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A CONSUMER CONNECT INITIATIVE

WOMEN'S DAY QUESTION

Do we need to talk of gender inequality or equal opportunity today?

TNM asked this question to a few notable women in the city and this is what they shared with Indrani Basu...

In 1910, an international conference of women determined that each year, a day should be set aside to press for women's demands. International Women's Day (March 8), stands for equality between women and men. Woman empowerment, equal status, reservations are some key issues that have been discussed day in and day out during these 100 long years. But today, we asked some women achievers from the city another question. Should we talk less about gender inequality and focus more on equal opportunities now? This is what they had to say:



"Women are beautiful creations of God with different physical, psychological and emotional needs from that of men. There is a natural gender inequality. However, opportunities are created by us and women must empower themselves and improve their self-esteem in order to compete with men on their own merits. Equal opportunity practices include measures taken by an organisation to

ensure fairness in the employment process. A basic definition of equality is the idea of equal treatment and respect. Hence focus on equal opportunities should get momentous."

(Dr Sally Enos, a resident of Khanda Colony, is an educationist and environmentalist who has spent 20 years in the field of education and is the principal of MES' Pillai's College of Education and Research)

●● Dr Sally Enos



"Gender inequality days are over as women are equal to men in all spheres of life. As seen over six decades of our independence, women have been in prominence, whether in politics, science, arts, sports, education, administration and business. Today, we have a woman President Pratibha Patil and earlier we had a very dynamic Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi and Nobel laureate Mother

Teresa. They are known not because they were women but because they were competent and proved themselves equal to men. Hence women should focus on their abilities, skills and be aware of their rights and fight for equal opportunities and prove their worth to be equal to men.

Women not only have the patience and ability to excel in any career but are also able to do the balancing act at home with children and work. Currently, men do take on some workload with respect to housework but it is still very difficult for working women not to think about home when at work and vice-versa. Today women are equal to men, educated, possess higher level of tolerance, can withstand pressures at work with ease and adjust to changed situation faster than men. That is why it is right for women to focus on equal opportunities and to think that she can take the lead in all situations, like having one's own bank account, properties and other legal documents. She can be the decision maker and should be able to shoulder responsibility equally with men. Then there will not be any need for rallies or women associations or even have a special day to celebrate women empowerment."

(Dr Sudha Rao, a retired senior scientist from Bhabha Atomic Research Centre, Mumbai is based in Vashi. Her field of specialisation in research was radiation preservation of foods, food science & technology. Currently, she is working as an expert member on a panel on food irradiation of TIFAC, New Delhi, and is an expert in Third World Academy of Sciences. She is the vice-president of Indian Women Scientists' Association (IWSA)).

●● Dr Sudha Rao



"Looking back in history, successful human beings are stereotypically equated to males. To break a stereotype, strong action and force is needed and that is why some women talk about gender inequality. A feminist point of view may perhaps be that women are now more independent and do not

need men for support. But my personal opinion is men and women are complementary and should not be viewed or based on their gender difference, but on their similarity as humans. The beauty of woman is in her power - her power to give, and in giving, her power is not limited. Remember one thing; no one can make us feel inferior without our consent. So now, the time has come, so that we should focus more on equal opportunities."

(Ranjana Kanti, a Nerul resident, has spent 22 years in social service, and has recently started (in April 2009), a movement called 'India - Redefined' for igniting the citizens of the country and empowering common men and women to take ownership of their everyday issues. The recipient of 'The Best Humanitarian Initiative of the Year 2009' in 'Women Leaders in India' conference at Mumbai and 'Global Youth award -2009', Ranjana believes that once a woman fully discovers her own giving capacity, and intentionally starts relating to the causes that impassion her, there will be no limits to her giving.)

●● Ranjana Kanti

Pics: Jagatdeep Singh

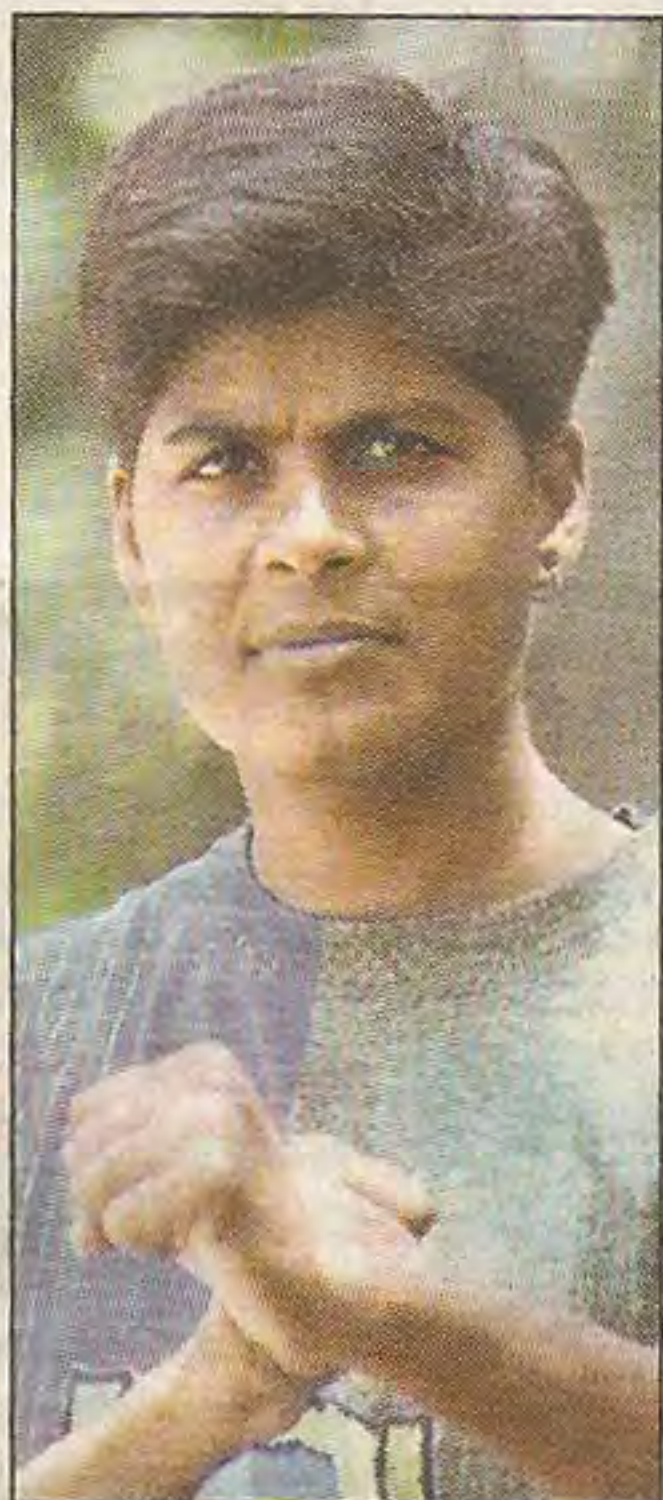


"I believe there is no such field on this earth where a woman could not compete with man. The only quality is required which will make you successful is your self-belief. If you have that kind of potential, there is no looking back. Whether you get support or not, that does not matter, work hard and give cent percent and definitely, you will succeed. But the sad part is that we still live in a world in which a significant fraction of people including women believe that a woman belongs and wants to belong exclusively at home.

Many, irrespective of gender, in our society today, actually believe that women are inferior and should not even try to dream to do better or go beyond that belief. A woman has to create her own opportunity without feeling deprived, and just go ahead and grab it when it shows itself."

(Archana Penta, the 32-year-old Belapur resident, is well known as the strong woman from Navi Mumbai. A weight lifter and power lifter by profession as well as a drill instructor in the police force, Archana is a gold medalist in the recently held Commonwealth Game - 2009 in Pune. At present she is aiming to achieve another feather in her cap in the forthcoming Asian Power lifting Game at Mongolia.)

●● Archana Penta



"Even today, we are shouting about (gender) inequality but unfortunately, a major part of our country is reeling under the influence of casteism and social inequalities. Equal opportunity would be the next step. But the major problem here is unless we are able to overcome the trauma of being harassed by our male counterparts in all areas, how can we talk about equal opportunity? I feel there should not be any segregation in the job market. There should be a

fair and firm opportunity for all irrespective of gender."

(Dhanwati Gadgil from Vashi police station started her career as an autorickshaw driver, (1991), and was the first woman in Navi Mumbai. She is a black belt taekwondo champion, an achiever of Chhatrapati Puraskar and winner of gold medals in various state championships. She is one of the few women who do night patrolling.)

●● Dhanwati Gadgil