

## **Eating and being Eaten**

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Darwin's theory "Survival of the fittest" works everywhere. The one who has the power to make one's own way wins the race, and the weaker subsides. Biology students learn about a food chain, "The chain of eating and being eaten". In the food chain each animal is eating the other and is being eaten.

Neha was good at biology for sure and also secured good marks. What she was unaware of was that there is a food chain which exists among we humans. One eating the other. Worse than that is the food chain which runs within us.

Neha was the youngest child in her family. She had three elder brothers. She was too busy with her studies than to think about anything. But now and then she was reminded that she was powerless for a lot many things in her life.

She had almost immersed herself in the situation, seeing her mother and her grandmother as the role model. But there was something eating her up. Was it society, people or she herself? She still had to figure it out.

Her grandmother always took time to speak to her and it was always during the hair oiling session that she got to tell Neha about the pros and cons of being a woman.

One day at the oiling session grandmother said, "Don't ever in life compare yourself to your brothers for they are always meant to receive the best".

Neha replied with a smile, "I don't compare myself with them grandmother but this difference, it makes me hate myself. I am not even allowed to do something I wish for myself."

Grandmother promptly replied, "This is how it is meant to be you are no one to make any change."

Neha said, "I am not even trying to ....!!!!"

Neha's mother rebuked, "This is what you are learning Neha, to argue with your seniors."

Neha moved out silently. Situations like this one was Neha's daily routine.

It is hard to live when you become a prey to someone or something. A prey to gender bias; a prey to being categorized; a prey to self-hatred; a prey to self-pity; a prey to guilt. Being eaten every day bit by bit until you are consumed completely.

Neha decided to dream less because her dreams could not even be acknowledged; Neha decided to think less about herself because she knew whatever she thought could never come real.

People appreciated her now for being very much, in fact exactly like her mother and grandmother. Neha was getting comfortable with it. There was at least something about her to be appreciated and thought about.

She could identify the same face; the same wrinkle; the same smile and the same shine of guilt in her face now. She grew up noticing all that in her mother and grandmother but never knew she had no choice than to inherit it.

This change was absolutely normal for his family but was absolutely abnormal for Neha. A mere eighteen something; eating up herself every day. It was her guilt of being helpless towards herself, that was eating her up. It was her fear of being a mother to a child like her, that was eating her up. It was her hatred towards her body, that was eating her up.

This was just the beginning for her. She had already learnt to be her own predator and to be a prey to the society. The food chain will continue for her till the day she decides to break it.

Indeed, there exists a food chain within us and around us.