

The 3Ls of Empowerment

-Christine Lagarde

Summary: "The 3Ls of Empowerment" is a speech delivered by Christine Lagarde where she talks about the factors that are essential for women empowerment. As the speech begins, Christine says that today's era demands women to take the economic role. Since women belong to a patriarchal society, they cannot show their "true potential". They are not getting equal opportunities.

There are "3Ls" of women empowerment which includes learning, labour and leadership. Learning helps women to get limitless knowledge which helps them to broaden their thoughts. It helps women to overcome adversities. Christine Lagarde tells an African adage: "If you educate a boy, you train a man. If you educate a girl, you train a village".

Next Christine Lagarde tells how labour helps in the women empowerment. Labour helps women to show their opportunities and become successful. Unfortunately, today even though many women have job, they are underpaid, low-status in the society and "low-security jobs". But Christine Lagarde demands "equal pay for equal work". Then she says that by making changes in laws such as property and inheritance laws should not discriminate women, women will get more jobs. Also, the Government should introduce new policies for women to getting better healthcare and education. Also, people should encourage women to have economic independence.

The third "L" is leadership which helps women to improve their potentials and to show their inborn talents and abilities. Women, just like men, proved so many times that they are effective leaders. They have decision-making ability which is based on "consensus-building, inclusion, compassion" and "long-term sustainability". Due to lack of confidence, sometimes women are unable to show their potential. So Christine Lagarde recommends women to "dare the difference" which

means that women should break their comfort zone and face challenges with confidence in all walk their life. As Christine Lagarde ends her speech, she tells that it is time for women to empower by adopting these "3Ls" of women empowerment.

Any women

-Katharine Tynan

Summary: The poem opens by introducing the central metaphor of the house. The mother says that she is the pillars of the house. She is the keystone of the arch without which the roof and wall would fall and the house would be ruined.

A mother is not only the foundation of the household; she is the 'vita lux et amor' – the life, light, and love that fill a house. Like the sun which warms the earth, she is the fire upon the hearth. The children warm their hands at her. Without her the house would be cold and lifeless and the children would not thrive.

The mother is also like a twist or a knot in the ring that holds the different strands together. She holds the children together in the sacred ring of love. Without the knot of love many a child could go a-wandering and get lost.

Finally, the poet describes the countless chores a mother performs every day in the house which may make her children wonder whether she has a thousand hands. She decorates the house, gets the table ready for dinner, spins the curtains, and makes their bed. Here she is also compared to a mother bird who builds the nest, feeds the nestlings and makes their bed with her own soft feathers. She walls out the wind and snow and protects them from all danger. The poem ends with the mother's prayer to Jesus to keep her alive till the children grow.

Analysis of the poem: All the metaphorical images in the poem revolve around the central metaphor of a house and underline the proposition that a house and a mother are synonymous. A house is a house only when

there is a mother. But her value is often not understood until she is lost.

Images of pain and suffering abound in 'Any Woman' and point to the hardships and burdens that a mother has to bear for her children. The pillars that bear the weight, the keystone that bears the tension, the fire that burns itself, the knot of the ring that is twisted by force, and the mother bird that sheds its soft feathers underline the selfless suffering that motherhood involves.

Matchbox

-Ashapurna Debi

Summary: "Matchbox" is a short story which is written by Ashapurna Debi. The writer says that she used to compare women with matchboxes because of certain reasons. Both of them outwardly appear to be very calm and quiet. They can be seen in the kitchen, pantry and bedroom but have the power to explode.

In order to prove Ashapurna Debi's statement, she gives an example. The story is set in a three-story house. It is Sunday morning. Nomita is collecting the Ajit's "dirty clothes" in order to give to the washerman. She finds a letter from his dress' pocket which is crumbled one. After looking at the date, she understands that the letter is meant for her which came a few days before. She gets angry when she realizes that Ajit has opened the letter before but did not feel to tell her. She is fed up with Ajit's this bad nature. She told him several times to stop this nature but he did not.

Nomita finds that the letter is from her mother who as usual is asking to send her money in order to rectify her damaged house. She is a poor widow who raised her daughter by her own effort and married her to a wealthy family. The mother thinks that Nomita is leading a calm and cosy life. Ajit used to insult her whenever her mother asks her to send money by sending a letter. She is ashamed by this. So she decides to tell her mother, "I can't do anymore, don't hope for anything from me".

At that moment, Ajit comes there. Immediately she asks about the arrival of the letter. He gives a vague reply to her. The reality is that he deliberately does not inform her about the mother's letter. He at first tells that he has forgotten. When she again indicts him for his bad manner, he tells, "Shouldn't I make sure that no one's passing you love letter in secret?" This sentence makes Nomita

furious. She should not bear his suspicious talk. They begin to indict each other.

Ajit tells that even if Nomita yells or screams at him, she cannot do anything.

This fumes Nomita. She takes a matchbox and fires the *anchol* of her sari. Ajit never expects this reaction from her and he begins to scare a little bit. He says that anger is not good for a woman.

Suddenly, Nomita's niece, Rini, appears there to inform her that the washerman is waiting for Nomita to give Ajit's dress. She immediately leaves Ajith and goes downstairs to give the dress to the washerman. After giving the dress to the washerman, she goes to the kitchen where other women in the house are cooking food. They tease Nomita for being late.

Accidentally, Boro-wife notices that Nomita's anchol is burnt. Nomita lies that the anchol was burnt while she was taking a hot pot of water from the stove. As the story ends, Ashapurna Debi sadly tells that women suppress their agonies and pain in front of others and pretend as if nothing has happened. This is the sad reality. In front of others, they eulogize their husbands who may have physically and mentally abused her. Men also know that women will keep their mouth shut in the public.

Horegallu

-Sudha Murthy

Summary: Horegallu means a stone bench in Malayalam. The narrator talks about her childhood which she spent in her village. She remembers a banyan tree in the middle of the village which provided shade to the people on hot summer days. There was a horegallu under the tree which provided relief to travellers who carried heavy burden on their journeys. Horegallu consists of a horizontal stone placed over two perpendicular ones. They were strong enough to support heavy weight on them. It was a great blessing to the travellers.

The narrator's grandfather used to sit under the banyan tree and listen to travellers and villagers. They used to discuss their problems with him. Though he did not have any solution to their problems, they felt relieved to share their problems with him. He was as important as the horegallu for the travellers and the villagers.

The horegallu provided physical relief, whereas the grandfather provided mental relief.

The narrator then talks about one of her colleagues who used to find time everyday to listen to the problems of her colleagues. She wouldn't discuss those problems with anyone else and her colleagues found relief in sharing their problems with her. She wouldn't judge anyone and would listen patiently. She was a simple woman and had no solutions for their problems. But she was good enough to know that sharing would alleviate the suffering of people. She was a horegallu for the people in the office. The narrator asks her grandfather, "what was the importance of listening to people's problems?" Her grandfather told her that although he was not able to solve their problems, he could provide temporary relief to them. A horegallu could relieve travellers only for a short while, but that rest was enough to refresh their mind and body, and ready them for the journey forward.

The anecdotes shared by the narrator stresses the importance of taking a break from strenuous tasks. This rest is very important for maintaining the quality of the effort. It also protects the mental health of the people. Modern life offers no respite for people. They are constantly pressurised to complete tasks. This affects their physical and mental well-being. This is one reason why mental health is on the decline in towns and cities. Horegallus have disappeared from villages and so have support systems meant to provide relief to people.