

SCENE

It was 4:30 pm, Saturday. An afternoon saturated with lassitude. Three friends were discerning the sun setting gradually behind the horizon through their window. Dhanush fetched the chair and straddled it, Abhishek took up his guitar while sitting on the sofa, and Pavan was about to take his first sip of chocolate milkshake, the phone rang. It was Dhanush's. Akanksha his girlfriend called. With her immense exuberance of fear and tension, she informed that she along with some of her colleagues might get suspended from her newly joined Start-up Company as they had asserted against the management because of the disparity in the disbursement of wages between male and female employees of the very company. With an annoyed face, Dhanush gave this information to his friends and they started discussing the matter.

DIALOGUES

Pavan: This gender pay gap is becoming a real issue day by day. When we should be working towards bridging the gaps, companies like these are trying heart and soul to make the chasm wider than ever.

Dhanush: So true. They are bringing the moral of every independent working woman, striving to succeed down. Why would one work as hard and dedicatedly as others while being paid less?

Abhishek: Let's not generalize it. The real problem lies with the company itself. The gender pay gap has nothing to do with this. As there is no concrete evidence that establishes the fact if anything as such exists or not.

Pavan: What!! Are you trying to imply that the gender pay gap is a myth like the pseudo-left liberals? Well if so let me tell you the statistics state otherwise.

Abhishek: Well! Enlighten me then.

Dhanush: Well. According to a report by a popular UK-based website, www.payscale.com in 2020 women earn 81 Cents for every dollar earned by men. The number of women running mainstream companies is way lower than men.

Pavan: Forget about the UK. We simply had to get to be proud of the fact after the 2019 election our Lok Sabha witnessed the highest number of female MPs which is only 14 percent of the total. Though it was 5 percent in previous terms.

Abhishek: Well, you should have read between the lines, my friend. Because the true devil lies in the details. Let me tell you Dhanush, why the analogy you mentioned on so many different levels. The data derived from a simple formula which is 'Amount of money earns by all full time working women, upon 'amount of money earned by all full-time working men'. Unfortunately, the matter is not that simple as the analogy you mentioned had not taken into account vital aspects like career choices, occupational differences, the position of work. Recently a study was done by AAWW (Asian

American Writers' Workshop) accentuates the fact that there are so many variables that drive wages that no study can derive the actual wage gap if there is any. And this answers your question as well Pavan.

Pavan: NO. This answers nothing because what you are saying makes no sense. Are you trying to imply that women purposely choose a job with a lower wage? Do they choose not to be at the top of any firm?

And let me remind you that India ranks 112th on the overall Global Gender Gap Index. How do you define that?

Abhishek: A study was done by George Town University on the best and worst top five college majors.

In the top five college majors, there was petroleum engineering, pharmaceutical sciences, mathematics, and computer science, Aerospace engineering, and chemical engineering. Most of these sectors are dominated by males. You might argue that because of their male dominance in nature women can't thrive in these sectors, if so then how come being one of the top five college majors the sector of pharma is dominated by a female? Similarly, if you argue that due to the low wages men usually don't prefer working in the worst paying college majors. Then how come sectors like Theology and Religious vocations are dominated by males despite being one of the worst paying majors and the rest four counselling and psychology, early childhood education, human services, and community organizations, and social work are dominated, my females. Don't you think the preference of occupation plays a great role in this? You will earn as you have chosen your occupation irrespective of your gender.

Dhanush: Ok. Even if so, still there is a huge disparity in numbers. Do you acknowledge that or not? If you do then what according to you is responsible? Only the choices? Really!!

Abhishek: Stop trying to insinuate that as if I said women make poor choices. I never said that.

Dhanush: Then what are you suggesting?

Abhishek: Being at the top of a firm needs every ounce of your life. You don't get any holidays no recreations all that you have to do is work 12 to 18 hours a day. Maybe women are more sensible in a way and make better choices with their lives, they can balance their lives well rather than working all day long. And if they know what they need they can achieve it. Take for example Angela Merkel, Kristalina Georgieva, our own Arundhati Bhattacharya, Kaplana Chowla and there are so many of them.

Pavan: (With a mild laugh) Indira Gandhi was our first female prime minister.

Abhishek: Then? (With an affirming face) Even First world countries like the USA still couldn't select a female president for themselves. The gender pay gap can never be a deterrent in our country.

Dhanush: What's your take on history then? Let's not forget in the pre-Vedic era women and men used to be treated equally. Women had the capacity to challenge men in every sector of work? What

has happened since then? Who suppressed them? Why do we have to still face problems like child marriage or dowry? Or do you deny that as well?

Abhishek: The answer is simple. We are to blame. It is us who have to atone for this. But aren't we trying Dhanush? There are separate trains for them, seats reserved for them everywhere, different government policies are being framed for them. And it is an imperative of our society. Yes, there are problems regarding child marriages, dowry even in 2020. That's a separate issue altogether. And we should be sorry for what our ancestors have done to theirs'. But the point that I'm trying to make in a civilized society of a metropolitan city in 2020 the concept of gender gap payment is a thing of the past. Despite having the same qualification my girlfriend can earn more or less than me. But the reason behind this is not merely our genders. That's it.

Pavan: Common man. Now stop. These arguments made us miss the sunset. Gosh, such a beautiful scene it was. Sing a song Abhishek.

Dhanush: yaa. Really. Ok, Wait. Let me make coffee for the three of us first. It was 5:30 in the evening. Abhishek is singing a song with his guitar and Pavan and Dhanush enjoying it with every sip of the coffee from their coffee mugs.



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