

Sneha, could you tell us what IWD means to you?

My answer is in coherence, and accordance with the current geopolitical climate, and thus is definitely related to and with respect in keeping relevant issues in mind.

Right now, with the onset, spread, and momentum gathered by of events leading up to and the global phenomena of movements such as the #MeToo, from Hollywood to the streets of the Global South, women have come a long way, but there is still a lot to achieve before we can say we are a gender equal society. Equal in opportunity, equally in mentality.

International women's day is more than stories that reek of tokenism. The global rhetoric on women's rights, being equated with the Western rhetoric, leading to spaces of othering, having traveled down centuries of women and women's stories of oppression being left out from mainstream media. International Women's Day is a time to change and challenge such stories.

It's time for news stories highlighting women being in the forefront as stories reduced to voices of women fighting for equal pay, being heralded as slogans for change to, infact, be changed.

The several instances of reducing their voice(s) to being incorporated into established cosmopolitan talk merely on the basis of voluntary cultural assimilation and other such challenges that they face to inclusion while examining the benefits their continued exploitation afford those in power, is a problem.

Women's Day to me means, finding solutions to issues of climate change and its effect on the environment, land grabbing, exploitation of traditions (eg. putting a value to someone's culture), MNCs surviving at the expense of those whose lands they grab, rendering women in the Global South, as already some of the most/more vulnerable communities even worse off, further exploited, more exposed and vulnerable .

Such issues not making the news, not being read and talked about, is a problem.

Tackling problems that stand in the way of giving EVERY woman a chance to be heard. Addressing issues of structural oppression, intersectionality, voices of the subaltern, condemning violence from within and uprooting injustice from the root, using tools such as emancipatory knowledge as a platform to not keep feeding ourselves the same stories that we are comfortable hearing, or rather, we've become comfortable hearing. This is what Women's Day means to me.

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Being from India having worked with NGOs and UN Women (PRADAN) on issues of women rights and solidarity, what are some of the experiences you have had w/regard to IWD?

My interest in International Studies entered into my travel and work experience across different countries. Among other things, this included: teaching shadow theater at a prison school in Trikala, Greece; working with women's rights groups in Graz, Austria; teaching English to the *carabiniere* in Duino, Italy. Semester At Sea, conducted by University of Virginia, involved visiting 12 countries with students and faculty from over 50 different nationalities. The field labs involved: analyzing the policies of a grass-root organization in Myanmar; examining policy implications on women's health through a field study of commercial surrogacy in China disproportionately affecting women of the *Ungir* tribe.

At the Summer Peacebuilding Program at the Middlebury Institute of Social Sciences in Monterey, California exposed me to Gun Policy, Trauma healing, Post-Feminist voices on Environmental Resource Management.

I have worked with women communities around the world, from India to China, and Myanmar, and even Ghana and America - I was beside these incredible, powerful, amazing women, listening to their stories, understanding their problems and I realized that there is hope. There are people, communities who are working tirelessly, endlessly and day in and day out to empower women, to help them find a platform where they don't need someone else's story to be told in order to get the spotlight. In India, I worked along with a set of representatives from UN Women, in an NGO called *Pradan*, studying the role of culture in implementation regarding policies of sexual and reproductive health.

I majored in International Relations and Political Science in Wartburg College, which opened my mind to a plethora of issues at various levels across nations, using tools like Gender Studies, among others.

This years theme of IWD, of [#BalanceforBetter](#) is a call-to-action for driving gender balance across the world. We need to ask ourselves, what do we need to do in our own ways, our socio-economic spheres, to branch out, spread the word, use our voice to bring sustainable change.

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