

oh!!!

wo-(man-ia)

[woo-m-uh-nia] noun, abstract most of the times, raw, unadulterated, ridiculously suave



unfolding edition 10

does the year really end?
the year definitely ends
when my friend's father went missing....
unpublished
Osho gyaan
of names and genders
completing the circle
do i want a daughter
how to make a difference?

DIBA
YAMINI

editorial

Ever heard about the deer that roves around the jungle looking for musk? It looks around everywhere for the fragrance that drives it crazy and it chases it until the entire lifetime is over and it dies not knowing that the deer itself was carrying it all the while.

We all are like Musk Deers. We carry so many fragrances, but keep looking for it outside. We look for acceptance, assurances, motivation from outside, and we chase people, we chase them to the world's end but little do we realize that it all lies within us.

A few months ago, I met an Ayurvedic doctor who asked me if I wanted to lose weight to look good or to be healthy. I did not know what to say. Of course I wanted to be healthy, but does it mean I could be, without looking thin? There are many people who are not slim and attractive, as per the "Industry" standards, but they are healthy. They have a pretty reasonable metabolism; they have their sugar levels in control and are fairly active. So, should they just maintain their health or go ahead and aim for that perfect body which people crave for.

I only decided to opt for the 'healthy' option and asked the Doctor, to suggest me something that I could do with my Software job-culture schedule. She had a very simple response. She said, 'Call your grandmother and ask her what she used to eat. Eat that, for the next three months, religiously. Then ask her, what tasks she did only in the morning and evening; do that, because during the day you will be at work. And third and the most important thing ask her about her spiritual and religious beliefs and try to follow that. You will see a stark difference in your health - both mental and physical'.

And I began following that. And it has worked wonders. I knew I was uselessly chasing things I wanted when everything lied within me. I just had to explore them. All I needed was one push.

Many times also we wish to speak or write to people who are not reachable. We believe open letters are very powerful and they give us a chance to express unabashedly about whatever we feel, knowing that perhaps it will reach the intended recipient, or perhaps it won't. But that doesn't stop us from expressing.

This edition we bring a myriad of stories, articles, the best of inspirations and realizations that have changed our lives. We believe that as the year ends, it is best to contemplate and resolve to do better the next year. But what is this fad about flipping the calendar, entering a new realm and leaving behind the past? Is it a reality or just an illusion?

Keep reading, to know more.

Happy reading!



Does the year really end?

Time is relative; yes it is! Days and weeks too. If Sunday wasn't a holiday who would have hated Mondays?

So we celebrate December, the New Year's eve, bid goodbye to the year well spent, and thank the people for making our year awesome. We bask in the glory of past year and think of New Year's new resolutions, not meant to be followed of course!

Then comes January, we start by scribbling the last year's numbers again, as we are so used to it. We make promises to ourselves and others and there is whole lot of newness. But is it really so? Earlier there were 13 months, now there are 12. What difference does that make? People in Dubai like Friday and Saturday and hate Sundays, because Sundays are their Mondays!

You see the logic?

So what's the big deal and big difference between 31st Dec and 1st Jan. Well actually there is none. We hardly change from this day to that.

You remain the same. The passing date on the calendar just gives you an idea of being old. The idea of aging wouldn't have been there at all had there been no calendar. Think about it. We don't change with the passing dates on calendar. With time – Yes. With Dates – No! What is the difference? Are we different or are we the same?

We are the same. Time - if there exists something like that, then it does change us and so do our experiences. But the year, our birthdays.... various anniversaries, naah! They don't change anything. This is just a human desire to bound, restrict, contain...TIME! So, the year really doesn't end. Like life...it goes on.

The Year definitely ends!

The Roman calendar talks of 12 months, 365 days a year. The idea that a certain year begins and ends, aids to a lot of things. The idea of aging, for example. We believe that we are not old enough to get married, because there is certain year on the Calendar which says that I am x years old.

I remember asking my grandfather his age. He would always guess, and year after year he would say that he is 76. Sometimes he clearly looked above 85. And at times he looked younger than 60.

He did know when he was born. No one cared to make a birth certificate for him. The one he has is a random certificate which tells a random date and time. He would say, it's good that I do not know when I was born. That way, every day is my birthday and every day is a new day.

But can we afford to live like that? Today, if a student doesn't pass his boards at the age of 15, then 17 and his graduation at 22 or 23 and get married by 28, then he is definitely regarded as a failure in life. It all has to do with the numbers in the calendar.

We all live in the world where numbers make more sense than experiences. Numbers on report cards, numbers in the salary one takes home, number of square feet one lives in and definitely the number of days you have seen in the calendar and the number of pages you have turned.

So time may be relative, but we make it absolute. We give it a number, a boundary, and we say the YEAR has ended. But what is a year? Nothing but time! Can time End?

I'd say in our world. We make it end. And we feel powerful about manipulating time the way we want.

We are better off not knowing the truth. Let us all believe that time is not as powerful as we are. This farce has kept us going, and it should.

So let's exert some more power and end the year on 31st December. Because... the year definitely ends!

Mid-Life Crisis

The age between 23 to 33 years is a very tricky age. Some of the major things happen to us in this span. Be it graduating, getting a job, finding a partner, getting married or having kids. For 90% of people, this span is the most life defining span, which decides the rest of the course of their life.

Where some settle down happily and find the direction in life without obstacles, there are many who feel stuck. They do not understand the purpose behind the things they are expected to do. Many feel like breaking free and living a life that defines adventure and thrill more than just plain mundane. It wouldn't be strange to know that there are many people who would nod in agreement while reading this. And many who are beyond the age of 33 also agreeing to this situation. There are seldom people who are very sure, very safe and secure in whichever place they are in, in their lives. To name this phase or condition, the psychologists have called it the Mid Life Crisis.

What does it feel like?

This mid-life crisis makes you feel like you are stuck in a whirlwind and there is no way out. You feel like no one understands you. You are not able to figure out why certain things are happening with you or not happening with you. You want to exert a lot of force and get out of the situation but you are so stuck in the whirlwind that you are just going further down with it, without being able to detach yourself from the negativity.

What do you do?

You read all self-help books possible. Or you talk to your friends and seek support. You look for meaning in your life. Some people get addicted to alcohol or smoking or drugs and find it very difficult to express themselves. The urge to express and let out frustration is so high that you find an outlet in any way possible. Good or bad. If not, you let it pile up, and fight with your loved ones and argue unreasonably. Or seek astrological solutions to the problems by spending thousands and lakhs of money in pleasing the planets which apparently rule them.

The way out of the mid-life crisis

This is not an easy phase. Most definitely not. But one must understand that this is just a phase. Life is all about uncertainty. Nothing in life comes foretold. We have to face one day at a time. Many people who find themselves in the mid-life crisis are either

Dwelling in the past, wondering about their past mistakes or how well their past was.
OR worrying about what will happen in the future.

They fail to understand that there is nothing one can do about the two. We have no control about what is going to happen in the future, nor do we have any control over whatever happened in the past. The only thing that is very important is the present moment.



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Mid-Life Crisis

Living the moment:

When everything is concentrated on the present, the given moment, it becomes very easy to analyse what one wants and needs. Ask yourself questions like

How do I want to feel right now? Happy or Sad?

If the answer is Happy, then ask yourself the next question

What makes me happy? A person, a hobby, an activity or fulfillment of self?

If you are looking for someone else to make you happy, then we have got a lot of basics wrong. Happiness does not lie in other people. It lies within us. If we find a way to make ourselves happy, nothing external can affect us.

If a hobby or an activity makes you happy, go do it.

Or do you think fulfilling yourself by earning or selling your resume in market or doing a job makes more sense, and then do that. Just one day at a time.

There will sure be disappointments. You may start out to sketch or write, or quill or paint or play music, and it may turn out to be a disaster. You may go on a self-fulfilment spree and you may not get any assurances. You may want to go to an NGO and work for the less privileged and it may not give you the feeling you were looking for.

Then come back to the question again. And keep digging. Have new answers.

But never go to sleep without analysing, what you did that day and was it worth it? If no, then you will be eternally stuck in that whirlwind and that will take you down and further down.

So break free and give yourself this chance, this exercise because you deserve to be happy.

Understanding the negativity around you:

Most of the problems in life are because of other people and the negativity they spread. You cannot change people. But you can most definitely choose what should affect and what should not affect you.

For example, if your parents are very orthodox or friends who are pressing, who keep telling you that you are worthless, let them not rule your mind. You have to define who you are and how you feel. No one else is responsible for that. If you hold anyone responsible, remember, nothing is going to happen to that person. But you will be drowning in negativity and depression. Let go of the people and their negativity. Sometimes you cannot exclude people from your life, it is impossible. But you can ignore how they behave or talk to you. Stop anything that pulls you further down.

Remember you are already lower than where you deserve to be. This is not the place for you and you should be aiming to be where you deserve be. Much much higher in terms of status and peace of mind, both!

Never Assume:

The major problem that we face is assuming things which do not even exist. We always assume what people will think if we do a certain thing in life. We are scared of the reactions. We always think about people and never about ourselves. Everyone lives for themselves. The society coexists in peace. If you give up a job because your neighbour talks ill about you, then you are neither doing any good to your neighbour, nor to yourself. Because the neighbour will find another reason to talk anyway.

Never assume that people feel a certain way for you, because for many you are not even important. They have other important things and their life is moving on perfectly fine. Then why do you sit back, assume things and remain in perpetual agony. Stop assuming things, about success or failure. All we need to do is just put in efforts. The result of the efforts is none of our business. If the efforts are sincere the results will be too! You have to believe in this mantra. Just the efforts are important. Results follow.

Forgive and Forget:

Many times, we face situations and people who do not do us any good. At a very young age we are cheated upon in relationships, dumped or deceived in trades and businesses or let down by trusted few. We do not let the grudges go. We hold on to them and live our lives blaming and cursing them for the state we are in this day. But who is this affecting? They are again, very well settled in life and doing fine. It is eating us up, and slowly spreading the negativity in our lives.

Every single person on earth will face deceit. Jesus did too. But the answer to this is to Forgive and Forget the wrong that was done to you. It may be utterly wrong in your eyes what the person did, but there must have been a reason why that was done. That reason may not be noble, but for sure that reason was to help you understand that nuances of life. If people who have hurt you hold you back, then you are only giving them a reason to rejoice in your misery. Be the stronger person. Forgive and forget and move on. Nothing in life is more important than you yourself.

Heartbreaks, failures, dreams not coming true, lack of purpose in life, disappointments are a part of mid-life crisis. We have to just believe that the past is gone, future is unseen and all that is important is the present. Slowly this crisis will end too.

When my friend's father went missing..

Last Monday, when my friend Shruti called and said that her father had gone missing, something stirred within. I lost my senses for a while. How can anyone go missing? Like that! I asked her the details and she told me how her father, who was a dementia patient, went to get the newspaper and never came back.

He was new to Bangalore.

He would go and get the newspaper every day from a

shop which was hardly 100 meters away. Being a Dementia patient, with an early onset of Alzheimer's, he was never let out alone without a company or an ID card. But since a month, he was doing pretty well. He would go to the shop and easily walk his way back home.

But that Monday afternoon, he went, and did not come back. He started walking in the other direction, the newspaper vendor said. Without money, identity card, or anything, he had started walking in a different direction.

As soon as Shruti called, I rushed to her place and we decided to contact all the shelter homes, hospitals and police stations to get the news going. I uploaded the picture on social media, sent it to all the people I knew, in Bangalore and began doing whatever clicked, at that time. Days passed, one, two, three.. And there was no clue about his disappearance. It was very difficult to console family, for obvious reasons. We made numerous calls, visited police stations, but were thoroughly disappointed by the lack of interest shown by the police.

I wondered, is this the value of life in India? They replied saying, that thousands went missing every year, and they could not concentrate on one person alone. They said they would put in their best. We saw their best. It was nothing.



When my friend's father went missing..

A few NGOs came forward and helped, but that was of no use. Every day, my friend and her brother would go around looking for their father. I would sit at work and make calls and join them in the evening. Eventually the weekend came, and we spent two whole days scanning every nook and corner of this huge city looking for a single trace of a man lost and wandering. But we did not find him.

Sunday evening, we were at Shruti's place, talking about what next could be done. Either we could continue looking for him, or hire a detective. Finally they agreed to hire a detective and paid a huge amount. I suggested that we should stop looking around in each and every lane, because after 6 days, without food and water it would have been very difficult for uncle to move around all by himself. The chances that he would collapse and someone would admit him in some hospital were more.

The exact thing happened. He was found lying naked and unconscious in front of a temple, and a citizen who found the sight inappropriate called the police and asked them to take care of the situation. Now we thank God that he was robbed and was lying naked. Had he been dressed and lying, anyone would have considered him to be drunk. He would have been easily ignored.

As decided, my friend and her brother were covering all the Government hospitals, and they reached the emergency ward of the hospital where uncle was lying, unattended.

Hopelessly, they saw a man lying on a bed and thought they would check him out, for one last time, to see if it was their father. And he was! He looked at them, and his eyes filled with tears. He couldn't speak anything. He was running a very high fever, was very weak, covered in dust and dirt. He was immediately shifted to a better care.

After 7 days, he was finally reunited with his family.

Shruti called me and told me the news. She asked me to pick up her mother and come to the hospital which I did. All through this episode, I felt nothing. No pain, no happiness, no relief. I was numb.

But I prayed, no one gets separated from their families. It may not be the worst thing, but the pain and frustration is infuriating.

No matter how hard I wish to change the past, to make it all perfect, I have come to believe that some things are meant to happen for a reason. We just have to understand the larger scheme of things and move on.

I am starting to believe in Happy Endings. Life is not harsh, always!

unpublished

He sighed as the faded ink in his notebook, diluted the feelings of the words he had once penned down.

It read,

When we are 80, and neither of us can read anymore, I will lend you my extra special bifocal lenses to zoom in to my feelings. You would need them. You would have lost the sight, as much as I would have.

It still takes nothing for me to understand what you want. I always know it. Like I did back then. You always needed reassurances, and missives. I hated writing, and you turned me into a novelist.

Words poured like rains during monsoons. Why, you'd wonder? I wrote so that one day, while walking past that book store; you'd pick up a hardbound with my name on it. And wonder..

'Am I the protagonist? Did he write about me?'

Knowing that you'd chance upon my book and read it- Back to back... and realize, it wasn't about you.

You'd ponder furthermore, 'perhaps there will be sequel to this. He said he was madly in love with me. He ought to write one book at least about me'.

Thinking that, you'd indulge in another book, with my name on it and consume all that I had to give. And try to find yourself -In me.

Why do you have to find yourself in me? Don't you know how you left a part behind when you refused to talk? Talk anymore about what had gone wrong?

You want to see how I perceive you today? You want to search yourself in the things I do?

What do you ask of a writer, who has forgotten his existence? Who writes to discover himself, after losing his senses in the person he claimed to love more than anyone else?

When you are everything that is there, what are you looking for? Are you trying to find light in the sun, or a shadow in the dark?

You are looking for that drop in the ocean which I set fire to, last summer. There is no soul anymore. It's gone!

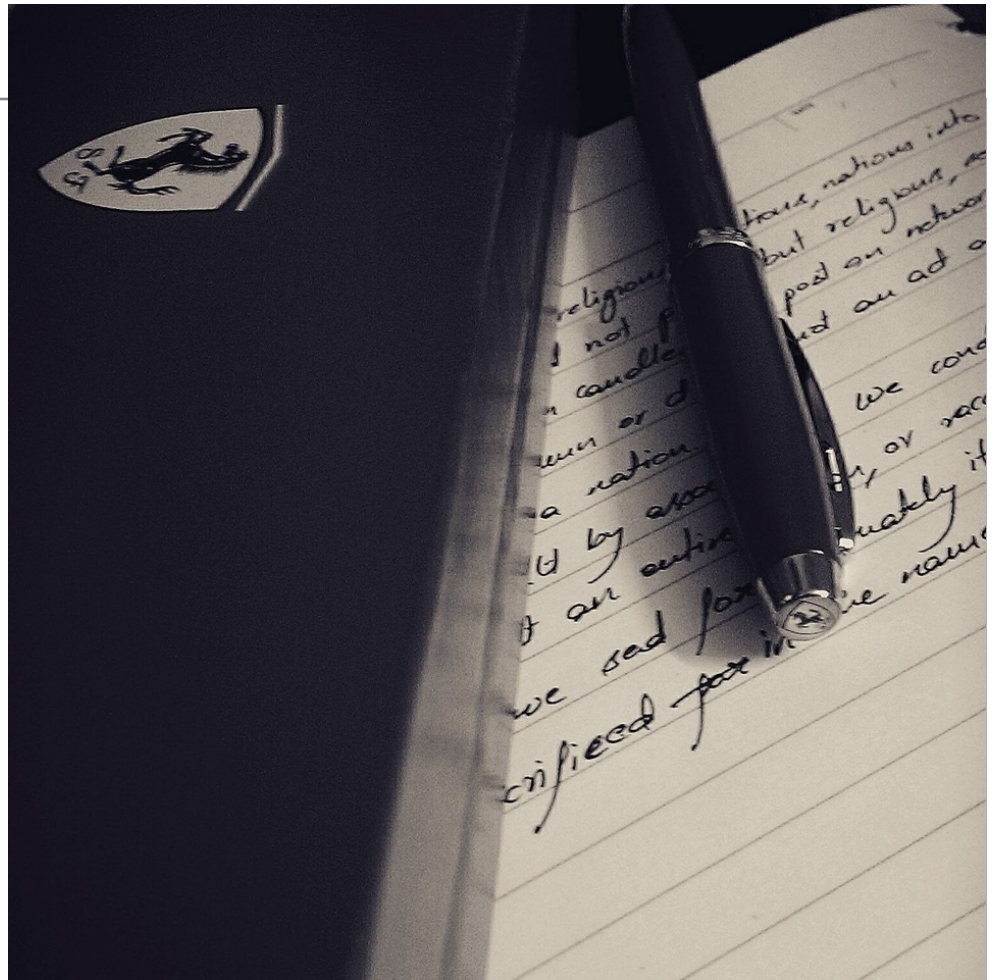
Then, why do you read? Especially my books?

I promised, I would lend you my bifocals...

You should've waited.

She walked around the city looking for bookstores hoping to find a book she hadn't read- With his name.

The book she was looking for was never published!



OSTHO gyaan

You have a very great desire to be a mother. But be knowing that you are taking on a great responsibility. To become a mother is one of the greatest responsibilities in the world. So many people are on the psychiatrists' couches, and so many people are in madhouses, and so many are out of the madhouses. If you go deep into the neurosis of humanity, you will always find the mother - because so many women want to be mothers but they don't know how to be. Once the relationship between the mother and the child goes wrong, the child's whole life goes wrong - because that is his first contact with the world, his first relationship. Everything else will be in continuity with it. And if the first step goes wrong, the whole life goes wrong.

The desire is there - I can feel it... a tremendous desire to be a mother. Nothing is wrong in it, but one should knowingly become a mother. You are taking one of the greatest responsibilities that a human being can take. Men are a little freer in that way - because they cannot take the responsibility of becoming a mother. Women have more responsibility. So become a mother, but don't take it for granted that just by being a woman, one is necessarily a mother - that is a fallacy. Motherhood is a great art; you have to learn it. So start learning about it!

A few things I would like to say to you:

First...

Never treat the child as yours; never possess the child. It comes through you, but it is not yours. God has only used you as a vehicle, a medium - but the child is not your possession. Love, but never possess the child. IF the mother starts possessing the child, then the life is destroyed - the child starts becoming a prisoner. You are destroying his personality, and you are reducing him to a thing. Only a thing can be possessed: a house can be possessed, a car can be possessed - never a person. So this is the first lesson - get ready for it. Before the child comes, you should be able to greet him as an independent being, as a person in his own right, not just your child.

And the second thing...

Treat the child as you would treat a grown-up person. Never treat a child like a child. Treat the child with deep respect. God has chosen you to be a host. God has entered into your being as a guest. The child is very fragile, helpless. It is very difficult to respect the child. It is very easy to humiliate the child. Humiliation comes very easy - because the child is helpless and cannot do anything, cannot retaliate, cannot react.

Treat the child as a grown-up, and with great respect. Once you respect the child, you don't try to impose your ideas on him. You don't try to impose anything on the child. You simply give him the freedom - freedom to explore the world. You help him to become more and more powerful in exploring the world - but you never give him directions. You give him energy, you give him protection, you give him security, all that he needs - but you help him to go farther away from you to explore the world.

And, of course, in freedom the wrong is also included. It is very difficult for a mother to learn that when you give freedom to a child, it is not freedom only to do good. It is also necessarily the freedom to do bad, to do wrong. So make the child alert, intelligent, but never give him any commandments - nobody keeps them, and people become hypocrites. So if you really love the child, the one thing has to be remembered: never, never help him in any way, force him in any way, to become a hypocrite.

And the third thing...

Don't listen to the morality, don't listen to religion, don't listen to culture - listen to nature. Whatsoever is natural is good - even if sometimes it is very difficult for you, very uncomfortable for you. Because you have been not brought up according to nature. Your parents were not bringing you up with real art, love. It was just an accidental thing. Don't repeat the same mistakes. Many times you will feel very uneasy...

For example, a small child starts playing with his sexual organs. The natural tendency of the mother is to stop the child because she has been taught that this is wrong. Even if she feels that nothing is wrong, if somebody is there she feels a little embarrassed. Feel embarrassed!

That is your problem; that has nothing to do with the child. Feel embarrassed. Even if you lose respectability in society, lose - but never interfere with the child. Let nature take its own course. You are there to facilitate whatsoever nature is unfolding - you are not to direct nature. You are just to be there as a help.

And start meditating.

Before the child is born, you should go as deeply as possible in meditation. When the child is within your womb, whatsoever you are doing continuously goes as a vibration to the child. If you are angry, your stomach has a tension of anger. The child immediately feels it. When you are sad, your stomach has an atmosphere of sadness. Immediately the child feels dull, depressed. The child totally depends on you - whatsoever is your mood is the mood of the child.

The child has no independence right now: your climate is his climate. So no more fighting, no more anger. That's why I say that to be a mother is a great responsibility. You will have to sacrifice much.

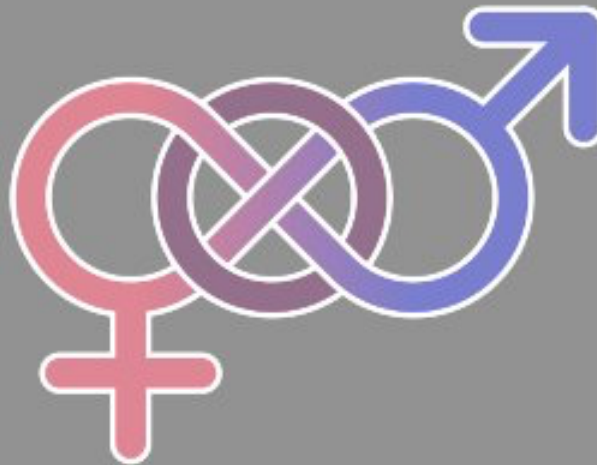
Now during these coming seven months, you have to be very very alert. The child is more important than anything else. If somebody insults you, accept it, but don't get angry. Say, 'I am pregnant, and the child is more important than getting angry at you. This episode will pass and after a few days I will not remember who has insulted me and what I have done. But the child is going to be there at least seventy, eighty years in the world. It is a big project.' When the child is born, then you can be angry - but not right now. Just say, 'I am a pregnant mother. I cannot be angry - that is not allowed.' This is what I call sensitive understanding.

No more sadness, no more anger, no more hatred, no more fighting.... Both parents have to look to the child. When a child is there, you are both secondary; the child has every preference. Because a new life is going to be born... and it is going to be your fruit. If from the very beginning anger, hatred, conflict, enters into the child's mind, then you are causing hell for him. He will suffer. Then it is better not to bring a child into the world. Why bring a child into suffering? The world is tremendous suffering.

In the first place, bringing a child into this world is a very risky affair. But even if you want that, at least bring a child who will be totally different in this world - who will not be miserable, who will at least help the world to be a little more celebrating. He will bring a little more festivity into the world... a little more laughter, love, life.

So for these days, be celebrating. Dance, sing, listen to music, meditate, love. Be very soft. Don't do anything hectic, in a hurry. Don't do anything in a tension. Just go slowly. Slow down absolutely. A great guest is to come - you have to receive him.

Of Names & Genders



All names should be unisex. Because now I have known of women with names like “Deepak” and “Pankaj” and “Rohil” and men with names like “Gowri” and “Dharini” and “Dayanidhi”. Boy!

And yes, one would have to rack their brains to understand that the women are called with those names that I just mentioned in the north and the men are lovingly named these girly names down south. So what is it? Huh?

No, I am not quoting Shakespeare’s “What’s in a name?” and all. When someone tells me to collect the file from a certain “Gowri”, I instinctively look for a female. And I look around everywhere on my floor. I do not look at name plates right away, but I look at faces. And where ever I spot a female, I check her name. But none of the females have that name. I look and look and look and there is no Gowri.

Like always, the shy me (I hate asking questions twice. I feel I will be insulted for asking over and over again. It’s embarrassing) refuses to pull my act together and confirm once again about the location of that person. I finally spot a name plate which says “Gowri S”. But there is a man sitting there.

Such short cuts mahn! Imagine what that S would be for? “Shankar”. That’s right. The name is “Gowri Shankar”. Why not name him just Shankar then. I feel terrible about my thought process, because it makes me laugh, while I ask him about the work stuff. I try to put on a poker face, do my business and come back to my place and laugh with a tissue stuffed in my mouth so that the decorum is not disturbed.

No, that’s not enough; the man who is always busy elsewhere is called Durga. And the ogler - Dayanidhi. All in my office, mind you. No Daya, no Maya, in reality! Sigh!

Then I call up my friend and tell her about this. She says, remember Pankaj who won one of the seasons of Masterchef?

I confirm “Wahi na jo apni wife ke saath Nach Baliye me aaya tha?”, she laughs and says, no..

“Wo aurat – Pankaj!!”.

I nod in affirmation.

And do you remember “Deepak Aunty?”.

I exclaim “What?”. Arre Dilli me Maasi ki Padosan, she tells me about the neighbors who were family friends of my aunt. I realize, it is useless dissecting the name game. Let people be called whatever they fancy.

And then I recollect my favorite book – Little women. Where Jo is a girl, and Laurie a boy! And how Joey – in FRIENDS gets confused. Then I think of nothing more. Because that’s it!

Now I quote Shakespeare – “What’s in a name? That which we call a rose, by any other name would smell as sweet”
The End!

Completing the circle

I was in Germany for 2 months where I stayed in small little guest house. It was a tiny room with no kitchen. I was to share the kitchen in the 4-sharing room in the apartment next to mine. I was the only girl and I couldn't have afforded to stay in a 4-sharing room with 3 other guys. So this arrangement was made and I was to stay alone. Now, this room was dirt cheap. If I were to stay here for two months, I would save a lot of money. The first night was lazy. I had not slept in 22 hours so I dozed off and slept like a log. But day-2 onward, it was crazy. The room next to mine sounded of two desperate couples, yelling during the love making, making me feel so uncomfortable. I wondered if it happened every day, and if they stayed for as long as I was there it would be very tough to go on.

My imagination transformed into reality. **The guest house was a one-night stand Guest house**, where guys bring their catches, bang them and move on. Prostitution is a legal business in Germany, and I wasn't aware. Worse, I wasn't even aware that I was staying in a place which people rented for just one night.

As an Indian, I rejoiced when I knew how much I could save by staying in a cheap accommodation, but otherwise, as a girl, a person- who loves to sleep in the night, this setup was a shock. I didn't have to tell the other male colleagues (Indians) staying in the other apartment, about this problem. One of them immediately offered to shift from that apartment to the room next to mine. I couldn't thank him enough. With him around I felt very safe. There was no way the Germans would have attacked me, but I had my own fears back then. For a first time traveler, these inhibitions and apprehensions get the worst out of you.

Meanwhile, weekdays went just fine. I was at work most of the time. One day my internet connection gave up and I wanted a recharge. My colleagues at work, the Germans, were very helpful. One of them, Marc, offered to take me to the supermarket and helped me with the recharge. I was overwhelmed by his generosity. Marc, was one guy I liked the most, as he spoke flawless English, while the other colleagues avoided me as much as possible because they couldn't communicate too well in English. It was very easy to talk to him. After buying the recharge, I asked Marc to explain me the instructions which were written in German, and the amazing guy that he was, he said he would help me install it. I was pleased. Then he asked me where I was staying. So we went to my room, and it was just 6 in the evening.

I purposely kept the door open, so that I wouldn't be in the room alone with him. That's what we do in India, right? But as fate would have had it, he locked the door.

My mind spoke, "Are you ready?". I shunned the thought and focused on making a "no-nonsense face".

Meanwhile, more couples got wilder and screamed with passion in neighboring rooms, and I was beyond embarrassed when we both tried to bring my internet up. Weird thoughts crossed my mind.

"What if he approaches me?" "How do I tell him I can't". I was preparing answers and defenses in my mind, when he looked at me and said, "It's done. You can use your internet". I said, "Thank you".

He seemed to be in no hurry. I was still in my overcoat; I hadn't even removed it, fearing the unreasonable. That's when he asked me if I'd like to turn off the heater. I said "No. It's ok".

My mind kept contemplating "Is this how you make the first move. Turn of the heater and turn on the body heat?"

"You are sweating", he said. My Mind: "Of course. I am. I don't know how German's do it. And plus I ain't a one night hi, next day bye kinda girl!"

"I have to go to the next apartment to help my colleagues make dinner", I escaped as I uttered this defense.

"Oh that's really nice. Tomorrow is my last day at work, perhaps we could go for coffee tomorrow morning in the cafeteria", he offered.

"Sure", I was relieved when I came know of his intentions. He was leaving anyway.

"Why are you staying here?" he asked out of the blue. "This place would be very uncomfortable for Indians, especially girls", he asked, unexpectedly. "No, I am cool.", I spoke, as if getting laid was so OK for me.

My mind strangled my neck and I almost died. "Ohh that's really nice. Then you wanna get a beer?", he finally asked. "Umm, no.. I think I should help my friends cook", I said freaking out.

"Thank you so much Marc", I said gratefully trying to tell him that he should be leaving now. I was getting a little restless, with him in the room, and the couples making noises in the next!

"That's no Problem. When I was in US, and didn't know English, I had a colleague help me like this. I understand what it is like being in a new country and not knowing the language. I had to do the good to someone. If you want to thank me, just do it for anyone who'd need it. Either in India, or any place else!"

I smiled!

"Remember, complete the circle!", he re-iterated.

Do I want a daughter?

The headlines in the newspaper pushed me in a trance. A painful trance. I saw the walls crumbling into tiny pieces of stones and my skin dissolving in some kind of a liquid. I felt lost. I did not want to believe in what I was reading. I had just crossed a crowd of people protesting against something, and like most of us, I gave a darn! A 6 year old was raped. In the school premises. And that school happens to be right close to where I stay.

Rape? What would a 6 year old understand? Someone undoing the little girl's dress, shoving his hand in her underwear, pulling it down and then satisfying himself in ways he fancies. Vaginal tear. Abdominal pain. She complained of not being able to urinate properly because she did not know how to relate that incident to her mother. For 7 days, the mother was clueless as to why the kid was running a fever for so long. Imagine the trauma. Finally when the doctor examined, they came to know about the assault the little girl had been through. Why? Did she provoke anyone? A six year old? Was she wearing skimpy dresses and flaunting her assets? Or wearing a low neckline dress to unleash those wild beasts?? What did she do?
She is just 6!

How will she be able to overcome the trauma. The mother says she is back to her cheerful self. Perhaps it is easy to forget these things when you do not know the intensity of it. Ignorance is bliss. But she will grow up. She will know how it happened to her. She will be scared. And she will curse herself for being a girl.

I do it! Today, I curse myself for being a girl. Not because I have a chance of being raped if I roam about alone in the city. No. I curse myself because I am incapable of calming a man's aggression, his perversion. I am incapable of commanding respect. I am incapable of portraying myself as a human and not an object. It's really my fault! Despite being a daughter, wife, sister to someone, a woman is still subjected to those inquisitive eyes.

How would her skin feel, if I touched them. How would her insides feel? How will she moan if I do her? And all the fantasies of the wonderful pervert-world the rapists live in. That's what they think about all the time. Don't they?

Is this a good time to be a girl? Do I want a girl child? Do I want her to study in one of the schools in India? Every time something like this happens, I wonder, it will not happen to me. It happens to other people. But I could be that other people any day now! Because I don't feel safe. Safe for myself, my sister, or my baby girl. Well, she's not going to come to life now!

If she does, I plan to move out of the country and give her a secured life. How much can one fight? I may, but will my 3 year old girl would?

I can't stop but wonder what happens to people who undergo all this and still turn out ok.

Am I lucky that I have been safe so far? No! I am not! Know why? Because if I feel lucky, then it's unfair to thousands of girls who have been through sexual abuse and are still fighting the demons. We are not lucky. None of the girls are!

I have no idea how to make this hurt go away. My heart goes out to that little girl.. Wishing for a better place is futile. I just wish I escape this hide and seek as long as possible. Because now, everyone's turn is going to come.

The devils are on a prow! Those Bastards!



Resolutions for 2015

Every New Year has two important things. A previous night's hangover and a list of New Year resolutions. We believe in Fresh Page, New Slate. We want to start scribbling things from scratch. We live as if everything that ever went wrong will be forgiven and forgotten and now we have new chances to set things right. That is indeed a great attitude to begin the Fresh New Year with.

Like everyone else, we have also committed to take up some resolutions and we intend to stick to them all through the year.

We have published 9 editions in the last 10 months, and this comes as a combined edition for December and January. I think it was a roller coaster ride for us. Brain storming on topics, to writing to designing and actualizing the magazine. We want to make it bigger and better from this point onwards. It is not just about us. It about all of us. So here is our list of resolutions which we are going to follow. You are more than welcome to join us in the journey of the next 10 editions and more!

- 1. Say no to Plastic. In all possible ways! No plastic bags, no plastic cups, no straws, no plastic wrappers, no plastic plates, or toys.**
- 2. Gifting saplings on birthdays and occasions. Making sure that everyone we know does it this year. Either voluntarily or through us. It barely costs less than Rs. 100 to grow a tree.**
- 3. Have our first give away in March'15 and have many more in the months to come. We believe in sharing love and light, and that we would want to do by giving away things we make with a lot of love and affection.**
- 4. More contests and rewards. You will come to know more about this from this edition onwards! Stay glued.**
- 5. Walk at least 100 km in a month. With increasing awareness about health, both mental and physical, we have decided to take up this exercise and we aim to hit 100kms a month mark.**

Join us on FB to know more.
Live in style!

Along with these 5 resolutions, we intend to create awareness about a lot of things. We shall take them in subsequent editions.

And as usual, contributions in forms of articles, photographs are welcome. This is a place where you express without fear!

Cheers to 2015!

open letter...

Dear Parents, New and Old,
*Your children are not your children.
They are the sons and daughters of Life's longing for itself.
They come through you but not from you,
And though they are with you yet they belong not to you.
You may give them your love but not your thoughts,
For they have their own thoughts.
You may house their bodies but not their souls,
For their souls dwell in the house of tomorrow,
which you cannot visit, not even in your dreams.
You may strive to be like them, but seek not to make them like you.
For life goes not backward nor tarries with yesterday.
You are the bows from which your children as living arrows are sent forth.
The archer sees the mark upon the path of the infinite,
and He bends you with His might that His arrows may go swift and far.
Let your bending in the archer's hand be for gladness;
For even as He loves the arrow that flies,
so He loves also the bow that is stable.*

~ **Gibran**

Like this famous Sufi philosopher indicated so many years back, I wish to re-iterate. Yes your children are not your children. Like a cat leaves its kittens as soon as they are off feed, able to walk and fend for themselves, like birds free their little ones as soon as they learn to fly. Similarly we humans should leave our kids as soon as they are capable of taking care of themselves. "Capable" here is a subjective term. Will we ever stop parenting? Taking decisions for them? From schools and colleges to careers and marriages, babies and their upbringing too? Look at your egoistic self, Parents; you don't love your kids you want to possess them. Behind the veil of doing the right thing for them, you make an engineer out of a writer, a doctor out of a singer. Why you think you are the all-knowing, correct people, who can't go wrong. Can you stop your kid from falling ill or meeting with an accident? Yes, you can be cautious and prevent the mishaps. But your child is bound to experience the things written in his destiny. Everyone is here for a purpose which you can't control dear parent, many a times you are a catalyst for particular experiences and many a times you are nothing but an observer.

The sooner, you accept the better!

Truly ourselves,

Us



Beauty Tips by Sabeeh Abidi

The winter has stuck for way too long. As the winters begin, we all shop for various products...moisturizers, thick creams, foot creams, lip balms, petroleum jelly and God knows what things! But these products really work to provide you moisture in this cool weather. You should really take care of your skin as this season demands lots of pampering for skin and specially lips. Well, I am going to mention here some really interesting tips to avoid chapped lips, so that you can smile all day long!

The very first tip is to drink plenty of water. Drink at least 8 glasses of water every day as less amount makes your lips chapped.

Have ample amount of fresh fruits and vegetables. This is a natural way to keep you hydrated.

Use a lip balm or a petroleum jelly. This is very common but very important tip. You can also apply ghee to your lips as it is a natural emollient. The market is full of good quality lip balms. Choose a branded one and always keep it handy so you can apply as and when required. http://www.peterglenn.com/sites/default/files/imagecache/product_1000x1000/product_images_new/70352_ROSE_LG.jpg

You should wear a scarf around your face, especially if you are travelling in morning. See to it that your lips are covered. This will protect your lips from harsh weather.

Exfoliate your lips. You can use a homemade lip scrub by mixing some honey and sugar. This will help prevent flaky lips.

If you like to wear lipstick, choose with the ingredients that have vitamin E, almond oil, shea butter. These are natural emollients and make your lips soft and supple.

I hope you all will follow these easy tips and prevent your lips from chapping,



Easy hacks for beauty this winter by Sabeeh Abidi

To one cup of ghee add some rose petals. Keep for some days. This can be used as a lipbalm.

Take few almonds. Add milk to it. Make a paste. Apply to your skin and keep for fifteen minutes. Wash with normal water. Your skin will glow.

Take a slice of raw papaya. Apply to your face. Keep for 15 minutes and wash. Its a good remedy to remove dead skin.

If your nail paint remover makes your skin dry. Add some olive oil to it. Now your nails will be smooth

Take some olive oil. Massage on your hands along with some salt. Keep it for some time and then wash off. Your hands will become soft and supple.

Take 50 ml of raw milk. Add a pinch of salt to it. Then add few drops of lemon juice. This can be used to clean the face.

Make a paste of sandalwood paste and rosewater. Apply it on pimples to reduce it.

How to make a difference?

Many people want to make a difference, but they think that they do not have enough time to get associated with an NGO and do something. Who said getting associated with an organization of shelling out money from your pocket in the form of donations is the only way of making a difference in the society.

The society does not need money. It does not need weekly participation from the people working in the IT industry. Most of all, it is not the poor people who need help. Each and every one of us needs someone to make that little difference in our lives. We have no idea how one act of kindness can lead to immense happiness and motivation in other people's life.

We all do things to satisfy our ego. If we make a contribution of thousands of Rupees to claim tax benefit, we feel satisfied that we have done our part.

But is that it?

The basic thing lacking today is EMPATHY. If you do not what it means or how it is related to Love- the most essential thing missing today, let us help you with some very basic and easy steps by which you can create a difference in your society, amongst people around with minimal or almost zero efforts.

Online shopping is one of the fads which is catching up really fast. Almost every other week we have one or the other delivery walking up at our doorstep. But who gets it for us? The Delivery Person. Perhaps they are out since morning. In extreme weather conditions, they stick to their company's policy and deliver your order on time. **The least we can do is saying "Thank You", instead of just signing on the paper and shutting the door on the person's face.**

"Thank you" can make the person feel that they are doing a worthy job. A smile of gratitude could make a whole lot of difference. Now talking of Empathy. Consider you climb up three floors after riding a bike in the scorching heat and reach a door to deliver a message. You'd be thirsty after all the exertion. Carrying a water bottle is a great idea, but how about some one treating you with a nice cold glass of water.

Invite the delivery person to sit inside, if you have no doubts about him/her being a rapist or a thief. Offer them a seat, while you finish the documentation. Offer a glass of water, if not anything else!

And see the difference!

Many times, we travel in the trains with our parents. With age it becomes difficult for them to accommodate the upper berths. The reservation facility is not very flexible to give us choices for berths and at the same time assure a reservation. It's a gamble while we book our tickets. What happens when you are travelling with your parents, and all of you have upper berths?

Perhaps you wouldn't have any problem climbing up and relaxing. But how about your parents? You would ask a favor from the people who have the lower berth reservation and expect them to exchange it with the upper berths. Most of the times, the youngsters or people who do not have any problem, willingly exchange the berth. But sometimes, the youngsters refuse to give up the window seat.

Many times, when we are travelling alone, we also tend to act selfish and refuse giving up a side lower seat for an upper berth, because the other person is not related to you.

This is where you empathize and think, what would you like a fellow passenger to do, if you required a lower seat for your parents?

Always know that, one act of kindness, takes you a long way.

A similar case perhaps for the Airline travelers. Sometimes there are new born kids, infants travelling in the plane. The mothers are sometimes allotted the middle berth, for again a number of unavoidable reasons. **The aisle and the window seats are taken and they are left with the middle seat.**

They have to feed, or move around or carry a number of things with the baby in lap. If a new mother asks for a favor, please offer your aisle or window seat to her. This is not about gender equality. This is about making things easier for our fellow humans.

The same thing goes for handicapped travelers. They would much rather appreciate an aisle seat than struggle all the way inside to a window or middle seat. Don't feel sorry for them. Don't look down upon them. But let them know that they have a choice. They have an opportunity. Give them that.

Because if you'd be in their situation, you would want someone to be this considerate too!

Many times, there are little kids sitting along with their parents selling vegetables, fruits or flowers. They sit there, not because they are learning how to become like their parents, they sit there, because they do not have provision to go to school or play in playgrounds.

The child deserves to be loved, and cared for. Teach your children to mingle with the kids of the grocer or sweeper. They are kids too.

They do not know anything about financial statuses or professions their parents are into. **Teach your kids to be friendly with everyone irrespective of their backgrounds.**

Love can take us a long long way.

cover speaks

One year is over and the other has arrived. We are well into the first month of January. The new year ushers in new standards, new resolutions, new thoughts and such a lot of Newness. So we thought of starting the 10th issue of Womana like a blank slate.

Its a blank slate because we dont want to offend anyone! We dont want to be prejudiced. We want to be free, and peacefully so. Free to scribble anything on our own blank slate and not be in two minds about its correctness (grammatically correct..yes yes) Its whiteness of newness, hope, peace, freedom and yes fun and sarcasm.

Someone said '**Sarcasm is Anger's ugly cousin**', we beg to differ, its '**wits funny angle**'

choli ke peeche

The matrix of dependence

Y: Someone discuss matrix with me.. Anyone watched it lately..??

I took a whole new meaning of there's no spoon

D: Yes

D: Bol

Y : Hau mereko kya lagta... Everything is a setup arnd us... If u see a spoon... The spoon is not showing itself.. U r seeing it.. U r recognizing the illusion...And by giving it cognizance u r allowing ur mind to be controlled by these objects or events that the matrix poses in front of u.. So eventually u go deeper n deeper into the matrix as u allow it to Control ur mind.. Whras in reality.. Thr is no spoon at all.. Thr exists nthn.. This is just an illusion... So is everything else...

D: I nvr. Believd in d illusion thot process

Y: U think. All this is real?? Human life n thngs that happn arnd us?? Or just a mental setup.. Based on what our. Soul needs to. Undergo?

D: Hmm..Who wud set up.. Soul needs souls to grow.. It's a matrix of dependence

When we are way ahead of time

When some magazine covered a certain topic months after we wrote about it! And it got famous!

D: Tis is wt all v wrote in womania... Damn m angry

Y: Exactly

D: V need to put acros properly yaar

Y: What?

D: Wt v write n r articles

D: Sab kuch jo trend hota v cover it way before

When we get into deeper discussions

Y: Soul has no gender

D: Yes bt it chooses d body ryt

D: Ya mayb it wants that experienc

D: Bt still i dun undrstd

Y: I am not sure it chooses the body... It chooses a situation.. Body inclusive

Y: Coz body takes shape way afr the soul attaches itself to the womb

D: Ur children r not ur children.... - Gibran

Y: Yep.. Thats exactly what even osho says

D: Bt obvslly soul knws d gender

PS: We have read the comments and taken up a few pointers too. How much we follow and stay in our senses, is all up to the rotation and revolution of the earth! We are unapologetic, but we sincerely respect feedbacks and we couldn't have been more thankful! :)

So keep 'em coming.

Until Next time:

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Note: All the typos in the posts are intentional. If you haven't found any, Congratulations!

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More light, more power to everyone!