

## **‘Remove eve-teasing from vocabulary’**

12th March 2013

Thousands of women from Stella Maris college raised their right hands and pledged to end violence against women and girls, as part of the One Billion Rise (OBR) campaign, observed worldwide for International Women’s Day.

Addressing the gathering of students and professors, Sheila Jayaprakash, advocate and expert in family law, lamented the commercialisation of an important observance like Womens Day.

“It is disheartening to see advertisements depicting semi-nude women for Women’s Day beauty products, and adverts with lines like ‘celebrate womens day with gold’. These ads just feed the idea that women can be satisfied with material things,” she remarked, stressing that women should never exchange material things for dignity. “In my line of work, I meet abusive husbands, who think it is okay for them to beat their wives, because they immediately ‘make up’ for it by buying her gold or giving her money to buy a sari,” she said.

Speaking about the Indian woman’s in-built tolerance towards sexual harassment, Sheila Jayaprakash asked the students to remove the word ‘eve-teasing’ from their vocabulary. “It is not mere teasing, it is not fun. Call it sexual harassment,” she exhorted.

“The largest number of crimes against women, according to the national crime records bureau, occur in their own homes. However, women have for so long been conditioned ‘to adjust’, that they do not recognise abuse as abuse,” she said.

She commended the Verma commission for taking steps to protect women in areas where the armed forces have been deployed, where records prove that the incidence of rape shows a 100 per cent increase.

Esther Mariaselvam, regional manager for ActionAid spoke about the importance of the global campaign launched by playwright Eve Ensler, and how it was fuelling women across the world to speak up against violence. The students of Stella Maris wore the OBR pledge on their sleeves and then signed banners to record their support for the campaign.