



PJRS

ISSN P-0972-3331 22/1

Jan-Ju 2018: 190-196

JNANADEEPA

Cite as: Pandikattu, Kuruvilla, & Baby, Ginish C. (2018). Violence against Women: An Objectification (Version 1.0). Jnanadeepa: Pune Journal of Religious Studies, Jan 2018(22/1), 190198. <http://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.4067387>

DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.4067387

Stable URL:

<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.4067387>

Jnanadeepa: Pune Journal of Religious Studies

Violence against Women: An Objectification

Ginish C. Baby & Kuruvilla Pandikattu

Abstract: This article deals with the objectification of women and the resulting violence against them. Humanity is the culmination both genders, identities and differences. We are not to be led by the sudden impulses and emotions but as a free agent who actively makes something meaningful out of this life. “Man is responsible for his acts. Evil is the free act of the individual who uses his freedom for his own exaltation.” Being responsible for one’s own freedom can make us a healthy individual respecting the freedom of the feminine gender. Objectification and identifying in miniaturizing ways are violence against women. Their respect and worthiness is downgraded by our limited or biased perception. The only way out is to fashion a new universe of symbols opening out to a new oneness and wholeness. Which emphasize the interconnectedness and the loving bond exist between the genders.

Keywords: Violence against women, objectification of women, gender, varying identities, subjectivity.

Introduction

In Indian context a bird is described as ‘twice-born’ – once in its limited shell and then finally in the freedom of the unbounded sky. This shows a movement from limitedness to unbounded freedom. Similar movements are seen in human

realm of existence. When considering the case of humans; this freedom of the unbounded sky determines a lot of meaning; its exercise can be always a question of morality. When deciding to become a husband or a wife or to give birth to a child are the deliberate choices we make. But the exercise of choice to have only a male child is a matter of morality and our ethical principles. Denying room for the existence of difference becomes an act of violence; giving a space only for our miniaturized thinking or wants denies the existence of other. All differences need to exist to understand the other or the opposite in a better way; each must be complementary to one another. We are individuals of a gender but connected to both genders and that is how we make meaning out of this life. “Far from us starting out as isolated individuals who then face the problem of making contact with other people, our existence from the beginning is a shared and social one, and our problem is that of becoming individuals, finding an authentic mode of personal existence.”¹ This is how Heidegger analyzes the human situation. The aspect of “thrownness” can help us to understand human differences in a better way. Being a man or a woman is not a choice, it is given to us or that is the way we are. This is the “thrownness” which we face, “thrownness” with uniqueness and differences.

Gender: An Expression of Freedom

When something new appears in any field we say it as creativity and appreciation follows with many sorts of rewards. If such differences are appreciated and rewarded, then how we understand violence based on differences. Here we try to analyze how gender difference becomes a reason for violence. This violence can be defined as “as the violation of beings worthy of respect.”² Everyone needs to be respected and also their individual freedom. When such freedoms are violated respect doesn’t exist between them. Being a human

itself shows that we have the potential to reason out and value our freedom and to express it in a socially acceptable manner. If such freedom I hold I should see the same in the other too because it has got a value and reason. This sort of violence can be said as depriving others right of ‘being free to live reasonably.’ “Freedom is valuable for at least two different reasons. First, more freedom gives us more opportunity to pursue our objectives – those things that we value. Second, we may attach importance to the process of choice itself. We may want to make sure that we are not being forced into some state because of constraints imposed by others.”³ The freedom which I hold explains that I am held accountable for my actions. My actions are or suppose to be an outcome of my reasoning and the values I attach to it. In this sense when we look at the violence it shows the degradation of human ethical principles. What value or reason can I attach to a rape, a murder, objectifying women for my sexual desires and the like? If we don’t value or reason out our actions what sort of freedom do we hold? Can we be just fools who don’t reason out? “We are ourselves the entities to be analyzed.”⁴

Objectification

The process of objectification takes place in the modern society in many different ways against women. Objectification can be defined as seeing and/or treating a person, usually a woman, as an object. According to Immanuel Kant’s view objectification involves the lowering of a person, a being with humanity, to the status of an object. Humanity is an individual’s rational nature and capacity for rational choice. The characteristic feature of humanity is an individual’s capacity for rationally setting and pursuing her own ends. A being with humanity is capable of deciding what is valuable, and of finding ways to realize and promote this value. Humanity is what is special about human beings. When we hinder these potentials

of an individual by any means it becomes violence. The right to actualize oneself in a reasonable way is one's right; that doesn't depend on others permission. Instead in a reasonable manner one realizes it. Many feminist thinkers have spoken elaborately about the objectification takes place especially in the sexual realm. Martha Nussbaum has identified several features that are involved in the idea of treating a person as an object. They are:

Instrumentality: the treatment of a person as a tool for the objectifier's purposes;

Denial of autonomy: the treatment of a person as lacking in autonomy and self-determination;

fungibility: the treatment of a person as interchangeable with other objects;

Denial of subjectivity: the treatment of a person as something whose experiences and feelings need not be taken into account.

Ownership: the treatment of a person as something that is owned by another.

The objectification can be of two modes that are individual and social. When it is done in an individual level we can correct the individual by applying the law that is reward and punishment. But when it is in a social level it needs a long process to change such things. The mind set and the outlook of the group has to be changed. Here the value aided education plays vital role. If the values are not inherited by the young minds then we need sophisticated laws to bring in such values. This sort of objectification basically brings in gender inequality. When inequality exists the space for appreciation of difference is removed and instead that space will be occupied by the biased perceptions of society. The outcome of such perceptions end up in seeing the female gender as an object: in this context the above aspect of instrumentality, denial of

autonomy, fungibility, denial of subjectivity and ownership develops.

Varying Identities

All humans have got different identities, most are shared identities and some are unique to the persons. We all assert our personal identities but these can be limited in the eyes of others, no matter how we see ourselves. When I see my mother I see in her the identity of a woman and the same time I also see the identity she holds before me as my mother. On the basis of gender inequality most often we miniaturize these identities and see only what we want to see. Such miniaturization of the one's identity is the reason for violence. The shared identity of humanity is not considered in an act of violence. The aspect of difference seen automatically gets connected with identity prioritization. Which identity we give priority and why? If such things come to mind a stable answer can be found for oneself and a relation with others identity can also be seen. Differences in the identities can also become a resource. This difference can help me to recognize and realize myself in the difference. Identifying the identities can exclude people but at the same the aspect of inclusion and complementarity also develops. So the best way is to prioritize my identity and ask oneself what value and reason do I attach to it. "Identifying with others, in various different ways, can be extremely important for living in a society."⁵

Each one of us men are 'potential rapists' on one hand and a store house of values. If we value ourselves and the rights of the other we can't be a rapist. If parents could begin by inculcating the correct values in children without gender disparity, there can be a lot of changes. The aspect of mutually supporting relationship of man and woman should be projected. "For a culture to be aesthetic it must be androgynous not only in the Jungian sense of every man having a share of womanliness

and every woman a share of manliness but in the sense the human is neither man nor woman separately but man and woman taken conjointly. That is why women's liberation cannot be achieved without men's liberation."⁶ To usher in a beautiful society we must have beautiful relationship between man and woman. It is necessarily a need of the hour to fight against the deeply entrenched tendency to reduce all to genital sex. So the liberation of man and woman though in opposite direction ultimately must lead to self-transcendence from necessity to freedom, from fragmentation to wholeness, from reign of unconcern to concern and for the well being of all. A unification based on values can bring in differences together which gradually lead to a universal value shared by all. Differences in identities become a platform for realizing oneself and the other. Hope in the collective future of humankind has no staying power unless the hoped – for has already been somehow experienced. This is where the hard and fast rules fail to attain a peaceful situation.

Conclusion

A new age has come up where our struggle is to save ourselves from our degraded values and attitudes. We are getting alienated from ourselves, when I become unsure of what I am and can expect to be, when I fail to express and find myself in what I do. When we get separated from our own ethical principles, love, care and concern our humanity dies. Humanity is the culmination both genders, identities and differences. We are not to be led by the sudden impulses and emotions but as a free agent who actively makes something meaningful out of this life. "Man is responsible for his acts. Evil is the free act of the individual who uses his freedom for his own exaltation."⁷ Being responsible for one's own freedom can make us a healthy individual respecting the freedom of the feminine gender. Objectification and identifying in

miniaturizing ways are violence against women. Their respect and worthiness is downgraded by our limited or biased perception. The only way out is to fashion a new universe of symbols opening out to a new oneness and wholeness. Which emphasize the interconnectedness and the loving bond exist between the genders.

Notes

- 1 Bryan Magee, *The Story of Philosophy* (New York: DK Publishing, 1998), 212.
- 2 Robert Audi, ed., *The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy* (Cambridge: University Press, 2006), 959.
- 3 Amartya Sen, *The Idea of Justice* (London: Penguin Books, 2010), 228.
- 4 Bryan Magee, op. cit., 212.
- 5 Amartya Sen, *Identity and Violence* (London: Penguin Books, 2006), 19.
- 6 S. Kappan, *Tradition Modernity Counterculture* (Bangalore: Vishtar, 1994), 55.
- 7 S. Radhakrishnan, *The Principal Upanisads* (Great Britain: HarperCollins Publishers, 2011), 104.

Bibliography

- Audi, Robert, ed. *The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy*. Cambridge: University Press, 2006.
- Clark, Malcolm. *The Need to Question*. New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1973.
- Kappan S. *Tradition Modernity Counterculture*. Bangalore: Vishtar, 1994.
- Magee, Bryan. *The story of philosophy*. New York: DK Publishing, 1998.
- Radhakrishnan, S. *The Principal Upanisads*. London: HarperCollins Publishers, 2011.
- Sen, Amartya. *Identity and Violence*. London: Penguin Books, 2006.
- Sen, Amartya. *The Idea of Justice*. London: Penguin Books, 2010.
- Article received: Apr 25, 2017
- Article approved: Oct 11, 2017
- No of words: 2034



Our Contributors

A. Pushparajan was the Professor and the Head, Dept. of Interreligious Relations, Madurai Kamaraj University, Coordinator of the School of Philosophy and Religions in the same University. He has authored 20 books, contributed over 350 articles in research journals, and presented over 400 papers in national and international seminars, symposia and conferences. He had been a Consulter to Pontifical Council for Faith and Culture and an Awardee of Charles Wallace Fellow in Dept. of Religions and Theology

Errol D'Lima SJ taught systematic theology at the Faculty of Theology, Jnana-Deepa Vidyapeeth, Pune for three decades and at present he is emeritus at the same faculty. He was the president of Indian Theological Association. He is the general editor of the Encyclopaedia of Christianity in India.

Francis Gonsalves SJ, Gujarat Jesuit, has taught at Vidyajyoti College, Delhi, for 18 years, being Principal for 4 years. He has authored 5 books, edited 6, and publishes regularly in India and abroad. Currently he teaches systematic theology at Jnana-Deepa Vidyapeeth, Pune.

George Therukattil MCBS holds doctorates in philosophy and theology from the Catholic University of Louvain. He was the Head of the Department of Christian Studies at the University of Mysore and associate professor at Jnana-Deepa Vidyapeeth, Pune. He has authored many books and articles including 3 Volumes of Compassionate Love-Ethics. Email: geotheroo@gmail.com

Ginish C Baby is a research assistant at Tilak Maharashtra Vidyapeeth, Pune, pursuing his doctoral studies in Philosophy on Amartya Sen.

Jacob Naluparayil MCBS holds a doctorate in Biblical Theology from SBF (Studium Biblicum Franciscanum) Jerusalem. He is a professor of

New Testament at St. Joseph's Pontifical Institute of Philosophy and Theology, Aluva since 2000. He is the chief editor of *Karunikan* theological monthly and co-founder of the national monthly *Smart Companion*. He has authored three books on Pope Francis, one of them becoming a best seller.

Jacob Parappally MSFS holds a doctorate in theology from the University of Freiburg, Germany. He taught systematic theology at Jnana-Deepa Vidyapeeth, Pune and served as the dean of the faculty of theology. He was the President of the Indian Theological Association and the rector of Tejas Vidya Peetha, Bangalore. At present he is the chief editor of the *Journal of Indian Theology*.

Kuruvilla Pandikattu SJ is Dean, Faculty of Philosophy, Jnana-Deepa Vidyapeeth, Pune. He has been involved in science-religion dialogue. Areas of interest: transhumanism, artificial intelligence, philosophical anthropology.

Mariapushpam Paul Raj is a priest from the diocese of Sivagangai, Tamil Nadu, and currently teaches Biblical theology at Jnana-Deepa Vidyapeeth, Pune. He has a doctorate in Biblical Studies from the University of Innsbruck, Austria. His area of specialization is Pauline Theology. He is engaged in the formation of candidates for priesthood at Papal Seminary, Pune

S. Stephen Jayard, belonging to the Diocese of Tiruchirapalli, Tamil Nadu, teaches at the Faculty of Philosophy, Jnana-Deepa Vidyapeeth, Pune and is a formator at Papal Seminary. Having a Doctoral Degree in Philosophy of Science, he lectures at several Institutes, presents papers at the national / international conferences.

Thomas Kalary MSFS holds a doctorate in Philosophy from the University of Freiburg Germany. He teaches philosophy at Suvidya College, Bangalore, Jnana-Deepa Vidyapeeth, Pune and St Joseph's Pontifical Institute Aluva. He is the Associate Editor of the international philosophical journal *Heidegger Studies* and together with Parvis Emad translated from German Heidegger's work *Besinnung/ Mindfulness*.