

A Reflection on International Women's Day

On the eve of International Women's Day, I found myself immersed in the rich tapestry of culture and art, attending a performance of Scheherazade, Symphonic Suite by Rimsky-Korsakov at the New Philharmonic, with a young woman conducting and an amazing woman cellist. As the majestic melodies filled the air, I couldn't help but reflect on the timeless tale of Scheherazade, a woman whose intellect and storytelling prowess enabled her to escape the clutches of death.

Scheherazade's narrative serves as a poignant reminder of the resilience and ingenuity of women throughout history. Despite facing grave danger, she utilized her intellect and creativity to navigate perilous circumstances. Her story resonates deeply with the struggles and triumphs of women worldwide, who continue to defy odds and challenge societal norms.

However, amidst the beauty of the music and the timeless tale of Scheherazade, a harsh reality looms large. In today's world, women still grapple with systemic injustices and violence. A stark reminder of this came from an article in *The Guardian*, which highlighted the urgent need to address the abhorrent practice of **genital mutilation inflicted upon women across the globe**.

A subject so dear to my heart and the fabric of our work for the last 40 years recorded on our web site.

The juxtaposition of Scheherazade's story with the grim reality of gender-based violence underscores the complexity of the fight for gender equality. While art and culture celebrate the strength and resilience of women, **they also serve as a mirror reflecting the harsh realities of gender inequality and violence**.

As I pondered the challenges that women face, I couldn't help but question **whether progress in eliminating violence against women would occur in my lifetime. The enormity of the task ahead seemed daunting, requiring concerted efforts and unwavering commitment from individuals, communities, and governments alike**.

Yet, amidst the challenges, **there is hope**. International Women's Day serves as a beacon of hope, rallying individuals worldwide to stand in solidarity with women and girls everywhere. It is a day to celebrate achievements, raise awareness of ongoing struggles, and renew commitments to gender equality and women's empowerment.

The power of **unity, diversity and collective action** was palpable in the air as I listened to the symphony and reflected on the pressing issues facing women. Each note seemed to carry a message of resilience and determination, **urging us to continue the fight for a world where every woman and girl can live free from violence and discrimination**.

As I left the concert hall, I was filled with a renewed sense of purpose and determination. The continued journey towards **gender equality** may be fraught with challenges, but as long as we continue to raise our voices and advocate for change, there is hope for a brighter future for women and girls worldwide.

In conclusion, International Women's Day is not only a day of celebration but also a call to action. Let us remember **of the progress we have made and the work that still lies ahead.** Through art, activism, and collective action working together , we can create a world where every woman and girl could fulfill her potential and live a life free from violence and discrimination.

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