



# India's Daughter

## Decoding The Collective Unconscious

A Semiotic Perspective *by India's daughter,*  
Aiyana Gunjan



# ***India's Daughter***

## ***A semiotic perspective***

The semiotic decoding of the complete text of the documentary film- India's Daughter, by Leslee Udwin, brings out the underlying cultural construct of the Indian mindset, perpetuating gender-inequalities. It helps us to understand what's going on below the surface - the cultural tensions and conflicts within the changing socio-economic context.

India's Daughter is not just about rape and the rapist, but It reveals the inherent cultural 'codes' - *the unwritten rules within the Indian cultural context, that shape and influence the people's identity, beliefs and values.*

India's Daughter not about the *voice-of-one-individual* BUT throws light on the 'Collective Unconscious of our society. Its not about a blame game but about taking collective responsibility as an evolving and progressive Indian culture

**India's Daughter, the documentary film by Leslee Udwin** objectively tracks the Nirbhaya Gang Rape case that shook the nation. The film covers in-depth the perceptions, and viewpoints of all the stakeholders – victim's parents, tutor, rapists and their family, the Judiciary - defense lawyers, members of Verma Committee, the Govt - CM, political leaders, the Investigation team- Police, Doctor, and the Civil Society. [bbc-releases-indias-daughter-on-youtube](#)

*Using the semiotic lens to make the unconscious conscious...*



## Decoding The Collective Unconscious.

*As opposed to the personal unconscious, which is composed of long-forgotten memories and experiences, the collective unconscious consists of archetypes that represent an inherited set of beliefs and understandings. These archetypes exist to varying degrees in all humans. Many believe that over time, the collective unconscious evolves and changes to incorporate new information that is globally recognized and accepted.*

**Semiotics is an outside-in perspective** where culture and communication is the object of the study.

***People don't have answers to everything.*** Their perceptions and behavior are largely influenced by the society and culture, that helped shape their identity, beliefs and values.

By looking at the '*hidden meanings*' behind all communication and cultural contexts, Semiotics decodes the framework of cultural codes, - the '*unwritten rules*' that define the attitudes and behaviour within that cultural context.

***The Semiotics Lens*** views people as decoders of messages and carriers of cultural meanings.

- ✓ An expert cultural analysis of all communications and cultural contexts ( any kind of message in any medium) that shape people's ideas, beliefs and identities within the world they inhabit. .
- ✓ Brings the unconscious universe of hidden meanings and association to the surface,
- ✓ Accesses the direction and pace of cultural changes across time. - the residual Vs. dominant Vs. emergent codes.





### It's Man's World

- **Birth right:** When boy is born, there is celebration. When girl is born, people don't rejoice as much. You are celebrating as if it's a boy! Why are you selling it (ancestral land) for a girl?
- **Protector:** It's the duty of the man to protect the woman in all circumstances. The woman is protected by her husband. If he's dead, who will protect her and whom she will live for?
- **Budhape ka sahara :** We hoped he would support us in our old age, after all the pains we have taken to raise him. The son has to perform the last rites.
- **It's man's right.** We are in the enjoyment mood. The rich men pay for it, we have the courage to do it

### Boys and girls are not equal.

- Biggest problem in our society is **the mentality**-the difference between girl and boy created since birth, continuously reinforced, there by creating a view. Social practices perpetuating gender bias become embedded.
- **Constitution provides for equality BUT** it has not happened because men don't allow it to happen, and they feel it's their hold on the women. Also, due to historical tradition of Patriarchy, embedded in men and women.

## Making the unconscious conscious The deep-rooted Indian cultural codes



**The girl is seen to be less important than boy, and because she is less important you can do what you like with her.**

### A Second-Class Citizen

- **Woman's identity only in relation to a man:** In our culture, there is 'no place' for a woman (as a person). A 'woman' means I immediately put the sex in his eyes. We need to see a woman with respect as a mother, wife, daughter, sister – not as a 'woman'.
- **Object of desire:** The woman is more precious than a diamond. It is up-to you how you want to keep the diamond in your hand. If you put her on the street, certainly the dog will take it.
- **Domesticated:** Girls are meant to stay at home and take care of the house. No decent girl goes out at night, wearing wrong clothes
- **Lakshman-rekha ( boundaries) not to crossed:** In our society we never allow the girl to come out of the house after 6.30 or 7.30p,m with any unknown person. If very necessary, she should go outside but she should go only with family members
- **Family honor-** Man and woman as friend does not have place in our society. If my daughter/ sister are caught in a pre-marital affair or any activities that brings disgrace, I will take her to the farm house and in front of my family – put petrol on her and burn her alive.

*Have these traditional cultural codes become residual or are they dominant? Have these cultural codes become outdated, obsolete, out of step with the current norm or do they still define the mainstream norm ? Its time to reflect and ask ourselves ...*

## The living context

### In a state of flux

*The social tension and conflicts between reality and aspiration, between traditional and emergent codes, within the changing socio-economic fabric of India*

*Life of deprivation Vs. rising consumerism  
Male domination Vs. women empowerment  
Control Vs. Freedom*



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### The Empowered Self Its about a new sunrise

- **A symbol of new aspirations** - *I have to do and I can; A girl can do anything*
- **Yes to a girl child:** *We are equally happy if it is boy or girl*
- **Dare to Dream.** *Want to be a doctor; In the last 15-20 years the Indian economy has given opportunities to young women, single women to come out and work. It has changed expectation across classes of young single women on how they should be allowed to live their life.*
- **Invest in a daughter** - *Whatever money you have saved for my wedding, use that to educate me; Education is the only way to change the society. Education gives self importance and self worth. It teaches men the value of women.*
- **Stepping out of home,** *walking shoulder to shoulder with the man : Medical student, working part-time nightshift at call centre, good in English, going out for a movie with male friend*

### The Power Game Its about power, control and violence

- **Rape – the culture of shame** *If we rape them, remove their clothes, they will not tell anyone because of shame. If she had remained silent and not fought back, we would have left her.*
- **Women need to be taught a lesson** *They feel that if women break restrictions men have imposed on them, it is a reason to attack them.*
- **Assume no responsibility.** *It takes two hands to clap. A girl is far more responsible for rape than the man. She asked for it!" Or worse, "She deserved it!*

*After all, any society that has rapist like them has to take responsibility of them. These are our people.*

*These men are ours.'*

### A Freedom Fight We have civil rights

- **United in Pain.** *Enough-is-enough, accumulated anger, silence broken*
- **A Youth Awakening:** *we want justice. Stop the violence. A fight for freedom. A momentous expression of hope by the Civil Society – no leader, no political parties involved; a people's movement across the country*
- **Challenging the norm** - *Demanding accountability, establishment threatened.*

*Whenever there is crime, the girl is blamed. – she should not go out. She should not go so late or wear such clothes. It's the boys who should be accused and asked why they do this.*



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*Culture is beneath awareness in the sense that no one bothers to verbalise it, and yet it forms the roots of action.*

## ***India's Daughter*** ***a beacon of light***

This is not about pointing a finger at 'THEM'  
BUT about reflecting on 'US'.

It's not about silencing one individual  
BUT taking collective responsibility of the embedded psyche of our society.

Its not about banning and putting it all under the carpet  
BUT looking at our deep-rooted cultural mindset that define our attitudes and behavior  
squarely and fairly.

We need to closely, objectively, examine the cultural codes we are still unconsciously perpetuating;  
Need to weed out what is outdated and irrelevant,  
And water the sprouts of new emergent codes.

**Change is the only constant,**  
**And awareness is the first step to Change.**





AIYANA GUNJAN WORKS AS AN INDEPENDENT CONSULTANT IN STRATEGIC BRAND PLANNING & SEMIOTICS.

Aiyana brings Brand & Cultural Intelligence into the marketing/brand interventions. She follows an incisive strategic approach towards the brand development process. Aiyana has been doing pioneering work in the specialized field of Semiotics, impacting global- local strategies. She has tracked the socio-cultural shifts and patterns in India across the two decades, Aiyana has more than 18 years experience in the strategic planning function in the advertising industry (at Ogilvy and JWT, and as Head of the Planning function at Mudra, Bates-141, Dentsu and Law & Kenneth). . Art, culture and traveling are her passions. Aiyana is an Artist-Calligrapher.

Thank You *Future belongs to those who see possibilities before they become obvious..*

