

SECTION - A

There are some things you learn best in calm, and some in storm.

“ As he washed ashore alongside the roaring waves, he could not believe his destiny. Even the remnants of his once mighty ship were not visible. He knew then and there, that the calm waves of his life had subsided, & the storm that followed took everything that he had ”.

When the greek merchant Zeno of ancient times suffered this mishap, his life changed irreversibly. He wandered aimlessly, lost in his misery. But then one day, something inside him changed. With a newfound courage, he now devoted his life to nobler pursuits. Highly inspired by Plato, he went on to lay the foundation

for "stoicism". Zeno's tale serves as a crucial lesson even today. It teaches us: "There are some things you learn best in calm, and some in storm."

When a newborn enters this world, he is welcomed with open arms. He receives his first lesson from his mother and family. He goes on to receive formal education in a school. Equipped with modern knowledge and theoretical values, he then goes out to face the world outside.

But this calm, managed inside world is nothing similar to what lies outside. Filled with harsh realities, and mounting adversities at every step, the real test of the values learned in the calm lies in this outside storm. This paradox can be aptly explained through the life

Lesson of M. Gandhi.

Equipped with a stellar education in law, M. Gandhi felt ready to face the challenges of a professional life in South Africa.

However, what followed was entirely unexpected. As he was thrown off a train for his color, he faced a storm that he had never imagined.

However, it was this storm that transformed him into the "Father of the nation". As he gradually applied his beliefs of "Truth" and "non-violence", he found their universal applicability. What followed was an epic struggle against the mighty British Empire, which resulted ultimately in India's freedom. His teachings still reverberate in contemporary world, guiding humanity to a better path.

Similar to Gandhi, every individual faces challenges in life. Be it personal loss of a loved one, or the failure of an ambitious plan, storms have many forms.

But it is here that strong willed people display their true grit. With the motto of "when life gives you lemons, make lemonade", they move forward with their indomitable spirit. And in this journey, they learn lessons that could have been only learnt in a storm.

In contemporary context, the storm brought by the pandemic named COVID-19 deserves a mention. A storm that swept the whole world, the COVID-19 challenge posed that obstacles that were hitherto unobserved by the global community.

Migrants walking miles with bleeding feet, hungry populace lining up for food packets, and overflowing hospitals echoing with heartbreaking cries became common sights during this period. It almost seemed that the COVID pandemic might force the world on its knees.

But the indomitable human spirit finds a way, even when darkness surrounds it. The pandemic saw coming together of millions of hands. Joined together, these hands moved forward to ~~health~~ help.

The lessons from this storm have been enormous. The world seems to be more empathetic (ex: huge funds transferred to PMNRF, donations received by NGOs for feeding poor etc). The world cooperated on an unprecedented scale (ex: success of Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness, coming together of scientists & doctors

across the globe to find a vaccine etc.)
And most of all, the world seems to
be on its way to learn the importance
of "One Health" (A concept which
emphasizes on interlinkages between
human & animal health).

Thus, it is evident
that though calm periods of life
see theoretical development, the practical
applications of that theory is undertaken
in the tumultuous, stormy periods of
life. However, it is here that one
might ponder, how to keep learning
in a storm?

It is here that the
"four cardinal virtues" of Plato deserve
a mention. Equipped with "wisdom,"
courage, temperance and justice, an
individual must face the storm. Though
bovices of the battles fought in this

Stom would scar an individual for life, but these bruises would later serve to be the lessons that guide personal growth.

Along with these virtues, it is further essential to equip oneself with "Aristotlian Empiricism". It refers to close analysis of everything that one faces. Through such an impartial analysis, one can truly identify ~~one's~~ one's strengths & weaknesses. Only such an analysis could allow an individual to learn & grow.

The last ingredient required to keep learning requires one to have a "Never say Never" attitude. This can be illustrated through a popular monologue from the film "Rocky Balboa":

"Life isn't all sunshine and rainbows. Its a very tough &

mean place, and I don't care how tough you are it will beat you to your knees and keep you there permanently if you let it. Me, you or nobody, can hit as hard as life. But it isn't about how hard you can get hit, it is about how hard you can get hit. That is how winning is done"

Thus, it can be concluded that the calm periods of the life have a unique importance. They allow one to learn and develop in a controlled environment. However, the real test lies in the storms of one's life. It is here that an individual's entire value system is challenged. But those who persevere through this phase, are the one's that learn the most important lessons of life.

SECTION - B.

Legislative measures alone are not enough to ensure women's safety.

“The box of sweets fell from his hands, as he dropped powerlessly on the nearby chair. It seemed that an unspoken tragedy had befallen the family. Gloomy faces conveyed immense hopelessness. After all, ‘A girl child was born’.”

Such unfortunate images are commonplace in our nation. A nation that has for years seen birth of a girl child as a curse. A child sex ratio of 919:1000 aptly manifests this phenomenon. And a major contributor behind this belief is the fear: How would we keep our daughter safe?

Women's Safety: A daunting challenge:

According to World Value Survey, India and Jordan are the most dangerous nations for women in the world. In such a gloomy scenario, it is pertinent to ask ourselves: what is women's safety, and how can it be achieved?

It is essential to understand that women's safety involves a complex set of requirements. It not only entails personal physical & mental safety of women. Instead, it further involves safety in the economic, social and cultural spheres.

In the context of the individual, women face a plethora of threats from the moment they are born. The fortunate ones who survive the threat of being killed in the womb face the challenge of child

marriage. Those who escape this curse face constant mental harassment of "eve-tearing". Even after being married, issues such as "dowry killing" and "domestic violence" pose a constant challenge. And through all these phases, the cold reality of physical violence and rapes dauntles in front of them.

This bias continues in the economic sphere. "Differential wages", "pink collared jobs" and the perennial "glass ceiling" constantly thwart women's economic independence. This indirectly affects their ability to stay safe.

Social & cultural biases serve as the source of all injustices. "Gender stereotyping" & "patriarchy" based on scriptural dominance is an ugly reality. These biases in effect serve as the real threat to

women's safety.

After a brief analysis of issues impacting women's safety, it is essential to understand the impact of "Legislative measures" on women's safety. Only such an analysis could help us understanding the extent of the issue at hand.

Legislative measures: An unfulfilled promise

Legislative measures to ensure women's safety have been a story of hits & misses. Their failure to ensure comprehensive safety for women have contributed largely to the poor condition of women.

The colonial period saw the enactment of legislations such as: "Abolition of Sati Act 1829", "Widow Remarriage Act 1856", and "Sharda Act of 1914". While these

laws aimed to ameliorate the status of women in India, they largely failed to change the social outlook.

Soon after independence, India enacted the Hindu Marriage Act 1955. Focussed on ensuring equitable laws in marriage, divorce and succession, it ushered in a new era for women. However, it still fell short of the desired outcome.

Gradually, legislations to ensure women safety grew further. In fact, judiciary ~~has~~ intervened to frame the Visakha Guidelines of 1997. These guidelines paved the way for the Sexual Harassment at Workplace Act, 2015.

These legislations were accompanied with frequent amendments in the Indian Penal Code. Issues such as dowry & adultery were dealt with through these amendments.

However, despite these measures, women safety remains lacking. The shocking Nirbhaya case of Delhi and Hyderabad Rape case bear evidence to this heartbreaking reality.

in marriages has remained a dream. Women are still not allowed to take decisions. Their freedom of choice has remained caged. Further, the prevailing bias has curbed women independence to a nauseating extent.

Various evidences can be cited to prove the above mentioned phenomenon. According to Annual Survey of Education Report, Female dropouts from schools remain high due to lack of toilets. Their poor literacy rates are a direct contributor to their enhanced vulnerability.

Further, the recent NCRB report claimed that domestic violence cases were at an "all time high" during the COVID lockdown. Lack of digital literacy and fear of repression simply ensured the subjugation of women during such a lockdown.

Bhavari Devi, the victim of sexual harassment whose case led to the drafting of Utsakha guidelines, is still in search of justice. She is forced to live in the same village where the perpetrators of that crime roam free.

In such a scenario, it seems absolutely essential to search for the comprehensive answer to women's safety. Only ~~the~~ after finding such an answer can we as a society feel proud of ourselves.

Way Forward: The search for answers.

In such a grim scenario, finding answers can prove to be difficult. But a comprehensive, and coordinated attempt by a united society can certainly find the desired outcome in this abyss.

It is essential to understand that framing legislations can never serve as the panacea for women's safety. Instead, a holistic solution is the need of the hour.

Such a solution could begin by emphasizing on "economic empowerment" of women. Allowing them to spread their wings could lead them to independence. Such an empowerment would require:

Rise in women's literacy, skill development of women, providing equal job opportunities, and shattering

the proverbial "glass ceiling" to their growth.

This could be followed by true "social emancipation" of women.

This would involve breaking the barriers of "Gender stereotyping". Further,

it is the sole of family (as the first agent of socialization) to inculcate

values of equality. Families free from patriarchy would lead the "society" to be free from these barriers.

It is important to remember that reduced reliance on legislative means does not mean reduced role of government. In fact, the holistic solution which we are searching for certainly involves the sole of government as a guiding light. Through sensitization campaigns, awareness campaigns, and facilitating

coordination between different groups (such as NGOs, women's groups, states etc), the government could truly contribute immensely to women's security.

Finally, it is the role of the community to put the finishing touches to this holistic solution.

A wonderful example in this regard is manifested in the "community policing" initiative run in various districts of Uttar Pradesh. A vigilant, aware and informed community could lead the way towards women's safety.

Thus, it can be concluded that a coordinated effort to ensure women's safety is the need of the hour. As Malala Yousofzai rightly suggested:

"All of us cannot progress when half of us are held back". Thus, it

is key to remind ourselves that ensuring women safety will not only lead to women welfare. Instead, it would lead to a brighter, more progressive future for the entire community.

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