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Tanvi Rathi, a young and ambitious woman, was elated to grab a high-paying job at a multinational company. The MBA graduate was excited to step into

but no one was talking about his marriage. That's when it hit me that things are different for daughters. When I asked, 'What's the rush?', they said that in our community, daughters marry before sons. It was only after a long discussion

expected to meet these time-bound goals?

CHOOSE YOUR PATH
The debate surrounding women's roles is age-old and despite progress, invisible and deeply entrenched barriers persist. Dr Malini Saba, a psy-

chologist, human and social rights activist, philanthropist, and global advocate for women and girls, states, "Women are still expected to conform to outdated expectations. These timelines are unrealistic because they do not acknowl-

edge individuality. Not every woman wants the same things in life, and that's perfectly fine. Progress shouldn't be measured by adherence to an outdated script but by the ability to choose freely. Women should not be bound by societal deadlines—they should be free to define their success, at their own pace."

On how she dealt with societal pressure, she shares, "I focused on my goals—whether in business, philanthropy, or personal life." She feels that women must create their own opportunities instead of seeking validation from outdated norms.

IT STARTS WITH YOU

Change in mindsets will change the world for women. Shweta Powar, an entrepreneur, expresses, "Women should establish their priorities and have the courage to stand up for themselves. Moreover, change begins at home. I always tell my daughter to live a financially independent life and that marriage is a matter of choice. A woman is settled in the true sense when she is capable enough to make her own decisions. If such progressive thoughts are ingrained in today's generation, then society's mindset will change gradually."

Instead of disparaging other women, we must uplift each other. Gagandeep Kaur, a communication and marketing strategist, concludes, "Stop asking your friends, 'When will you settle down' or 'Why haven't you had kids yet'. Instead, ask them, 'Are you happy' or 'What excites you about life right now'. Because that's what matters. Every woman deserves the right to create her own story—without fear, judgment, or a ticking clock."

Is it a race against time?

Society would certainly have you believe so. Yet, the expectation to marry and have children by 30 shows a lack of respect for women's individual choices and diverse life paths. It's time to beat the clock against gender inequality

the professional world. However, six months later, her parents called to inform her that they had shared her profile with a matrimonial agency and asked her to be prepared to meet prospective grooms. The 23-year-old recalls, "I didn't expect this because my parents have always encouraged my brother and me to focus on our studies and careers. What angered me was that my brother is five years older than me,

that I convinced them that I needed a few years to settle into my career before I could even think about getting married!"

Like Rathi, many women are pressured into meeting such milestones within set timeframes. As soon as they enter their 20s or 30s, they field questions like 'When are you getting married?' or 'When are you planning to have a child'. This makes one wonder, are all women

The issue:

The societal expectation of marriage in one's 20s and motherhood by 30 reveals a fundamental lack of understanding that women's desires and life trajectories are not uniform.

Stat check:

A study by Stylist, a UK-based media company, found that 87 per cent of women feel the pressure of time to achieve everything they want in life.

Why it matters:

The imposition of age-normative expectations for life milestones negatively impacts psychological well-being, professional development, financial security, and personal aspirations. Addressing these would contribute to greater gender equity and provide women with increased opportunities for growth.

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