



India's Daughter Discussion Guide

Director: Leslee Udwin

Year: 2014

Time: 62 min

You might know this director from:

INDIA'S DAUGHTER is the first film Leslee Udwin has directed. She previously produced feature films, including *East is East* (1999) and *West is West* (2010).

FILM SUMMARY

INDIA'S DAUGHTER tells the story of Jyoti Singh, a 23-year-old medical student raped and murdered on her way home from the cinema in Delhi in December 2012. Through this tragic tale, the film dissects the wider troubles plaguing women in India, and interviews the wide cast of characters embroiled in the story of Jyoti's life and untimely death. The heady, emotional mix of evidence, insight and opinion offered by these representatives of contemporary India leave much to be contemplated.

The film does not limit its cultural examination to a purely feminist stance- while it reflects upon the despicable limitations and abuse women are faced with, it also explores the extreme imbalance between wealth and poverty that modern-day India is forced to grapple with.

INDIA'S DAUGHTER examines the values and the mindset of society and culture, questions assumptions and paints a both hopeful and hopeless picture of India today, a nation fighting at the crossroads of yesterday and tomorrow. Yet in the final minutes of the film, we come to realize that this is not just an India-centric problem, happening to "those people" or "over there", but one that plagues every country in the world. Gender equality and violence against women is our global issue and the time to deal with it decisively is NOW.

Is this a matter of the outdated grip of patriarchy? Is this a global issue, close to the hearts of women and men across the world? How do we convert this example of grief, disgust, shock, and despair into hope and change? INDIA'S DAUGHTER asks all of these questions and more. It is a tale of humanity and of the inhumane, it a testament of the justice essential for life to flourish and gender inequality to be banished once and for all.

FILM THEMES

Jyoti Singh's rape case portrays India as a nation of opposites - wealth vs. poverty, old vs. new, male vs. female, hope vs. despair, life vs. death - and highlights the current of change reverberating across both the nation and the world.

TRADITIONAL VS. CONTEMPORARY INDIA

A patriarchal system has long been in place in India. With men wielding an almost god-like power over women, and women commonly bowing to the horrific treatment they endure. Present practice in India is anachronistic and outdated. But as the unprecedented wave of protests in Delhi began the day after Jyoti's rape the sounds of a changing country reverberated across the world. Serving as a symbol of a new India, where women are entitled to the same opportunities as men, Jyoti's experience hit a nerve in a country embroiled in a battle between patriarchy and modernity.

POVERTY VS. WEALTH

The gulf between the rich and poor in India has reached catastrophic proportions. With the majority of the population living in poverty, and a small minority enjoying luxurious wealth, when these two opposing groups encounter one another the results can be dramatic. We must consider how to thoughtfully bridge the wide gap between these two radically different populations in a way that would result in a more unified way of thinking about human rights and equality.

MINDSET VS. MONSTER

What shocked the filmmaker the most about her lengthy encounter with the rapists in jail was that they were far from the monsters the media had prepared her for. Far more chilling than that, they were ordinary, apparently rational men who had been brought up and encouraged by their society to think of women in a particular way and who felt no remorse for their actions. This shows that simply removing the perceived monsters, the perpetrators of violence and wrongdoing, from society is not enough. The imbalance and assumptions will remain the same, and until the general mindset is shifted and the teachings passed down over generations are done away with, rape, persecution, and sexism will continue to reign.

AN INSPIRING EXAMPLE

Accumulated anger at the medieval system alive and well in India - where acid attacks, dowry, domestic rape, and pre-birth sex selection are still widely the norm - reached a pinnacle on December 17, 2012. This time the tables began to turn, and the six individuals responsible for the demonic acts against Jyoti Singh were handed out the maximum punishment- death by hanging. Jyoti served as a strong example of India's modern women. This rape, however brutal, was nothing new in India, yet the nation seized the momentum this incident had created in order to set a powerful example. And India's brave men and women who faced water canons, tear gas, and lathi charges by the authorities set an inspiring example to the world where, perhaps less dramatic but nonetheless prevalent prejudice against women exists.

“A girl can do anything.”

Jyoti Singh

“Boys and girls are not equal.”

Mukesh Singh, accused rapist

“Even the devil himself couldn't commit such a terrible crime.”

Badri Singh, Jyoti's father

“We have the best culture. In our culture, there is no place for a woman.”

M.L. Sharma, defence attorney

FURTHER DISCUSSIONS:

1. After watching **INDIA'S DAUGHTER**, who appears to be the greatest victim in modern-day Indian society?
2. Have you ever been to India? If not, would you like to go?
3. Have you ever known a rape victim? If so, how did his/her experience affect your idea of rape?
4. Do you feel that rape victims have access to a fair legal and justice system in your community?
5. Do you believe that a rapist is born or made?
6. Should a woman ever be held accountable if she is raped? If yes, under which circumstances?
7. What do you believe are the roots of patriarchy? Why have men taken a superior position in society for so long?
8. Do you have any experience of a matriarchal society?
9. Were you taught that women were equal to men in your upbringing? Do you currently believe that women and men are equal?
10. What makes rape such a powerful tool? What is it about sexuality that is such an overwhelming tool in the individual psyche?

NOTES:

FILM FACTS:

- Before making INDIA'S DAUGHTER, British director Leslee Udwin worked as an actress and producer, and produced with award-winning films East is East and West is West. INDIA'S DAUGHTER is her debut as a director and her first documentary.
- On 10 September 2013, four of the six adult defendants in the Delhi rape case were found guilty of rape and murder and three days later were sentenced to death by hanging. One, a juvenile, was tried separately and sentenced to the maximum sentence possible for juveniles in India- 3 years in a special home. One of the adults was found hanging in his cell during trial. Many doubt if the remaining 4 adult rapists will ever be executed, as only 4 death penalties have been carried out in India since 1995. As of 2013, there were 476 convicts on death row in India.
- The word "rape" originates from the Latin term for "to snatch, grab, or carry off." In the 1300s, it came to mean "to seize and take away by force."
- Female feticide, the act of aborting a female foetus, is practiced in India, regardless of both sex determination and abortion being very strictly monitored by Indian law. The uneven boy-to-girl birth ratio bears witness to female feticide. The highest differentiation in 2011 was in Haryana province, where 120 boys were born for every 100 girls. Feticide is linked to the arrival of affordable ultrasound technology in the 1990s, which can detect fetal sex from 12 weeks.
- The motives behind female feticide are many, and are symptomatic of the patriarchal system long in place in India. Though the practice of dowry is unlawful, it is still widely practiced in India. Some motivating factors include the desire to avoid paying an overwhelming dowry at the time of a daughter's marriage; a son being viewed as someone who can earn and care for his parents in their later years; a son carrying on the family name; girls being viewed as consumers - boys being seen as producers; families considering a son as a status symbol and a daughter as a burden.
- 24,923 rape cases were reported across India in 2012. However, some claim that as many as 90% of rape cases go unreported for various reasons, including the fact that a girl who has been raped is considered to have lost her honor and to bring shame upon her family. Following the rape case of Jyoti Singh, The Criminal Law (Amendment) Act was passed in 2013, and some changes were made to existing rape law. Many recommendations, however, remain to be adopted. Marital rape, however, is still not considered a crime under Indian law.
- Many experts say that patriarchy began developing with the introduction of social and technological innovations, such as agriculture and domestication. Some claim that when the concept of fatherhood took root some 6,000 years ago, patriarchy began to spread.

WAYS TO INFLUENCE

1. Visit the film's website www.indiasdaughter.com where you will find a comprehensive and exciting hub for all those who care about bringing about change for women in India and the world. The website lists several actions the campaign is running and offers opportunities for YOU to get involved and join hands with the India's Daughter Campaign and its partners.
2. Arrange screenings of the film and discussions for groups of your friends and contacts. Contact India's Daughter's Outreach Producer Stuti Jalan will be happy to advise and facilitate larger screenings at schools and libraries.
3. Encourage healthy relationships between boys and girls from an early age, erasing the reign of patriarchy.

We believe a good documentary is just the beginning...

In a world of sound-bites, documentaries provide an opportunity to think, understand, share, and connect with the world.

They are controversial, divisive, fascinating, unexpected, and surprising. They can be thrillers, dramas, comedies, romance, tear-jerkers, and horror films.

Documentaries provide the perfect topic for meaningful conversations. If you want to talk about the things that matter with people that matter then pick a film, invite your friends, and watch & discuss together. It's as easy as that.

Influence Film Club – We are the conversation after the film.