

16 DAYS OF ACTIVISM

AGAINST GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

2018 | Day 8



NO RAID NO TRADE

Mumbai's past records on the enforcement of certain parts of the anti-prostitution legal provisions are 'impressive'. No, it is not alone on that front. In the name of 'raid' several victims (whether minor or major) are picked up, charged with 'indecent behavior in public places' under the respective state Police Act, produced before a nearby magistrate. Some are declared guilty others are tutored to plead guilty and all are made to pay a standard fine. The sex traders 'volunteer to help' by paying the fine on the victim's behalf but not without adding it to the victims' debt-book. In case of the rescued minors, the sex traders posing as parents or relatives approach the Home authorities, claim the custody of the girls and promptly get the girls back too. In the end the girls are returned to their sex traders. The cases are closed, the government treasury gets richer with the fine amount, the Home authorities are happy as the residents (minor or major) are thrown out of their Homes and their files are 'successfully closed'. The prosecutor and the magistrates are happy that the case is 'fast disposed ...no pendency'. The government is happy that the anti-trafficking law is not applied. Had it been applied the government would have had to provide for the victims' shelter, food, clothing, medicines, compensation and rehabilitation besides bringing her offenders to justice through a long process of investigation and prosecution. Finally, the brothel keepers and pimps are happy that the girls are back to their cages and the trade is back on track.

Ironical but true; when the sex traders say - No raid no trade!

Police raids are essential for the sex trade's sustenance! How will the girls otherwise learn the lesson that the raids and rescues are a sham, that the state and society don't care for them, that the reach of the sex traders is very high, that it is pointless for them to resist the oppression or try to escape. The girls don't break fully unless they go through such raids a couple of times."

Light at the end of the tunnel? The Mumbai police is changing. The misapplication of law is getting replaced with the rule of law. Not everywhere though!