

Gandhi 'Slept With Grandniece', Historian Tells UK Government

By Staff Reporter — August 9, 2014

The UK government has been criticised for a proposal to erect a statue in honour of Mahatma Gandhi in Parliament Square, because of Gandhi's "unspeakable and absolutely unacceptable" sexual antics with younger women.

The founder of the Indo-British Heritage Trust said she had been forced to speak out about Gandhi's "hush-hushed obsession with sex" because of the rise in violent sexual attacks on women in India, which has focused the world's attention on women's right in the country.

Dr Kusoom Vadgama is chair of this year's 400th anniversary celebrations of Britain and India's political relationship. She said Gandhi's "habit of sleeping naked with young women" in order to test his commitment to a life of celibacy had been overlooked in the years since his death in 1948, but can no longer be ignored.

The treatment of women in modern-day India – where there has been a recent spate of gang rapes and violence against rape victims – had prompted her to speak out.

Dr Vadgama told The Times: "My anger is because of the last three years, the way Indian women are treated in India is despicable and unacceptable.

"Gandhi was obsessed with sex and it has all been hush-hushed for all these years. He had a habit of sleeping naked with women, including his great niece and other married women, to see if he could control himself. I find it absolutely disgusting that he used women for his own experiments."

At the age of 38, in 1906, Gandhi took a vow of brahmacharya: living a spiritual life which included a vow of chastity. He encouraged his followers to abstain from sex, even in marriage.

To prove his self-control he often slept and bathed naked with other women – including a grandniece and the wife of his grandnephew, who were both 18 when they started sleeping in the same bed as Gandhi, who was 77 years old at the time.

Gandhi's behaviour was widely discussed and criticised by family members and leading politicians.

Some members of his staff resigned, including two editors of his newspaper who left after refusing to print parts of Gandhi's sermons describing his sleeping arrangements.

The first Indian prime minister Jawaharlal Nehru is said to have described Gandhi's sexual behaviour as "abnormal and unnatural".

Chancellor George Osborne announced the proposal for a statue in Parliament Square last month, saying: "As father of the largest democracy in the world, it's time for Gandhi to take his place in front of the mother of Parliaments."

Dr Vadgama said: "No man, hero or a villain, has the right to put women to this level of debasement. What is unbelievable is the fact that no one dare point a finger at Gandhi. It has taken me decades to speak openly. If the recent abuse, killing and hanging of women in India was not such an emotive experience, I would have kept quiet.

"I know I will be pilloried but those who disagree with me have to prove me wrong."