



Half a Billion Rising: The Emergence of the Indian Woman

Anirudha Dutta

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Half a Billion Rising travels to different parts of India, and finds that a tremendous wave is sweeping across the nation—girls and women are getting educated, finding jobs and emerging as empowered citizens. The implications of such breakthrough transformation are phenomenal in a nation that is home to 17 per cent of the world's total number of women.

Half a Billion Rising analyzes the change drivers and the repercussions of present-day gender revolutions. It does this by collecting the stories of young Indian girls across the socioeconomic pyramid, and by retelling, in their particular voices, their aspirations, disappointments and everyday challenges. We learn of Chandra who, despite being undereducated and disempowered, succeeds in securing economic independence for her daughter; of Saira, who fights her father, and secures admission in a school with her aunt's tacit support; of Priyanka, who funds her own academic pursuits by teaching; and of Manisha, who is proud of Allahabad's new-found freedom, as girls, once compelled to wear salwar kameezes with dupattas, now dress in outfits of their choice.

Against a backdrop of key statistical data and research findings, Half a Billion Rising surveys how society at large and men in particular are reacting to the rise of woman power. It asks: Is there support from within the family when a woman chooses enfranchisement? How are men responding to the changes around them and how do they have to transform? Is violence against women on the rise? Moreover, what role is the local NGO playing in spurring a change in mindset and how can the government help?

Half a Billion Rising provides no easy answers—for, the case-studies are as diverse as the protagonists. What it does achieve is a vivid portrait—as compelling, multilayered and paradoxical as India.

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