

Editorial

India's Daughter: Subject or Object

"India's Daughter," the BBC's documentary about the notorious gang rape and murder of Jyothi Singh, 23-year-old medical student, was banned in India for the reason that the excerpts "appear to encourage and incite violence against women." The government of India tried a range of measures to curb the embarrassing documentary from being telecasted worldwide by the BBC. Danny Cohen, the BBC's director of TV, responded to the Government of India's demand in a letter as follows: "the broadcaster appreciates the concern; however, the film represents an important account of an event that galvanised Indian opinion to ensure such tragedies are not repeated". The Government's efforts to suppress the film backfired, triggering widespread coverage and a proliferation of unauthorized copies on YouTube. The documentary film opens with an eerie reconstruction of the fatal night in December 2012. Jyothi, on her way back home after watching a movie with her male companion at 8:30 P.M, boarded a bus at a major intersection in South Delhi. The gangster group in that bus had been out for a drinking spree manhandled Jyothi's companion and took her to the back of the bus and raped her. The details of that attack, from which Jyothi was left beaten, bitten, and disembowelled, are atrocious and appalling. She was somehow still alive when those criminals left her and her friend on the side of the road, but she died of her injuries several days later. Apart from the horrific details of the incident, the film's director Leslee Udwin (who herself, a rape victim), in an attempt to look at the bigger picture, turns her camera towards the perspectives and outrageous attitudes of the sons of India in general.

In one scene, Mukesh Singh, one among the four men convicted and sentenced to death for the rape and murder, is heard muttering, "A girl is far more responsible for rape than a boy. A decent girl won't

roam around at 9 o'clock at night. ... Housework and housekeeping is for girls, not roaming in discos and bars at night doing wrong things, wearing wrong clothes." AP Singh, a defence lawyer in the case, was loud and bold in his assertion: "If my daughter or sister engaged in pre-marital activities and disgraced herself and allowed herself to lose face and character by doing such things, I would most certainly take this sort of sister or daughter to my farmhouse, and in front of my entire family, I would put petrol on her and set her alight." Another defence lawyer for the convicts is seen gesturing with his hands as he describes women as flowers who must be protected by men, "diamonds" who face inevitable assault if they end up in the wrong places. Udwin then turns her camera towards the terrible living conditions of the crowded slums of Delhi where the perpetrators lived until they were arrested. One psychiatrist claims in the film that there are men in jail who have committed 200 rapes but penalized for about 12. Singh, the driver on death row, complains to the interviewer that bigger crimes have been committed than one he took part in - such as victims being burned alive - crimes that have gone unpunished.

Silencing "India's Daughter": Reactions and Responses

"The real 'embarrassment' India needs to confront is its own horrific reality... and the shame that goes with it. Not a bold documentary..." columnist Shobhaa De wrote in her article. "I am very shocked at the decision to ban the video. Rapes happen every single day and this has to be exposed. The documentary didn't defend the rape. In fact it showed the mindset of the rapist," Congress party's Priya Dutt said. In an interview with India's NDTV, the victim's father, Badri Singh, said that he thinks everybody should see the film. For a long time, his daughter's name was not made public; she was known instead as *Nirbhaya*, which means "the fearless one." But in the documentary, Badri says that he and his wife want their daughter's name to be known, and that "she's become a symbol." On the other hand, those who called for the ban of the documentary say that airing the interview is equivalent to giving a platform to the rapist's views; others say that the documentary paints sexual violence as an Indian issue rather than a global one, and fear that it will perpetuate a "white-saviour" attitude in foreign viewers. The ruling B.J.P party has alleged that the film is part of "an international conspiracy to defame India" and argued that its release will affect tourism.

What does "India's Daughter" Expose?

Indeed Jyothi Singh has become a symbol and the rallying point of the increasingly visible and vocal movement to fight violence against

women in India. Andrea Denhoed in her article published in *The New Yorker* unearths some of the iniquities that the emerging India tries in vain to cover up: The dehumanization of women is the primary backdrop for the film, but problematic notions of femininity go hand-in-hand with problematic notions of masculinity: "What sort of idea a boy gets", one activist in the film asks, "when he is always given more milk than his sister because the whole family believes that his energy and strength are more important?" Poverty, of course, plays a role: Jyothi's murderers all grew up amid grinding deprivation. The mother of the teenaged rapist, an agricultural labourer, is interviewed in her home. "The dishes haven't been washed," she says. "No point. There's nothing to eat." She describes how her son left at the age of eleven to provide for the family. "How could we know that the gangsters of Delhi would get him and take him away from us?" Sandeep Govil, a psychiatrist at the prison where the men are being held, summarizes their mindset: "It's our right. We are just in enjoyment mode, and everybody has a right to enjoyment. Big people, you know, somebody who has money, do it by payment. We have the courage, so we do it by our courage." A female is at the mercy of the men around her. She bears the brunt of the ills in the world, whether as targeted victim or collateral damage. Perhaps the most striking interview in "India's Daughter" is with the wife of one of the murderers. She wears a sari and sits on a doorstep with her young son, who looks to be three or four years old. While all the other interviewed family members, whether of the victim or of the perpetrators, seem sad, diminished, and broken, she flares with anger. "Am I not a daughter of this country?" she asks. "Don't I have a right to live? Will there be no more rapes in Delhi? Will you hang all rapists? A woman is protected by her husband. If he is dead, who will protect her and for whom will she live? I also don't want to live. Priyanshu, my son, is a child. He understands nothing. I will strangle him to death. What else can I do?"

The Government of India and people in general exhibit a tendency to runaway and bury their heads in the sand like ostriches, refusing to face the disturbing reality. Shruti Verma Singh in her "*India's Daughter' - A Young Woman's Open Letter to the Prime Minister*" responds to the ban in India on the documentary writes:

Dear Prime Minister:

Without understanding the mindset of the perpetrator and what made them do what they did, you can never find a solution. Leslee Udwin's film shows an unrepentant rapist unabashedly recounting how and why he did what he did simply because "everyone does it".

This was not rape - it was a violent and barbaric act that also cost an innocent girl her life! Her only fault? She happened to be a girl in India and that she was out with a friend at night! There are numerous others like Nirbhaya who are forced to confront this fear every single day.

Any society should sit up and do some serious introspection about why incidents like these continue to take place every day and why we as a system are unable to do anything about it. We come out in hordes to support rape victims, blame the system and eventually forget, while these psychopaths continue to walk the streets in search of another prey.

Young women are stalked, kidnapped, raped in cars, buses, trains, picked up from the streets of cosmopolitan cities, taken advantage of by cab drivers, molested by strangers, some of them thrown out from moving vehicles and some broken even in the safety of their own homes.

The film "India's Daughter" is an unpleasant reminder of this reality. We don't like it. What the rapist says is disturbing and undeniably shocks us, urging us to face that one truth - that there are many others like him who continue to live in our midst and till they remain, our women are not safe.

However, banning the film or bringing up questions as to how the film-maker was allowed to interview the rapist etc takes away from the issue that rape (and they seem to be getting even more barbaric as time goes by) is a stark reality in India that needs to be confronted.

It's important also to consider that perhaps the film-maker, herself a rape victim, may not have been seeking to provide a platform for rapists, but instead seeking to unearth answers that may have been bothering her all these years. Couldn't that be a possibility?

So Mr Prime Minister - Ban the film if you must. But more importantly, Ban Rape! Ban Rapists! Please find a way to ban the mindset of men like Mukesh featured in the documentary, who think it's perfectly normal to rape. Do something that allows victims to get justice and ban the system that allows perpetrators to get away. Enable our girls to feel safe by ensuring that such incidents are prevented in future. The film is a stark reminder that we are nowhere close to resolving anything - whether it's the mindset or the system.

Banning the film on TV only reflects our own limited intellect and is yet another instance of our sheer foolishness that, despite repeated reminders of the reality of rape in India, we seem to have learnt nothing at all.

Through this letter Shruti wanted the Prime Minister of India to realize that the women of India are not asking for a 'nanny type' government that babysits them. They demand a fair share and a rightful position in the Indian society. *To my shock, as I am writing this editorial (30, April 2015) as "Braking News" the TV channels are broadcasting a similar incident that took place today in Punjab. Four men molested a 14 year old girl in a moving bus. When she resisted the perpetrators threw her out of the moving bus along with her mother. The girl died instantly and her mother is in critical condition fighting for her life in the hospital. Occurrence of violent protests in different parts of Punjab is being reported. To my utmost horror the Education Minister of Punjab is reported as remarking: what happened was the will of God, How can our Government stop it? – A typical Indian attitude – holding God responsible for human mistakes!*

The Plight and Fate of India's Daughters

Discrimination towards women and the suppression of their autonomy are deeply ingrained in the Indian culture. Men have the upper hand, always and everywhere. In India it seems safer to be born as a cow than a girl. In the Indian society, a woman's problems start right from the moment she is conceived. Though legally banned, through sex-selective abortions female foetus are slaughtered inside the womb. India is one of the few countries where males significantly outnumber females and this abnormal imbalance has increased over time. If a female child escapes abortion, she is killed soon after their birth because they are considered a heavy burden to the family. If she still survives the murder attempts and steps into childhood, she faces various types of exploitation and discrimination. As she grows up, a girl has to withstand different kinds of violence, both domestic and societal. If she is harassed, pestered or violated, the girl is told to keep quiet and not to tell anyone about the sexual abuse that could bring a bad name to her as well as her family. Though according to the Constitution of India all Indians are equal, women's equality tends to remain on paper only. In India women remain subjugated and are often treated as second-class citizens. This reminds us of the allegorical and dystopian novella *Animal Farm* by George Orwell, where he says: "All animals are equal, but some animals are more equal than others". Let us have a fleeting look at the female plight based on the available statistical data.

An Overview of India's Daughters' Status

Current Population of India (2015) is approximately 1.28 billion. The male-female ratio of India presently stands at 1000:940. Kerala with 1058 females per 1000 males is the state with the highest female sex

ratio. Pondicherry (1001) is second, while Chhattisgarh (990) and Tamil Nadu (986) are at third and fourth places respectively. Haryana with 861 has the lowest female sex ratio (against 888 in 1991). Kerala is the only state that favours females (1058, down from 1068 in 1991); two States that had favourable sex ratio in 1991 (Himachal Pradesh: 1070 and Goa: 1019) came down miserably (Himachal Pradesh: 968 and Goa: 961). Sex ratio in Tamil Nadu was exactly even (1000) in 1991, 987 in 2001 and now it is 986.

Although female literacy has gone up six times since 1951, it still represents an area of major concern. Although girls' enrolment in school has increased greatly and consistently at all levels, the rising rates of drop-outs continue to be the major problem. Only about 33% of girls entering the primary stage complete schooling. Women's employment in the organized sector, which is nearly 1/4th that of men, is around 18.7%. It is revealed that majority of women go through life in a state of nutritional stress. 52% of women in general and 56% of women in the age group 15-19 are found to be anaemic. Poverty, early marriage, malnutrition and lack of health care during pregnancy are the major reasons for both maternal and infant mortality. The average Indian woman has little control over her own fertility and reproductive health and bears her first child before she is 22 years old.

Although Indian women played a major role in the freedom movement, it did not translate into continued participation in public life in the post-independence era. In the Indian socio-political patriarchal system, women still remain under-represented in governance and decision-making positions. At present, women occupy less than 13% of Parliamentary seats, less than 14% Cabinet positions, less than 4% of seats in High Courts and the Supreme Court, and less than 12% positions as administrators and managers. In 2014, out of 23 Cabinet Ministers, there are only six (in 2004 only 1) female Cabinet Ministers and 1 female Minister of State (MOS), out of 39 MOS. As in April 2015, there is only one Female Judge out of 28 Judges in the Supreme Court. In the High Courts, there are only two Female Chief Justices among the total of 24.

Finally coming to the crime scene, as per the data of 2013 of National Crime Records Bureau, Ministry of Home Affairs, among the crimes committed against women, torture shares the highest percentage (37.7%), followed by molestation (22.4%), rape (11.8%), kidnapping (10.1%), abduction (8.8%), and immoral traffic (3.7%). It is also significant to note that 6.5% cases are of eve-teasing and 4.6% of dowry deaths. If one goes by the latest statistics (NCRB), every day 93 women are being raped in the country. In 2013, the year after the rape of the

medical student, more than 33,000 women were reported raped across the country. That represents a staggering jump over the 24,000 rapes reported the year before. The capital, Delhi, remains unsafe for women, with annual reported incidents of rape more than doubling over the same period, to more than 1,400. NCRB statistics also indicates that 31,807 (94%) were familiar to the victims, which includes neighbours (10782), other known persons (18171), relatives (2315) and parents (539). In the same year, out of the total juvenile delinquency, only 6.7% were girls.

Female Repression and Its Cultural Background

ML Sharma, one of the defence lawyers interviewed in the Documentary makes an outrageous claim: "We have the best culture. In our culture, there is no place for a woman." There could be no clearer statement about the moral or cultural disadvantages faced by women in India. We can protest until we are hoarse about violence against women. We can demand harsher punishments for perpetrators. We can blame our leaders for not ridding India of the scourge of rape. But the persistence of violence against women in our society comes down to a simple truth: There is something rotten in the culture of India, which is prejudiced and discriminative towards women. This demands a brief look at the foundations of Indian culture that embolden even a lawyer like ML Sharma to maintain such despicable attitude and makes such outrageous statements. Since it is impossible to scrutinize the enormous amount of scriptures that gave rise to the Indian cultural ethos we have to restrict ourselves to a typical authoritative account of the Indian morality, which is nothing other than the legendary *Manusmriti*. This classic masterpiece of Indian moral code is quoted both by its proponents and opponents to prove their point. Its admirers quote stanzas like, *Yatra naaryastu poojyante ramante tatra devata: yatraitastu na poojyante sarvaastratraa phalaa: kriya:* (Where women are worshipped, Gods are pleased there; where they are not worshipped, all functions go in vain.) – Manusmrti 3:56. Its adversaries indicate verses like, *Pita rakshati kaumere, bhartta rakshati yaovane, rakshati sthavere putra, na stri swatantryamarhati* (Father protects her in childhood; husband protects her in youth; and son protects her in old age; hence a woman is not entitled to be free) – Manusmrti 9:3. To whichever faction one belongs, the influence of Manusmriti in the shaping of Indian culture is undeniable.

Status of Women According to Manusmriti

Manusmrti is also known as *Manava Dharma Shastra* (Human Moral Science). According to Hindu mythology, Manusmriti is the law of

God for human society, and it is classified as the most authoritative teaching on *Dharma*. By using the eponym 'Manu', the author of this compilation identified himself as the first human being and the first king of humanity. Its promoters regard these laws and regulations as indisputable divine code of conduct inspired and authenticated by *Brahma* to maintain law and order in the society to enhance the wellbeing of both men and women. Manusmriti consists of 2690 verses, divided into 12 chapters. As it happens with all Religious Scriptures, the apologists of Manusmriti selectively quote certain verses that are praiseworthy while conveniently avoiding the verses that are embarrassing.

Manu's Positive Depiction of Women

We have already quoted Manusmriti (3:56) which unambiguously states that women form the foundation of a prosperous society. There are many such pronouncements: "An acharaya is superior to ten teachers; a father is superior to hundred acharyas; and a mother is superior to thousand fathers" (2:145). "A family where women remain unhappy due to misdeeds of their men is bound to be destroyed. And a family where women are always happy is bound to prosper forever" (3:57). "A family where women feel insulted or discriminated against and curse their men is destroyed in same manner as poison kills all those who eat it" (3:58). "One desiring glory should ensure that he keeps women in the family by giving them respect and pleasing them with good ornaments, dresses, food. Women should always be revered under all circumstances" (3:59). "Women give birth to next generation. They enlighten the home. They bring fortune and bliss. Hence women are synonymous to Prosperity" (9:26). "One should feed the following even before feeding the guests: newly married women, girls, and pregnant women" (3:114). "Woman is the source of all kinds of happiness in all generations, be it from children, or from noble benevolent deeds or through conjugal bliss or through service of elders" (9:28). "Women should be provided autonomy and leadership in managing the finances, maintaining hygiene, spiritual and religious activities, nutrition and overall management of home" (9:11).

Manu's Derogatory Depiction of Women

Along with the above mentioned positive outlook, Manusmriti incorporates a lot of deprecating statements on women as well. It says, "It is the nature of women to seduce men in this world; for that reason the wise are never safe in the company of females" (2:213). "Women, true to their class character, are capable of leading astray men in this world, not only a fool but even a learned and wise man. Both become

slaves of desire" (2:214). "Wise people should avoid sitting alone with one's mother, daughter or sister. Carnal desire is always strong, it can lead to temptation" (2:215). "A female child, young woman or old woman is not supposed to work independently even at her place of residence" (5:150). "Men, may be lacking virtues, be sexual perverts, immoral and devoid of any good qualities, yet, women must constantly worship and serve their husbands" (5:157). "Women have no divine right to perform any religious ritual, nor make vows or observe a fast. Her only duty is to obey and please her husband and she will for that reason alone be exalted in heaven" (5:158). "It is the duty of all husbands to exert total control over their wives. Even physically weak husbands must strive to control their wives" (9:6).

Deconstructing Manu's View of Women

Deconstruction is a method used in the analysis of literature and philosophy. There are scholars who avow the negativities in Manusmriti are later interpolations and not part of the original text. Even if their claim is factual, it is citing that so-called interpolated text, women in India were defiled and maltreated down through the centuries. As we go through the complimentary as well as the derogatory remarks of Manusmriti about women we can discern certain radical fatal fallacy: "Objectification" of women. A woman is treated not as a subject but an object. Both the favourable and unfavourable comments have the same foundation. Idolizing women is still objectification. Women are not idols. Indians often claim that unlike other religions and cultures half of their 330 million strong pantheon are Goddesses. *Ardhanareeswara* (God depicted as half male-half female) is projected as the greatest contribution of India to theodicy.

This sort of idolization and objectification of women is not unique to Indian culture alone. In almost every culture and religion we come across this tendency. Idolization is not the solution for commoditization of women. Both idolization and commoditization are objectification. Whenever and wherever women are treated as mere objects of enjoyment for men, they are dehumanized. Unfortunately many women fall for it and avail themselves to be commoditized since they are sought after and made to feel glamorous and priceless. In the field of art this sort of commoditization is widespread. Sadly the moment there appears another commodity fresher and better the attention of the people shifts and the old commodity is thrown to the waste bin. If we analyse each and every verse of Manusmriti we will realize the truth that its primary concern is the maintenance of the status quo and the safeguarding of the law and order in the society.

Ruses and Ways of Objectification of India's Daughters

There are numerous ways and methods through which the objectification of India's daughters is justified, institutionalized and perpetuated. Religions, culture and numerous other social factors have played their role in this objectification. Even those seemingly innocent, progressive and modern trends have contributed to this commercialization of femininity. Even those who declare war on injustice towards women have contributed towards the dehumanization of women. During his homily Pope Francis on 16, April challenged the "so-called gender theory" which denies gender differences. Pope Francis stated that erasing sex difference is a problem, not the solution. This is what he had to say in this regard:

The image of God is not only displayed in man and woman individually but also together as a couple. The difference between man and woman is not for opposition, or subordination, but for communion and creation, always in the image and likeness of God. Without the mutual enrichment in their relationship, neither can truly understand what it means to be man and woman.

While modern culture has opened new ways and freedoms to understand these differences it also introduced many doubts and much scepticism. I wonder, for example, if the so-called gender theory is also an expression of frustration and resignation, which aims to erase sexual difference because they can no longer deal with it. Yes, we risk taking a step back. The removal of the difference, in fact, is the problem, not the solution. To solve their relationship problems, man and the woman should instead talk more, listen more, know more, [and] love each other more. They must treat each other with respect and cooperate with friendship. There is a need for women to not only be heard, but also that her voice has a real weight, a recognized authority, in society and in the Church. We have not yet understood in depth what things the feminine genius can give us, that woman can give to society and also to us. Perhaps to see things with different eyes that complements the thoughts of men. It is a path that must be crossed with more creativity and more boldness.

We can pinpoint numerous social evils deeply rooted in the Indian society that lead to objectification and commoditization of women. Dowry system, cast discrimination, menstrual impurity, arranged marriages, *Devadasis* (Indian version of vestal virgins), *Sati* (widow-burning), fashion industry in general, various industries that bloom and boom through selling beauty products and beautification of women are just a few of them. Utilizing the sex appeal of femininity for sales promotion also contributes in one way or another towards the commoditization of women. However, none of the above mentioned

practises are as such immoral and are often justified in the light of various historical and natural reasons. For example dowry system is giving a share of parental property to the daughter. Arranged marriages are the manoeuvring of communal responsibility towards the wellbeing of individuals. Therefore, the abolition of certain outdated customs and practices will not bring about any radical change in the society unless the mindset that corrupted these practices is set right.

What India's Sons Need to Learn?

Rather than using Udwin's documentary as a wakeup call, a harsh but essential starting point for an honest discussion about the male attitudes towards females, the Indian government hurriedly banned its release in the country. Governments and religions have a tendency to hamper human capacity to think, feel, speak and act independently as individuals. Some leaders demand sheepishness from their followers. As per the outlook of some people women have no right to have a mind or choice of their own. They are in charge of them and they will decide their destiny and will 'send' them wherever and whenever they like! This is the typical mindset of majority of India's sons. In a patriarchal society, boys develop a false concept that they are in charge of women and their safety and security are men's responsibility. They are taught to control women's freedom – first their sisters', then their wives' and then their daughters'. The male-dominated society even issues codes regulating women's behaviour: you must not speak loud in public, you must not laugh aloud, you must dress in a certain way in public; you must return home before a certain hour and a thousand other do/don'ts. In India there is a classical name for it: *Lakshmana Rekha* (the line of control) if a woman dares to cross that line she is at the mercy of *rakshasas* (demons). India's sons expect their women to be within their limits. It is this mentality that needs immediate correction. Women should not be at the mercy of men. They are equals. There is no need to lock them up in our homes or worry about their safety and security outside if all men recognize women as 'subjects' not 'objects' and carry out their duties and responsibilities toward them as persons. When men start viewing women as persons with equal rights and dignity, rather than mere objects to gratify their sexual urge, then India's daughters' fears will eventually dissipate. Women are not goddesses to be worshiped or commodities to be used or protected; they are human beings. Love and respect women as they are - nothing more, nothing less.

India's sons should recognize that women are also endowed with brain and intelligence, feelings and emotions, likes and dislikes of their own.

They are neither objects entrusted to men for their sexual gratification and safekeeping nor the workforce that ensures the survival of the species and welfare of the society. Indian society, with its economic, cultural, and political structures, still remains feudal and patriarchal where men are the norm, and what men see and say is what is seen and spoken of. A patriarchal society believes that women are men's possessions – to be used and set aside, to be displayed as an ornament, to be bartered for benefits, to be thrashed and abused if they fail to behave, and to be killed if they undermine family honour. Patriarchy exists everywhere, East and West – in secular, 'developed' societies and medieval 'developing' ones. But patriarchy has a unique colour in this country. It is tinted with caste, with that pernicious system of social stratification which makes sure that 'those others' stay in their place – below us – to serve us when we want.

Things are not any better within the Indian Church circle too. Priests and bishops are also shaped by the same feudal patriarchal mindset of entitlement and know how to exploit women, just as other Indian men do. Seminaries that shut their doors to women make men feel extra special. Though they preach from the pulpit: "In Christ there is neither Jew nor Greek, neither slave nor free, neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:28), for all practical purpose they insist: "All animals are equal, but some animals are more equal than others" (*Animal Farm*, George Orwell, 1945).

What India's Daughters should Realize

Do not let yourselves be passively guided and ruled by individuals and institutions however powerful or respected they are. Seek to realize your "true self". Challenge and reject the false, prescribed self, fabricated and imposed under social and religious compulsion. As Thomas Merton puts it, "Seek a way that is uncharted, unique and freely chosen, which is not inherited from others who had mapped it out for you in advance". Society and religion are two powerful institutions that often promote irrational fear of repercussions, helplessness, passivity, and dependence on others. The religious leaders and politicians on one hand, parents and teachers on the other who instil these debilitating ideas in the minds of naïve girls are in fact reining them in to keep them under control. Do not allow yourselves to be curbed or wish to curb others for we are all equals (Matthew 23:8). To be fully human and fully alive is our divine mandate. Let nothing and nobody stop you from realizing it. Keep in mind:

1. *Physical Strength is Not the Ultimate Power*
If brute force is a licence to dominate, then bulls and elephants rule. There are greater powers than physical strength. Never get intimidated by muscle power.
2. *Know Trees from Their Fruits*
Titles, roles and positions are to be validated by corresponding behaviour. If persons fail to live according to the title or position they hold, they do not deserve the respect assigned to that title.
3. *Do Not Throw Holy Things and Pearls to Dogs and Pigs*
Commoditization and commercialization of female sex is dehumanization. The fashion business, the hype around beauty, the sale of ornaments, diamonds, beauty products, etc. can lead to objectification. Shun everything that destroys self-esteem and honour. Persons are not for sale.
4. *Nobody has a Right to Demand Your Sacrifice for Their Gain*
All are children of the same God. Nobody has the right to use others for their personal advancement. Selfish people have no right to demand others to be selfless.
5. *Sans Freedom Vows and Contracts may Degrade into Imprisonment or Slavery*
Ask, seek and knock for reason, equality and freedom. Brain is given to us not for safe keeping but to use. Vows and contracts are not permits for exploitation and incarceration. Stand for justice. You are persons not anybody's private property. Insecurity and survival instinct may coax women to submit to domination, domestic violence and even prostitution. Fear is the greatest enemy of freedom. All are called to freedom.
6. *Some People are Not More Equal Than Others*
People who enjoy privileges will not naturally give them up unless they are made aware of the injustices involved. Unjust laws should be challenged. Promulgating manmade laws as divine dictates, religious leaders also exploit their naïve believers. Struggling for equality and freedom is not an option but an obligation.
7. *Women are the Custodians of Life – Its Survival and Formation are in Your Hands*
God trusts women so much so that life is entrusted to them.

Women have a rare and unique opportunity to groom a new generation unpolluted by false societal and religious notions.

8. *Love is the Ultimate Game Changer*

In spite of cultural and religious upbringing there are millions of men in India who treat women as equals with utmost love and respect. Join hands with them and spread your wings to soar and live the life you are born to live. Where there is love, there is freedom.

9. *Be the Change You Want to See*

Rape, female infanticide, sex trafficking, domestic violence, etc are not the real issues. They are simply symptoms of a mindset. What we need in India is not more punitive measures and penal codes but a radical change in our mindset. It is not going to happen if we wait for others to change. Be the change you want to see. From victims to victors, daughters of India, "unite; you have nothing to lose but your chains".

Kurian Perumpallikunnel, CMI