En-gendered, en-dangered

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Context: These poems have been created using the words of past and present learners from the health professions in India who have ever experienced othering during their training, and who have volunteered to talk about it. **Click here** to read the editorial about the project. Alternatively, you may right click over the hyperlinked text, copy the link, and paste it in a browser of your choice.

Don't

Don't take risks.
You're a woman,
a mother of two.
Let the career be.

Don't aim for the stars.
You're a woman,
administer your home,
let the department be.

NO!
YOU let ME be...

I'm a Woman,
I'm a Leader,
Mother,
Administrator.

I am all things.
All that I want to be.

I WILL define my path.
Listen. Listen to my voice, and watch me walk my talk.

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No permission necessary, thank you

Bullied,
harassed,
since our days in school…

"*Don't you know*
how to style up
like other girls do?"

I am a man
and I want to wear
a pink crop top.

"*Get permission*
from your family
to wear your hair long
or to put on a dress."

I am a man
and I want to
pierce my nose
and wear rings
and a pearl necklace.

"*Get permission*
from your family
to be ~~a person~~
a transgender."

The pride flag,
this beautiful flag,
is misleading
because our lives
are hardly that beautiful
or colourful.

It's you
with your sticks and stones
"*chakka*"
"*meetha*"
"*gurr*"

An HIV test
does not make us
perverse.
Parts of our life are beautiful
--they're invisible parts to you--
since you'd rather not look at us.

No man or woman
needs permission from another
to be a man or a woman.
We're humans first
before we're man or woman

I am a man
and I want to cry;
I am a woman
trapped by your so called rules
of gender construction.

If parts of our life
are beautiful,
Is it any thanks to you?
Can you not celebrate with us
our invisible, beautiful parts?

My own family

Girls are valued less
than boys...

If we are so insignificant
how come,
when your frustrations
and your insecurities
get the better of you,
you notice us?

It's not so much the strangers,
it's family, friends, and peers...
they are the risks we face
at home, at work, at school.

Gender inequality
is gender violence.

Acknowledgment: without the authentic contributions made by the respondents, it would not have been possible to create poems on othering that illustrate such a wide spectrum of issues.