**SHOULD WE GIVE UP YET?  
PRESCRIPTIVE MORALITY**

                                                           -K.V. Smitha, Hansraj College , DU

While  Pepsi  is  busy  belting  out  creative  taglines  which  never  fail  to  leave  a  smile  on  our  faces , the  leader  of  PepsiCo , its  parent  company  is  fighting  another  battle. ‘Oh  Yes  Abhi!’ , ‘Live  For  Now’, ‘More  Happy’ have  captured  the hearts  of  customers , and  encapsulate  the  essence  of  youth , vibrancy , perseverance , and  above  all ,  the  ‘Never  Say  Die’ spirit  promoting  equality  and  happiness. But  when  Indra  Nooyi,  CEO  of  PepsiCo,  famously  stated, “Women can’t  have  it  all.” It  was  one  of  those  moments, when  you  realize  that  the  utopian  version  of  equality  is  just  one  of  our  wild  fantasies.



Just  when  people  had  started  ditching  feminism  for  the  world  ‘seemed’  to  move towards  equality, Nooyi’s  comments  have  brought  the  entire  corporate  stage  to  a standstill.  Her  painful  acceptance  of  the  fact  that  women  just  can’t  have  it  all, even  though  “…we  might  pretend  to.” , brings  to  the  fore,  various  issues  like gender  discrimination,  which  slowly  were  being  pushed  to  the  backburner.  The mother-child  relationship  is  the  worst  affected, as  per  Nooyi, who  believes  that “...the  biological  clock  and  the  career  clock  are  in  total  conflict… ” for  a  woman. ‘There  is  only  so  much  you  can  do.’, has  been, most  unfortunately,  glorified. The sense  of  resignation,  though  depressing,  has  been  echoed  by  many  women executives  like  Andrea  Thomas, CEO  of  ScratchMeNot,  Jen  Lee  Kos  of BRIKA.com,  and  Patricia  Campbell  of  LegalAdvice.com  among  others. The  cocktail  of  ambition  and  guilt  have,  since  ages,  been  portrayed  as  a  dangerous mix  for  women,  whose  sole  purpose  in  life  is  to  get  married  and  have  children (Pun , obviously , intended).  Choosing  between  building  a  career  and  being  a  full time  mother , is  more  of  a  battle  fought  in  the  mind. If  the  former  wins,  the woman  is  deemed  to  be  an  over  ambitious  bossy  bitch,  but  if  the  latter  wins (which  always  has  a  higher  probability), the  decision  is  deemed  as  ‘the  natural thing  to  do’.

When  a  high  powered  woman  is  asked  to  ‘leave  her  crown’ at  the  garage,  and when  she  is  asked  to  fetch  milk  after  a  day’s  hard  work, it  pretty  much  sums  up  that  the  battle  is  already  lost. When  a  working  woman  is  bulldozed  with  snide remarks  about  her  parenting, it  is  almost  always  clear  that  she  had  it  coming.

The  prescribed  code  laid  down  ages  ago,  says  that  women  aren’t  intended  to  do  what  the  men  do. Manusmriti,  a  holy  Hindu  text  from  the past, says  the following : Her  father  protects  her  in  childhood,  her  husband  protects  her  in  youth,  and  her  son  protects  her  in  old  age; a  woman  is  never  fit  for  independence.  Early  Christianity  deems  woman  as  ‘defective’  and  ‘misbegotten’. Several  scriptures  from  different  religions  have  stated  women  to  be  inferior  to men,  which  is  often  met  with  a  casual  shrug  by  men  even  today! The  immensity of  this  marginalization  of  women  is  unimaginable.  The  wall  is  so  thick ,  that  even  the  most  successful  women  finds  it  hard  to  believe  that  the  success  she has  attained  is  real. The 2003 Julia Roberts’ starrer ‘ Mona  Lisa  Smile’, subtly conveys  the  sorry  state  of  affairs  through  one  of  the  well  thought  dialogues , which  is  unfortunately  true:  A  good  wife  lets  her  husband  think  that  everything’s his  idea  even  when  it  is  not.

So  basically  what  the  world  tell  us  is , “Don’t  you  worry! Everything  has  been written  down  for  you  to  follow.  Just  go  along  the  handbook.  But don’t  you  dare venture  outside  the  ‘prescribed’  book.  Just  play  the  role  for  which  you  were  born-  that  of  a  woman.  A  woman , who  is  not  allowed  to  think,  who  has  to accept  the  boundaries  as  set  by  the  men,  who  is  merely  the  dust  of  the  feet  of her  male  counterpart.”



The  silver  lining  is  the  fact  that  ultimately,  what  is  normative,  is  almost  always JUNKED.

The  question, therefore,  is  whether  we  agree  to  disagree?  The  economy  runs because  of  the  speculation  that  everything  goes  as  planned,  rockets  are  launched  because  the  scientists  are  sure  that  they  won’t  explode,  we  fall  in  love because  we  are  always  certain  of  ‘happily  ever  after’. Recessions  happen. Freak accidents  happen. Heartbreaks  happen.  Just  because  a  hugely  respected  leader says  the  truth, it  doesn’t  have  to  squash  our  hopes. It  doesn’t  have  to  be  a  battle  between  the  sexes. And  no,  it  doesn’t  have  to  be  an  agreement.  Nor  does it  have  to  be  feminism.  Stick  to  one’s  guns,  for  the  world  runs  on  hope. The  hope  for  a  free  world,  once  tagged  ‘utopian’,  materialized  after  centuries  of fighting  the  shackles  of  slavery.  Can  an  ‘equal  world’  be  far  behind?  I believe not.