



Editor's Column

The shocking incident, which took place at Panchkula is not only a dark blot on our society but a cruel travesty of justice, as the protectors become the perpetrators of crime. What can be worse than taking one's own life in order to get justice from a callous government, which is there to safeguard our life, honour and property?

A 28 year old rape victim, a mother of two young children, committed suicide by consuming poison at the Haryana Police headquarters at Panchkula after a futile two-month struggle to ensure that the guilty-two police constables-were brought to book. The two had raped the woman while her husband was in custody in connection with a theft case. She left a suicide note holding the two policemen responsible for

her death. Taking suo motu cognizance of the suicide, the National Commission for Women has demanded strict action against the two errant policemen.

As far as the case is concerned, more than a week before the woman

FOCUS

POLICE BARBARITY

took the extreme step, she had met the state's top most police officials, following which an FIR was lodged. Earlier, all her pleas to apprehend the policemen fell on deaf ears and the perpetrators were not only moving about scot-free but had the temerity to intimidate her to withdraw her complaint. Here the question arises as to why no immediate action was taken by the senior officers when the matter

was brought to their knowledge? Is it because the complainant belonged to the lower strata of the society, whose life and dignity were of no consequence?

Meanwhile, the alleged rapists have now been dismissed from service. But had this been done at the initial stage, when the complaint had been lodged, a life could have been saved and two little girls would not have lost their mother.

However, in view of the enormity of the crime, dismissal is not enough punishment. Nothing short of a summary trial in such cases can act as a deterrent. In addition, stringent action must also be taken against the senior officials, who tried to shield their colleagues, for serious dereliction of duty and, last but not the least, proactive and urgent steps have to be taken to sensitise the police to gender crimes.

Visit of Ambassador of European Commission to NCW

Madame Smadje, Ambassador of European Commission visited the National Commission for Women and had a very fruitful interaction with the Commission.

Briefing the Ambassador, NCW Chairperson, Dr. Girija Vyas said that the Indian Constitution was committed to provide equal rights and opportunities to women and the Parliament had enacted various special laws for women on the recommendations of NCW.

The Commission, she said, was trying to create awareness among women all over the country about various women - related laws, through workshops and seminars. The Commission was also committed to sensitize the police to gender issues from the level of the constables to the Director General of Police.

Dr. Vyas said that the Commission was holding workshops and consultations on the issues of female foeticide, NRI marriages, dowry laws, acid throwing etc. to suggest changes in the laws.

Reacting positively, the Ambassador said that as their goals were similar-i.e.

empowerment of women, she would like to be a partner to the Commission's projects. She further said that they had strong international instruments and substantial funding to support Government as well as non-governmental projects within the concept of gender issues to help women, children and the minorities with access to water, healthcare, education, sanitation, etc.



The Chairperson (right) and Member Secretary (Left) in conversation with Madame Smadje.

Sikkim passes two Bills on women empowerment

To give a filip to women empowerment, two Bills have been passed recently by the Sikkim Assembly-the Sikkim Municipalities Second Amendment Bill providing for an increased 40 per cent reservation to women in municipal bodies in the State and the Sikkim Succession Bill providing succession rights to women.

Currently, urban local bodies in the State have only one third reservation for women.

The Sikkim Succession Bill, provides legislation for equal property rights to daughters, wives and even divorced and abandoned wives.

However, a Sikkimese woman, who has married a non-sikkimese or has acquired foreign citizenship will not be entitled to enjoy the benefits under this Act.

Profile in Courage

In an incident reminiscent of Nisha, the brave girl, who rejected her groom for demanding dowry from her parents at the time of her wedding, a bride in the Jehangirpur Kasba of Greater Noida refused to marry after the bridegroom's family demanded an additional dowry of Rs. 1 lakh.

When the bride's brother expressed inability to pay, the groom and his parents started shouting and abusing him. The bride heard their heated conversation and refused to marry.

Thereafter, the 'baraatis' were sent back, but the groom and his parents were held captive for hours and were released only after the police intervened and the groom returned all the gifts received by him and his family.

Making a difference

Two sisters Hazra Banu and Rabia, residents of Peshgarha village, about 230 km from Ranchi, have set an example for the government and the male-dominated society by digging a well in their village. Severely plagued by water scarcity, they started digging a well after the Giridih district administration failed to respond to their repeated requests for a drinking water source. As there are very few hand pumps or wells in Peshgarha, villagers are forced to drink polluted water from nearby ponds. But no one supported the sisters, who are in their 20s, when they decided to dig the well.

The sisters, who live alone, have been toiling since November but no one lent them a helping hand. Now that the well is almost complete, villagers and politicians are praising them and assuring all help.

The hard work of both the women is an example for the youths who, have made no efforts to get drinking water for the villagers.

From the Complaint Cell

- The Commission received a complaint from a woman alleging that her sister had been murdered by her in-laws. Later, the in-laws burnt her body and said that it was a case of suicide. It was further alleged that in spite of complaint to the police, no action was taken by them. On the contrary, the complainant was constantly harassed by the police and the accused.

The Commission after registering the complaint, asked SP, Udaipur, to conduct an investigation and submit a report to the Commission. The SP reported that a case had been registered at Kherwada court against the accused under Section 306 and 34 of the Indian Penal Code.

- A woman sent a complaint to the Commission regarding harassment by her husband and in-laws for dowry. Unable to bear constant torture, she left the matrimonial home to stay with her parents. However, the in-laws would even visit her there and harass her. As the police did not register her complaint, she approached the Commission for redressal.

The Commission sent a letter to SP Aligarh requesting for investigation into the case and submitting an action taken report. The SP reported that a case had been registered in the court under section 498A, 323, 504, 506 of the Indian Penal Code and three of the accused had been arrested.

Bill amendment seeks to punish sex workers' clients

A group of ministers recently approved an amendment to the Immoral Trafficking (Prevention) Act giving power to police to book clients of victims for sexual exploitation. This would curb the demand for trafficked persons for sexual trade. The clients found to be exploiting sex workers can be jailed for up to three months and fined up to Rs. 20,000 or both for first offence. For second or subsequent offences, the punishment has been increased to six months or fine of Rs. 50,000 or both.

Seminar on Indecent Representation Act

The National Commission for Women organised a seminar on the need to amend the Indecent Representation of Women (Prohibition) Act 1986 in Mumbai.

While addressing the seminar, the NCW Chairperson Dr. Girija Vyas said that NCW was campaigning for an amendment to the law governing portrayal of women in the media. She discussed the matter with industry's professionals and women activists in Mumbai. She urged the industry, particularly, the electronic media to ensure that they did not show women in indecent manner.

Expressing disappointment over the regressive and stereotypical depiction of women in TV serials and ads, she said NCW would push for an amendment to the Indecent Representation of Women Act, 1986.

Speaking on the occasion, filmmaker Mahesh Bhatt said that a society was judged by the way it treated its women and television was an ideal medium to bring about a change in the portrayal of women.

Supreme Court advocate Ms. Aparna Bhat, who had drafted the proposed amendments, gave a power point presentation.

Later, the seminar discussed the views expressed by the NGOs, advocates and other stake holders. The suggestions and recommendations emerging from the deliberations would be further examined before proposing final amendments in the law.

Members' Visits

- Member Manju Hembrom attended a public hearing organised by NCW and ATSEC at Ranchi. As many as 186 women narrated their problems before the Commission. While a majority of them have been tortured for practicing witchcraft, some have been exploited for dowry while some were rape victims. Ms. Hembrom said that the NCW had proposed an amendment to the anti-witchcraft law and was advocating for life sentence for torturing a woman by accusing her of practising black magic. She advised the victims to submit their complaints in writing to NCW for taking necessary action.



Member Manju Hembrom (middle) listening to a complainant.

Taking suo-moto cognizance of the mysterious death of a housemaid, named Rosila at the residence of a jeweller at Palwal, Member Manju Hembrom along with a representative of NGO Shakti Vahini, visited the place of the incident to enquire into the case.

- Intervening in the Arushi murder case, Member Nirmala Venkatesh along with Sweetie Sood, visited the Talwar's house in Nodia and spoke to the mother of the victim to hear her version of the case. The NCW condemned the police statement about Arushi and said serious action must be taken against police officers for maligning the image of the dead girl.



Member Nirmala Venkatesh (right) arriving at Talwar's residence

There is a 24-hour women's police station at Nanakpura and special women's Helpline Numbers are 23317004, 1091, 1291

Important Decision

Treat girls as adults from age 16 : Court

A Delhi court today acquitted a young man of charges of raping and abducting his girlfriend and urged the Parliament to amend the law to treat girls as adults from age 16.

Pointing out that girls were maturing faster in the present social conditions and environment, the additional sessions judge suggested that they should be treated as adults from age 16.

Brutal murderers deserve no leniency : SC

The Supreme Court said that showing leniency towards a convict involved in brutal murders may undermine public confidence in the efficacy of law, while confirming the death sentence on a man, who raped and murdered two minor girls almost a decade ago. The Court said that if for extremely heinous crime of murder, perpetrated in a very brutal manner, without any provocation, the most deterrent punishment is not given, then the case of deterrent punishment will lose its relevance.

Unmarried daughters to get pension

The Haryana Government will grant family pension to the eligible unmarried daughters of the pensioners beyond the age of 25 years at par with widows and divorced daughters on the pattern of the Central Government.

Women compensated for unwanted pregnancy

A Delhi court has held the government responsible for the birth of an unwanted child in a poor household because the mother became pregnant despite undergoing sterilisation under a government sponsored scheme at a hospital.

Asking the government to bear the expenses of rearing the boy, additional district judge awarded the 40-year-old mother, Nirmala a compensation of Rs. 1 lakh.

Separation not a ground for divorce : HC

The Nagpur bench of Bombay high court dismissed a husband's petition seeking divorce from wife living separately for last 19 years stating that just staying away for 19 years was not sufficient ground for a divorce and was not enough for judicial separation.

Separation is no bar to spouse's conjugal rights : H.C.

A married couple is entitled to conjugal rights even if they have never lived together. In a judgment passed earlier this month, Bombay High Court upheld the order of the family court that asked a husband to pay his wife maintenance of Rs. 3,000 per month even though they had not lived together even for a day after their marriage.

Pay for loss of marriage prospects : SC

In a judgment with far-reaching consequences, the Supreme Court has said that accident victims should also be paid compensation for the loss of "matrimonial prospects" and "future treatments" if they are permanently crippled. While directing the authorities to keep Rs. 2,00,000 in a fixed deposit in the name of victim Sapna, the apex court commented that the High Court failed to award any compensation despite noticing the fact that the accident would affect the matrimonial prospects of the victim on account of rendering her permanently disabled.

NCW will probe 'police atrocities'

The National Commission for Women (NCW) has said that it will look into the complaints filed by members of the Gujjar community about the alleged police atrocities on women during their ongoing stir in Rajasthan.

An NCW team will visit Rajasthan to conduct a first-hand probe into the complaints and also probe violation of any laws during their protest.

News from Abroad

Mothers deserve a 6-figure salary

According to new calculations if mothers were paid for cooking, cleaning and caring for their families, they could easily earn a six figure salary.

After asking 18,000 mothers to list their most common tasks such as cooking, cleaning and childcare, a salary compensation company determined the value of their job functions to calculate what they could earn if they were paid.

In Canada, the 10 most popular jobs performed by a stay at home mother would equate to a 125,000 Canadian dollars (\$124,280) salary, including overtime, and almost \$75,000 for a working mother, in addition to her real salary.

The salary calculations were based on the top ten jobs mothers said they did at home and the hours they spent doing them each day. The numbers were then compared to the market value each job was worth.

The high salary calculations were due to lots of overtime hours. Stay-at-home moms reported over-90 hours in overtime while working moms said they put in 54.6 hours of overtime, on top of their paying jobs.

for further information visit our website at : www.ncw.nic.in

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