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**CHIEF EDITOR:**

**DR. AKANKSHA SHRIVASTAVA  
AADHYA PUBLISHING HOUSE**

# Preface

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***"Panache Ink" is not just a name. It is a basic value of our "Aadhya Publishing House" as we believe talent should never die. Rather it should always stand out like the feathered plume on a helmet to attract the world and that is what Panache means. We, as the Publisher, believe in encouraging new talent in the field of literature. We want each and every poet to get the opportunity to express themselves and get the proper acknowledge that they deserve. They should be known by the world for their views and we hope very soon we shall be able to achieve this.***

***Panache Ink is a monthly international magazine in the English Language, that is released on digital platforms for literature lovers.***

***However, our work does not end here. I, Akanksha Shrivastava, Publisher and Chief Editor of Aadhya Publishing house, am trying to put a smile on the faces of poor children by providing them with food on behalf of our publishing house. By taking this small initiative, it is our wish to fulfill this basic need of food so that we help the children to survive in a better way.***



# **AADHYA PUBLISHING HOUSE**

**PRESENTS**

## **PANACHE INK** International Magazine

March 2026

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# **Panache Ink**

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# Editorial

## Women & Words: The Power of a Voice That Refuses Silence

Literature has always been more than the arrangement of words on a page; it is the echo of human experience, the memory of societies, and the quiet resistance of voices that refuse to disappear. In this March 2026 edition of Panache International Magazine, we celebrate one of the most profound forces in the history of human expression—the voice of women.

Across civilizations and centuries, women have shaped narratives in ways both visible and invisible. Sometimes their words appeared in sacred texts, sometimes in whispered poems passed from one generation to another, and sometimes in letters that were never meant to be posted. Yet every expression—spoken, written, or imagined—has contributed to the evolving story of humanity.

This edition brings together reflections, research, creative writing, and literary analysis that collectively illuminate how women's voices have transformed culture, literature, and society.

The opening editorial feature reflects on the divine feminine power represented by the Navadurga, reminding us that strength is not a single quality but a spectrum of virtues—resilience, discipline, courage, creativity, compassion, justice, transformation, clarity, and wisdom. These nine symbolic energies reflect the many roles women play in the modern world as thinkers, leaders, creators, and nurturers. As the article illustrates, true empowerment is not merely external achievement but an awakening of inner potential.

The discussion continues through an exploration of Indian epics viewed through a contemporary lens, where mythological figures such as Draupadi, Sita, Mandodari, and Tara are reconsidered beyond traditional stereotypes. When we revisit these narratives today, we discover not passive characters but complex individuals who demonstrate courage, intelligence, and moral strength. Their stories remind us that even ancient narratives contain seeds of resistance and agency that continue to inspire modern conversations about gender and justice.

Another important dimension of this issue is the historical journey of women's literary expression. From the philosophical debates of Vedic scholars like Gargi and Maitreyi to the devotional poetry of the Bhakti movement, from nationalist writings of the colonial era to contemporary feminist narratives and digital storytelling platforms, women's voices have evolved alongside social transformations. What once existed primarily through oral traditions now circulates globally through digital media, connecting writers and readers across cultures and continents.

Language itself becomes a subject of inquiry in this edition through a thoughtful analysis of gender bias in linguistic systems. Words shape perceptions, and historically, many languages have subtly privileged masculine experiences while marginalizing female perspectives. Recognizing these patterns is the first step toward creating a more inclusive linguistic environment—one where communication reflects the dignity and diversity of all voices



Alongside critical reflections, this issue celebrates the global influence of women writers who transformed literature and society. Figures such as Maya Angelou and Toni Morrison remind us that literature can challenge injustice, confront historical trauma, and give language to experiences long ignored. Their works demonstrate that writing is not only an artistic act but also a moral and political one.

The magazine also acknowledges the emergence of contemporary digital poets and storytellers who use modern platforms to reach new audiences. Social media, spoken-word performances, and online publications have democratized literary spaces, allowing young voices to share personal narratives that resonate globally. These evolving forms show that literature is not confined to traditional publishing; it continues to adapt with the changing rhythms of the world.

In the creative section, the poignant story “The Letter She Never Posted” reminds us that writing can become an intimate refuge. Through the life of Meera, the narrative portrays how women often preserve their identities through silent acts of expression. Even when society refuses to listen, the written word becomes a space where memory, resilience, and self-recognition survive.

Together, the pieces in this edition reveal a powerful truth: women’s voices are not merely additions to literature—they are foundational to it. They question tradition, reinterpret history, challenge language, and create new possibilities for the future.

As readers move through these pages, they will encounter scholarship, storytelling, poetry, and reflection that collectively celebrate the richness of feminine expression. Each contribution adds another layer to the ongoing dialogue about identity, creativity, and equality.

At Panache, our commitment remains the same—to provide a platform where voices from different cultures, backgrounds, and experiences can be heard. Literature thrives when diverse perspectives come together, and we believe that every writer has the power to illuminate the world through words.

May this edition inspire readers to listen more deeply, think more critically, and write more courageously. Because every voice matters. And sometimes, the words that change the world begin quietly—on a single page.

**Dr. Akanksha Shrivastava**  
**Chief Editor**  
**Panache International Magazine**

# Column

By: Piyush Goel

Long ago, there lived a fisherman who earned his living by catching fish and selling them in the market. Whatever he earned, he used to support and care for his family.

One day, as usual, he caught several fish and was placing them in his basket. Suddenly, he noticed that one fish was jumping restlessly, struggling again and again as if it were very distressed. The fisherman took it out of the basket to see what was wrong. To his surprise, the fish's eyes looked moist, almost as if it were crying. Just then, the fish released a pearl from its mouth. Written on the pearl were the words: "Brother, please let me go. Without me, my children will die."

The fisherman's heart melted with compassion. He released the fish back into the pond and kept the pearl safely with him.

Life went on like this, but the incident stayed in the fisherman's mind. After some time, something similar happened again. One day, another fish in his basket began jumping desperately, its eyes again filled with tears. When the fisherman picked it up, another pearl came out. On it was written: "Without me, my mother will die."

Once again, the fisherman was moved with pity. He released the fish into the water and kept the pearl. Yet he began to worry—If this continues, how will I continue my work?

Time passed. Then one day it happened again. Another fish jumped helplessly in the basket. When the fisherman held it in his hands, a third pearl appeared. On it was written: "Brother, my wife cannot live without me."

This time, the fisherman could not bear it anymore. He immediately overturned his entire basket full of fish back into the pond. Keeping the three pearls in his pocket, he returned home.

When he reached home, he told his wife everything that had happened. With a heavy heart, he said, "I don't think I can continue this work anymore. I have lost the strength to catch fish. My heart does not allow me to do it."

Both of them became worried. If he stopped fishing, how would they support their family?

A few days later, troubled and restless, the fisherman went and sat near the pond. Overwhelmed with worry, he began to cry out loudly. Just then, a fish appeared from the water and said, "Brother, please don't worry. You have done so much for us. Now it is our turn."

Soon, many fish began coming out of the pond, one after another. Each fish released a pearl and left it near him before returning to the water. They said, "Do not worry about anything. Whenever you wish, you can come here to meet us."

The fisherman gathered all the pearls and returned home. When his family saw so many pearls, their joy knew no bounds. With those pearls, the fisherman started a new business, and from that day onward, they lived a peaceful and happy life.

Whenever he felt like it, the fisherman would go to the pond to visit the fish that had once changed his destiny.

**Live with joy, and let others live with joy.**



# Embracing Divine Feminine Power: Lessons from the Navadurga

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By: **Usha Krishnan**  
**Edior Panache**



In an era marked by rapid change, social upheavals, and unprecedented opportunities, women are increasingly stepping into roles of leadership, innovation, and social transformation. They are forging their own identities of strength and power by transcending constraints, dismantling restrictions, and breaking barriers. By shattering stereotypes, they are paving new paths of empowerment.

However, the true essence of strength lies not only in external achievements but also in embracing the divine qualities that reside within each of us. The Navadurga—the nine divine forms of Goddess Durga, serve as eternal symbols of feminine power, resilience, and wisdom and compassion. Each goddess embodies a specific energy that can inspire women to harness their inner strength and lead fulfilling, purpose driven lives with courage, discipline, compassion, and inner clarity.

Understanding and invoking these divine energies can undoubtedly equip women of the current era to unlock their fullest potential and manifest a life of purpose, balance, and empowerment.

Let us explore the divine qualities represented by each form of Durga and how these can serve as guiding lights to women of the current era.



## 1 Shailputri – Foundation Strength and stability

Shailputri, the first form of Goddess Durga, symbolizes the foundational strength of a woman. She embodies stability, resilience, and grounding, symbolizing the importance of a strong base in life—be it values, relationships, or inner strength. Her name translates to "Daughter of the Mountain," highlighting her connection with the Himalayas, representing stability, resilience, and unwavering support. She is often depicted riding a bull, holding a trident and a lotus, embodying strength and purity.

In a world demanding constant change and adaptation, Shailputri encourages women to stay grounded in their core values and inner strength. Her energy encourages us to stay grounded during turbulent times, emphasizing that true strength lies in stability and inner fortitude. She inspires women to build their lives on the pillars of patience, perseverance, and inner resilience.

As the first goddess in the Navadurga series, Shailputri sets the tone for spiritual growth, reminding women of the importance of rooting themselves in their core principles to face life's challenges confidently. Today's women can draw inspiration from her to cultivate resilience, remain anchored amidst chaos, and stand tall with unwavering confidence.

In today's world, women face constant challenges—balancing careers, family, and personal growth. Shailputri's energy advocates for stability and perseverance. It reminds women that success is rooted in inner strength and that staying true to oneself creates a resilient foundation for all endeavours. Her divine energy inspires women to cultivate patience, resilience, and a grounded sense of purpose.

## 2. Brahmacharini – Discipline & Knowledge

Brahmacharini, the second form of goddess Durga, embodies the virtues of discipline, devotion, and the pursuit of knowledge. Her name signifies "the one who practices austerity" and is revered for her unwavering dedication to spiritual growth. Depicted carrying a rosary and a water vessel, she symbolizes purity of mind and devotion. Her austerity signifies dedication and self-control, essential qualities for personal growth and mastery.

In an era where distractions are plentiful, her energy inspires women to cultivate focus, patience, and continuous learning. Whether advancing careers, pursuing passions, or seeking spiritual enlightenment, Brahmacharini reminds us that discipline and knowledge are powerful tools that lead to inner strength and wisdom. Brahmacharini's energy inspires women to cultivate discipline in their daily routines and to seek continuous learning. She reminds us that true knowledge requires patience, perseverance, and self-control. Her energy is a beacon for those on a path of self-improvement, encouraging women to pursue education, spiritual wisdom, and self-awareness with dedication.

Brahmacharini exemplifies that discipline and knowledge are powerful tools that lead to inner strength and enlightenment. Her teachings motivate women to remain steadfast in their goals and to value the process of learning as a means of personal empowerment.

Embracing her energy can help women navigate their journeys with clarity, purpose, and unwavering commitment.

In an age of instant gratification, the virtues of patience, discipline, and continuous learning are more vital than ever. Women seeking personal development, professional success, or spiritual enlightenment can draw inspiration from Brahmacharini's example. Her energy encourages setting clear intentions, practicing self-control, and dedicating oneself wholeheartedly to the pursuit of knowledge and inner peace.



### 3. Chandraghanta - Courage

Chandraghanta, the third form of Durga, is depicted with a half-moon on her forehead, riding a tiger, wielding weapons, and wearing a bell-shaped Chandra (moon). Named after the crescent moon (Chandra) on her forehead, she radiates a fierce yet compassionate energy, calmness amidst chaos, while her ten arms wield formidable weapons to protect righteousness. Face life's challenges boldly and without fear. Her fearless stance encourages a sense of inner bravery to confront difficulties and stand up for justice and truth. In today's world, where women confront societal challenges, personal dilemmas, and global issues, Chandraghanta's energy inspires boldness, resilience, and the courage to lead change. Her divine strength empowers women to confront life's battles with grace and fearlessness. She inspires women to face challenges fearlessly and stand strong in the face of adversity, radiating inner strength and valour.

She symbolizes the power to protect oneself and others, inspiring women to be resilient and courageous in their pursuits. Her energy reminds us that true strength lies in the courage to face fears and uncertainties, transforming vulnerabilities into sources of power. Her fierce demeanour exemplifies inner bravery and the willingness to confront adversities head-on. The half-moon signifies calmness and emotional balance, even amidst chaos. She teaches that true strength involves courage, resilience, and the ability to stand firm against injustice.

Women today often face societal biases, personal fears, and challenges that demand courage. Chandraghanta's divine energy inspires women to face their fears confidently and to stand up for themselves and others with conviction. Her fearless presence encourages leadership, activism, and self-assertion.

### 4. Kushmanda – Creation Energy

Kushmanda, the fourth form of Goddess Durga, is known as the goddess and creator of the universe. Her name means 'the one who created the cosmic egg,' signifying her role as the divine force behind the universe's birth. She is depicted with a bright, smiling face, holding a lotus, and emanating divine light, symbolizing the power to generate energy and positivity. Her radiant smile and energetic presence symbolize the power to manifest dreams into reality.

She inspires women to harness their creative powers and to bring new ideas to life. Kushmanda's energy encourages positivity, vitality, and an innovative spirit. In the current era, women are creators of change, and this goddess's divine energy reminds us to believe in our ability to shape our destiny and to foster growth and renewal in all aspects of life.

In a world craving innovation and renewal, women are at the forefront of creating change—be it in the arts, entrepreneurship, social service, or nurturing relationships. Kushmanda inspires women to believe in their creative potential, generate positive energy, and bring new ideas into reality.



## 5. Skandmata – Nurturing Leadership

Skandmata, the divine mother of Lord Skanda, embodies nurturing leadership and compassionate guidance. She is depicted as a compassionate mother holding her son, Skanda, in her lap, symbolizing protection and guidance. She exemplifies that true leadership combines strength with empathy. Her divine energy encourages women to lead with kindness, patience, and nurturing care within families, communities, or workplaces. As women take on leadership roles globally, Skandmata's example reminds us that compassionate strength is the most transformative force.

Skandmata teaches women the importance of nurturing others while leading with empathy, patience, and kindness. She inspires women to be caring leaders in their families, communities, and workplaces, balancing authority with compassion. Her divine energy encourages nurturing qualities that foster trust and loyalty in relationships.

In other words, Skandmata's example reminds women that leadership rooted in love and understanding can create positive change, making them powerful agents of growth and harmony in their spheres of influence. Her divine energy reminds women that true leadership combines strength with kindness. Nurturing and compassion are powerful tools for inspiring change and creating harmony.

## 6. Katyayani – Justice & Action

Katyayani, the sixth form of Goddess Durga, is associated with justice, power, and decisive action. She is depicted riding a lion, wielding weapons, and exuding fierce energy. Known as the warrior goddess, Katyayani embodies the strength to fight injustice and stand for righteousness.

She inspires women to stand up for what is right and to act decisively against societal wrongs. Her energy fuels assertiveness and moral courage, qualities vital in today's world where women are advocating for equality, rights, and social justice. Katyayani's divine strength urges women to be fearless warriors for justice, making a positive difference in their spheres of influence.

Her energy inspires women to take bold action when faced with unfairness or adversity, motivating them to uphold truth and integrity. She encourages assertiveness, courage, and the willingness to act decisively for the greater good. Katyayani's divine power reminds women that justice requires courage and proactive effort. Her energy fuels the determination to make a difference, whether in personal life or societal issues, inspiring women to become warriors for justice and righteousness. Her energy embodies moral courage, assertiveness, and the determination to uphold truth. She urges women to stand against injustice and to act decisively when faced with moral dilemmas.



## 7. Kalaratri – Fearless Transformation

Kalaratri, the seventh form of Goddess Durga, embodies fearless transformation and the destruction of darkness. She rides a donkey and wields a sword, representing inner transformation. Her formidable appearance, with a dark complexion and disheveled hair, symbolizes her power to eliminate ignorance, fears, and negative energies. She embodies the courage to confront and transcend the darker aspects of life, transforming pain and obstacles into growth opportunities.

She teaches women that true growth often involves shedding old identities and facing inner shadows. Her energy signifies that true transformation often involves shedding old identities and fears to emerge stronger and wiser. She inspires courage during times of change and upheaval, guiding women through inner darkness toward self-realization and enlightenment. Embracing her divine energy empowers women to transform challenges into opportunities for renewal and strength.

Her energy signifies the power to confront and transcend fears, doubts, and negative energies. She teaches that growth often involves shedding old limitations and embracing inner darkness to attain enlightenment.

Women often face internal fears, doubts, and societal negativity. Kalaratri empowers women to confront their shadows, fears, and doubts fearlessly, transforming challenges into opportunities for profound growth.

## 8. Mahagauri – Inner Clarity

Mahagauri, the eighth form of Goddess Durga, symbolizes purity, serenity, and inner clarity. Her radiant white complexion signifies peace and calmness. She embodies the inner light that clears mental fog, doubts, and confusion, helping women attain self-awareness and tranquility. Her luminous white form reminds women of the importance of inner peace and mental clarity amidst external chaos. Her divine energy encourages self-reflection, patience, and emotional balance.

In today's world filled with distractions, she reminds women to nurture their inner selves, cultivate mindfulness, and seek clarity of purpose. Inner serenity and clarity become powerful tools for making wise decisions and leading a balanced, harmonious life.

Mahagauri's energy encourages women to cultivate inner peace, patience, and clarity of thought. She teaches that true strength comes from a calm mind and a pure heart. Her divine presence inspires women to seek self-purification, forgiveness, and mental clarity, leading to a balanced and harmonious life.

She embodies calmness amidst chaos and teaches the importance of mental peace and self-reflection. Her divine energy encourages women to nurture inner tranquility, patience, and emotional balance. Inner purity and clarity lead to wise decisions and harmonious relationships.

In a world full of distractions, cultivating inner peace is vital for mental health and overall well-being. Mahagauri's divine energy reminds women to prioritize self-care, mindfulness, and inner reflection.



## 9. Siddhidatri – Fulfillment & Wisdom

Siddhidatri, the ninth and final form of Goddess Durga, signifies ultimate fulfillment, spiritual wisdom, and divine power. She is depicted seated on a lotus, radiating divine grace and knowledge. She grants supernatural powers and spiritual insight, inspiring women to realize their higher potential. Her divine energy encourages the pursuit of self-actualization, spiritual awakening, and inner fulfillment in all aspects of life. In a world where women seek purpose and meaning, Siddhidatri reminds us that true fulfillment comes from aligning with our inner wisdom and divine potential. Her blessings empower women to live with grace, purpose, and divine confidence.

Her energy inspires the pursuit of wisdom, self-realization, and fulfillment. She embodies the culmination of spiritual progress, reminding women that true happiness and success come from inner wisdom and divine connection. Siddhidatri's blessings empower women to attain complete fulfillment, balance, and spiritual enlightenment, guiding them on their journey toward self-actualization and divine grace.

Her divine energy signifies the attainment of spiritual knowledge, inner fulfillment, and divine grace. She inspires women to realize their higher potential and live with purpose.

Women seeking spiritual growth or greater self-awareness can draw inspiration from Siddhidatri's divine blessings. Her energy empowers women to connect with their inner wisdom and manifest their highest aspirations.



## Conclusion: Embrace Your Divine Power

The Navadurga embodies a spectrum of divine qualities—resilience, discipline, courage, creativity, nurturing, justice, fearlessness, inner peace, and wisdom. Each form offers unique lessons that are as relevant today as they were millennia ago. Each form embodies qualities that are vital for women navigating the complexities of the modern world and reminds us that the power to lead, transform, and fulfill lies within each woman.

In the current era, where women are breaking barriers and inspiring change, it is essential to connect with these divine energies and integrate their lessons into daily life. The modern woman can conquer any challenges in life if she channels the nine Durgas' strength and power within herself.

She can invoke Shailputri's strength to remain centered in moments of doubt or upheaval and cultivate resilience by reaffirming her core values, trusting her inner strength, and embracing the calm power that sustains her through life's storms. Inviting the presence of Brahmacharini's energy during moments of temptation or distraction and cultivating daily discipline through meditation, study, or self-care to strengthen her resolve and deepen her understanding of self and her own purpose will make her stronger. Invoking Chandraghanta's power when facing difficult situations, embracing her inner warrior to stand tall against injustice, speak truth, and lead with fearless confidence will act as a catalyst for her transformative change.

To channel Kushmanda's divine radiance, she can focus on nurturing her passions, expressing positivity, and embracing her creative energies; thus, she can be a source of inspiration and transformation in her community and beyond. Invoking Skandmata's nurturing strength when mentoring, guiding, and practicing compassionate leadership fosters trust, loyalty, and long-term success. She can embrace Katyayani's fierce energy when advocating for causes she believes in and be fearless in standing up for truth and justice, knowing her voice can inspire others. Similarly, having Kalaratri's fearless energy during times of transformation would help her embrace change, shed old fears, and emerge stronger, wiser, and more resilient. Connecting with Mahagauri's serene energy through meditation and self-awareness would no doubt create space for inner peace and guide her actions and relationships, and invoking Siddhidatri's divine grace to seek clarity, wisdom, and fulfillment will make it easy for her to embrace her divine potential and live a life aligned with her highest purpose.

By awakening these divine energies, women today can create a ripple of positive change—leading with strength, compassion, wisdom, and fearless transformation. The time is now to embrace our inner goddess and shine brighter than ever before.

If every woman of the current era works conscientiously to embrace her inner goddess, harness her power, embody her qualities, and illuminate the world with her unique divine light, she can be even more empowered to change this world with her inner strength.



# Global Women Voices Spotlight

BY: KARTIK  
SHRIVASTAVA

## Maya Angelou (1928–2014)

Maya Angelou was an iconic American poet, memoirist, and civil rights activist whose voice carried the strength of resilience and dignity. She is widely considered a strong spokesperson for the rights of Africans against Black culture. Her autobiographical work, “I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings”, broke barriers in American literature by candidly addressing racism, trauma, and identity. Angelou’s poetry—especially “Still I Rise” and “Phenomenal Woman”—celebrates Black womanhood, empowerment, and unyielding hope.

She worked closely with leaders like Martin Luther King Jr. and Malcolm X, embedding activism within her art. In 1993, she recited her poem “On the Pulse of Morning” at then-President Bill Clinton’s inauguration, becoming a global symbol of poetic courage. Angelou’s voice continues to inspire women and in fact, everyone worldwide, who must have read her works to speak boldly and live unapologetically.

## Toni Morrison (1931–2019)

Toni Morrison was a Nobel Prize-winning novelist whose works examined the Black experience in America with profound emotional depth. Her novel “Beloved” remains a landmark text in world literature, addressing slavery and the trauma experienced by Africans during the Atlantic slave trade. For this book, she also won the Pulitzer Prize in 1987. In 1993, Morrison became the first African American woman to receive the Nobel Prize in Literature. Her writing centers on community, history, and the silenced voices of Black women. Morrison once said, “If there’s a book that you want to read, but it hasn’t been written yet, then you must write it.” Through her narratives, she became the voice of marginalized stories and reshaped the conventional form of fiction into a newer form.

## Mahadevi Verma (1907–1987)

Mahadevi Verma was a leading figure of the Chhayavaad movement in Hindi literature and is often regarded as the “Modern Meera.” Her poetry expresses spiritual longing, compassion, and a subtle feminist consciousness. Works such as *Yama* highlight her lyrical style and philosophical depth.

Beyond poetry, Verma was an educator and social reformer who advocated for women’s education and empowerment. She received the Jnanpith Award and Padma Vibhushan for her literary contributions. Her life reflected a harmonious blend of literary excellence and social commitment.

## Contemporary Digital Women Poets

In the digital era, women poets are reshaping literary landscapes through social media platforms like Instagram, YouTube, and online publishing forums. These poets use accessible language, visual aesthetics, and spoken-word performances to connect with global audiences.

Writers such as:

- Rupi Kaur – Known for minimalist poetry collections like *Milk and Honey*, focusing on love, trauma, healing, and femininity.
- Nikita Gill – Blends mythology, feminism, and empowerment themes in her digital poetry.
- Warsan Shire – Explores migration, identity, and womanhood; her poetry gained global attention through collaborations in popular culture.
- Priya Malik is a well-known spoken word poet who gained popularity through platforms like YouTube and poetry events such as *Kommune* and *UnErase Poetry*. Her Hindi and bilingual performances focus on feminism, body positivity, relationships, and self-worth. Her strong stage presence and emotive recitation style have made her a recognizable digital poetry voice.
- Anamika Amber is widely appreciated for her powerful Hindi *kavita* performances on social media and *Kavi Sammelans* available on YouTube. Her poetry often reflects patriotism, women’s empowerment, cultural identity, and social awareness. She bridges traditional poetic style with modern digital reach.
- Nidhi Narwal is popular among young audiences for her romantic and socially reflective Hindi poetry. Her performances, frequently circulated online, address love, heartbreak, gender roles, and societal expectations. Her conversational tone makes poetry relatable to contemporary youth.
- Aranya Johar is a spoken word poet and activist whose performances address gender equality, body image, mental health, and youth identity. While she performs in both Hindi and English, her Hindi pieces strongly resonate with digital audiences advocating social change.
- Jyoti Tiwari is known for her emotionally charged Hindi poetry performances shared widely on YouTube and literary platforms. Her themes revolve around love, separation, women’s dignity, and social sensitivity.

## My Reflections

From Maya Angelou’s powerful civil rights poetry to Mahadevi Verma’s spiritual lyricism, from Toni Morrison’s historical narratives to Amrita Pritam’s partitioned grief, women’s voices have shaped global literature profoundly. Today’s digital poets continue this legacy by transforming personal experiences into collective empowerment.

Together, these voices remind us that poetry is not merely written—it is lived, resisted, and reclaimed.



# FEMINISM AND INDIAN EPICS: RE-READING WOMEN THROUGH A MODERN LENS

By: Usha Krishnan  
Editor Panache

Indian mythological tales and epic narratives like the Mahabharata and Ramayana are more than tales of divine beings and heroic deeds; mirrors of the societal values and moral principles that have shaped Indian culture for generations. These epics have long served as moral guides, influencing perceptions of gender roles and expectations, shaping cultural ideas, including perceptions of women. Traditionally, women in these epics have been portrayed through specific archetypes such as obedient wives and sacrificial figures. However, as we reflect on these narratives through a modern feminist perspective, it becomes clear that these legends are not just stories of the past—they are reflections of the values we hold. Re-examining these mythic women allows us to uncover stories of strength and resistance that have been hidden beneath the layers of tradition.

By reinterpreting these legendary figures, contemporary feminist perspectives urge us to revisit and reinterpret these legendary women with fresh eyes—recognizing the complexities and strengths that often go unnoticed.

## Draupadi: The Power behind the Stereotype

Draupadi's story is one of the most powerful and controversial in Indian mythology. Historically, she has been depicted as a victim—humiliated publicly in the Mahabharata's infamous dice game, where her dignity is insulted. For many years, her suffering was emphasized over her resilience and intelligence. However, modern feminist writers challenge this narrow view.

Draupadi was not merely a passive sufferer but a woman of remarkable political astuteness and resilience. Her boldness in voicing the injustice done to her and refusing to accept her humiliation silently demands recognition. Her fiery outbursts during the dice game and her demand for justice highlight her assertiveness and refusal to be silenced. She navigates through the different phases of overwhelming adversity with courage and assertiveness.

Reinterpreting Draupadi as an empowered woman challenges the stereotypical victim narrative. She embodies resilience and agency. Her story resonates with modern women who refuse to accept injustice and seek to redefine their identities beyond societal stereotypes.

## Sita: The Embodiment of Inner Strength

The Ramayana's Sita is revered as the ideal wife—virtuous, obedient, and pure. Her abduction by Ravana and her subsequent exile after Lord Rama's victory have often been used to exemplify the virtues of patience, sacrifice, and unwavering belief in herself. While these qualities are admirable, contemporary feminist readings explore Sita's character beyond her suffering.

Sita's decision to undergo the 'Agni Pariksha', or the fire test, is often seen as the ultimate proof of her purity. However, in some of the contemporary voices, this act of hers is interpreted as her power of moral strength and urge to hold on to her independence. She values her dignity more than anything else. Her decision to return to the forest and her subsequent exile demonstrate her resilience and individuality.

Modern reinterpretations emphasize that she embodies inner strength that goes beyond societal ideals of purity, representing a woman who chooses her own moral compass amid challenges. Her story inspires contemporary women to stand firm in their convictions, even when societal pressures demand otherwise.

## Mandodari and Tara

The stories of Mandodari and Tara reveal the importance of wisdom often overlooked in traditional narratives as voices often silenced.

Mandodari, Ravana's wife, is portrayed as a compassionate woman who attempts to counsel her husband against his destructive ambitions. Despite her efforts, her voice is marginalized; yet her moral strength and emotional resilience are noticeable. She embodies the voice of reason and morality in a story dominated by war and ego.

Tara is recognized as a woman of profound strength in both the Ramayana and the Mahabharata. She is known for her intellect, diplomacy, and resilience. In the Ramayana (as Vali's wife), her story highlights her role as a proactive, vocal, and strategic figure who shapes the fate of kings, embodying both intelligence and the ability to navigate crises. Her political wisdom, strategic foresightedness, diplomacy, and resilience literally stand for what her name, Tara, as "the power of lightning" stands for.

. During the turbulent times of the Mahabharata, her counsel often influences decisions that impact entire kingdoms. Her wisdom and calm presence challenge the notion that women's roles are limited to domestic or submissive spheres. Reinterpreting these characters as embodiments of moral strength and intelligence broadens our understanding of women's roles in epic narratives.

## Modern Reinterpretations: Literature and Theatre

Contemporary literature and theatre are playing a vital role in reimagining these legendary women. Writers and playwrights are exploring themes of empowerment, resistance, and moral complexity through modern retellings of these stories.

Authors like Chitra Banerjee, Divakaruni, and Mahasweta Devi have crafted narratives that shed light on women's strength and resilience, often drawing parallels between ancient characters and contemporary struggles. Chitra Bannerjee Divakaruni's writing often reimagines mythological and legendary women through a contemporary lens, emphasizing their strength, resilience, and agency. For example, in her novel 'The Palace of Illusions', she offers a retelling of the Mahabharata from the perspective of Panchaali (Draupadi). Instead of portraying Draupadi as a passive victim.

Her book on Sita is titled 'The Forest of Enchantments,' and it is a retelling of the Ramayana from Sita's perspective. It reframes the epic as a story of love, portraying Sita as a stronger, proactive character than a passive receptor. It is retold entirely in Sita's voice, highlighting her emotional journey and inner strength.

Divakaruni shows her as a woman of resilience and moral strength who navigates her complex relationships and societal constraints. This reinterpretation challenges traditional stereotypes and highlights her as a symbol of empowerment.

Mahasweta Devi's works focus on marginalized women, shedding light on their struggles and resilience in contemporary Indian society. Her stories often draw parallels between mythological themes and real-life issues faced by women. For instance, her story 'Draupadi' from the collection 'Breast Stories' reimagines the mythic Draupadi as a symbol of resistance against oppression. Her narrative emphasizes the strength of women fighting social injustices, making ancient stories relevant to modern struggles for gender equality and social justice.

Theatre adaptations, too, have reimagined these epics, portraying women as active agents rather than passive victims. Plays explore themes of gender equality, moral agency, and social justice, making these stories relevant to today's societal debates.

## Modern Theatre Adaptations

Contemporary theatre has also reimagined these legendary women as active agents. Plays like *Draupadi*, based on Chitra Banerjee's adaptation or other feminist reinterpretations, portray these characters challenging societal norms.

Tanika Gupta's *A Doll's House* is an adaptation focusing on the new woman and rearranging the narrative of Henrik Ibsen's play to fit in the Indian context. Mohan Rakesh's *Adhe Adhure* (Halfway House) features Savitri, a woman battling for control over her life and family, defying submissive roles, which are some other examples.

These adaptations explore themes of gender equality, moral agency, and social justice, often depicting women as empowered figures fighting for their rights rather than passive victims. Such adaptations make the stories more relatable and relevant to today's societal debates about gender roles and power dynamics.

Both authors and theatre adaptations serve to challenge traditional stereotypes, transforming legendary women into symbols of strength and resilience. Their works inspire ongoing conversations about women's agency, social justice, and gender equality, showing that these mythic figures are timeless symbols of empowerment.

These reinterpretations serve a dual purpose: they challenge traditional stereotypes and inspire new conversations about gender roles, power dynamics, and women's agency. They remind us that these legendary figures—Draupadi, Sita, Mandodari, Tara—are not just relics of myth but symbols of strength and resilience that continue to inspire.

Re-examining Indian epics through a feminist lens enriches our understanding of these timeless stories. It allows us to see women not just as archetypes of virtue or suffering but as complex individuals with agency, intelligence, and resilience. Draupadi's defiance, Sita's inner strength, Mandodari's wisdom, and Tara's insight exemplify the multifaceted roles women have played—and continue to play—in shaping history, morality, and society.

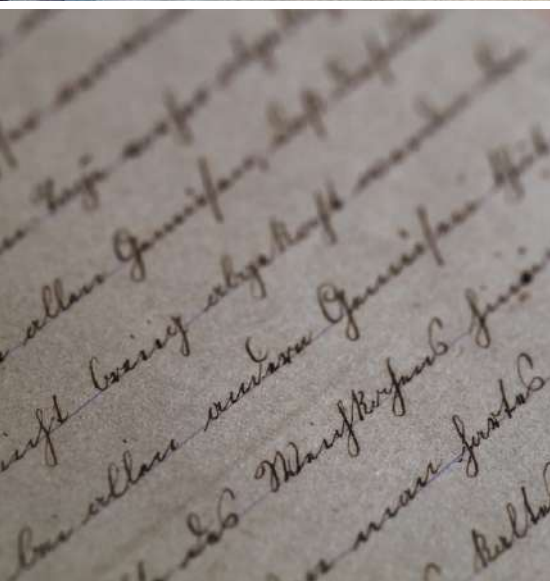
As we reinterpret these mythic figures for the modern age, we forge a more inclusive narrative—one that recognizes the power of women's voices and the importance of agency. These stories remind us that strength, wisdom, and resilience are timeless virtues—worthy of celebration and emulation in both myth and reality.



# THE LETTER SHE NEVER POSTED

BY: KARTIK  
SHRIVASTAVA

This story is of Meera, an adolescent girl weaving her own world through her dreams, a disciplined and hardworking daughter to her parents and how her life transcends through different phases of womanhood and the challenges she goes through, interestingly rather surprisingly keeping silent, not for herself but to keep by the societal traditions- The traditions which are not traditions but those which become a slow poison for one's life.



The first letter Meera wrote was at sixteen.

She folded the page carefully and addressed it:

"To Meera, who still believes love will always protect her."

She never posted it.

At sixteen, she was a cheerful girl but a disciplined daughter - the kind who lowered her eyes when elders spoke and raised her dreams only inside textbooks. Her mother would often say, "A girl's real home is the one she goes to after marriage." Meera would nod, though something inside her resisted the word "real". If this was not her real home, then what was she fighting so hard to belong to? This question kept pondering in her mind.



The second letter came at twenty-two, a week after her wedding. The house was bigger. The rules were tighter.

She was now a wife. Her laughter became softer, her opinions shorter. Every mistake was a reminder that she was "someone else's daughter." When she tried calling her mother once, her voice trembling, the reply was gentle but firm:

"Beta, these things happen in every marriage. You must learn to adjust."

That night she wrote again.

To Meera, who thought marriage meant partnership-

Remember: silence is not strength. It only makes you heavy from inside, a reminder of the insult that you tolerated unnecessarily.

She folded the letter and placed it inside her steel trunk, beneath her wedding saree.

She never posted it.

At twenty-seven, she became a mother.

Motherhood gave her both power and imprisonment. She could protect her child, but who would protect her? She swallowed insults so her son would not hear raised voices. She forgot all taunts so her daughter would not grow up thinking anger was normal.

Sometimes she wondered — if she went back to her parents, would they welcome her? Or would society whisper: She couldn't keep her marriage.

The stigma was heavier than her pain.

So she wrote again.

To Meera, who is tired —

Your endurance is not proof of love. It is proof that no one taught you how to leave.

She pressed the letter between the pages of an old diary.

Unposted.

Years passed.

Meera noticed something changing in the world outside her window. Women were speaking up now. Filing cases. Demanding rights. Refusing to “adjust.” Some were reclaiming dignity. Some, she observed quietly, were burning everything in retaliation — using law as weapon, suspicion as shield.

Pain had created two extremes.

One side still suffered in silence.

The other refused to suffer at all — sometimes even when suffering was not there.

Meera did not judge either. She understood both.

Violence leaves marks in strange ways. It makes some women smaller. It makes others sharper than necessary.

And society, instead of listening, simply picked sides.

At forty-five, Meera wrote her final letter.

Her children were grown. Her hair carried silver threads. The house was quieter now, but so was she, not defeated, just distant.

To Meera, at every age —

You survived. Not because they were kind.

Not because society was fair.

But because you found a place where you could speak — even if it was only to paper.

She gathered all the letters that night — to the daughter, the bride, the mother, the silent woman, the thinking woman.

Her husband once asked her why she kept old papers tied in red thread.

She smiled and said, “Memories.”

He never opened them.

No one ever did.

The letters were never meant to be posted.

They were not written to change society.

They were written so that society would not completely erase her.

One evening, her daughter found the bundle while cleaning the wardrobe.

“Mumma, these are letters. Why didn't you send them?”

Meera looked at her — at the confidence in her posture, the education in her voice, the freedom in her choices.

“I did send them,” she replied softly. “To myself.”

And for the first time in her life, Meera realized something profound-

She had preserved herself through writing.



## THE EVOLUTION OF WOMEN'S VOICE: FROM ORAL TRADITION TO GLOBAL LITERATURE

BY: SHASHIDHAR KUMAR

The story of women's literary expression is an expansive arc – beginning with oral recitations in ancient civilizations, crystallizing through spiritual and poetic movements, and surging into global literature and digital narratives today. Far from being a monolithic journey, it reflects cultural, religious, social, and technological shifts that expanded both the space women occupy in letters and the modes through which their voices circulate.

Across eras, women have authored, recited, performed, and published works that question norms, narrate experience, interpret tradition, and imagine new futures. From Vedic sages to vernacular mystic poets, from colonial era activists to postmodern feminists, and finally to creators in the digital age, women writers have continuously expanded what it means to have a voice in literature.

This feature chronicles the evolution of women's voice in literature across five key phases: early scholarly expression, spiritual-poetic outpourings, colonial and freedom era writings, modern feminist and identity literature, and digital-era storytelling platforms. In doing so, it foregrounds narratives often marginalized in global literary histories.

## **1. Vedic Women Scholars: The Earliest Testimonies of Female Intellect**

In the ancient Indian subcontinent, the Vedic period (circa 1500–500 BCE) was a formative era for religious, philosophical, and literary activity. Among its remarkable contributions were female scholars whose intellectual involvement was foundational to early Indian epistemic traditions.

### **Gargi and the Questioning of Reality**

One of the most renowned figures from this era is Gargi Vachaknavi, a philosopher-poet whose voice resounds in the Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upanishad. In a famed debate with sage Yajnavalkya, Gargi posed incisive questions about the nature of existence and the cosmic order. Her inquiries – about the essence of reality beyond sensory perception – prefigure philosophical rigor that would later flourish in classical Indian thought.

### **Maitreyi and the Quest for Love and Knowledge**

Another distinguished Vedic woman is Maitreyi, also found in the Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upanishad. Unlike the stereotype of passive devotion, Maitreyi engaged in dialectical exchange, asking probing questions about immortality, selfhood, and the purpose of love. Her voice embodied a blend of emotional depth and intellectual acuity.

### **Women's Participation in Ritual and Recitation**

Beyond individual philosophers, many women participated in the oral transmission of the Vedas. These women, known as Rishikas or Brahmavadinis, memorized and recited extensive hymns, sustaining oral traditions that would define South Asian textual culture for centuries.

The presence of women in Vedic scholarship challenges assumptions that ancient literary spaces were exclusively male domains. Their recorded dialogues and recitations are among the earliest attestations of women's voices shaping philosophical and literary discourse.

## **2. The Bhakti Movement: Women Poets as Mystics and Reformers**

From the 6th century CE onwards, the Bhakti movement spread across South Asia. Known for its emphasis on personal devotion and egalitarian spirituality, it produced some of the subcontinent's most enduring vernacular poetry. Importantly, women – often deeply marginalized in orthodox structures – became powerful poetic voices within this movement.

### **Meerabai: The Queen Who Sang to Krishna**

Meerabai (c. 1498–1547) remains one of the most iconic female poets of the Bhakti tradition. Born into Rajput royalty in Rajasthan, Meerabai renounced courtly life and chose devotion to Krishna as her central identity. Her songs (bhajans) are lyrical, intimate, and filled with yearning – not merely spiritual but also a poetic subversion of gendered expectations.

Her voice offers a radical reimagining of devotion – one where the beloved is both divine and defiant, tender yet confrontational to caste, gender, and social norms.

### **Akka Mahadevi: Veerashaiva Vision and Poetic Renunciation**

In southern India, Akka Mahadevi (c. 12th century) emerged as a central figure in the Veerashaiva Bhakti movement. Known for wearing minimal clothing as a symbol of renunciation, her poetic corpus expressed an unmediated yearning for the divine. She signed many of her poems with «Chennamallikarjuna», asserting a devotional identity tied to the divine lord, rather than social or familial relations.

Mahadevi's verses articulate love, abandonment, mysticism, and a critique of societal expectations of women. Her poems became part of the Vachana tradition – short, expressive verses that remain foundational in Kannada literature.

#### Bhakti Women as Social Critics

Other women – such as Janabai, Lalleshwari (Lalla), and Bahina Bai – also contributed to the devotional canon, blending spiritual surrender with social commentary. Many of these poems were transmitted orally across communities, enfolding women's voices into devotional gatherings that emphasized direct emotional experience over ritual hierarchy.

Through the Bhakti movement, women found a medium where personal expression, egalitarian spirituality, and vernacular idioms converged – laying groundwork for future literary vocality.

### **3. Colonial and Freedom Era Women Writers: Narrative Beyond Spirituality**

The colonial encounter reshaped literary cultures across Asia, Africa, and the Americas. As print expanded, women began writing not just poetry but also prose, memoir, novel, and essays – often with themes that negotiated gender, nationalism, social reform, and personal agency.

#### **Beginnings of Women's Print Literatures**

In South Asia, women such as Swarnakumari Devi and Torulata Mukhopadhyay wrote in Bengali in the 19th century, engaging with wider social issues such as education and women's agency. Elsewhere, in Europe and North America, writers like George Eliot, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, and Emily Dickinson were innovating literary form and tone. These women expanded literature beyond devotional or domestic concerns into psychological and social complexities.

#### **Freedom Struggle and Feminist Assertion**

The early 20th century saw women participating in anti-colonial movements and writing with political urgency. Sarojini Naidu, poet and political leader, blended literary expression with nationalism; her poems articulate a voice both lyrical and defiant.

In South Asia, writers like Kamini Roy and Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain interwove social critique with gender solidarity. Hossain's feminist novella *Sultana's Dream* (1905) offered a visionary exploration of a world run by women, imagining technological and social reform long before such themes entered mainstream discourse.

#### **Women's Autobiography And First-Person Narratives**

This era also foregrounded women's life writing. Figures like Annie Besant and Sarojini Naidu penned autobiographical accounts where personal life, political commitment, and spiritual conviction intersected. Their narratives positioned women not only as observers but as agents of history – contesting patriarchal privatization of experience.

Across continents, colonial and freedom era women writers transformed literature from predominantly male public domains into arenas where women's interior lives, political commitments, and social aspirations could be expressed and contested.

#### 4. Modern Feminist and Identity Literature: Reclaiming Self and Society

By the mid-20th century, the emergence of feminist literary criticism, identity politics, and postcolonial theory created new spaces for women's voices. Literature became a site not only for expression but for interrogating structures that shaped gender, race, caste, sexuality, and power.

##### Second-Wave Feminism and New Narrative Forms

In the West, the 1960s and 1970s saw a surge of feminist writing that questioned patriarchy, language, and representation. Writers such as Simone de Beauvoir (*The Second Sex*), Virginia Woolf (*A Room of One's Own*), Toni Morrison, Audre Lorde, and Adrienne Rich redefined literary boundaries. Their essays and fiction eloquently argued that women's voice was not merely a stylistic attribute but a political and cultural imperative.

These authors expanded literary scope to include multiple genres – from lyrical fiction to polemical essays – while exposing how gender intersects with race and class.

##### Postcolonial Feminist Intersections

In formerly colonized regions, women writers brought forward hybrid identities shaped by empire, tradition, and modernity. South Asian writers such as Kamala Das (*Kamala Suraiyya*), Mahasweta Devi, Bama, and Nayantara Sahgal interrogated caste, sexuality, nationalism, and family structures.

In Africa, writers like Ama Ata Aidoo and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie wove personal and political narratives that foregrounded women's aspirations amidst postcolonial realities. Their works contributed to a global conversation on identity, belonging, and resistance.

##### Linguistic Plurality and Subaltern Voices

Modern feminist literature also amplified voices from linguistic minorities and subaltern communities. Authors such as Assia Djebar (Algeria), Isabel Allende (Chile), Edwidge Danticat (Haiti/US), and Arundhati Roy (India) challenged dominant literary forms with storytelling that blended history, memory, folklore, and critique.

These writers illustrated that women's voices are not homogeneous; they are shaped by intersecting histories of race, nation, class, and culture. Their narratives have influenced both academic scholarship and popular readership, reshaping global canons.

#### 5. Digital Era Women Storytelling Platforms: New Voices, New Ecologies

The advent of the internet, social media, and digital publishing has dramatically transformed how stories are told, shared, and archived. For women writers – especially those outside traditional publishing infrastructures – digital platforms have been revolutionary.

##### Blogs, E-Publishing, and Independent Narratives

Since the early 2000s, personal blogs and independent e-publishing have enabled women to bypass traditional gatekeepers. Platforms like WordPress, Medium, and Wattpad have fostered communities where women share fiction, memoir, poetry, and essays – often tackling taboo or marginal themes such as sexuality, mental health, domestic abuse, and queer identity.

Digital publication democratized access, making literature more inclusive and responsive to lived realities.

## Social Media Movements and Collective Storytelling

Social platforms such as Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook have hosted movements like MeToo, BlackLivesMatter, LoveWins, and StopCasteGenocide, enabling women's narratives to enter global conversations rapidly. These movements illustrate how micro-narratives – individual testimonies – accumulate into powerful collective voices demanding social transformation.

In countries where censorship or social conservatism restricts expression, pseudonymous accounts and encrypted groups have been vital in amplifying dissenting voices.

## Podcasts, YouTube, and Multimedia Narratives

Digital storytelling is no longer confined to text. Women hosts, producers, and creators have launched podcasts and video series that interweave narrative, critique, and testimony. For example, podcasts by women journalists and storytellers explore gendered violence, identity, labor, and diaspora, reaching international audiences.

These multimedia formats expand the definition of literature, integrating spoken word, documentary practices, and audience interaction.

## Localization Meets Global Circulation

Digital platforms have enabled local languages and dialects to thrive on a global stage. Women writing in Hindi, Urdu, Bengali, Kannada, Yoruba, Arabic, and Indigenous languages now find readerships across continents, often via translation communities or subtitled video content. Digital circulation has made literary exchange more polyvocal and less dependent on anglocentric publishing economies.

## Conclusion

The evolution of women's voice from oral sages to digital narrators reveals an ongoing negotiation between tradition and transformation. Each historical phase – whether Vedic inquiry, devotional poetry, nationalist writing, feminist critique, or digital innovation – reflects both continuity and rupture.

What emerges is not a linear progress but a multilayered mosaic of expression, resistance, reinvention, and interconnection. Women's voices have shaped and reshaped literary landscapes, questioning norms, redefining genres, and generating new languages of self-representation.

Today, as global literatures become more inclusive and diversified, the essential lesson from this evolution is clear: women's voices are foundational to understanding the human story – in all its complexity, courage, and creativity.



# A Pothole That Opened My Eyes

**By: Rahul Chaurase**  
**Editor Panache**

For a very long time, I lived as an isolated person. Not physically isolated—I lived among people, had family around me, saw crowds every day—but mentally I stayed distant from the world. I rarely paid attention to what was happening around me. I didn't care much about society, politics, or public issues. My thinking was simple: I am responsible for myself.

If something went wrong in my life, I believed it was my fault. If something good happened, it was because of my own effort. The world outside me felt like a separate system with which I had no connection.

Because of that mindset, I never asked questions. I never questioned politicians. I never thought about the systems that shape our daily lives. If a road was broken, if a government project failed, if public services were poor, I simply accepted them as part of life. I believed ordinary people like me had no role in questioning these things.

To me, society was something distant, something abstract; it existed, but I didn't feel responsible for it.

Then one small incident changed the way I saw everything.

One day I had to catch a train. I was already running late, and time was slipping away quickly. My elder brother was helping me by driving the bike so I could reach the station faster. We were rushing down the road. The road seemed mostly empty, which made us believe we could make it in time. But suddenly, the bike lost its balance.

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The reason was simple: the road was full of potholes.

Within seconds, we crashed. It wasn't a very serious accident, but it was enough to stop our journey. My body was shaken, the bike was damaged, and the plan to catch the train was over. The trip to Bhopal that I had planned had to be canceled.

For the rest of the day, I blamed myself.

I kept thinking: Why was I late? Why didn't I wake up earlier? Why didn't I plan my time better?

The entire responsibility felt like it was mine. That was my usual way of thinking—if something goes wrong, it must be because of me.

But later that day, another thought slowly entered my mind.

What if the accident wasn't just about me being late?

What if something else had caused it?

My elder brother was not a careless driver. The road had very little traffic. There was no sudden obstacle. The only real problem was the road itself. The potholes were everywhere. That realization led to another question.

Why were those potholes there?

The road had been constructed only about a year earlier. A newly built road is not supposed to collapse so quickly. Roads are meant to last several years, not just a few months.

So how did it become so damaged?

Then my thoughts moved one step further.

If the road was poorly built, that means the contractor must have used low-quality materials. Perhaps money was saved by reducing the quality of construction.

If the contractor had done that, then what about the officer who inspected the road? Someone must have approved the work.

Then I thought about the politicians who assign these contracts.

Then, about the system that allows corruption to happen quietly.

Then, unexpectedly, my thoughts reached another place. They reached me. Why had I never asked these questions before? The potholes on that road did not appear overnight. They must have been there for months. Many people must have noticed them. Many people must have faced problems because of them.

Yet I had never thought about questioning anymore. I had simply accepted the situation as normal. That moment made me realize something uncomfortable: my silence was also part of the problem.

For years, I believed that my voice didn't matter. I believed that questioning systems, politicians, or public work was something for activists, journalists, or powerful people—not for someone like me.

But the accident made me see the chain of responsibility more clearly.

A poorly built road is not just a road problem. It is connected to decisions, corruption, negligence, and public silence.

And when people stay silent, those problems continue.

That was the first time I truly understood the power of a question.

A simple question like:

Why is this road already damaged?

Why was low-quality work accepted?

Who approved it?

Who is responsible?

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Before that day, I never imagined myself asking such questions. But the accident forced me to see how deeply public issues affect our private lives.

Sometimes that seemed like a small inconvenience—a pothole on the road—had suddenly changed my entire day. It caused an accident, canceled my travel plans, and made me realize how connected we all are to the system around us.

That day, a shift happened inside me.

I began to understand that being a citizen is not just about living in a country. It also means paying attention, asking questions, and holding systems accountable.

Our voices may seem small individually, but silence makes problems bigger.

The first time I felt my voice mattered was not when I spoke loudly in public or confronted someone powerful.

It happened quietly, in my own thoughts, when I realized that I had the right to question the world around me.

Since then, I have tried to observe more carefully. I think more about the systems that shape everyday life. I understand that roads, schools, hospitals, and public spaces do not exist magically. They are created through decisions made by people—and those decisions should be questioned.

Maybe my voice alone cannot change everything.

But asking a question is still a beginning.

Because change does not start with power.

Sometimes it starts with a single thought:

Why is this happening?

And the courage to believe that your voice deserves to ask it.

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# Language and Gender Bias – A Global Analysis

BY: SHASHIDHAR  
KUMAR

Language is far more than a tool for communication; it is a powerful social system that shapes how societies understand identity, authority, and relationships. The words people use not only describe the world but also influence how individuals think about roles, power, and belonging. Because of this influence, language often reflects the social structures in which it develops. Across many cultures and historical periods, linguistic patterns have frequently privileged male experiences while marginalizing or stereotyping women. Gender bias can appear in grammar, professional titles, media discourse, legal language, educational materials, and even modern digital technologies.

Historically, many languages treated the masculine form as the default representation of humanity. In several European languages, masculine grammatical forms are used to represent groups that include both men and women. Although this may seem like a simple grammatical rule, it symbolically places the masculine at the center and the feminine as secondary. English has also reflected similar tendencies. For centuries, the pronoun “he” was commonly used in legal, academic, and philosophical writing to represent all people. While intended to be universal, this linguistic practice subtly reinforced the idea that the male experience represented the human experience.

Literature and cultural narratives have also contributed to shaping gender perceptions through language. In many traditional stories, epics, and classical texts, female characters often appear as symbols of virtue, beauty, sacrifice, or moral caution rather than as independent individuals with their own voices and ambitions. At the same time, male authors dominated literary production for long periods of history because women had limited access to education and publishing opportunities. As a result, cultural narratives often reflected male perspectives while women’s experiences remained underrepresented.



Legal and institutional language has historically carried similar patterns of bias. Many early legal frameworks and constitutional documents used male-centered terminology such as “man” or “he” when referring to citizens or rights. These expressions developed in social contexts where women had restricted political and economic participation. Laws concerning property, inheritance, and household authority frequently assumed male leadership as the norm. Even when legal language appeared neutral, its structure often reflected broader patriarchal systems. Media and public discourse continue to shape social perceptions through language. Studies have shown that women in leadership positions are often described differently from men. Media coverage may focus on a woman’s appearance, personality, or family life, while male leaders are typically portrayed in terms of competence, strength, or authority. Similarly, phrases such as “female scientist” or “woman engineer” may unintentionally suggest that these roles are unusual for women, reinforcing the perception that certain professions are primarily male domains.

Language also affects how individuals imagine possibilities and social roles. Research in psycholinguistics suggests that linguistic patterns influence cognitive associations. When children repeatedly hear gender-specific occupational terms such as “fireman” or “policeman,” they are more likely to imagine men performing those roles. Over time, such associations can contribute to stereotypes and may influence career aspirations or expectations. Educational materials have historically reflected these biases as well. In many textbooks, male scientists, leaders, and inventors appear far more frequently than women. When women are included, they are sometimes portrayed in supportive roles rather than as innovators or decision-makers. Such patterns can subtly shape how young learners perceive gender roles and opportunities.

In the digital age, concerns about gender bias in language have expanded into new areas, particularly technology. Artificial intelligence systems and language-processing technologies are trained using vast collections of data drawn from books, websites, and other historical records. If these sources contain gender bias, digital systems may reproduce and even amplify those patterns. Researchers have shown that some algorithms associate certain professions more strongly with male identities or generate stereotypical descriptions of women. Similarly, many virtual assistants use feminized voices and personalities, reflecting long-standing associations between women and service roles.

Recognizing these challenges, scholars, international organizations, and policymakers have increasingly promoted the use of gender-inclusive language. Alternatives such as neutral professional titles—“chairperson,” “police officer,” or “firefighter”—have gradually become more common. The use of the singular “they” as a gender-neutral pronoun has also gained widespread acceptance in modern writing. Institutions such as the United Nations and UNESCO encourage inclusive language in official communication to ensure that both women and men are clearly represented.

At the same time, debates continue about how language should evolve. Some critics argue that linguistic traditions should remain unchanged or that social inequality cannot be solved through language reform alone. While it is true that language change cannot replace broader social reforms, many scholars emphasize that linguistic representation plays an important symbolic and psychological role. Inclusive language can increase visibility, challenge stereotypes, and signal a commitment to equality.

Ultimately, language and gender bias operate at multiple levels—structural, cultural, cognitive, and technological. Throughout history, linguistic norms have often positioned men as the universal subject while women appeared as exceptions or secondary figures. Yet language is not static; it evolves as societies change. As conversations about equality and representation continue around the world, language itself is gradually adapting to reflect more inclusive values.

Creating a more equitable linguistic environment requires ongoing awareness and collaboration among educators, writers, policymakers, media professionals, and technologists. By examining the ways language shapes perception and social structures, societies can move toward communication that reflects the diversity and dignity of all human experiences.

# Beyond the Crown of Expectations

By: Rahul Chaurase  
Editor Panache

The world tests her with all its might,  
Filling her inner world with its noise and fight.

Yet after all these tests and trials,  
She still chooses to become what she desires.

She borrowed no wisdom from the world's loud sermons,  
Nor does she bow blindly to what she was told.

The shadow of her mother's life,  
Seen and understood by the daughter.  
She gathered it all and took it as a lesson,  
How patience & endurance can also act like a weapon.

And what shall I say of the world's persuasion?  
Must I stay silent, must I endure?  
Only so all may remain together,  
Their pride intact, their honor secure?

These traditions dipped in the syrup of pretense,  
Shaped by the careful hands of the world.  
Must I place it upon my head like a crown?

Though the world may never truly see women as human here,  
Yet it asks them to rise as a goddess divine.

Why should women restrain the flight of their own being,  
And cloak themselves in the illusion  
Of some grand and holy sacrifice?





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## Education: The Light of Life

Education is not merely the ability to read and write; it is the light that awakens the soul. It is the silent force that turns darkness into understanding and confusion into clarity. In every corner of the world, from crowded cities to quiet villages, education shines like a lamp in the night guiding dreams, shaping futures, and transforming lives. It is the gentle whisper that tells a child, "You can become more than your circumstances."

For many, education begins with a small book and a hopeful heart. A child sitting under a dim streetlight, determined to learn despite hardships, carries within them a spark brighter than the sun. That spark is hope.

Education does not ask where you were born or what you possess; it simply asks if you are willing to learn. It breaks the chains of poverty, challenges inequality, and gives wings to those who dare to dream. In its light, fear slowly fades and confidence begins to bloom.

A teacher, standing before a class, holds more than chalk and a lesson plan they hold the power to inspire. One encouraging word can build courage; one lesson can change a life. Education teaches us not only facts and formulas but values compassion, respect, responsibility, and empathy. It shapes character and nurtures humanity. It teaches us to think critically, to question wisely, and to act ethically. In a world often divided by differences, education builds bridges of understanding.

Yet, education is not always easy. It demands patience, perseverance, and sacrifice. There are tears of frustration and moments of doubt. But within those struggles lies growth. Just as a seed must push through the soil to see the sunlight, a learner must face challenges to discover their strength. The journey of education is not about perfection it is about progress, resilience, and becoming a better version of oneself each day.



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Education is truly the light of life because it illuminates every path we choose to walk. It empowers the powerless, gives voice to the unheard, and transforms ordinary lives into extraordinary stories. When a child learns, a family rises. When a family rises, a society progresses. And when societies progress, the world moves closer to peace and prosperity.

In the end, education is more than a system it is a promise. A promise that no matter how dark the night may seem, there is always a light waiting to shine. And that light is education the eternal flame that guide's humanity forward.

**By Harsha Mardiya**



## Dreams That Refuse to Sleep



**Mr. Jayu Chavda**  
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Dreams are not the fragile whispers we often mistake them for. They are living forces quiet yet persistent that stay awake even when the world sleeps. Dreams that refuse to sleep are those ambitions, passions, and hopes that continue to burn within us despite obstacles, failures, doubts, or delays. They do not fade with time; instead, they grow stronger in silence.

Every individual carries a dream. For some, it is the desire to achieve academic excellence; for others, it is to serve society, create art, build a business, or bring change to the world. Yet life does not always offer a smooth path.

Challenges such as financial limitations, social pressure, fear of failure, or self-doubt often attempt to silence these aspirations. But true dreams do not surrender easily. They knock at the doors of our hearts again and again, reminding us of who we are meant to become.

History is filled with examples of dreams that refused to sleep. A. P. J. Abdul Kalam, born in a humble family, nurtured a dream of contributing to India's scientific progress. Through perseverance and dedication, he rose to become the "Missile Man of India" and later the President of the nation. Similarly, Mahatma Gandhi held an unwavering dream of freedom for India. Despite imprisonment and opposition, his dream remained awake until it became a reality for millions. Dreams that refuse to sleep also demand courage. They require us to step out of comfort zones, to learn from failures, and to keep moving forward even when results are not immediate. Failure is not the end of a dream; often, it is the shaping ground where resilience is built. A dream tested by hardship becomes stronger and more meaningful.

Such dreams are not selfish desires; they often carry a purpose beyond personal success. A teacher dreaming of inclusive classrooms, a doctor aspiring to serve rural communities, or a young student determined to break generational barriers

all reflect dreams rooted in hope and social transformation. These dreams inspire not only the dreamer but also society.

A dream requires discipline. Passion without action remains imagination. Consistent effort, planning, and self-belief are essential. Even when circumstances slow progress, patience keeps the dream alive. The quiet hours of struggle, unseen by others, are where dreams grow their deepest roots.

In conclusion, dreams that refuse to sleep are powerful forces within us. They define our identity, guide our actions, and give meaning to our struggles. When we choose to listen to them, we choose growth. When we protect them from doubt and fear, we allow them to flourish. Let us never silence our dreams, for they are the light that guides us through the darkest nights and the dawn that awaits every determined soul.

**By Jayu Chavda**

## I'm not where I belong

There are times in my life I feel foreigner  
Because the civilians do not behave correctly  
They might seem opposite from my thoughts  
But I don't think I could fit adequately to this society

People who lives around me are careless of everything  
Those are living rushed up to whatever they decide to  
Probably escaping from the same chaos I breathe  
Ironically they can't accept the fact they have provoked it  
Why's that? Unsupportive to solve what you don't control

Different from my perspective of have a whole peace  
I definitely define this place as third world civilization  
The only pride of survival is the flag they barely respect  
The reason civilians decide to move somewhere else  
Those are reluctant to tolerate their own neighbors

Indifferent whose people are beside me or whose walking around you  
They are untouchable, high class wealth attire  
So what's the show of those individuals who don't fit their society  
Being isolated or ignoring the presence of everyone who is alive

Statues of unpitted facade of sanctity they don't believe  
Custom wearing heroes of their lack of filthy legacy and pride  
I don't think I could have the cynical appearance to them  
In the opposite direction, I prefer not to be polluted

I'm not where I belong  
Alienated to the wrong information of my life to forbid them to allow to be  
human  
I'm not going to make a puppet for the pleasure of others  
I have to get the esteem I will have to do this entire process  
Not for the fitting the falsely civilization they were pretending



**Dr. Jose Luis  
Lopez  
Writer artist  
Puerto Rico**

## The Day Death Played Me

The night whispered ending in my ears  
while death stood close, too close to ignore.  
I was counting my heartbeat, unsure of tomorrow.  
I was scared of breathing.

I said goodbye in my heart.  
I was not fighting anymore.  
I was surrendering to that illness.  
My soul was packing its things.

I thought my name would slip from the future  
So, I pleaded before the noble death. Death laughed,  
"It was only a prank", it whispered.  
My life won a trick this time.



**Mr. Jubril Adesoga**  
**Writer**  
**Ogun**  
**Nigeria**

## An Empty Planet

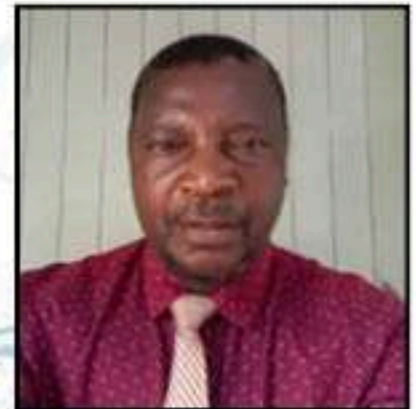
The thought sends the marrow in your bones freezing  
And the calcium in their hardness to ashes  
Yet it is real, though frightening  
The build up made you a wretch  
Even in the shadow of the most precious person.

Yes, the love that once turned your nerve fibres  
To strands of live wire has melted away  
Like wax on a bed of sweltering sand grains  
Only the stale smell lingers like the leftovers  
Of a heavily spiced meal - the farewell meal  
Shared by lovers lost to each other  
In real time and emotional space.

Yes, you search your heart and soul  
But all that remains is emptiness  
Your heart now a desolate planet  
That hosts only memory and regrets  
You want everything alive that made you  
The hero in your lady's life, blossomful  
And weighing with turgid fruitfulness

But you don't know much of what you ought to know  
The love that has died in you died within her  
An age and a half ago, yet your orbit she keeps  
As love is not the only thing to her  
That gives a woman character.

Without love, she is proudly Mrs Someone  
Without you, the world is a maze of choices  
Leading a woman nowhere, yet in your shadow  
She will keep the right image she desires  
Though you touch nothing within her bosom.



**Mr. Nhamo  
Muchagumisa  
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## The Unbroken Thread: The Evolution of Women



**Mrs. Priyanka**  
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The story of women's independence is often told through a series of loud, revolutionary moments—protests in the streets, the banging of gavels, and the signing of laws. But the true heart of this evolution lies in the quiet, daily shift from living by permission to living by choice.

Only a few generations ago, a woman's identity was often a shadow cast by the men in her life. In the early 20th century, they were defined by a state of legal invisibility. In many parts of the world, marriage resulted in "civil death," where a woman's property, earnings, and even her legal signature were absorbed by her husband. Independence wasn't just discouraged; it was practically illegal.

Today, that landscape has been fundamentally reshaped. We have moved from a world where women were "protected" by law into a world where they are protected as individuals. The modern woman in 2026 views her identity not as a derivative of her family, but as a sovereign entity. She owns property, manages her own wealth, and holds a legal standing that is no longer tied to her marital status.

In the past, a woman's ambition was largely confined to the domestic sphere. Education was often treated as a "finishing" tool—a way to become a better wife or mother—rather than a weapon for professional survival. Careers were limited to a handful of "nurturing" roles, and a woman's success was measured by the stability of her household.

But now it paints a radically different picture. Education is now the primary engine of female empowerment. We see a generation of women who are not just entering established industries but are architecting new ones. From the rise of female-led tech startups to the borderless careers of digital nomads, women are bypassing traditional gatekeepers. Success is no longer a one-size-fits-all script; it is a custom-built life that can include being a CEO, a solo traveler, a scientist, or a stay-at-home parent by conscious choice rather than social coercion.

Perhaps the most profound change is internal, the greatest barrier to independence was the law. Now, the challenge is often the lingering social conditioning—the "perfectionism trap" or the "invisible labor" of the mental load at home.

While the legal battles of the past won us the right to work, the modern struggle is about the right to lead without apology. We are witnessing a shift where women are unlearning the need for external validation. True independence in 2026 is the courage to be "unlikable" if it means being authentic, and the strength to demand domestic equity so that the burden of the home is shared equally.

We stand at a unique vantage point in history. We have the inherited courage of the suffragettes and the technological tools of the digital age. While there was a time about gaining a seat at the table, but today is about redesigning the room entirely.

The evolution of women's independence proves that autonomy is not a finite resource—it is a muscle that grows stronger with every generation. As we look forward, the goal is no longer just to be "independent" from others, but to be entirely free to become whoever we choose to be.

**By Priyanka**

## Literary & rhetorical terms of English



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English is the dominant global lingua franca, spoken most widely as second language round the world. It connects not only people of diverse culture and continents but also works as medium of learning in technology, science, communication, business and tourism. Another aspect of this language is its funny nature .

There are, however, a number of literary as well as rhetorical terms and devices in English language yet few of them are stated below in order to enhance knowledge and vocabulary and even some fun is also gained .

**\*ANAGRAM\*** It is a word play in which letters of a word or phrase are re-arranged in such a way that a new word or phrase is formed . Some Examples...

DEBIT CARD - BAD CREDIT

LISTEN - SILENT

DORMITORY - DIRTY ROOM

FOURTH OF JULY- JOYFUL FOURTH

A DECIMAL POINT - I'M DOT IN PLACE

THE EYES- THEY SEE

ELEVEN PLUS TWO -TWELVE PLUS ONE

THE EARTHQUAKE - THE QUEER SHAKES

MOTHER-IN-LAW - HITLER WOMAN

SCHOOL MASTER - THE CLASS ROOM

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE - I AM WEAKISH SPELLER

**\*EUPHEMISM\*** - It is frequently used in daily life. In order to hide unpleasantness in listening, these sentences must be used by a gentle person because these words sound refined and ear- loving.

Some Examples...

He died. - He passed away.

He is blind man. - He is visually challenged.

She is pregnant.- She is in the family way.

He is block head.- He is mentally challenged.

This child is handicapped.- This is a special child or this child is physically challenged.

**\*CHIASMUS\*** - It is also a word play. Two or more clauses are balanced against each other in order to produce an artistic effect. Some Examples..

1- We live to die but die to live.

2- Eat to live, do not live to eat.

3- You forget what you want to remember and you remember what you want to forget.

**\*PANGRAM\*** - A sentence containing all the letters of the alphabet is known as PANGRAM sentence.

Examples..

1- The quick brown fox jumps over a lazy dog.

2- Pack my box with five dozen liquor jugs.

3- The five boxing wizards jump quickly.

**\*ORONYMS\*** These are the words/phrase/ sentences that sound identical while spoken but have different meanings and spellings.

Some Examples..

1- I scream, you scream ,we all scream for ice-cream.

2- A name has an aim.

3- A teacher has sixty sicks students out of sixty six students.

4- The fire burnt her tulips and two lips.

**By Pushendra Pratap Singh**

## My Grandmother's Wisdom: Lessons from Her Life and Legacy



**Mrs. Usha  
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If my grandmother had written her story, it would be a remarkable tale of resilience, tradition, and progressive wisdom. Born into a joint Nair family in Keralam, she grew up in an environment where stories of epics and legends were passed down through generations. Though she was not literate, her mind was a treasure trove of deep, in-depth knowledge of these timeless tales, which she shared with us with passion and wisdom.

Her understanding of the epics was intuitive, and her storytelling carried morals and lessons that shaped our values. She was also a great cook, known for her traditional recipes that brought warmth and joy to everyone around her.

Her long, curly hair was always well-maintained with traditional shampoos, reflecting her grace and pride in her cultural roots. Her starched, ironed white attire, without any crimps or folds, conveyed to us the importance of being presentable in front of others, regardless of our tiredness or emotional ups and downs.

Determined to connect more deeply with her roots, she made efforts to learn to write her name in our mother tongue, Malayalam. Although it was a small step, it showed her desire to stay connected to her identity and culture, and she took pride in making this effort.

Later in life, when we had to relocate to a hill station, she adapted beautifully to the style of living there, embracing the cooler climate and lush surroundings with the same spirit of resilience. She took great care of us, always ensuring we were fed and loved. She cared for her hens with motherly affection and enjoyed having tete-à-tete conversations with them, expressing her gratitude for providing fresh eggs for her poultry. Despite her age, she actively supervised work at our coffee plantations, balancing her traditional values with the responsibilities of managing the estate, demonstrating her strength and adaptability.

She found joy in simple pleasures like watching 'Kathakali' (a traditional art form in Kerala) shows and participating in temple festivals, where she would immerse herself in the vibrant cultural celebrations, her face lighting up with enthusiasm. Her life in the hill station was a perfect blend of tradition and modernity, where she preserved her cultural identity while embracing new ways of life.

One of her most admirable qualities was her outlook on women's independence and her progressive views on feminine life, especially considering the era she grew up in. She believed that women should be self-reliant, capable of earning their livelihood, and living with dignity and purpose. She often emphasized that a woman's strength lay not just in her ability to manage the household but also in her confidence to pursue her ambitions and contribute meaningfully to society. Her own life was a testament to this belief; she was a woman who managed her household with grace, sold eggs and other produce to earn extra income, and never depended solely on her husband or family for support.

In her kitchen, she kept a brown coin box, adorned with intricate elephant carvings on its lid. Every day, she diligently ensured that a portion of our daily earnings was deposited into it. The pride shining in her eyes when she broke it open during times of hardship taught me the true value of saving money for the future.

Her perspective on women's independence was rooted in respect for tradition but also a recognition of the importance of self-empowerment. She believed that a woman's role extended beyond the domestic sphere; she was a partner in progress, a person with her own dreams and dignity. Despite the societal norms of her time, she championed the idea that women should be respected as individuals and given opportunities to grow and earn. She exemplified this outlook through her own actions, working hard, saving money, and living with a sense of pride and purpose.

Her love for her roots was also evident in her annual trips to her hometown, where she would reconnect with her relatives and bring back traditional eateries to share with us. She believed in the importance of sharing and caring, often teaching us that we should always share our food with others, spreading love and kindness through simple acts.

Her warmth extended beyond her family to her neighbors of different religions. She believed in kindness, understanding, and mutual respect, fostering harmonious

relationships with everyone around her. Whether it was sharing traditional dishes, helping during festivals of other communities, or exchanging greetings with a genuine smile, she promoted unity and friendship among diverse faiths. Her open-heartedness and respect for all faiths made her a beloved figure in the community.

In her quiet yet unwavering manner, she exemplified true independence through her resourcefulness and self-reliance. Her independence was not just about earning; it was also reflected in her confident way of being, her ability to stand on her own feet, and her disciplined approach to life.

Socially, she was a warm and approachable presence, maintaining a great rapport with all passersby who came to our gate. Her friendly smile and genuine kindness created bonds beyond family, making her a beloved figure in the community. Her life was a perfect blend of strength, humility, and compassion—an inspiring example of how one can live with dignity, independence, and love for others.

While her life was anchored in strong values of resilience, tradition, and community, the modern era often presents a contrasting picture. Today, relationships tend to be more loosely bonded, and genuine communication sometimes takes a backseat to digital interactions. The sense of community and shared responsibility that she exemplified is gradually giving way to individualism and fleeting connections. Despite the rapid advancements in technology and the pace of life, her way of living reminds us of the importance of rootedness, mutual respect, and meaningful relationships. Her life teaches us that true strength lies in staying connected to our culture, values, and community, even as we navigate the complexities of contemporary life. As we move forward, let us cherish and incorporate her timeless lessons of dignity, independence, and compassion into our ever-evolving world.

**By Usha Krishnan**

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