

“The caged bird sings with a fearful trill,
of things unknown but longed for still, & her tune is heard on the
distant hill, for the caged bird sings of freedom.”



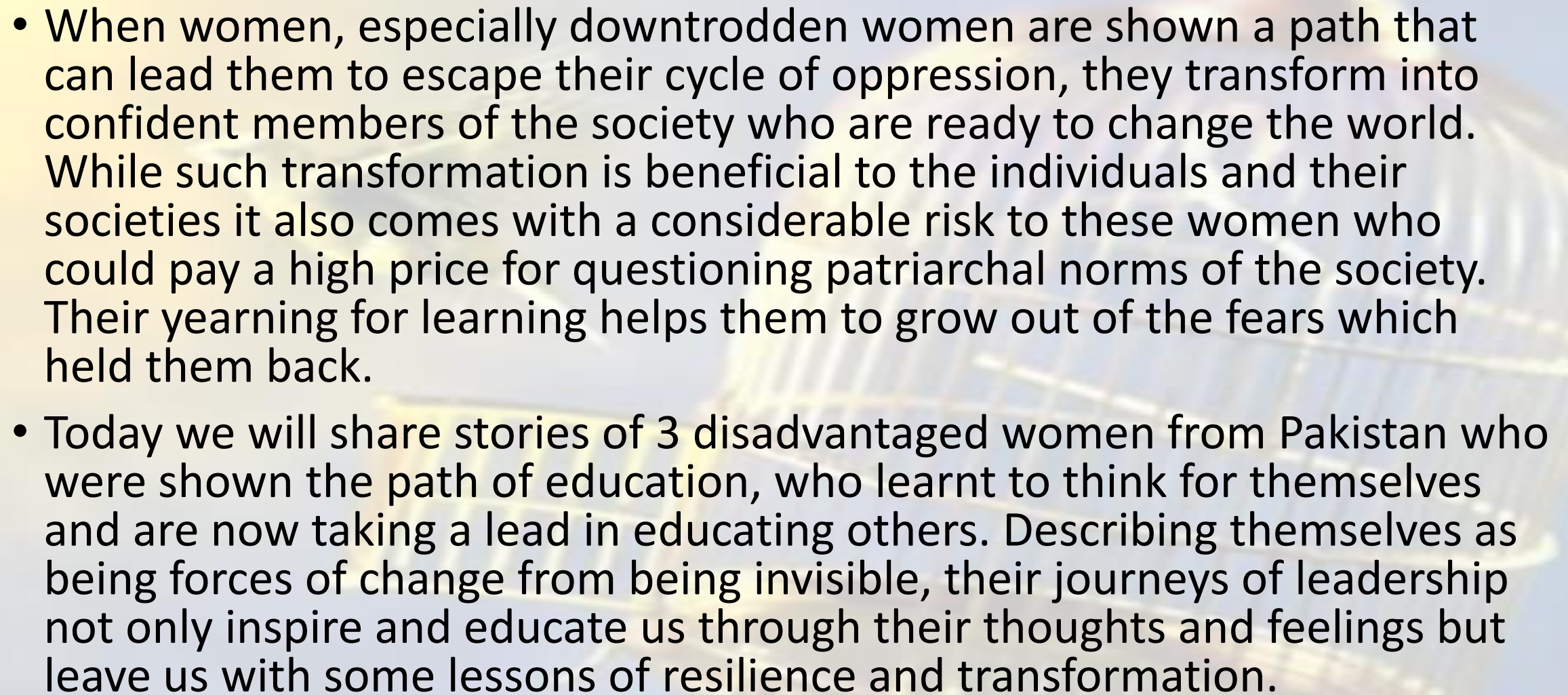
Not the Invisible Women anymore

**Lessons of transformational leadership journeys of women from
Pakistan**

Qurban & Surraya Educational Trust

Lahore, Pakistan

@abaidaqurban

- 
- When women, especially downtrodden women are shown a path that can lead them to escape their cycle of oppression, they transform into confident members of the society who are ready to change the world. While such transformation is beneficial to the individuals and their societies it also comes with a considerable risk to these women who could pay a high price for questioning patriarchal norms of the society. Their yearning for learning helps them to grow out of the fears which held them back.
 - Today we will share stories of 3 disadvantaged women from Pakistan who were shown the path of education, who learnt to think for themselves and are now taking a lead in educating others. Describing themselves as being forces of change from being invisible, their journeys of leadership not only inspire and educate us through their thoughts and feelings but leave us with some lessons of resilience and transformation.

The price women pay for speaking out

Shunned by family and friends

Lack of support

Social boycott



Naheed Naeem

1994 married, 4 months on husband passed away

In laws threw me out, came back to live with parents

1994, a dependent pregnant woman

Time to rethink about how to pass my life:

1. Listen to the society: Remarry, abandon my son, live a life of subordination and misery

2. To study further, work and support myself and son
I decided to take the 2nd route. Came across Qurban College and met Mr Qurban Ali who in the very 1st meeting told me to continue with my studies and join the college as a lecturer as I held a degree already.

He was the one to inculcate leadership qualities in me and support me in my journey. It has not been easy but I consider myself lucky to have had the support of someone who believed in me and showed me that dependency is not the only option for women in Pakistan.

I am pleased to say that now I am not only supporting my old father, my young son but many other young girls in the family and community that are trapped in circumstances that are beyond their control.

Naheed Naeem

From a widow to a Principal of Qurban Degree College

The message is:
We might not be able to control our circumstances but we can control what we do with them. Girls, do not think the world has ended. You have to find the light at the end of the tunnel by walking. Keep walking.



Gule Rana

Lost my mother when we I was very young. Father remarried and the step mother didn't want us to study. My father passed away and mother made life too difficult so I had to leave home and go and live with my sister and her in laws. My sister was a widow but her kind in laws had let her stay.

My life was dragging on. It was passing. However one thing that my father used to say: Study so me and my widowed sister continued to study in the evening and work in the morning. We worked at various schools and offices and then in 1996 we came to join Qurban trust. My sister and I then managed to move out and find our own little abode.

When I joined Qurban trust I started to learn what it meant to 'LIVE'.

Mr Qurban Ali was like an umbrella saving us from the harsh weather. His fatherly figure helped and supported us to grow into confident leaders.

Now I am very proud to see myself as a Deputy of the trust and a Curriculum coordinator.

I am not only confident that I can deal with anything that comes my way but also pleased to be a mentor to so many young girls who are striving to find a way.

Gule Rana

From an Orphan to a Curriculum
Coordinator

The message is:

*Keep learning. We will never
be able to live if we are afraid
of people. Do what is right for
yourself.*



Ishrat

I am a 'Pathan' by cast and we are only married to other pathans. Most of the men from our tribe marry to control women. We are not supposed to think or say anything, we are just there for their pleasure.

I was married off when I was 16 without any school certificate. I could barely read or write. I was treated like a slave and thought it was normal as I was told, 'This is how things are'. Then the beatings started and my daughter was born.

Things started to turn nasty. My parents took me back several times but the violence continued. I was still quiet.

Finally in 2003, after 5 years of hell, my parents spoke out but it cost them my divorce.

I was told I was now tainted, I had to carry that mark around forever. My parents wanted me to remarry but I was not willing to walk into another hell especially when I had a daughter.

I started to look for work but without any education I was turned away. I had no skill.

One morning I walked into Qurban School and met Mr Qurban Ali, his daughter was in the office too. I broke down in tears. 2 things changed my life forever.

1. Mr Qurban telling me that he would educate me, train me and then give me a job.
2. Ms Abaida telling me that women should put away their tears of misery and face the world.

Since that day, I have studied day and night, worked hard and learnt that only I can change the circumstances for myself, obviously with support that I was blessed with. I am proud that I earned a degree and then a masters degree as well.

I am now a reprographic co-Ordinator of the trust. My daughter was given free education and she is now a young girl pursuing her degree.

I have grown into an independent and confident woman from a crying, timid and a fearful girl.



Ishrat

From an uneducated victim of domestic violence and divorcee to an educated reprographics coordinator.

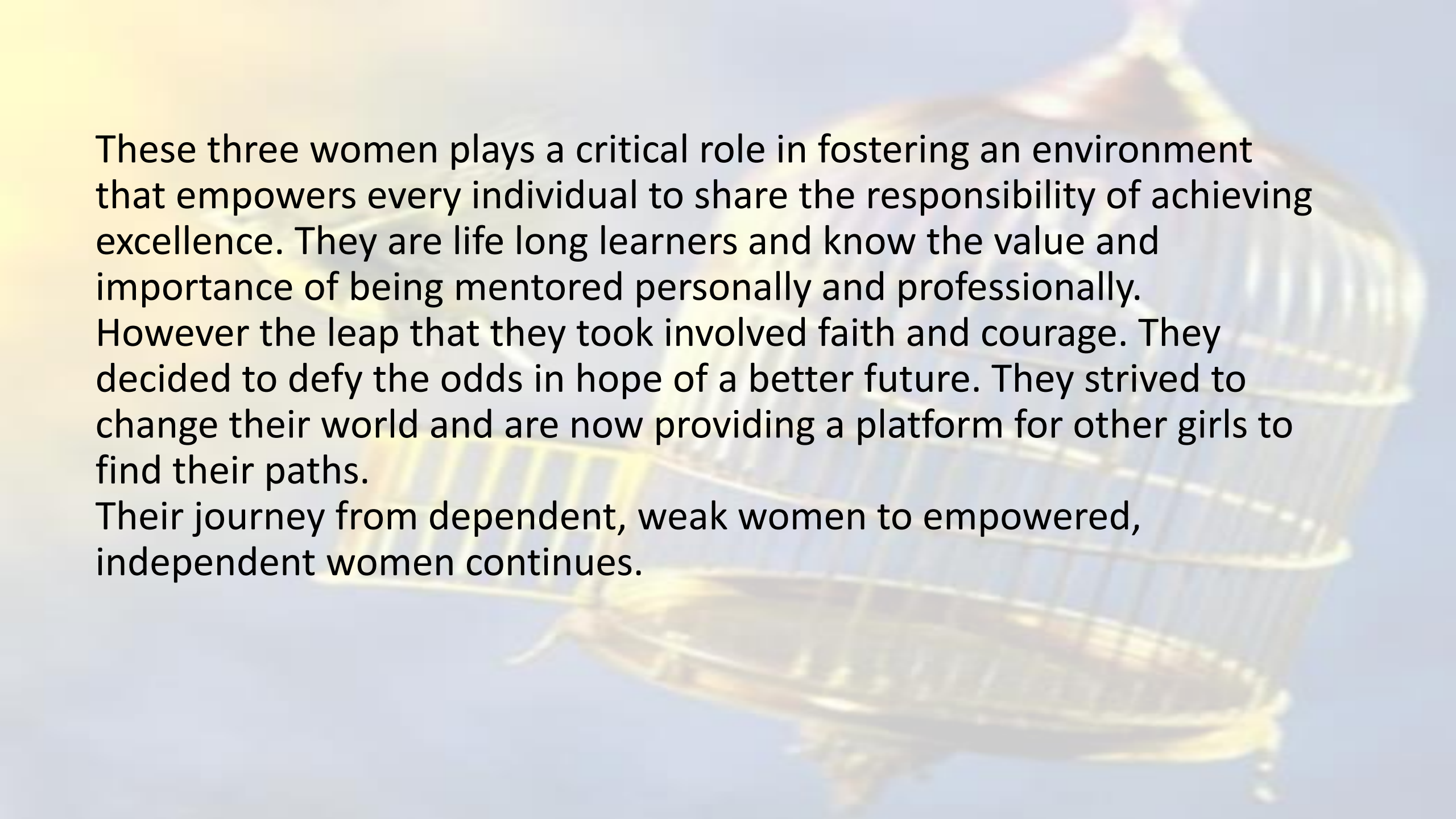
I felt oppressed. Not just by my parents, but by the weight of being a female in a country that didn't know what to do with its women. I wondered what it would be like if I ended up having to live without any support.

But I had to live?

I had to step out from my comfort zone.

The message is:

You have to take risks to achieve something without fearing people.

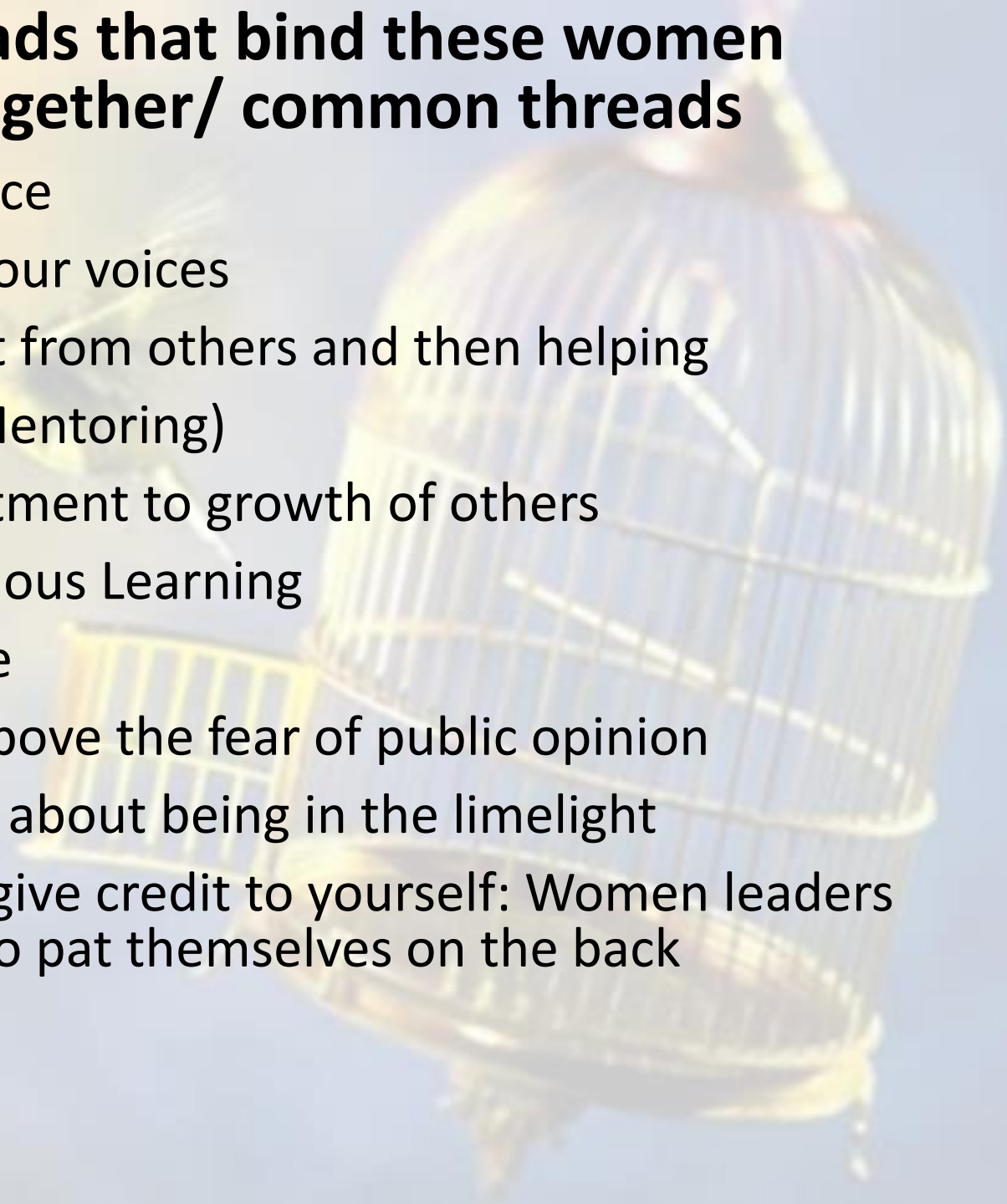


These three women plays a critical role in fostering an environment that empowers every individual to share the responsibility of achieving excellence. They are life long learners and know the value and importance of being mentored personally and professionally. However the leap that they took involved faith and courage. They decided to defy the odds in hope of a better future. They strived to change their world and are now providing a platform for other girls to find their paths. Their journey from dependent, weak women to empowered, independent women continues.



The beads that bind these women together/ common threads

- Resilience
- To find our voices
- Support from others and then helping others (Mentoring)
- Commitment to growth of others
- Continuous Learning
- Courage
- Grow above the fear of public opinion
- It is not about being in the limelight
- But do give credit to yourself: Women leaders forget to pat themselves on the back



- **Resilience**

- **To find our voices**
- **Courage**
- **Grow above the fear of public opinion**
- **Of being ridiculed, being in the lime light.**

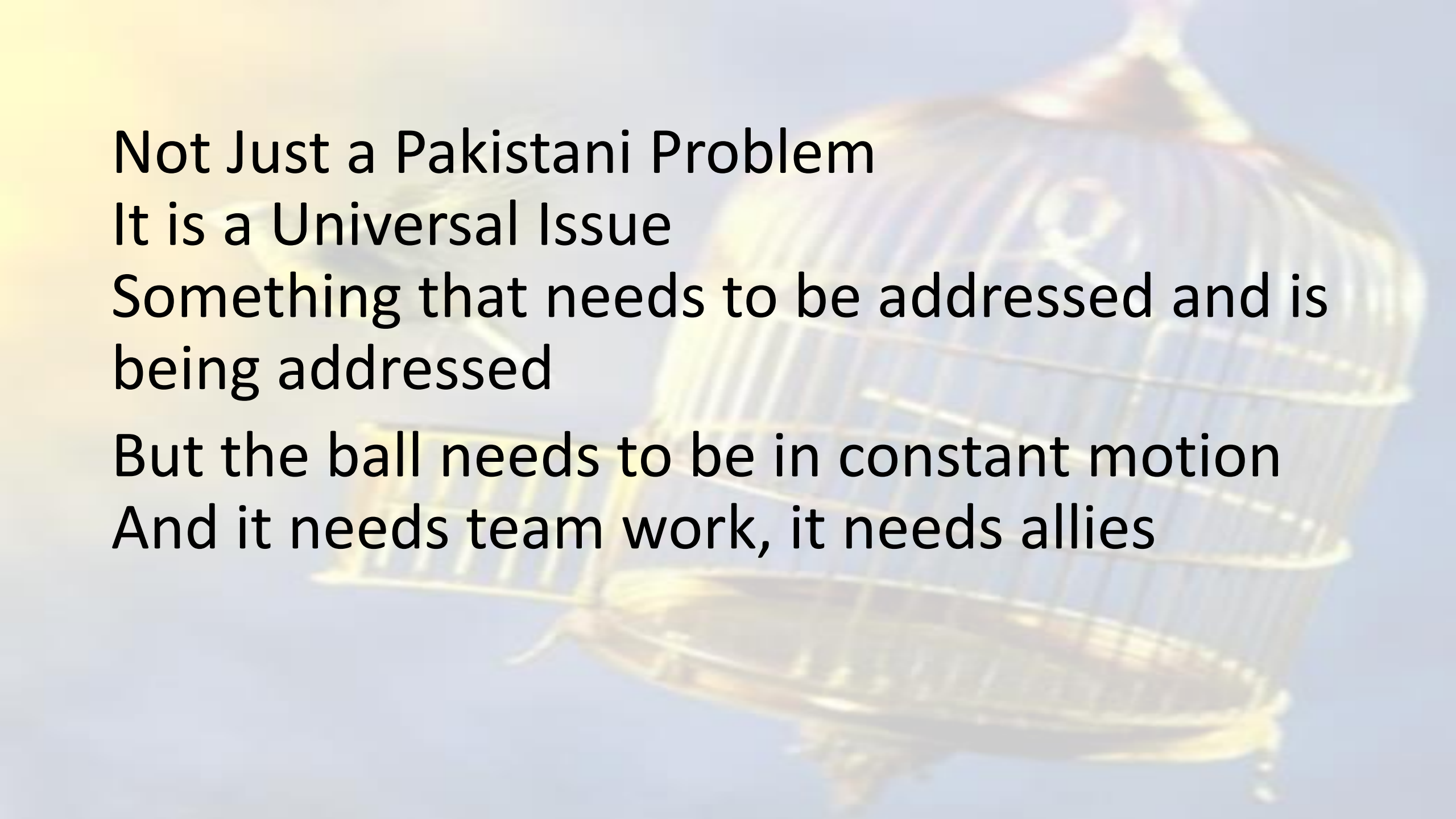
- **Support from others and then helping others (Mentoring)**
- **Commitment to growth of others**
- **Continuous Learning**
- **But do give some credit to yourself**

If you want to be more resilient, be more optimistic, embrace change, adapt to circumstances. It will not come to us naturally but it can become part of who we are with intention and practice. Be more transformatively resilient.

We hold ourselves back even if we know the facts and figures. Just remember that you are unique and everything about you is your voice. You don't have to fit in. You are unique and everything about you contributes to your voice. Own that. Do not muffle your voice in an attempt to fit into your environment

Asking for help is difficult and can chip away at our own self esteem — that stubborn portion of our ego that believes we can do anything but it also makes us stronger, more successful and more confident.

Women leaders forget to pat themselves on the back

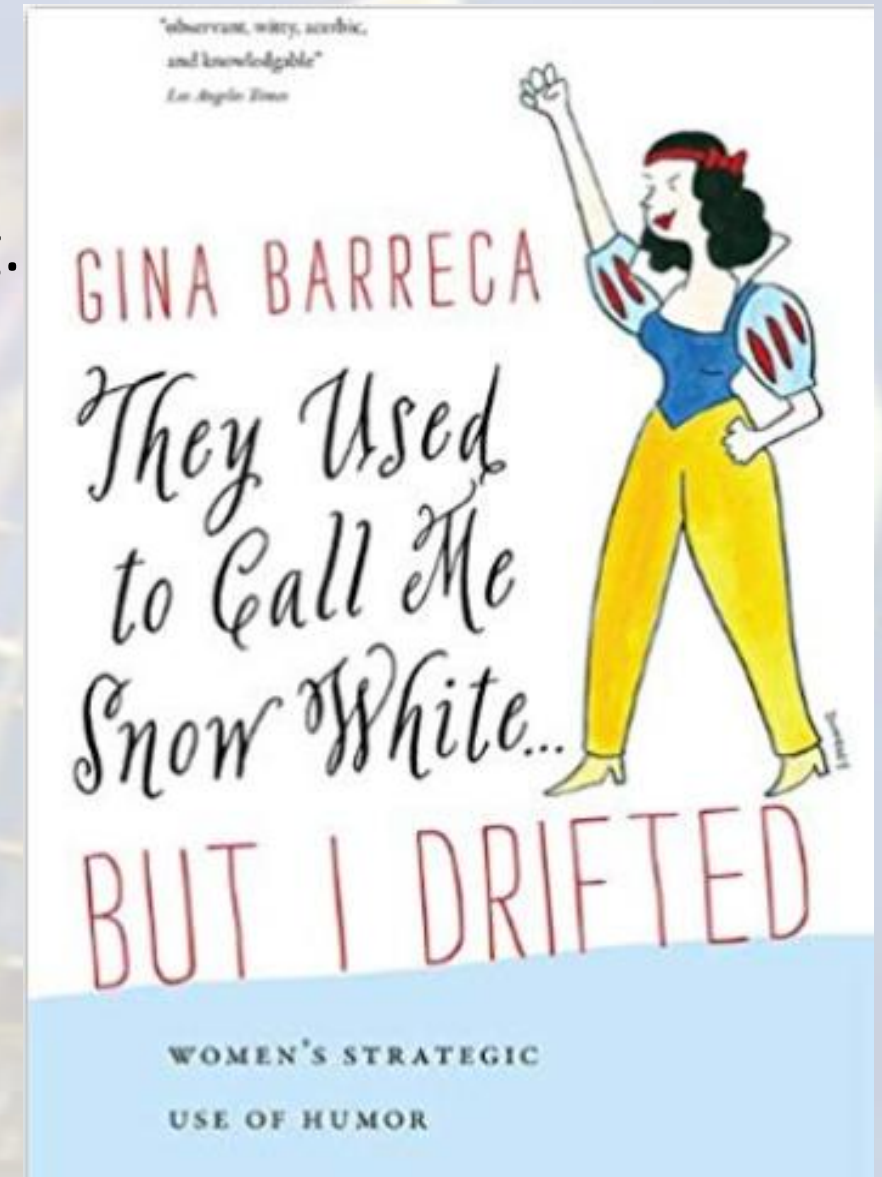


Not Just a Pakistani Problem
It is a Universal Issue
Something that needs to be addressed and is
being addressed
But the ball needs to be in constant motion
And it needs team work, it needs allies



‘The journey of
Leadership begins
outside our
comfort zone.’

The "Good Girl" is passive, pleasant, and pleasing.
She doesn't laugh out loud, or interrupt the conversation, or crack jokes.
Doing those things is part of the Bad Girl's role.

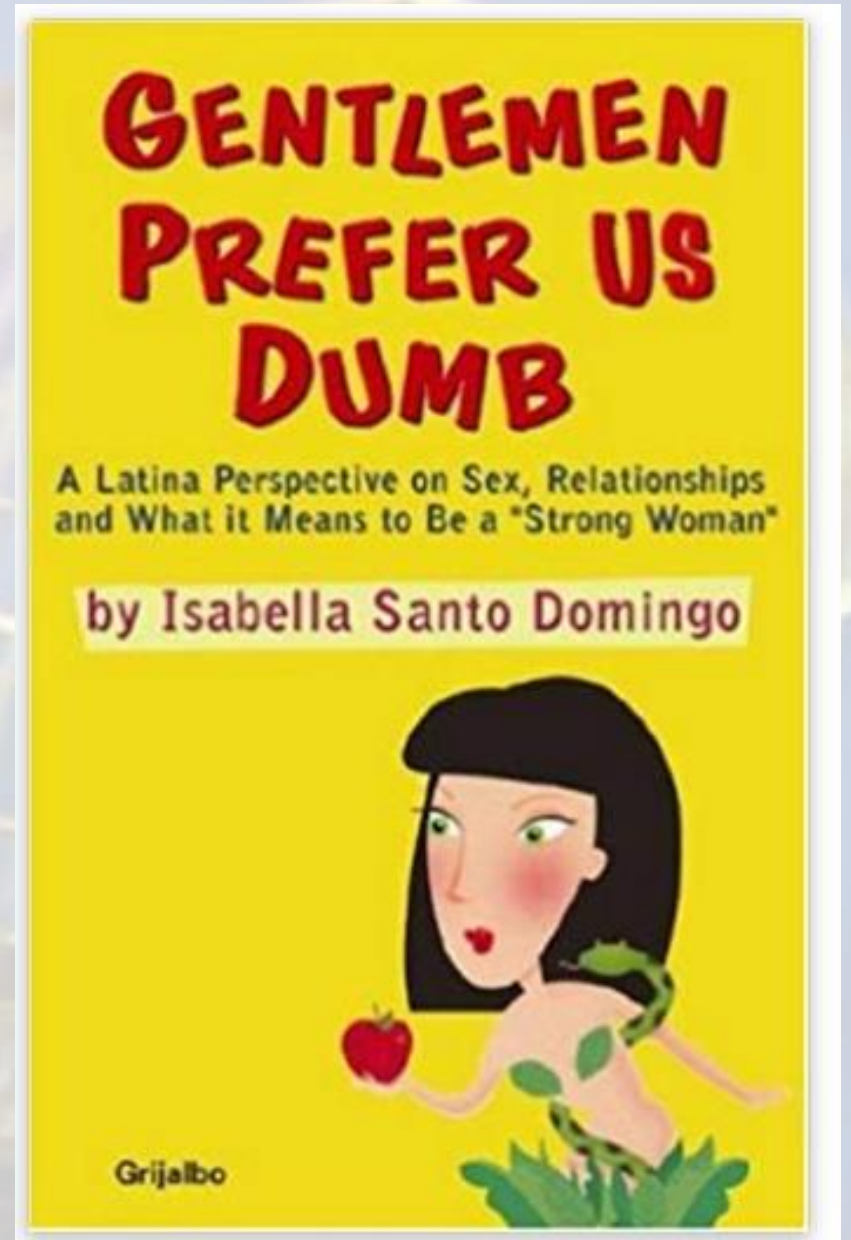


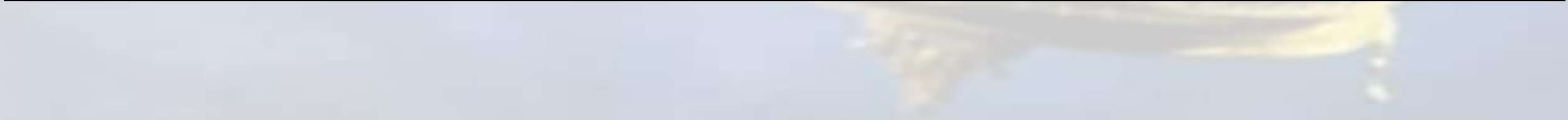
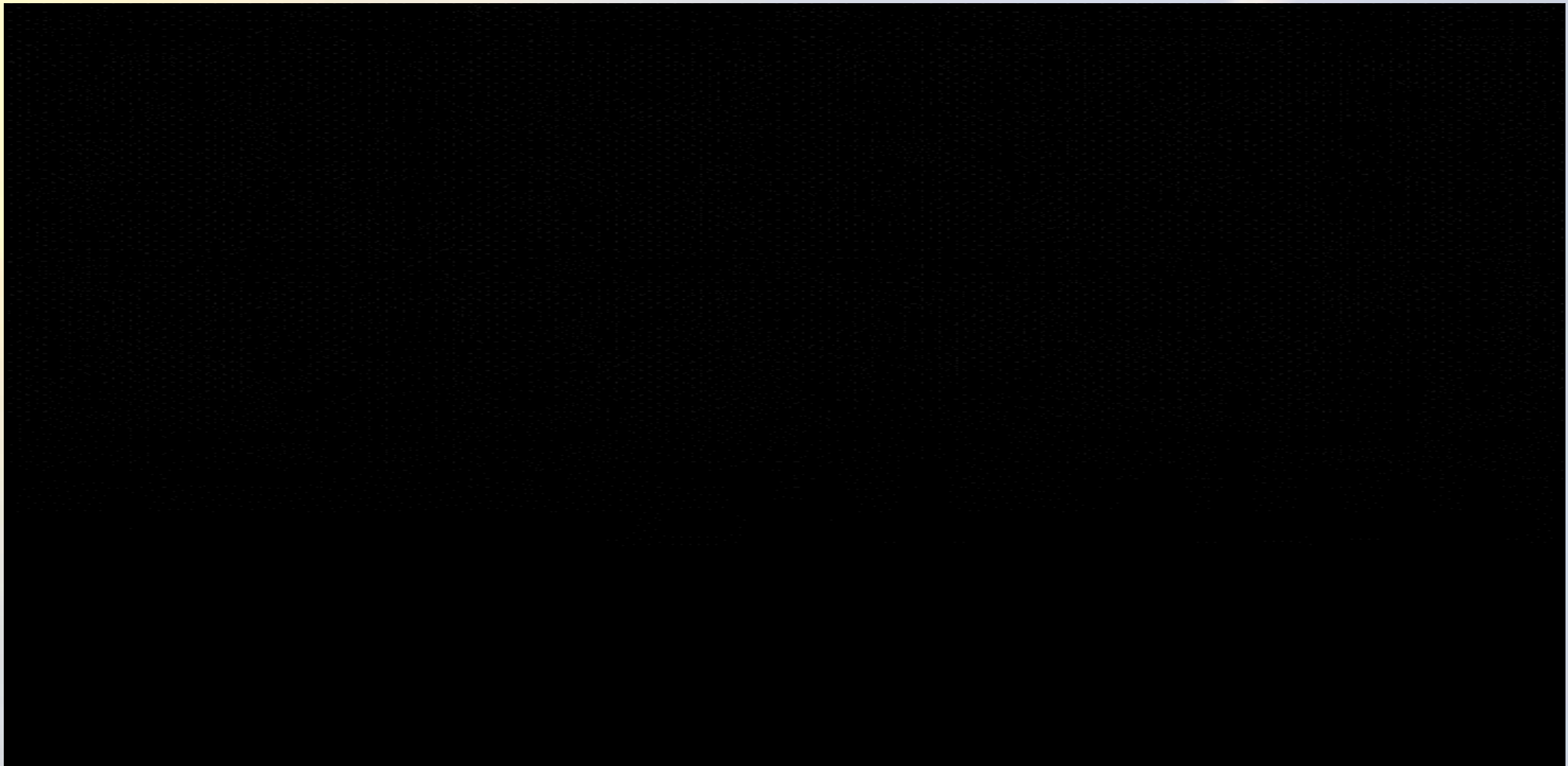


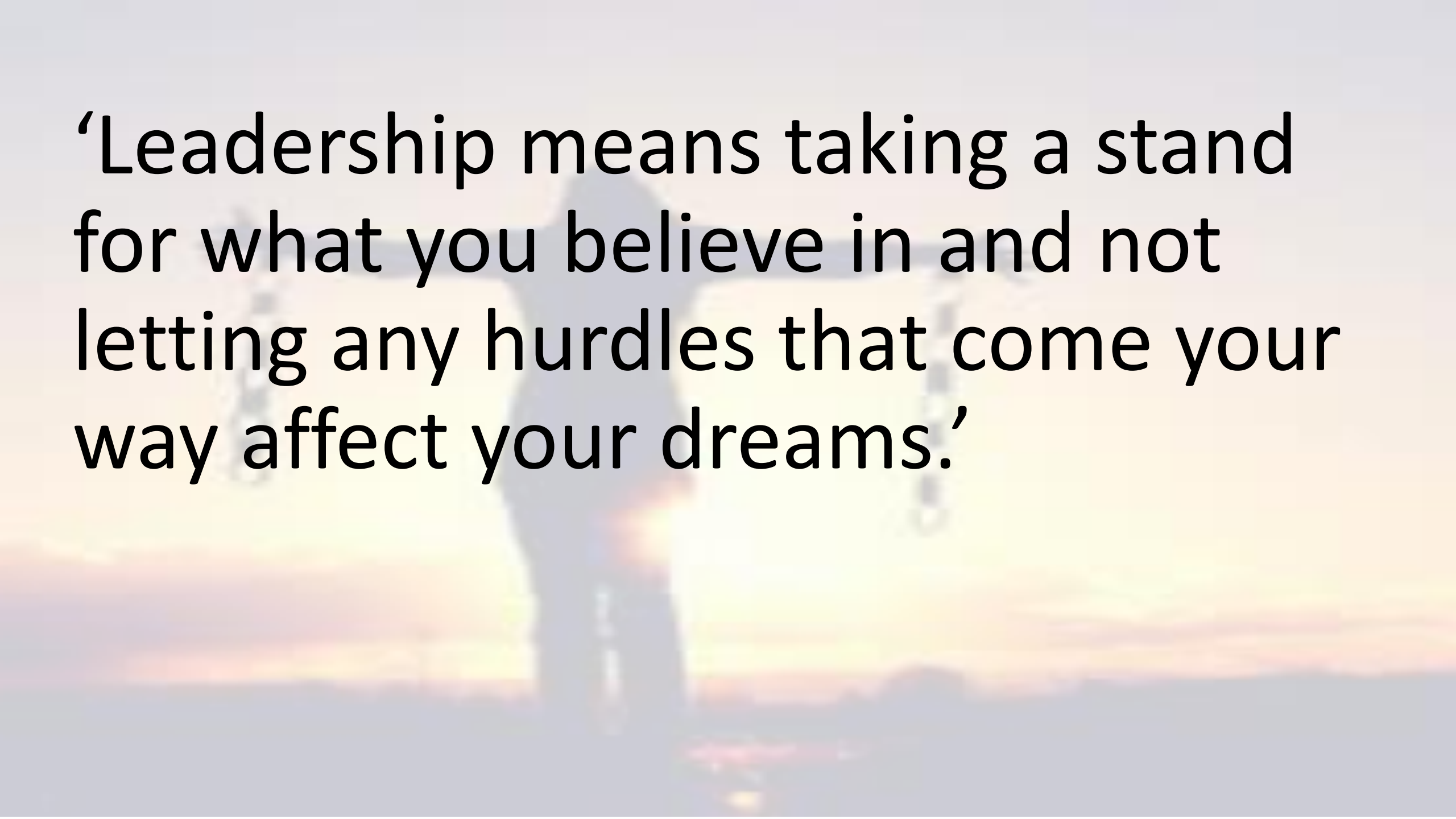


"Actually I like her for her mind. She never knows what's going on."

Should women pretend to be submissive on what they want or should they get out there and be that 'Strong woman' they want to be?





A blurred background image of a person running on a path during a sunset or sunrise. The sky is filled with warm, orange and yellow light, and the person is in motion, creating a sense of energy and movement.

‘Leadership means taking a stand
for what you believe in and not
letting any hurdles that come your
way affect your dreams.’

