

Seeds of Exchange Kula {Community} Voices in Response the film, Driving with Selvi
Driving with Selvi | Seeds of Exchange

Is Selvi considered famous?

- *She is a famous woman and an inspiration [see last question]. –Lima + Malika | South India*
- *Selvi herself isn't famous among us in Nepal. –Raju, Udaya + Shalome | Nepal*

What types of other jobs are being taken on by women very recently that had previously only been held by men - and is it a national dialog or largely ignored? Do these women have trouble and if so, what? Are there groups helping them?

- *I live and studied in South India. I can see how Selvi broke traditions by taking a job as a taxi driver and also how this gave value to her life. Although India is a country with many women goddesses and we talk highly about our mothers, when it comes to practical living, women are not treated well. Lima + Malika | South India*
- *We come from a small Christian society and we encourage ladies to stand on their own feet. Jobs like machine working, tailoring, plowing fields with bulls, taxi driving and with the police force and government, are now being taken by women. Many educated women have also taken high-level jobs, but less than males.*

The government of Nepal is creating a quota for women's jobs of 33% [mostly at the starting level] but in reality, still there is a hindrance for women to move forward, even with this reserved quota. Throughout sectors, the pay is less for women and sexual harassment in workplaces is a tragedy. Also, physical strength and domestic working in their families is also a challenge for many women.

There are many organizations working for the welfare of children and women who are providing secure shelter and education for girls. Female child trafficking to brothels of India and Arabian nations has reached heights and many females have been trapped. The government is nearly silent on this issue. –Udaya + Shalome | Nepal

- *Usually jobs like driving taxis or buses are done by the men and they have a feeling of pride and superiority; yet these jobs are now slowly being taken by women. Our society is dominated by men and many of these issues are ignored. Women have lots of trouble like being abused, conquered and scorned by males in the community. Some groups are helping them by conducting awareness programs and vocational trainings. –Raju | Nepal*
- *India is becoming a more developed country and there are women who are able to study and achieve some jobs, but still, it's been understood that only men can handle certain responsibilities. In general, we now see women working jobs as bus conductors, at petrol pumps, as bouncers, and the mindset in sports is also slowly changing. Yes, it is a national dialog, but not with an idea of accepting the women in doing what they are doing. It isn't that it is ignored, but they are not supported fully as they deserve. –Lima + Malika | South India*
- *NGO and Government Programs. –Anna + Victoria | New Delhi, India*
 - *[Azad Foundation](#). Trains women to be chauffeurs.*
 - *[Poorna Shakti Kendras \(PSKs\)](#). Launched in September 2011 in Rajasthan, it set up 150 village-level PSKs & have prevented more than 200 child marriages.*
 - *[The Rajiv Gandhi Scheme for Empowerment of Adolescent Girls](#). Called "SABLA", this program was introduced in 2010 for the holistic development of girls aged 11-18 years, including nutrition, health, counseling, vocational training provisions.*
 - *[Dhanalakshmi](#). In 2008, the Ministry of Women & Child Development introduced this program in impoverished districts of the country, as a conditional cash transfer program providing funds to the family of the girl child if conditions are fulfilled, such as birth registration, immunizations, enrolment retention in school and delaying marriage age beyond 18 years.*
 - *[Integrated Child Protection Scheme \(ICPS\)](#). The program was launched to strengthen families of children at risk.*
 - *[Bal Vivah Virodh Abhiyan \(Campaign against Child Marriage\)](#). In 2005, a nationwide awareness-raising program against child marriage was started by the National Commission for Women.*
 - *The National Bravery Award is a mechanism established by the Central Government since 1957 given annually to 24 Indian children for "meritorious acts of bravery against all odds." In 2003, 5 girls were nominated who had stopped two child marriages. Since then, several other children have received the award for stopping child marriages.*

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- *Traditional professions like bankers, doctors, lawyers, law enforcement, politicians, and software engineers have been dominated by males in India. However, I believe this is changing (ever so slowly) due to increased access to education. The challenge is that several long-standing cultural and religious institutions exist in India like the Caste System, Dowry System (Child Marriage), and Human Trafficking, which continue to stifle and restrict access to education and employment. –Grant | USA*
- *After an alleged rape by an Uber cab driver in India, women in Mumbai are turning to a new taxi service – run by Kung Fu females. [Viira Cabs](#) is run strictly by women, for women and drivers are trained in deadly karate and armed with knives and pepper spray. {[video link](#)} –Sarah | USA*

Did you hear about the street protests after the rape of Selvi and other women in India and Nepal?

- *In 2012, Jyoti Singh, a 23- year old student, was gang-raped and assaulted by six men in a private bus and thrown out of the moving vehicle to die. This triggered protests across India and sparked a global outcry advocating greater protection of women's rights. As a result, the Criminal Law Ordinance, 2013, was promulgated by President Pranab Mukherjee, several new laws were passed, and six new fast-track courts were created to hear rape cases. –Anna + Victoria | New Delhi, India*
 - *The film, [India's Daughter](#), was made about her story. –Sarah | USA*
- *Yes, there were street protests, but justice and follow-through has been lacking. –Lima + Malika | South India*
- *I was aware of the protests following the rape and death of Jyoti Singh in December 2012 but no others. –Grant | USA*
- *We hear of protests against violence against women in India through social media and daily newspapers. –Raju | Nepal*

What is your perspective and personal connections/stories about the history of child marriage?

- *Nepal also has patriarchal family system. When I married my wife, Bhakti, she was only 15, and she experienced difficult times from my family. She was not allowed to go out and talk to people. She was made to do domestic and farm-work all the time, particularly in the cowshed. She had never previously done farm work. She was scolded all the time and when I would come home, family members would complain to me about her all the time. I was gone a lot and so she was made to sleep outside in the cowshed. For four years she didn't get pregnant, which caused people to hate and abuse her even more. When she did get pregnant, she was made to do heavy work, and that is one reason why her health is not good today.*

Child marriage is a strong cornerstone for those practicing gender-inequality and raises the dominancy of men. Although in the city, the trend of child marriage does not exist as much, there are many villages where child marriage is still practiced. It's due to ethnicity, religion and lack of education. Some Hindus believe that if they marry their daughter off before they have their first menstruation cycle then they have washed their feet to go to heaven. Girls are married away as children so that parents don't have to bear the burden of raising her, and when she is gone, somebody else will be responsible for her. – Udaya + Shalome | Nepal

- *For many poor families, marrying their daughter at an early age essentially is a strategy for economic survival; it means one less person to feed, clothe and educate. Also parents feel that their burden of paying a dowry at their daughter's marriage will be lower if she is married at a young age.*

India is predominantly a patriarchal society. Educating girls often is less of a priority than educating boys. When a woman's most important role is considered to be that of a wife, mother and homemaker, schooling girls and preparing them for the jobs may be given short shrift. And even when poor families want to send their daughters to school, they often lack access to nearby, quality schools and the ability to pay school fees. It is usually safer and economically more rewarding to spend limited resources on educating sons than daughters. This boxes families into early marriage as the only viable option for girls. Little or no schooling strongly correlates with being married at a young age. Conversely, attending school and having higher levels of education protect girls from the possibility of early marriage.

In many cases, parents are under pressure to marry off their daughters as early as possible in an effort to prevent her from becoming sexually active before marriage; a woman who does so brings dishonor to her family and community. Because

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marriage often determines a woman's status in many societies, parents also worry that if they don't marry their daughters according to social expectations, they will not be able to marry them at all.

NGOs such as [Vasanya Mahila Mandali](#) and [Saarthi Trust](#) are working to stop child marriage. –Victoria + Anna | New Delhi, India

- Child marriage, a social evil was previously done in order to protect girls from rapes and abductions. Yet, it is a very big crime and injustice to these little children who don't even understand the word "marriage" itself. Because of this, these children are lead to a dark future. Child marriage is like a flower withering before it has blossomed. –Raju | Nepal*
- I believe that child marriage should be outlawed. Girls younger than 16 should not be married off to men three or four times their age. Indian culture is very different than American culture and in many rural village girls do marry much younger than Western countries. However, they should never be forced, coerced or manipulated into a marriage. –Grant | USA*

How is Selvi an inspiration?

- Selvi is a woman who is an inspiration for many in India. She is an example and a model to speak to women who do not know the value and dignity of life, and thus, attempt to run from real life. She is a living lesson that: "You can face any challenge in your life, even death at your door. But if you love your life and your own identity as a woman, you can create a new chapter in history where traditions are transformed." –Lima + Malika | South India*
- She is a pioneer and risk-taker for womens' rights. –Grant | USA*

Contact info for our impassioned and extraordinary virtual panelists:

- [Anna Garriot](#), former project director + [Victoria Sanjenbam](#), director of [The Khushbu Project](#). We are committed to seeing women, men, and children in Zamrudpur in New Delhi, India, equipped in education, advocacy, the arts, and vocational skills to be leaders in their community.*
- [Grant Knisely](#), founder of [Code Red Films](#). Our tagline is "taking risks to tell the truth" and our mission is to illuminate extraordinary individuals and organizations who are taking risks to combat the worst vices on the planet. Code Red produced a powerful film, [Untouchable: Children of God](#), about the sex-trafficking of Nepali women and girls.*
- [Lima + Malika Aklant](#) are founders of a greeting cooperative of women in Hyderabad, South India. Malika creates beautiful pen and ink drawings and the co-op women add stunning color using plant and vegetable dyes. The income generated from this endeavor opens doors of possibility for dignity, educating their children, and food and shelter security. Email [Sarah](#) if you'd like to place an order for the next shipment of cards. \$4/individual card + \$14/set of 4 cards.*
- [Raju Sundas](#), founder of [LightHouse Foundation](#) in Nepal and in the brothels of New Delhi, India. We foster education and health care among the poor and orphans in the country. We are engaged in fighting injustice and sexual exploitation especially among the Badi people in Nepal, an ethnic group who live in poverty in West Nepal. They are Dhalits, "Untouchables of the Untouchables," in the Hindu caste system and are considered by many to be the most marginalized group in Nepal. Most of the women and girls are forced to sell their bodies to earn a living from a very young age and are vulnerable to sex trafficking and exploitation.*
- [Udaya + Shalome Bhatta](#), father-daughter team in this remarkable, community-based organization in Nepal. This extraordinary family is compassionately responding to the needs around them through creating and running children's homes, community-based initiatives and women's business training and empowerment programs in Kathmandu and West Nepal.*

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Although not able to participate in this virtual panel, each are friends and part of our Seeds kula {community} working in India:

- **Jaimala Gupta**, co-founder of [Vatsalya](#) in India. *Vatsalya has undertaken projects and interventions throughout Rajasthan. We have a unique Children's Village on the outskirts of Jaipur where 60 orphaned, abandoned and destitute children live. In addition we have outreach programs which attend to the needs of over 800 children in slums every month as well as significant interventions in the fields of Health & HIV-AIDS & Women's Empowerment.*
- **Hakan Gabrielson**, founder of [Out of Ashes](#). *Where life has ceased, hope has gone and nothing is left but ashes, there is still hope. We exist to rescue and restore girls and women from sexual exploitation, forced prostitution and slavery. Working in the brothels and communities of India, Nepal and Myanmar.*



Sarah Davison-Tracy, founder + director | Seeds of Exchange
igniting the kula {community} with connection and purpose

We are cultivating an organization that encourages us all to say YES
to our unique and one-of-a-kind gifts to be and do.
{We cannot wait to here more about YOUR story and passions in life...}

We are committed to fostering flourishing lives and opposing systems of injustice.
No one...not women, children, or their families should be trafficked, enslaved, silenced and abused.
May we make room in our hearts, in our lives, for ALL to feast and celebrate together.
Everyone belongs at this table of life.

*For much of my life, my heart has been quickened by the stories of women and their families around the world,
particularly those who are vulnerable and without freedom {yet} to thrive.*

*Capturing my heart right now is a community, a caste – called the “Badi” – in Nepal.
Until this generation, Badi girls have 1 choice for work when they are born: enforced prostitution - sexual slavery.
Some of these women have become my BE {loved} friends and part of our Seeds kula {community}.*

*A growing number of Badi in this generation are free for the first time in many, many years -
free from sexual trafficking, slavery...free to be educated, to have dreams and hope for the future.
This spring, I plan to return to Nepal to explore a project in collaboration with these friends to write their extraordinary story.*

*I am fueled for this amazing work by love.
Loving and being loved by God, my sistas and brothas near and far. –Sarah DT*