

## Letters to the EDITOR

Sir, - Heated arguments are going on against or in favour of a young woman who appeared for an entrance examination, wearing half pants, in Tezpur. Dress is a matter of personal choice. Appropriate clothing suiting certain situations is always welcome. What is unwelcome is when dress is often used as a tool to further subjugate women and girls. Tensions prevailed when curtains were wrapped around her before she could write the test. This is outrageous. Would curtains be wrapped on a male candidate in similar clothing? She was definitely targeted for her gender and was expected to save society's honour. There is no yardstick to measure the levels of modesty. It is defined differently for men and women. Dress is used conveniently as a tool when it comes to upholding culture and tradition and it becomes the women's, not men's, responsibility to be the torchbearers of such socio-cultural identities. Such beliefs have been institutionalized

## Of clothing and crimes against women

for women from school uniforms to religious attendance and more. Women are systematically targeted if dress dikats are disobeyed; deviance invites naming, shaming and abuse on women and girls. Patriarchal perception of this nature is one of the root causes of growing crimes against women. Unfortunately, Assam again recorded the highest rate of crime against women for the fourth year according to the National Crime Records Bureau in 2021. It is women's dress which is often blamed when acts of sexual violence or harassment occur. Girl, children and senior women have been targeted as sexual objects and have been raped, molested and teased even when they are covered in layers of clothing from head to toe. The central focus remains on controlling women and keeping society's honour intact rather than establishing that abuse or discrimination has occurred. It leads to a series of violations of a women's rights to a life of choice, liberty, safety and dignity. Certain illogical actions have larger implications in a girl's life. It is time we stop

targeting only girls. Society as a whole must walk out of discriminatory perceptions and allow equal spaces for all genders and identities. Yours etc., ANURITA PATHAK, Guwahati.

Spot

The Assam Tribune,  
22 September 2021

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