

Dr. Sonal Pandya (Professor and Head of Media Department, Gujarat University)

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An expert on gender studies, a columnist and regular panelist on several television debates Dr. Sonal Pandya offers perspective on gender inequality and how deep-rooted the phenomenon really is.

“Have you seen our advertisements today? It is still the woman cooking, changing the nappies while the men are assigned roles of coming back with dirty clothes for their women to wash. The Situations have changed but the position of women remains the same even today, this is the harsh reality. Your marriage decision is still more important than your career decisions in most rural and urban families. Society does not like women who are like big large trees rooted, infallible, they like creepers, women who will bend backwards according to the ebb and flow of the moods of those in power and influence.”

And this is precisely what troubles her. She goes on to spoke about the dizzying extent of gender inequality, how we

are all a part of it, how deep-rooted it really it is and the only way forward.

“Even in academics which is supposedly women oriented where are all the women in policy making? In Schools and colleges where are the women in the trust? Are any of the women in the state vice-chancellors in college, deans in college? Is it because they are not qualified? It is simply because those are positions of political power and influence and nobody wants to bestow that power to a woman.

We might argue and assume that women are marching forward in the professional realm but look at the percentage of women working and many facts will be set right. And to add to that, we need to understand the concept of career woman vis-a-vis working woman. Sure you are working, but you are working, or rather being allowed to work not to craft your own personal identity, or fulfill your professional aspirations but to help out your family financially, make ends meet. Your identity still

revolves around being a wife, a mother and these aspects will always be more valued in society, no matter what professional laurels you achieve.”

Addressing motherhood and child birth she further emphasizes a lesser discussed issue- birth control. “The onus of birthing lies with a woman, but is it not ironic that the onus of birth control too lies with the woman? It’s mostly women who undergo sterilization, tubal ligation and take oral pills for birth control. In contrast the number of men who opt for vasectomy for birth control is marginal.”

She goes on to say that among her many works of genders studies what has emerged is a generic acceptance of the inferior position of women. It does not bother us that our mothers who have cooked for us often eat the last after all of us have finished dining, it does not bother us that for a voting population of 50% in the state, we have a meager 8% representation in the government. When these things will start bothering us, making us uncomfortable is when we will accept equality as a value system in life and that is when real progress will start and social conflicts will arise lesser and resolve more amicably. Till then we should all be feminists.”