

Do Naina

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There is something extraordinary about the birth of a child. For nine months, the parents eagerly await the arrival of their child, not knowing, whether it will be a boy or a girl.

Nature neither consults or offers a choice.

And then the child arrives. It's a Girl.

She is welcomed with celebration.

“Lakshmi has come.”

She is described as the goddess of prosperity and good fortune - a blessing entering the home. There is celebration, affection and gratitude. For that moment, she is exactly what she is called: **a blessing.**

The little Lakshmi grows up - and the blessing with which she entered the world begins to transform into an invisible burden.

Something begins to change.



**Am I Really Equal to
My Brother?**

Slowly, the blessing with which she entered the home begins to acquire another, rather different description - **a responsibility, an expense, a future marriage, a daughter who, one day, will “belong to another family.”**

No announcement is made. No one sits the child down and tells her that she is worth less. Yet, as she grows, the difference begins to find its way into everyday choices - often so quietly that no one even calls it discrimination.

That is the more subtle face of discrimination today. It does not necessarily mean denying a girl an education, refusing to feed her adequately or keeping her confined within the home.

In many families, the daughter is educated, well dressed, well fed, cared for and given every basic comfort.

And her parents genuinely believe that they have treated her well.

Perhaps they have.

But equality asks a different question:

“If she were a boy, would I have made the same choice?”

Imagine this :-

A daughter never married. Not because she had failed to find a life of her own, but because life simply unfolded differently for her.

She stayed with her parents.

She was there through the long years of their old age - the doctor's appointments, the medicines, the sleepless nights, the small worries that come with caring for ageing parents. She was the daughter who stayed when everyone else had built lives elsewhere.

Then her father passes away.

And suddenly, there was more than grief to deal with - Property, brother, and the quiet expectation to give up her share.

Why does she need it? she was told, or perhaps made to feel.

She has no husband. No children. Her brother has a family. His daughter will have to be married.

Now, reimagine the story:

Imagine the unmarried child was the **son**.

He had stayed home. He had cared for his parents. His sister had married and had a family of her own.

The father dies.

Would anyone now ask the unmarried son to give up his share?

Would anyone say, *"Why does he need it? He has no wife, no children. His sister has a family, and her daughter will one day need to be married"*?

If the answer is **NO**, perhaps it is worth pausing to ask:

Why?

That "why" is the silent question which every daughter asks long before she is asked to sacrifice something simply because she is a daughter.

Do Naina - two eyes belonging to the same face.

No sensible person looks into a mirror and says, *"I love my right eye more than my left."* We instinctively understand that both eyes belong to us. Both are precious. Both are necessary. If one needs attention, we do not neglect it because the other is somehow more valuable. We protect both.

So why do we find it so difficult to do the same with our children?

A son and a daughter are both born of the same parents. Neither chose their gender. Neither asked to be valued more or less.

And yet, when it comes to our children, we create a

“ Game of Genders ”