain Shradhha
- Sunita Choudhary
- Payal Nag *@thegalgal*
- Sabitri Majhi
- Indian women's cricket team
- Banu Mushtaq
- Satyesha Leuva
- Sonajharia Minz
- Rainbow Habba 2025

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Herdicts & Schemes

- Maternity leave
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- Lesbian couple
- Live in relationship for 16 years
- Victim's statement
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- Adult Woman's Right to Marry a Person of Choice
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- Secret call recordings
- UGC rules against caste-based bias
- Honour killings

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- Donald School Journal of Ultrasound in Obstetrics & Gynecology
- Evolution of Ultrasounds
- Maternal Devices

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- Androcentrism
- Cisnormativity

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Herbatim

- Cyberbullying
- Guru Nanak
- Fashion
- LGBTQ+ bullying
- Seeing like a feminist

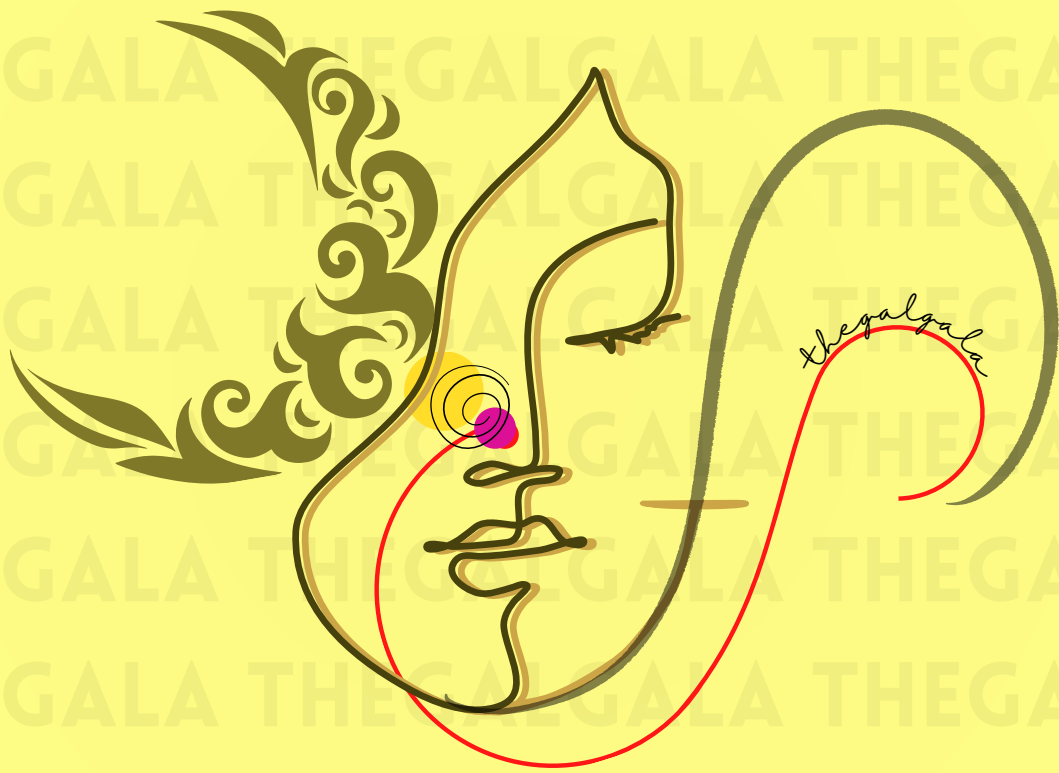
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She.E.O Spotlight

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