



A Tale of Two Panels: Vrinda Marwah

MARCH 9, 2013

by Shuddhabrata Sengupta

tags: International Women's Day, Justice Verma Committee Report, marital rape, Misogyny

Guest Post by Vrinda Marwah

On 6th March, in the run up to International Women's Day, I was involved in two panel discussions on women's rights, both adrenalin-raising but for entirely different reasons. As someone who has been working in feminist organisations, and who, like so many others, is trying to be active and simultaneously make sense of the agitations and conversations following the Delhi gang rape, I decided to write about this experience because it was so revealing about how power operates.

The second panel, which I will talk about first, was in the United Nations Information Center, from 7:00 PM to 9:00 PM approx., organized by the New Delhi hub of the Global Shapers Community of the World Economic Forum, on issues of women's safety in Delhi and practical measures that can be taken to address these. I don't know much about this rather fancy sounding group (in their correspondence with me they describe themselves thus: The Global Shapers Community is a network of hubs developed and led by young people who are exceptional in their potential, achievements and drive to make a contribution to their communities). I was contacted by a batch-mate from school and another from college about three weeks prior to the event. Both of them are 'Shapers', and asked me to be the 'youth voice' on the panel. When they told me about the line-up (Law Minister, Former DG Police, BJP national secretary, etc), I balked. I told them the line-up was so pro-establishment that it WAS the establishment, and advised them to bring in strong feminist voices that could take on and expose a panel as 'luminous' as this. I recommended Vrinda Grover, Madhu Mehra, Kavita Krishnan, Kamla Bhasin, amongst others, and some young people who work directly with young people. I was assured that there would be a representative from the women's movement, and that they would reach out to the people I had suggested. I was still reluctant, because I was afraid I wouldn't be able to, and wouldn't be allowed to, do justice to a feminist position, in all its strengths and complexities, at such a panel.

My colleagues encouraged me to participate, highlighting the need to engage newer, 'unconverted' audiences. I agreed also because I felt encouraged that I would have another feminist ally. But when I was sent the final email invite to the event, the panel was as follows:

- Dr. Ashwani Kumar: Union Minister for Law & Justice
- Mr. Prakash Singh: IPS, Former DG
- Ms. Vani Tripathi: National Secretary, Bhartiya Janata Party
- Ms. Geeta Luthra: Senior Supreme Court Advocate
- Ms. Madhu Kishwar: Founder Editor of Women's Journal Manushi
- And me (bottom-most in the Order of the Illustrious)

However, nothing prepared me for how extremely one-sided, regressive, and farcical this panel actually would be.

The format of the panel, as shared by the moderator, was that everybody would speak in turn twice, for three minutes each, before the Q&A round. In the first round, panelists would speak on their area of expertise (I was asked to cover 'societal mindset' on gender), and in the second, everybody would put forward three tangible short-term solutions. The moderator also decided

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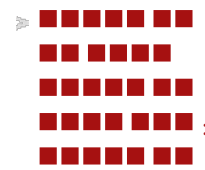
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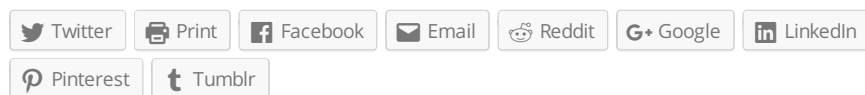
structures around caste, religion, class, sexuality, conflict zones, custodial cases, etc. I needn't have worried. The conversation was not only not that advanced, it was downright anti-women on even basic questions that have been generating consensus in less professedly-enlightened spaces.

The other panel, the first, was a study in contrasts. It took place in Jamia Millia Islamia, co-organized by their Outreach Program and my organization CREA. It brought together activists from the women's movement, including men, to discuss different aspects of gender-based violence and women's human rights with students. The speakers were: Kavita Krishnan, Sehba Farooqui, Satish Singh, Dhruv Arora, and Nandini Rao, in a discussion moderated by Shalini Singh. Topics ranged from JVC vs ordinance, masculinities and men's role in ending violence against women, khap panchayats, to communalism, the meaning of democratic rights, and the legacy of 8 March. In the same amount of time and with roughly the same number of participants, the panel spoke of women's rights beyond just law and order, to understand it as a structural issue of unequal power relations, connected with many other issues of social justice. The Q&A round was long and engaged, and all sorts of questions were asked and answered. I don't want to describe the entire exchange here, but I will detail one aspect of it to illustrate the comparison. The Jamia panel discussed how the criminal justice system sees victims of sexual assault as 'good' or 'bad' women, as does the law through its language of 'outraging modesty' (the ridiculous logical corollary being that you have to have modesty for it to be outraged). In this context they situated the non-inclusion of marital rape as a crime: if women are the properties of their husbands, they cannot consent or dissent. Women are often seen to merit protection only to uphold the honour of their men: fathers, brothers, and (potential) husbands. This attitude is borne out by judges who ask rapists to marry their victims, because of course then it should all be okay, right? When questions were asked about the dreaded M word, Misuse, the panelists gave considered responses about how even if some instances of misuse happen, as they do and will in every law, they cannot be used to thwart the many cases of legitimate use. Misuse will be weeded out by due process of the law, and we must demand women's unqualified freedom without being scared of it, as if the day a law against marital rape is passed, all married women will flood police stations to seek their vengeance!

I am not saying that everybody went home convinced. And maybe it is better to have a panel where there is also some divergence in the views of the panelists. But the Jamia panel seemed real, engaged, intense, reflexive, and open. As opposed to that, the UNIC panel was like lip-service, a CV stunt that ended up being quite disconnected with the progressive and rights-affirming mood of the moment. In fact it felt so out-of-step that it was like a blast from the past, as if the significant shifts in mainstream discourse about sexual assault and women's rights in the last ten-odd weeks have not even happened.

I have no doubt that the Global Shapers intended well. I hope they will read this in the spirit of healthy critique. And yes, I may be an ultra-feminist (Madhu Kishwar later that day tweeted unflattering things about 'ultra-feminists' whom she 'ruffled' at the UNIC panel) but in my universe that's pretty damn far from a bad word.

[Vrinda Marwah works with CREA, a feminist human rights organisation based in Delhi.]



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March 9, 2013 2:44 PM

Good for you Vrinda. With feminists like Madhu Kishwar getting constant visibility, the struggle is going to be over generations. But there are more of us than that first appalling panel you described think. So keep up the good fight. The one billion are still rising!

[REPLY](#)

Ashwaruda [PERMALINK](#)

March 9, 2013 10:14 PM

This is what a woman acquaintance working in a Delhi branch of a nationalised bank had to say about the celebration of the International Women's Day at her workplace. 'I work in a government bank with branches all over India. After the start of business hours, there was a meeting convened for felicitation of women on International Women's Day by the senior most male officer, the location head. The meeting, comprising of only women from only a particular branch was addressed by the male officer with an uninspiring speech which bordered on the politically. The speech concluded with a senior female officer pouting, wiggling and giggling gave a 'thank you speech'. She declared that 'empowerment' of women had been achieved in the Bank by conducting such 'meets'. She thanked the male officer in particular, for arranging the meeting, calling the women and presenting them a single rose bouquet, a bar of chocolate and a gel pen and felicitating them on being 'multi taker as a daughter, daughter-in-law, mother-in-law etc. After that, the women of that branch, gathered together and sang romantic songs and danced to 'filmy' item numbers. Thereafter, the women had done dutifully, what the location head had advised them to do – relax for a couple of 'hours' and get back to work. An attempt by a female officer to turn the event in to an opportunity to discuss and contemplate upon the consequence of the Dec 16, 2012 gang rape was blacked out by an unresponsive silence and empty looks. March 08, 2013 being the next day after the Ghaziabad Auto Gang rape, the female officer had expected some response, some spark, some reaction. None! So desperate were the women for time out, recognition and relaxation that they danced 'item numbers' and sang 'filmy songs'. Among the crowds, were women of earlier generation, who some 20 years back, had undergone ultra sound and abortions to eliminate female fetuses. Women who had in no way, been compelled by their man nor the man's family, In such a situation, is it any wonder that since December 16, 2012 there has been no decrease in the rape crisis of Delhi, NCR? It is not the Delhi men with ailing sexist mentality who are a danger to women, but it is Delhi's misogynist (against their own sex), women who are the danger to themselves. Or maybe, the acquaintance consoled herself, that bank branch was a minority. An anachronism in face of Delhi's India gate's protests. What so ever, unless and until such pockets are contained and eliminated by transformation, the 4 rapes per day, is going to be better ratio compared to the ones to come.

[REPLY](#)

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no applause for you [PERMALINK](#)

March 10, 2013 2:07 AM

Hi

At the outset let me declare that I don't completely agree with the views of Madhu Kishwar (I attended a talk she gave recently and I know how conservative she can be) but she does bring an interesting point that ... all women are not angels. Certainly that does not mean that women should not have protection under law but at the same time I think it is dangerous to act as if women can only be meek, passive recipients of abuse. It is as bad for the women's movement as for anyone else.

I think that if feminism has to actually help in making women feel empowered, then feminists need to be more sophisticated and intelligent than saying that "even if some instances of misuse happen, as they do and will in every law, they cannot be used to thwart the many cases of legitimate use". The idea that we should pass a law that it is even theoretically open to misuse is just ridiculous and no rational legislature will/should pass it. All laws are made to be solid and fool proof. Misuse is an unwanted/unexpected effect not a planned or expected byproduct.

And its sounds all noble and everything to say that some misuse case will happen, but no legal system should ever be as sloppy as to say that we will let a few innocent people go to jail for a higher cause.

This is not me saying that women's rights or safety is not important. This is me saying that feminist discourse needs to be better than this and needs to consider the interests of all members of the society (men included, men who may be victims of a bad law) if it is going to do anything useful (also if it wants to be taken seriously).

[REPLY](#)

Gayatri [PERMALINK](#)

March 10, 2013 1:00 PM

If you actually read what feminists (the non Madhu Kishwar variety) have to say on patriarchy you would realise that they never see women as passive victims at all points of time. Our understanding of patriarchy is deep enough to realise that women at many points of time act as agents of patriarchy as well. However we do not attribute this to essential qualities of womanhood ('women are women's worst enemies' etc) but rather that patriarchy as a structure of power rewards women for behaving in certain ways. To that end, your argument about feminists seeing women only as "passive recipients of abuse" and thus a law not being passed until such laws are "solid and fool proof" is ridiculous.

Feminists are well aware that laws are open to misuse, however they are also aware that this is the case with every law in the book. I don't need to go into details of trumped up charges of sedition that are handed to those who disagree on state policies, or charges of kidnapping that are usually leveled against those who want to pursue an inter-caste marriage. Every single law is open to such manipulation, however I bet no one will stand up and say that the law on murder, or kidnapping, or theft needs to be held back until it is ensured that it can never be misused, These however are familiar arguments always used against any pro-women legislation, such as the anti-dowry law, or

rape laws. If one is really to be progressive about the laws in this country what you must emphasise is on more accountability with regard to following due process of law. If perhaps you had bothered to read more about feminist discourse you would realise that feminism is about equality for all. Which we think would be a better deal for everyone, men included.

[REPLY](#)

C S Lakshmi [PERMALINK](#)

March 10, 2013 7:34 AM

A must read note.

[REPLY](#)

Kari [PERMALINK](#)

March 10, 2013 12:11 PM

I was in the audience during “Panel 2” as you have described it and wanted to share some observations. Firstly, I think you spoke for a long time and made several interventions during the discussion so I am not sure which “3 min” you are referring to. Also you seemed to be getting the maximum support from the audience..in fact you were the only one who received applause from a certain group of people at every other innocuous statement you made (which I found a bit odd to be honest). More importantly, the discussion was meant to throw up tangible solutions. I heard some of the other panelists make some pretty concrete suggestions but all you said was that there are 300 solutions to this problem so it is impossible to come up with 3. We all know that there are not 300 but in fact many more factors involved with addressing such a problem but you could at least have suggested something useful that could be taken up, beyond rallies. Changing the entire society all at once is neither possible nor practical. I appreciate your very strong “feminist” views but you seemed to be intolerant of other views and wanted to dominate the entire discourse which me and several others in the audience found quite jarring.

I chanced upon a more balanced view of the discussion here:

<http://www.sunday-guardian.com/young-restless/experts-debate-steps-needed-to-gender-sensitise-city>

[REPLY](#)

Shals [PERMALINK](#)

March 10, 2013 6:50 PM

Dominate the discussion? That’s a laugh. The hostility of the panel towards her was a sight to see. When the moderator allowed Vrinda to take a question on media representation to make up in a token way for not giving her her 3 minutes, Vani Tripathi butted in obnoxiously saying “since I am from the industry (she’s some sort of film industry has-been or something), my response will be more relevant”. The audience clapped the two times Vrinda was allowed to speak simply because those were the only times there was any sign of a real discussion.

[REPLY](#)

Hargopal Singh [PERMALINK](#)

March 10, 2013 12:20 PM

There is no doubt that the feminists will have to wage a protracted fight for the rights they perceive to be inviolable .Why should they expect any sympathy from this quarter or that quarter is not understandable.It is their fight and they have to fight it out.May it be humbly put that the fight itself has to be put in such a perspective that it results into their victory .For that one has to go into the history of their problems of various discrimination,exploitation,atrocities ,violence etc,They will have to find out the roots of their problem.They should not expect any solution in isolation of the total context.For example changing of mind-set is too simplistic a solution to be taken as a panacea.The causes are much more deep .They need a very serious study and analysis .For the present all the best. .

REPLY

Sunalini Kumar [PERMALINK](#)



March 10, 2013 5:19 PM

Kari, I wasn't at the panel. But your critique is interesting to me for a couple of reasons. One, you are obviously unaware of the protocol of a panel discussion – if a panelist is invited formally and asked to speak at a panel, she would come prepared with a talk or presentation. Vrinda has every right to expect to be allowed to share her pre-prepared presentation. Her intervening in others' presentations doesn't preclude this. Two, you assume that she is somehow responsible for the audience cheering and clapping. I fail to get this. Perhaps many in the audience were unhappy at the way the panel was progressing, and were genuinely happy somebody opposed the other panelists. Three, this old tired thing about 'giving solutions' while making a fundamental critique. Why? Why should the person making the critique be pressurised to give a solution? Why can't everybody, if they agree with the critique, take a moment to absorb and agree, and work on the problem in their own ways, and collectively in various fora? It's the first thing that is said to a person, especially a young person when they critique a system – to give solutions. I would say it is easier and lazier to give solutions, and smacks of the same mindset that wants to limit the problem by quickly proposing solutions. A good metaphor of this is Delhi Police's knee-jerk banning of tinted car windows and chartered buses after December 16. No, thank you, patriarchal society, you give the solutions. As a woman and an activist, if I call out the problem in a clear, strident voice, identify the malaise, remind everybody we are dealing with nothing less than structural and fundamental issues, it is no minor achievement.

REPLY

Kriti [PERMALINK](#)

March 10, 2013 6:31 PM

Dear Kari,

If you had cared to read the post carefully enough, and if indeed Vrinda had been allowed her three minutes (which was due to her according to the stated format of the panel, in addition to the minutes she took commenting on the law minister's and Madhu Kishwar's three minutes), you would have known that the topic on which she had been asked to speak was the societal dimension of the problem, which should automatically explain the nature of the 'solution' that she offered. If indeed she had been allowed to speak (rather than just respond), she would have probably spoken of how this societal dimension is in fact central to the problem at hand, for prejudices and flaws in legislations and legislative processes related to sexual assault

are not mere technical errors than can be corrected through easy solutions. Instead, they are intrinsically linked to the prejudices and flaws that we produce and live with as a deeply patriarchal society. Given this, 'changing the entire society' as you call it, is precisely what is required and no three piece-meal solutions are going to do the trick. This, I think, is what Vrinda meant when she said that there are no 3, but 300 solutions to the problem.

This is not to underestimate the suggestions made by the other speakers, such as a structural overhaul of the police system among others, but only to point out that however vague and intangible a 'societal solution' might seem (to use the vocabulary of the seminar), it is in fact the most effective and permanent solution, without which nothing else will work. Even the law minister said as much in his closing comments, when he quoted a principle of jurisprudence which suggested that a law is only as effective as its legitimacy. By that logic, every concrete solution must gain legitimacy, for which what is required is precisely a fundamental restructuring of society, so that there is an ever-widening acceptance of a discourse that respects women's freedom and bodily integrity. If Vrinda was intolerant towards anything to the contrary (which indeed she was), I am nothing but proud of her!

As for her suggestion of participation in and engagement with political protest, I'm surprised to learn that you think that is not tangible enough. If not for the huge wave of political protest that happened in the last few months, we would not have been having this discussion and searching for solutions. If not for the decades of protest and political participation by women's movements in this country, we would not have all the existing pro-women legislations that were spoken of at that seminar. If not for this engagement, the discourse on rape would not be undergoing this significant shift from honour to consent. The importance of political participation in challenging, overthrowing and re-shaping legislations, structures of domination and the biases that we carry as a society can hardly be overstated. Given this, I don't see why the suggestion of political participation is anything but concrete and worthy of being 'taken up'.

And if this suggestion, the few lines that Vrinda spoke on the importance of situating rape in a discourse of consent and her wonderfully jarring and forceful critique of non-inclusion of marital rape and rape by security forces invited loud applause (and indeed it did), it can only mean that the societal discourse is already shifting, even if it didn't get its three minutes!

[REPLY](#)

Kari [PERMALINK](#)

March 11, 2013 12:08 AM

Hi

I am impressed with your knowledge of protocol. It will be good if you can make Vrinda also appreciate it more. Ministers in India are addressed as honorable in all public forums so it wasn't the event organizers' fault for doing so (couldn't help noticing this comment since I did read the blog quite carefully). Anyway I just want to comment on the point about why "solutions" are important. Solutions are important because women are getting raped and losing lives every single day. No matter how many wonderful jarring and strident voices we have, no one in their right mind will suggest that we can change this mindset (whatever the reasons for it) overnight. No one is saying that "political protest" is not important or useful but how successful it will be or indeed has been in changing mindsets so far is questionable. We are still one of the worst societies in terms of crimes against women. In fact all crime statistics (you might question the validity of these) show that crime rates have only been increasing which in

some way reflects the very little progress we have made on the mindset front. It is not to say that things haven't progressed..but the progress is painfully slow and in the process we are losing precious lives every day. That is why practical, tangible solutions are critical. They might be piecemeal, knee-jerk as you describe them but if they can save a life today do we have a right to be critical? Every life is invaluable.

A girl was gang-raped on International Women's Day – what should we tell her and her family? Sorry, it is just taking a little long for us to change society – just be patient? Sorry we are waiting for that most perfect and effective solution? We cannot do that. Every single life is invaluable and if a “tangible” solution can save even one life today, then it is completely worth it. In fact as I write this another girl has been reportedly gang-raped in Delhi. It is high time we start doing something practical, beyond just engaging in strident discourse. It is easy to criticize and years of criticism have perhaps led us to where we are today. Vrinda seems to be particularly adept at criticizing one and all – the government, politicians and even this young group that has tried to take initiative in this matter. But instead of merely criticizing we need to try and actually do something constructive.

REPLY

RoyGroupie [PERMALINK](#)

March 11, 2013 12:46 PM

What, then, do you think we should do, Kari? Women are getting raped everyday, and that in itself should be enough to make you realize the complexity of the problem. Solutions, you say. Solutions are answers, aren't they? So how will we get answers if we don't even begin to ask the questions? And coming up with “solutions” isn't going to be stop rape in a jiffy, as your comment seems to suggest. Open, public debates involving people with differing views about the current situation are extremely important. Only by reaching a consensus through such debates will we be able to come up with solutions.

REPLY

Sunalini [PERMALINK](#)

March 11, 2013 8:59 AM

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Kari, I must hand it to you. It's clever how you have deployed the word 'protocol' to make it mean something trivial and self-indulgent. In fact your entire depiction of academic discussions and discussions in general seems to imply that they are trivial and self-indulgent, when “a woman is being raped every day”. So, assuming we are equally concerned with this issue (and perhaps you will grant us that) how do you propose we change that statistic, with “practical” solutions, in the face of the overwhelming misogyny that blames women for rape? How do we begin to even establish the idea of bodily consent in a society in which a woman is seen as another's property? Every tangible, practical solution has to pass through the patriarchal law enforcement machinery, and get past the mindsets of people for it to become a reality beyond panel discussions. In that sense, a practical solution that does not simultaneously give a solution to its enforcement in a misogynistic society is not that practical at all. What is required is for the powers-that-be to become uncomfortable, for them to feel the pressure of the political-public. On that count, as Kriti said, the protests that took place on the streets, however chaotic and messy they were to many sensibilities, were the direct ancestors of panel discussions like this one. And 'protocol' is not a minor thing – if it helps to mitigate

hierarchies between “Honourable” ministers and young women activists, it’s a wonderful thing. The problem is with the hierarchies of the outside world being reproduced in the seemingly sanitised space of a panel discussion – where it has no bloody place! If the operation of that hierarchy, which was a subtext of this post throughout, passed you by, then I doubt if we can blame the author.

REPLY

Puja [PERMALINK](#)

March 11, 2013 12:10 PM

Hey Kari, thanks for telling us why “solutions are important”! If someone had only put it to us like that before- we need solutions because there are problems and the problem is that “women are getting raped and losing lives every single day”- it would have saved everybody a world of time no doubt. And here we were trying to get at the structures of sexual violence through unwieldy complex discussions about power relations, patriarchal institutions and questions of freedom.

Kari, solutions are a very good thing indeed, if we are certain we understand the problem. To be sure, how we understand the problem determines the kinds of solution we will demand. That, whether you like it or not, has everything to do with politics and our understanding of social structures. It is one of the reasons we find that issues such as the non-inclusion of marital rape and the exemptions accorded to high ranking officers in the Criminal Law Bill cannot be part of any long term solution for anyone who is actually serious about women’s rights. Frustrating as this might be to you, for a lot of us, an active engagement with these questions, through protests, rallies, academics and activism, is a viable “solution”.

Vrinda was correct and courageous in criticizing the law minister and the government, especially in a forum that showed no sign of any kind of critical questioning. The whole thing was like a mindless school event where children are taught slavish respect for those in positions of power and are told to speak only when spoken to.

REPLY

Vrinda Marwah [PERMALINK](#)

March 11, 2013 12:12 PM

Dear Kari

Your comment embodies in my opinion everything that was wrong with the UNIC panel that evening, in that it is missing the woods for the trees, and insisting on a superficial and downright dangerous separation between ‘critique’ and ‘action’. Allow me to explain.

I don’t think Sunalini, Kriti or I will dispute that ‘solutions’- an unwavering commitment to and demonstrable action on women’s rights- are important. You don’t have to remind us that statistics on crime against women are bad, and that women are getting raped in India everyday. The JVC report, which I spent the better part of my mike time defending, is a report full of ‘tangible solutions’ that relate to law and order, and also extend beyond it. But perhaps I need to remind you that this much-hailed report was being so easily dismissed by other ‘esteemed’ panelists that evening. Perhaps I need to also remind you that in the little time I was allowed, I condoned some solutions offered by others, such as making public spaces safer for women with better lighting and patrolling, sex education in schools and colleges, large scale police reform etc. I spoke of how we need to understand ‘rape culture’ instead of being fixated with acts of rape. For this, we need to understand the full extent of patriarchy in all

our institutions, and as Sunalini put it 'absorb and agree', including on our complicity in it. This is the critical difference in your approach and ours. While your approach focuses on answers, our approach wants to first ask the right questions, and we believe those will inevitably lead to the right answers.

In case the connection between 'critique' and 'action' still eludes you, allow me to explain further. In law, criminalizing all rape and including all women, irrespective of their marital status and geographical location, is a 'solution'. Adopting consent as a standard of sexual legitimacy, and not 'honour' or 'shame' or 'public morality', is a solution. You may recall that the debate on marital rape that evening was the most 'jarring' as you call it. What was that, if not an identification of the problem (marital rape as a bastion of private patriarchy), and a related solution (criminalize it)?

You seem very impressed with the 'initiative' that the government and the Global Shapers are taking. I have no doubt they mean well, but as you've probably heard, the road to hell is paved with good intentions! In my opinion, whatever 'initiative' the government and others are taking has not dropped from the skies. It has been facilitated, indeed forced, by the initiative that so many have taken these last few weeks, and that, as Kriti rightly points out, other women and men, collectively, have been engaged in for decades together. But perhaps you are not aware of this. While you clarify that you are not saying political protests are not important, you question their impact. Histories of social movements, including the women's movements, document why and how they organized, where and how they succeeded and where and how they did not, and are available in most libraries. Please do help yourself to a sound reading. You see Kari these discourses do not dominate at the World Economic Forum, and other glamorous and seemingly earnest gatherings, but they are alive and burning all right.

And lastly, a minor correction: Ministers are not referred to as 'Honourable' on all public forums. They are often called by their names. Ashwini Kumar was there to answer tough questions in a time like this, not to receive an ego massage. But here's what does happen at most public forums: people who are invited to speak are ALLOWED to speak. But I guess what protocol one follows and what one shelves is interesting to note.

REPLY

Niyati [PERMALINK](#)

March 11, 2013 12:13 PM

Kari, I am perplexed at your understanding of what constitutes a concrete solution—something hard-hitting, hurried, urgent and “effective” vs. a more abstract, ‘fluffy’ and structural attempt to challenge patriarchy (typical of a powerpoint generation which sees solutions as concise, pithy bullet-points as if a pointer can contain the complexity of an issue). If this is the dichotomy that you have created, then I guess challenging or questioning patriarchy would not even be on your agenda? After all in your worldview, we solely need quick solutions to these problems because rapes are not a structural problem at all. However, I belong to the camp which does believe that rapes are not an impulsive, rash act of sexual release but as is oft-repeated it is an act of reminding women that the phallus has maximum power. Ultimately, it boils down to whether you think rapes have anything to do with patriarchy or not. And your hoarse demand for “quick-fix” measures reeks of a refusal to blame patriarchy or recognize that such a horrendous, oppressive structure does exist. But, I have to break this to you that rapes do “tangibly” and “concretely” flow from patriarchy making it logical to argue that since patriarchy is the cause, then the solution is to attack and challenge it in its entirety proving that structural or systemic

solutions are not so much fluff after all. (Isn't it obvious?) And the protests example you gave is a brilliant instance of people taking action by coming out on the streets collectively to develop a shared understanding and critique of patriarchy. I frankly don't see how you can call rallies useless since they radically changed public discourse around patriarchy in popular media.. something your hasty solutions could not have achieved.

PS- Since I want to give you the benefit of the doubt, the only other plausible way in which your comment can be interpreted is that you think structural changes are impossible or too far-fetched since the vicious, bulky monster of patriarchy is beyond our power to conquer , in which case I would just urge you to give up this attitude of resignation and pessimism and give the fight another try. Just so you realize how concrete and real patriarchy is even in its most innocuous forms.

[REPLY](#)

Kriti [PERMALINK](#)

March 11, 2013 1:07 PM

Hey, just received an invitation to another panel discussion on gendered violence. If the concept note and names of speakers are any indication of what to expect, it promises to illuminate the connection between critique and action in the context of women's struggles in India. Sharing its details below, please do have a look and consider attending.

The Nehru Memorial Museum and Library cordially invites you to a Panel Discussion

at 5.00 pm on Thursday, 14 March, 2013

in the Auditorium, Library Building

on

'Gendered violence and the search for justice'

by

Ms. Vrinda Grover, Fellow, NMML, Dr. Uma Chakravarti, Former Professor, University of Delhi, Delhi, Ms. Rosemary Dzuwichu, Nagaland University, Nagaland

[REPLY](#)

Rusy [PERMALINK](#)

March 13, 2013 2:03 PM

Kari Madam,

Unless Doctor fully diagnose the disease, effective prescription would not be possible. That's what Vrinda was doing.

[REPLY](#)

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