



RASHTRA MAHILA

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EMERGENCY HELPLINE FOR
DOMESTIC VIOLENCE
(COVID-19 RESPONSE)



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1. THERAPEUTIC YOGA FOR MENTAL WELLNESS FOR SURVIVORS OF ABUSE

Yoga teaches us the knowledge of how to lead a healthy life and improving our concentration and creativity, build our muscles strength, immunity and mental stability. Yoga ensures the overall wellbeing of our mind, body and soul. Therapists and Counsellors around the world are integrating Yoga as therapeutic form into current best practices for treatment of survivors of sexual abuse. Results have shown how Yoga transforms into preventive tool along with ability to heal. The idea is that if the mind is unhealthy or off-balance, the body will show symptoms of this imbalance and vice versa. With these measures in mind, Therapists says that true healing can be considerably achieved by working with both the body and the mind in proportion.

Yoga as therapeutic measures has proven that survivors can develop resistance to trauma and connect with themselves and their feelings individually, both physically and mentally, and allowing them to cope as a movement-based mind-body intervention to release memories of pains and anxiety, thereby enabling them to empower their overall self.

Sexual abuse involves unwanted sexual activity where the victim of the abuse is either unable to, or does not give consent. The issue of sexual abuse permeates through all socioeconomic classes, cultures, races, religions, sexual orientations, and genders. While sexual abuse is most commonly discussed in relation to women as the victims, men can also be victims of sexual abuse. However, sexual abuse is a common phenomenon across the world, and according to the National Crime Records Bureau 2018 Annual Report, 33,356 rape cases were reported in India against women. Out of these, 31,320 were committed by someone known to the victim (93.9% of the cases). At an average, 90 women everyday becomes the victim of sexual abuse. Despite various government campaigns such as *Beti Bachao Beti Padhao* – the crime rate per 100,000 women increased to 58.8% in 2018 in comparison with 57.9% in 2017. Thus, making young girls and women comprised in the great majority of victims in our country. The physical and emotional pain that result from these acts can continue to affect a survivor for years after the abuse occurred.

Therapists and Experts around the world have taken steps and methods of healing sexual abuse survivors by introducing Yoga as therapeutic intervention, and it has proven effective through various projects across the globe. The research suggests that Yoga, when used as an intentional form of intervention, is able to reduce symptoms of PTSD, including anxiety and depression in survivors of sexual abuse. Survivors of sexual abuse experience their trauma that engages both their body and their mind. Hence, it has been widely acknowledged that, the effects of Yoga directly penetrate through mind, body and soul.

While Yoga has become the tool for prevention of various mental and physical disorders, it is however, very important for Yoga Instructors, Therapists or Counsellors takes certain things into consideration while working with survivors of sexual abuse. The techniques of therapeutic Yoga should be such that take accounts of actual clinical treatments are in order for the survivors to feel the change.

Some of the things to keep in mind while dealing with survivors and teaching Therapeutic Yoga are:

1. Yoga Instructors, Therapists or Counsellors must first establish ‘trust’ with the survivors in order build credibility and safety net for a reliable exchange of communication, as it is important to remember that survivors come from various traumatic experiences which must be dealt with utmost sensitivity and care. Hence, building a safety net for enabling her to corporate is important through trust.
2. Yoga Instructors must enable survivors to develop the ability to progress and adapt stability in one’s own body, relationships, and life. Survivors could sense trauma in any form, so it is the job of the Yoga Instructors as Therapists to find a medium that can hold survivors for acceptance and coping with change and re-establishing faith in things.
3. Yoga Instructors must create exercises that dwells into developing inner strengths of the survivors and any other potentially available resources for healing in conjunction to Yoga.
4. Therapeutic Yoga helps in learning how to control one’s emotions and manage symptoms that cause suffering or make one feel unsafe. Therapists must be accountable to deal in any surprises.
5. Therapists must invent methods for developing and strengthening skills for managing painful and unwanted experiences, and minimizing unhelpful responses to Survivor is very important process.

Yoga Instructors as Therapists should find ways through postures and meditation to trigger the sense of survivors’ mind, body and soul. Along Yoga, it is suggested that one should follow healthy routine of sleep and work hours, mindful eating and other activities that address a full range of multisensory healing that enable the body and mind to adapt in the therapy process. Sexual abuse is an issue that continues to affect our society and families all over the world, hence adapting to Yoga brings abundant possibilities.

2. UPDATES FROM COMPLAINT & INVESTIGATION CELL

Mode of Complaint	Complaints Received	Complaints Closed (Old+New)
Offline+Online	2043	592
WhatsApp	322	236

3. SUCCESSFUL INTERVENTIONS OF C&I CELL

A Complaint was received regarding denial of paid maternity benefits to a lady who was working in a Private Company. The Company had also terminated her service. The Commission took up the matter with the concerned Company and the lady, and held five hearings regarding the matter. In spite of the nationwide lockdown, the Commission worked towards bringing justice to the lady's case by conducting online hearing meetings. The Private Company agreed to pay the lady her due maternity benefits and also offered back her service and position at the Company. After the successful intervention, the lady informed the Commission that the due maternity payment was paid to her via net banking, and apprised the Commission of her joining back at the service. She paid gratitude to the Commission's efforts for achieving her rights.

A request was received by the brother of a victim from Bangalore that her sister who was married and living in Goa was a victim of domestic violence, and was continuously being harassed during the lockdown period. The brother requested the Commission if arrangement could be made to rescue her sister and bring her to Bangalore. The Commission worked on the request immediately and coordinated with Goa Police for arranging her transportation to Bangalore. The Police visited the woman's house the same day and registered her case, and with coordination of the Commission, the Police was able to transfer her to a Shelter Home for the night. The following day, Goa and Bangalore Police made arrangement of her travel and she reached safely to her brother's house.

4. UPDATES FROM NRI CELL

Mode of Complaint	Complaints Received	Complaints Closed (Old+New)
Online	42	11

5. UPDATES FROM SUO-MOTO CELL

No. of Cases Taken-up	No. of ATR Replies Received (Old+New)	No. of Cases Closed (Old+New)
18	29	14

6. SUCCESSFUL INTERVENTIONS OF SUO-MOTO CELL

The Commission had taken cognizance on the reported incident of, 57 girls being tested positive for COVID-19, of which few of them were found to be pregnant at a state-run children and women Shelter Home in Kanpur, Uttar Pradesh. The Commission wrote to the concerned authorities for immediate and thorough investigation on the matter, and report on all appropriate actions taken against anybody found guilty.

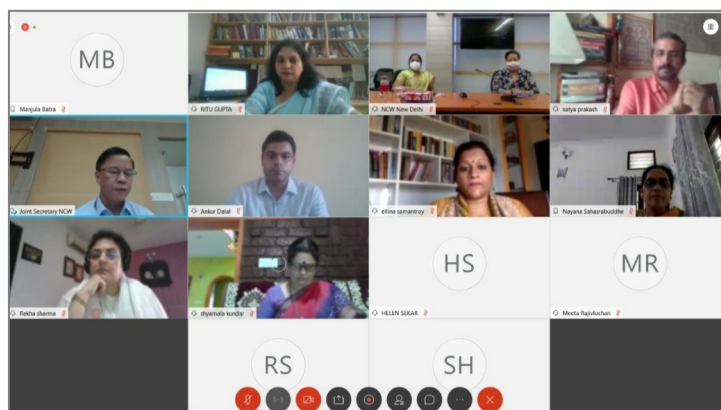
The Commission took cognizance of a media report captioned, "53-Year-Old Bank Manager Allegedly Raped in Her Bhopal Home Amid Lockdown". It was reported that the victim was allegedly raped inside her flat by an unidentified man in the posh Shahpura area of Bhopal in the early hours. The victim is visually impaired and manager of a state-run bank. The accused was arrested by Police. The matter was pursued by the Commission and charge sheet was filed in the Court.

The Commission intervened against the matter of a video endorsed by Faizal Siddiqui, a social media influencer, wherein it appeared to promote acid attack on girls and women as revenge. The Commission found the content to be very harmful, disturbing and misleading, and based on which the Commission had immediately sent a notice to Tiktok India Grievance Officer. It was instructed to remove the content and suspend the account with immediate effect. Due action was taken by Tiktok India and assured the Commission that measures suggested are considered by them to avoid such negative occurrence in future on their social media platform.

The Commission bought out an official statement that any such similar posts found across social media instigating crimes against girls and women posted by any account should all be banned. Chairperson, Smt. Rekha Sharma stated that there must be a collective responsibility to tackle crimes online, and social media platforms must monitor such contents and regulate their platform as per cyber laws and guidelines to ensure protection of women dignity and rights online. Similarly, the Commission had taken cognizance of several matters of reported cybercrime and harassment in cyberspace against women.

7. VIRTUAL CONSULTATION ON REVIEW OF LAWS RELATED TO INTER-STATE WOMEN MIGRANTS WORKERS

(FROM LEGAL CELL): On June 19, 2020, the 4th Regional Consultation on "Reviewing of Laws Related to Inter-State Women Migrant Workers" was successfully conducted by the Commission in collaboration with National Law University and Judicial Academy, Assam. The series of this particular Consultation was in special focus to North East Regional States. As part of the Commission's mandate, several consultations on law reviews are conducted by the Commission on yearly basis, to 'recommend' amendments to the existing provisions of the Constitution and other laws affecting women. The review of laws on Inter-state Women Migrant Worker was one of the Consultation series of the Commission, and 5 Regional Sessions were decided with several prestigious law universities and organization across the country.



The 4th Consultation was attended by different stakeholders of government officials, academicians, legal officials, judicial professionals, scholars, civil society organization from the North East Region. The objective was to identify the inadequacies in the present legal framework, and to suggest remedial measures so as to improve the condition of the women migrant workers and their social security. NCW Chairperson Smt. Rekha Sharma highlighted the problems and discrimination faced by women from North East Region who are employed in hospitality, tourism and the beauty sectors are discriminated with unequal remuneration and harassment at workplace which is a cause of concern for the Commission. The Consultation bought agreements from all participants that all concerned stakeholder working towards the rights of Inter State Migrant Workers must advocate for bringing awareness to legislate gender friendly approach in their security.

The invited Expert Speakers on Panel for the 4th Regional Consultation gave deliberation on the following Sessions:

- (i) Special Vulnerability of Women Migrant Workers.
- (ii) Challenges in the Grassroot implementation of Law and Policy Measures relating to Women Migrant Workers.
- (iii) Women Migrant Workers and Labour Laws: Identifying Gaps and Exploring Remedial Measures related to Women.

8. VIRTUAL SEMINAR ON MAINSTREAMING WOMEN WITH DISABILITIES

(FROM CAPACITY BUILDING CELL): The vision of the Constitution regarding equalization of opportunities can be achieved by creating a barrier free environment and increasing mass awareness on the rights and requirements of women with disabilities. It is the duty of the nation for recognizing the fundamental causes that perpetuate disability in the country and build measures to facilitate their wellbeing by creating equal access to build their lives.

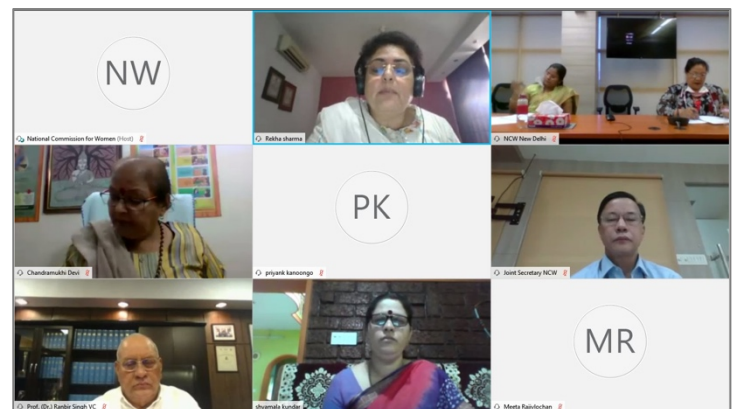
India is committed to empower every woman in the country, and the Commission has mandate to protect women's interests and promotes schemes to empower women with disability endorsed by networks of stakeholders that include government officials, specialized agencies and institutions, social activist persons with disabilities, civil society etc. In view of this, a Multi-Stakeholder Consultation was held on June 12, 2020 by the Commission through virtual interface to examine the challenges and difficulties faced by women with disabilities due to their gender and status.

The objective of the Consultation was to bring out a detailed knowledge regarding the subject, and find ways to programme the exchange and collaborative creation for future action plans to ensure that women and girls with disabilities are not left behind in India's political, legal and economic growth and development. There was a focus deliberation to provide access for their sensibilities, dignity, general health, hygiene and mental wellbeing as rights of every woman and not categorized them as disabled entity. Hence, the Consultation was moderated for drafting measures and remedial suggestions that would ensure successful rehabilitation of women with disabilities in every sphere of life.

The Consultation was carried out in two Sessions under:

- (i) Prejudices, Stigma, Discrimination, Subjugation other Social, Cultural and Legal Dilemmas faced by women with disabilities.
- (ii) Enabling Provisions Needed in the System / Schemes / Programmes to Protect the Rights of women with disabilities.

The deliberation formulated during the virtual Consultation has been drafted as recommendations and forwarded to Ministry of Women and Child Development and other Ministry for implementation of the suggestions.



9. UPDATES FROM WOMEN SAFETY CELL

On June 23, the Commission had conducted an e-Meeting with Officials and Experts from Tata Institute of Social Science to discuss and take updates on the initiatives undertaken by the Special Women Cell during the lockdown situation. The Special Women Cell is an initiative of the National Commission for Women that have been functioning in 21 Districts across 7 States in India. The Special Women Cell is a mechanism approach created under the pilot project known as "Violence Free Home: Every Woman's Rights", that is been sponsored by the Commission and started in 2016, in association with TISS Officials. The Special Women Cells provide service to women survivors with help of trained professional social workers, located in the Police system with a clear understanding that violence against women (VAW) is a crime and that it is the responsibility of the State to prevent and counter it. Also, during the Lockdown, the trained Social Workers from the Special Cell had been working towards achieving its' target to ensure safety of women by counselling and providing assistance in Domestic Violence grievances.

The reports received from the TISS Officials during the e-Meeting, on achievements under the Project across 7 States was commendable, and under leadership of the Commission's Chairperson, Smt. Rekha Sharma took the decision during the e-Meeting to further extend and sustain the "Violence Free Home: Every Woman's Rights", Project to next financial year until March 31, 2021.

The objective is to continue rebuilding the self-esteem, self-worth and dignity of every woman survivors. The trained Social Workers are committed and vigilant in providing immediate services in:

- ➔ Counselling for motional and trauma support;
- ➔ Referrals to medical, psychiatric, educational and vocational services;
- ➔ Harnessing Police assistance;
- ➔ Placement in supportive/service providing institutions;
- ➔ Legal information, support and aid

Some of the activities and highlights of the Special Women Cell's successful approaches and interventions are:

- ➔ Create critical awareness among women, professional groups and the general public, on the atrocities committed against women and children through programmes and social participation.
- ➔ Officials of Special Women Cell develops material for training and provide programmatic support to policy on Violence Against Women to local social workers to actively work in their own locality.
- ➔ To liaison between Police and organizations for women and children to stop abuse and crimes.
- ➔ The Officials also document the work and assessment of Special Women Cell timely for critical review & reflection, and defining newer measures to address women grievances at grassroots level.



10. UPDATE FROM THE PSYCHIATRIC HOME & CUSTODIAL HOMES

The Commission as part of its statutory mandate, has responsibilities to conduct survey and inspection of One Stop Centers (OSC) in the Country. It allows to review OSC's functioning and assessment of their ability to ensure the protection of rights of women and her dignity who are living/residing in Psychiatric and Custodial Homes. The Commission firmed up a comprehensive proforma that would facilitate to gather relevant information from OSC through coordination with Principal Secretary of the respective department in the State Government/UTs. Through the comprehensive proforma, the filed information gathered by the OSC workers across the country, would be further used for assessing the quality functioning with reference to the guidelines issued for the purpose of women's safety in Psychiatric and Custodial Homes. The Proforma requires details for general health arrangements, hygiene facilities, social activities and care for mental wellbeing alongside reports of crimes and numbers of women and children facilitated under the schemes across the country.



11. HIGHLIGHTS OF CHAIRPERSON'S ENGAGEMENTS

1. NCW Chairperson appeared as Guest Speaker at the webinar on "Invisible Pandemic: Domestic Violence During Lockdown", organized by Association of India Law Institute and India Law Institute on June 10, 2020.

2. The Amity Law School had launched the India's first ever Nari Shakti National Online Article Writing Competition 2020 on June 12, on the themes of "Women Empowerment and Safety". The event was inaugurated by NCW Chairperson and applaud the initiative and wished for the success of the Competition that will educate and bring awareness on women's right in the country.

3. An Online Workshop was organized on June 29, 2020, on "Dealing with Sexual Harassment in Virtual Workplace" by PHD Chamber of Commerce and Industry where NCW Chairperson delivered an opening speech on the issues of women's safety in cyberspace and new era of digital challenges.

4. An Exclusive Session with NCW Chairperson and Officials of Council for Transforming India was organized virtually on June 30, 2020, on topic of "Global Pandemic: The Way Indian Women Tackles".

5. NCW Chairperson appeared as Chief Guest and Session Moderator for a Webinar on "Migrant Women Workers in India during COVID-19: Issues and Challenges", organized by Sharda University on August 31, 2020.

Dos & Don'ts of Online Workspace

- Appropriate dress code should be made mandatory for all while attending online meetings
- Organisations should lay out clear work from home guidelines as houses are the new workplace
- Fixed timings for conducting online meeting and video calling women professionals for work
- Ensuring posters with derogatory remarks against women should not be displayed in the background
- Passing lewd comments during online meetings should also be considered as harassment at workplace



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