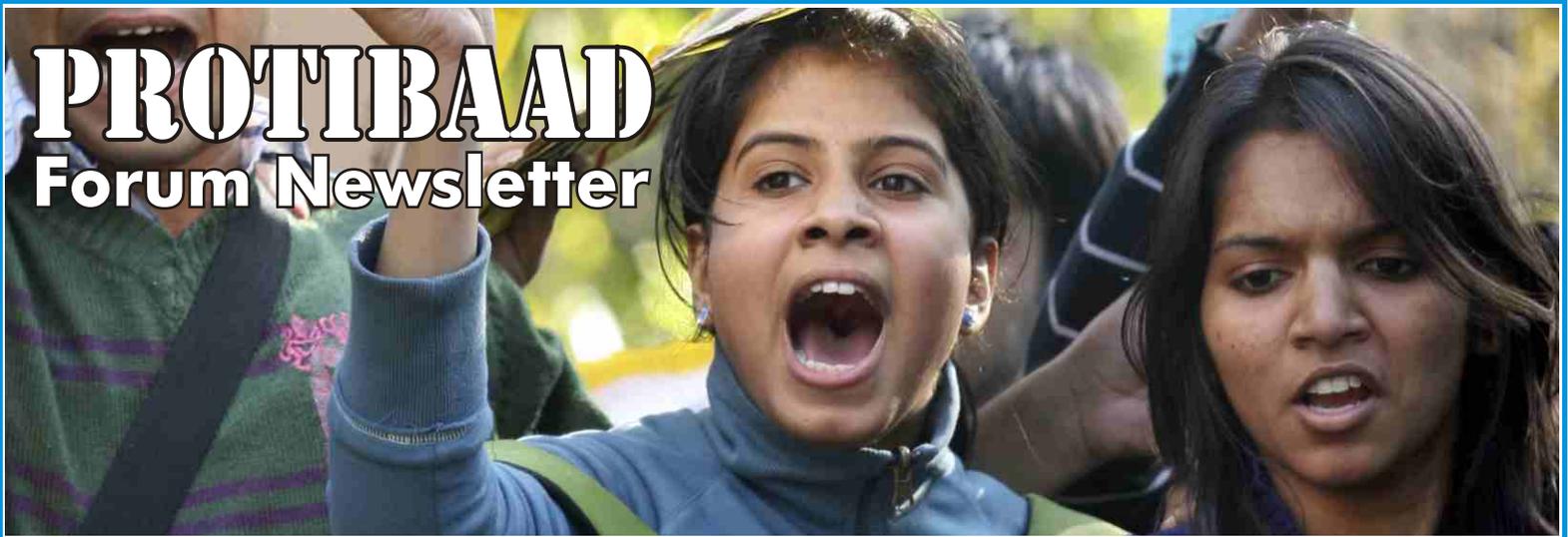


PROTIBAAD

Forum Newsletter



Protesting Violence Against Women

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OPINIONS : 'Abused Goddesses' Campaign

Sarah Farooqui: Recently, we came across an excellent campaign, the abused goddesses campaign, against domestic violence towards women. The images used in this campaign are hard-hitting and visually stunning. The intent of this campaign is commendable. Women, who are goddesses in this country, worshipped and revered, are in reality, effortlessly abused and bruised. The aesthetic appeal of the campaign, using traditional pictures that every Indian has seen in calendars and posters, makes this campaign relatable and relevant. However, its visual power also makes one question our own understanding of gender, its representations, the ideal, and the intention among other things in the gender discourse. It is a campaign that our common public can connect to. After all, there is nothing more powerful than our goddesses facing violence. But now, I too am left wondering, about why women are seen as goddesses in the first place. Why are women put on a pedestal of being an ideal, something holy and perfect? What happens to women who are not parallels to a Saraswati, Lakshmi or a Durga? What happens to women who are just women, however flawed and immoral? What if, instead of the picture of a Goddess, the bruised woman was a promiscuous looking girl wearing lingerie? Would its impact have been as powerful? Or would we all have unconsciously, or unintentionally felt that she deserved it?

This raises a very pertinent point: "Pedestalisation of women as goddesses is as damaging as portraying them as sex objects. Both dehumanise women. Both leave no space in between for women to exercise their will or have feelings and opinions and flaws and desires as human beings. Trapping women into images of a supposed ideal is one of the oldest strategies of patriarchy – and if we do not fit the image, it is deemed alright to 'punish' and violate us."

Jhuma Parial: Imagine of someone blindfolded right from the birth! Can the person think of the difference

between light and darkness? So, we are living in a world full of violence against women, be it at home, or outside home. Violence outside home is easily recognizable due to its pronounced expression. On the contrary, violence within the four walls what we call HOME happens so subtly that unless and until it takes any of the severe forms like bride-burning and honour-killing, victims may not have the opportunity to feel and make others feel how they are mistreated by their closest one(s). This is the hard reality all over the world.

But why is it so in our country, where women are regarded as goddesses? Women are the epitome of Laxmi, the Goddess of wealth, Durga, the source of strength etc. Yes, in fact, women here are trained to be tolerant to the power of infinity, like the earth, to live their lives only as a source of joy and success of family members. Other elder women in the families take the direct responsibility shared

NO
ANYTHING LESS THAN A **YES** IS A

Did you know that most reported rapes involve two people who know each other or who met earlier that evening? When it comes to sex the law is clear: if you have sex without consent you're committing rape. It's that simple. No pressure, no forcing and no expectations.

CROSS THE LINE AND IT'S
RAPE

Hampshire Constabulary

with elderly males in creating living goddesses. This god-like image of women is necessary for the sustenance of the age-old patriarchal familial set-up. As a source of inspiration, women are also perceived to be responsible for all the misdeeds done by men and misfortunes happening to men.

So, still, 200 years after the Indian renaissance, would-be Indian parents go to clinics for sex-determination of the embryo. If it is female, abort it. Because the living goddess will bring financial misfortune in future, in the form of dowry. Goddesses need no material-wealth for survival, so, till now, in some corners of India girls have no share in their fathers' properties. Wife and daughter-in-law, as Laxmi, are to bring wealth to marital home, call it dowry or gift. And when they do not, and make us unhappy, either we verbally abuse them by taunting or beat and burn her. A daughter must marry the boy of her father's choice to make him feel happy and honoured. If not, then father, brothers, and even mother would join hands to kill her. This is the picture of the status of girls and women in some wealthier families in India.

The situation is no better in other sections of our society where less-educated, even illiterate and poorer women are concerned. They have no alternative but to work hard in fields, factories, and construction-sites to provide just a single meal for their children. They face severe opposition from their family members and from neighbours too, as if they are going out to be engaged in acts other than earning. They are used to be beaten every other day by husbands because of so many factors like bad cooking, having failed to serve meals in 'proper time', giving birth to girls etc.

But we should not be hopeless. Because women from the so-called have-nots have started to find the way out of the chains of patriarchy and to respond positively to any call for change in thought-process. A few months back, the Muslim Women's Convention was held in Kolkata, where women from almost all the districts of West Bengal came to speak of their agonies and exchange their views.

At least some of us have dared to ask why they are treated as sub-humans by their own people! Now we all need to open our eyes to see and feel that our girls and women are not goddesses, but mere human beings with all natural feelings of joys and sorrows and other material needs, just like our boys and men. We have to learn it from our families, and schools and colleges, not from any correctional home, that man and woman are complementary to each other to make the earth worth-living. If we can, only then we may dream of a society, free from violence.

Gautam Benegal: It may seem clever and catchy but this is one of the most insidiously harmful campaigns ever to be launched in the name of women's emancipation or to sensitize men towards the brutalization of women.

The use of these icons reinforces the mindset that we must see women as goddesses of a particular religion. It defines a space that is by default sacrosanct to the exclusion of any other space for women that may exist. The apotheosis of the 'fairer' sex has a natural corollary in orthodoxy - that women are our mothers sisters and daughters and therefore, by holy writ, to be protected.

How often have we come across misogynists, rapists and molesters who consider themselves justified in their actions because they think that women who do not fall under these hallowed categories are beyond the pale of 'protection' and are therefore 'fair game?' This kind of stereotyping is surprisingly finding many takers on the net, even those who feel they are gender sensitized, which would go to show how far we, as a nation have yet to go before we realize that we do not really need excuses, especially by invoking mythological characters to protest molestation and rape—which is not always targeted towards women. It is tantamount to painting gods and goddesses on walls so that people will avoid urinating on them, instead of constructively providing a decent and healthy environment for them.

NEWS : VAW IN INDIA

■ ANDHRA PRADESH

In a shocking incident, a panchayat offered money to the parents of a girl who was allegedly raped and asked them to keep quiet. The 11-year-old girl was raped on night of 20th September. in a village in Visakhapatnam district. The matter came to light two days later when the girl's parents filed a complaint. Accused is a 30-year-old farmer Appa Rao. When the girl's parents approached the panchayat, village elders asked the parents to keep quiet and offered them Rs. 1,500 to foot medical bills.

A tribal girl killed a man, who allegedly tried to rape her at Jala village (Komarada Police Station) in Vizianagaram district, late on 25th Sept. night. The girl hit the drunken man's head against a stone when he tried to sexually assault

her at a lonely place in the village. The man died of a head injury. A case was registered under Section 302 of the IPC.

■ ASSAM

The police have apprehended five 'juveniles' for gang-rape of a minor girl in a locality under Basistha police station in Guwahati. The victim, aged about 12 years, was playing with the five when they lured her to a hut and raped her repeatedly for two days. A medical examination confirmed the rape. The victim's mother, a daily wage-earner, lodged a FIR at the Basistha police station. All the five accused have been sent to Observation Home at Boko in Kamrup district.

■ BIHAR

A woman from West Bengal was gang-raped by five men in Bihar's Patna district on 23rd Sept. The victim, a resident

of Bolrampur village in neighbouring Bengal, was found lying unconscious by a roadside, with several injuries on her, by a team of National Disaster Response Force in Bihta, about 30 km from Patna. Gang-rape was confirmed by medical examination at a local hospital. With the help of a mason, who was working near the hospital, she informed the police. The woman told police that she parted from her husband at Howrah railway station in Kolkata, and boarded a train. Police have lodged a case and begun investigations as to how she reached Bihta from Kolkata.

Two teenage girls were gang-raped at gunpoint by five men on 23rd Sept. in Vaishali district. The crime occurred in a deserted field at Bidupur in Vaishali, about 40 km from the state capital. The girls were returning to their village after collecting wood for fuel when the assault occurred. A medical test has confirmed the sexual assault. Police have registered a case but none of accused has been arrested.

■ DELHI

At night, he raped her. In daytime, the middle-aged man would smother the 13-year-old with gifts. This went on for a month and a half till the girl was rescued by Chetna Welfare Society, an NGO from a shanty in Delhi, scared to go back to her home in Bengal. The victim was a student of Class VII in a school in Kakdwip, South 24-Parganas, when Ilias Ali, her 51-

Delhi Records 1,121 Rape Cases in 8 Months, Highest in 13 Years

Surprisingly, Delhi police see this rise in the number of cases as a good sign, saying that more cases are now being reported which was not the case earlier and a number of efforts have been taken to ensure women safety in the city after the last year's December 16 gangrape case.

The number of reported cases which stands at 1,121, till August 31 this year, is more than double of last year's figure of 468 in the same period. As per data of National Crime Record Bureau (NCRB), in 2011, the numbers of registered rape cases were 572, while 507 rape cases were reported in 2010. The figure stood at 469 in 2009. In 2008, the figure was 466.

Police calls it a good sign that now more cases are being reported which was not the case earlier. A senior police official said, "The rise in the number of reported cases means that now women are coming forward and reporting incidents. Earlier, a number of cases went unreported as women were afraid of contacting police and also the social stigma which came with it. Today, complaints are recorded verbatim and FIRs are filed simply on the basis of the women's complaint without raising any issue. This has caused significant rise in number of registered cases," he added and claimed that among all the cases of crime against women registered by Delhi Police, more than 80 percent of the perpetrators are arrested within the first week.

year-old tormenter, came to stay with her family. The Delhi-based scrap dealer, who has two more trafficking cases against him in Kakdwip, soon started working on the impressionable young girl and lured her to Delhi. A case has been registered against Ali under the stringent Protection of Children Against Sexual Offences Act.

■ HARYANA

A 36-year-old nurse posted in Civil hospital at Hansi area in the district was raped by a head constable of Haryana Police on 25th Sept. Police has registered a case against him and his wife under IPC sections 506 (criminal intimidation), 376 (rape) and 120 B (criminal conspiracy). The accused head constable is posted in Rohtak at present and is evading arrest..

■ KERALA

The father of a nine-year-old girl and two of his accomplices were arrested on 26th Sept. for raping her. The police said the father, Vijayan, Biju and Shine Raju, all from a locality near Kundara, had raped the child several times. Another accused, Veerappan, was absconding. Preliminary medical investigations showed rape, and the victim had identified the three accused after their arrest. Victim's mother had died a few years ago, and the child and Vijayan had been living in a single-room shanty. A woman noticed Vijayan sexually abusing the girl and she passed the information to the Kundara police.

■ MADHYA PRADESH

A 3-year old girl was lured with biscuits by a 25-year old, who took her to a deserted place outside Sikrouda village in Morena and raped her. The accused, known to the girl and her family, left the victim outside her house after committing the offence and fled. The girl then informed her mother about the crime following which she lodged a complaint.

■ MAHARASHTRA

Mumbai witnessed another shocking incident of gang-rape. A woman, who fell asleep while travelling in an autorickshaw, was allegedly abducted and taken to Sanjay Gandhi National Park and sexually assaulted by a group of unidentified men. The police have registered a case against seven unidentified persons. Last month, a 22-year-old photojournalist was raped by five men in Shakti Mills compound.

■ ODISHA

A woman's body was recovered from the Mahanadi in Kishore Nagar area on 25th Sept. Police later told that the woman was brutally raped and murdered. The naked body of the 25-year-old woman was fished out from the river a day after she went missing. "There are bite and injury marks all over the body, especially on the cheeks and chest of the girl. This indicates rape and murder. However, we are still awaiting the post mortem report," SP (Rural), Cuttack, said.

Don't always believe Rape Victims' Evidence: SC

Rape victim's testimonies command "great respect and acceptability" but can be disbelieved if the allegations are not corroborated with evidence, the Supreme Court held on 19th Sept. "The version of victim in rape commands great respect and acceptability, but, if there are some circumstances which cast some doubt in the mind of the court of the veracity of the victim's evidence, then, it is not safe to rely on the uncorroborated version of the victim of rape," a bench headed by Justice K.S. Radhakrishnan said.

The bench passed the order while acquitting a man for the offence of rape. The man was accused of raping the victim at a public place. "The place of the alleged incident (of physical relation) and the time is very crucial, so far as this case is concerned. It was early morning at 8:30 am and the place of the alleged incident was on the side of a public road. If she had made any semblance of resistance or made any hue and cry it would have attracted large number of people from

the locality. Further, the first information report, as already indicated, was lodged after a period of 10 months of the alleged incident. All these factors cast some shadow of doubt on the version of the victim," the bench said.



The woman, a native of Tarito village, had gone to the nearby market to purchase some household items.

■ RAJASTHAN

Former Rajasthan Minister Babulal Nagar is under investigation for rape. He is doing everything possible to stall the investigation. The Criminal Investigation Department (CID), investigating the rape case filed by a 35-year-old woman against Babulal Nagar, failed to collect the former minister's blood sample for medical examination. The woman accused former minister of state for dairy and rural industries of raping her at his government bungalow on 11th Sept. She has given CID a memory card, purportedly containing recording of a conversation between her and the accused. The minister had to resign after the complaint. The state government has recommended CBI inquiry.

A caste council in Rajasthan has ordered the parents of a six-year-old rape victim to get her married to the eight-year-old son of the man accused of the rape. The incident occurred at Keshavpura in Kota, 250 km from Jaipur. The 40-year-old man raped the girl. Instead of registering a police complaint, elders belonging to the girl's caste called a panchayat meeting. The panchayat ordered girl's parents to get her married to Kailash's minor son. Meantime Kailash again raped the girl. Some social activists brought the girl and her parents to a police station in Kota and filed a complaint. Kailash was arrested and an investigation launched into the allegations against the panchayat members.

■ UTTAR PRADESH

On 5th September when Chief Minister Akhilesh Yadav was present at the 'Janta Darshan', a weekly event to meet

people at his official residence in Lucknow, a young woman stunned everyone when she alleged that her father and brother had been sexually abusing her for the last 10 years. A beautician by trade and a resident of Krishnanagar in the state capital, the woman pleaded that she be saved from abuse by her father and brother. She told that her mother allowed the two men a free run. The woman was sent for a medical examination. The accused have been arrested.

Rakesh, the SPA manager in a hotel near the Taj Mahal, Agra has been arrested for allegedly raping one of his woman employees. In her complaint, the woman had said that on 19th Sept. after working for 20 days at the SPA, she had gone to collect her payment, when the manager raped her. When she came out of the hotel, a friend of the manager took her to another hotel, where he too raped her, she claimed. The manager's friend is absconding.

■ UTTARAKHAND

A three-year-old girl was allegedly raped by her neighbour in Mussoorie on 26th Sept. The accused, a 20-year-old youth from Nepal, has been arrested. The accused lured the girl to his room by offering her a chocolate. The matter came to light when the victim's mother heard her cries and ran to the scene of the crime from where the youth had escaped by the time she reached there.

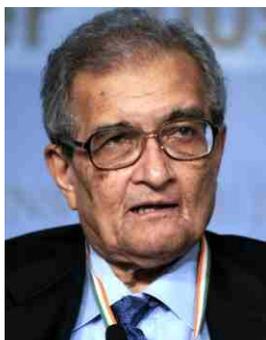
■ WEST BENGAL

A taxi driver was arrested on 25th Sept. for allegedly raping a teenager in the Maidan area of Kolkata. Md. Sajir Alam (19), a resident of Topsia and a taxi driver by profession, was arrested for allegedly raping the girl who also hails from the same area.

"Women really do rule the world. They just haven't figured it out yet. When they do, and they will, we're all in big big trouble."—**Doctor Leon**

Musings and Hypotheses from Professor Amartya Sen's Essay on Women's Issues

Nobel Laureate Professor Amartya Sen recently wrote a long essay in the New York Review of Books, titled, **India's Women: The Mixed Truth**. Here are my reflections on this essay. On the one hand, this essay provides a great summary of Professor Sen's ideas and opinions that are already well known and those that he has written elsewhere. Over and above, it also raises a few more hypotheses that are worth exploring. On the whole, I identified three challenges he wrote here on the role of media, women's empowerment, judiciary, and public (we the people) that might be worth considering for those of us who are worried about women's empowerment and gender violence in India. After all, one can learn from the words of the wise.



that could be expected if there were symmetry in the treatment of women and men"). What's interesting here is his mention of line of division he identified from an analysis of pre-existing data. The data suggest that this "line" exists across India. Considering that of Ireland's ratio (1000:935) as a cut-off for the high versus low male:female ratio, geographically, the ratio is higher in the northwestern region of the line that cuts across India and this region includes

the so called Northwestern States — including Punjab, Haryana, Delhi, and those of the Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Uttar Pradesh (BIMARU) states. On the south east and eastern regions of that line are the other states of India where the male:female ratio is closer to one.

First among the issues that intrigued me was his ignoring/overlooking the role of social media in the case of the Delhi rape. He opened this essay describing the gruesome murder of the Delhi based girl, Jyoti, last December (2013). For those of us who tracked the social media reaction immediately after the event was known, can recall how our otherwise "insipid" middle class educated people of India went up in sharp protest. Undoubtedly, the event was widely publicized and covered in the social media. Yet, Professor Sen in this essay goes about describing how the news of this event spread, in word such as "every serious Indian newspaper" carried the news of the event on their headlines and mentioned radio, television and cable channels. Intriguing to say the least, to read his omission of the role of social media response as if this didn't exist. One wonders the cause of this omission.

Does geography influence society? As a corollary of the idea that gender discrimination and gender violence exist on a continuum, it'd be instructive to see whether incidence of gender violence mimics a similar pattern across Indian geography as does gender discrimination studied on the basis of male:female ratio. If so, uncovering this relationship could throw interesting light on the patterns of gender discrimination that he has talked about in the essay.

Second, he put 'violence against women' with 'gender preference' across a spectrum. One would (as a generalist) think that the commonly practiced gender preference is a social phenomenon with highly complicated societal and historical roots. Is there a relationship between sexual violence against women and gender preference? He writes for instance, "It is, however, very important to understand the nature of female disadvantage in India, which can take many different forms. On the one hand there is this issue of actually killing and beating up of women, on the other, preference to 'boys.'" To the general audience, he suggests an implicit relationship between gender violence and gender discrimination, as they exist at the ends of a spectrum.

In a relatively long section on male gender bias, Amartya Sen writes for instance, ". . . definitive empirical evidence that women's literacy and schooling cut down child mortality and work against the selective neglect of the health of girls. They are also the strongest influence, among all relevant causal factors, in cutting down fertility rates. . . The reduction of fertility that has taken place throughout India (and more sharply in Bangladesh) is clearly connected with the expansion of women's literacy, which empowers women to have a stronger voice in family decisions. . . Bangladesh's steep fall in total fertility rate from nearly 7.0 children not long ago to 2.2 now (quite close to the replacement rate of 2.1) is strongly connected with the power of women to gain more control of their lives, and both girls' education and women's outside employment have done much to yield that result. . . China's shift from high fertility to

Note for instance where he talks about the issue of "missing women" ("Boy preference relates closely to the deep-rooted problem of what has been called "missing women," which refers to the shortfall of the actual number of women from the number we would expect to see, given the size of the male population, and the female-male ratios

Volunteer With Us

'Protibaad' need volunteers in major cities who can work with local NGOs and activists. You will be meeting new people, and gaining the satisfaction of helping a cause you believe in. No previous experience is necessary. Volunteers are crucial to create awareness and supporting victims of VAW.

You can register your interest in volunteering by writing to Protibaadforum@gmail.com.

below-replacement fertility can in many cases be more easily explained by women's having more say, and more power, in family life—helped by education and greater economic independence—than by the draconian compulsions of its punitive “one-child policy.”

This raises another set of interesting hypotheses. Globally, what is the relationship between fertility rates and gender violence or violence against women? For instance, it is reasonable to speculate that fertility rate is inversely related to women's empowerment (thus higher fertility rate indicates less women empowerment and reduced fertility rates would indicate better women's empowerment). Is there empirical evidence to support that fertility rates are associated with gender violence. In other words, is there evidence to suggest that countries or regions or hotspots with higher fertility rates have higher rates of gender violence? Is there an association between male:female ratio, fertility rates and gender violence? On that note, after adjusting for the effects of male:female ratio, is there evidence to suggest that increased fertility rates are associated with increased gender violence? If this be so, attempts to reduce fertility rates may be a way to address issues around gender violence from a large societal perspective.

My third take away lesson from the essay was Professor Sen's take on the public, press, police and judicial process. In a sense, I thought he articulated sentiments of a large section of the Indians when he wrote about perils of “slow” judicial processes, public apathy, inefficient police investigations, and activities of a national press that are somewhat biased in their coverage. As he wrote, the data speak for themselves, “... The number of recorded rapes in India is certainly a substantial underestimate, but even if we take five times—or ten times—that figure, the corrected and enlarged estimates of rapes would still be substantially lower in India than in the US, the UK, Sweden, or South Africa

(even with the assumption that there is no under-reporting in these other countries). ... India has a huge problem in seriously monitoring rape and taking steps to reduce it ... (note the strong words), “(The problem in India is) not so much in a particularly high incidence of rapes, but in its inefficient policing, bad security arrangements, slow-moving judicial system, and, ultimately, the callousness of the society”. Note also his advice, “... There is a clear need for the new activism of newspapers to go well beyond the reporting and discussion of only rapes”. This is another important lead, particularly in the light of recent debates on the deterrent power of death sentences and harsh punishments on rape. There is a case to argue that swift investigation, efficient and prompt policing and legal action, and a sensitive, responsible, and responsive public action can justifiably go a long way to curb violence against women in the society.

Professor Amartya Sen thus stoked three intriguing questions/debates about gender violence in India in this essay. His apparent emphasis on the role of newspapers and in stating the story how newspapers, radio, TV, and cable covered it but not a word about the role of social media raises arguments about where he puts the role of social media in raising awareness and news/rabble rousing about it. More importantly, where does social media fit in the debate? I think it is vitally important and the way to go. Two, is there a case for women's empowerment by way of social engineering to reduce fertility rates and can that lead to reduction in gender violence rates? Finally, his scathing view of the slowness of police and judicial process and sharp criticism of public apathy calls for some hard judicial and policing changes and perhaps a shift in social outlook. He has posed intriguing challenges that should be taken up and addressed.

—Arin Basu

Let's Clap and Pray for Braveheart Linkan Subudhi

An Odia girl, Linkan Subudhi, an IT professional, who also works as a social activist with NGO 'AidNOIDA', was brutally attacked by two persons (including a woman).

Her fault? She was trying to rescue a minor girl from forcible marriage at Noida on 23rd Sept. The 15-year-old girl's groom-to-be and her mother allegedly stabbed Linkan and hammered her with bricks, causing her serious head injuries. She needed 25 stitches on her head.

After being informed about a minor girl's marriage without her consent, Linkan had gone to rescue her. When she tried to rescue the girl, the girl's mother and her would-be-husband suddenly stabbed her head with knife.

'AidNOIDA' is a Volunteer Group of socially responsible



and self-driven youngsters who are working with an objective of facilitating quality education and awareness for marginalized & slum communities in Noida. Volunteers at AID-Noida come from varied backgrounds; many of them are IT professionals, entrepreneurs, students etc. Along with volunteers, a team of full-time individuals manage the educational programs on day to day basis.

Despite writhing in pain at a private hospital in Delhi, braveheart Linkan said she would continue to serve the society. “I am not going to panic. I will keep working for slum dwellers, especially women in need,” Linkan told a private news channel. A native of Nayagarh district of Odisha and an Engineering graduate from Ravenshaw University, Cuttack she has been residing at Noida since 2008. ■■■

Report : Inaugural Conference of New Zealand India Research Institute (NZIRI)



Kaushik Basu, Senior Vice President, World Bank came. Here we can see him with two Cabinet Ministers of the New Zealand Government. Right behind him, was an Indian born New Zealand MP, speaking with the first woman Mayor of Auckland. Someone with a prominently blue shirt had sat in the next row with chopped off head, which can be seen in the dark shade above; well, that's me who presented a paper titled: "Violence against Women and Economic Wellbeing".

The keynote speaker for the conference was the former chief economist of India: Kaushik Basu.

Following the NZIRI conference in Wellington, we had another conference on September 1 in Auckland, where Professor Chatterjee delivered a very informative lecture on the nature of violence against women (VAW) during the period of Bengal Renaissance. He contrasted the role of two great social reformers: Vivekananda and Vidyasagar in combating VAW. He noted the sharp contrast between the secular approach of and the influence of religions on the wellbeing of women: <http://homes.eco.auckland.ac.nz/dban008/Swami%20Vivekanandas%20on%20Women%20by%20Prof%20Srikanta%20Chatterjee.pdf>.

Three world-renowned Swamijis, representing Ram Krishna Missions, located in three different continents: Europe, Asia and America, emphasized the importance of women's education. They recommended that men should ask women what they want before pushing for any reforms. A local Indian newspaper covered that event and you can get a summary of what Swamijis said here: <http://www.indianweekender.co.nz/Pages/ArticleDetails/7/3927/NewZealand/Ramakrishna-Vedanta-Centre-celebrates-the-150th-birth-anniversary-of-Swami-Vive>.

I presented my ideas suggesting that a transition from the traditional culture, based on the glorification of motherhood, to a different one which respects womanhood improves the wellbeing of a technologically advanced economy and the society that upholds it. The traditional role playing labels as mothers and daughters often act as a euphemism for values that make women's desire for liberation immoral in men's eyes and that may contribute to male hostility and violence against women in the society. To recognise that a woman, like a man, is a human first turns out

to be also an economically smart idea for creating wealth of nation. Consequently, in my model, men's education and protection of civil liberty of men and women, as opposed to male protection of women, turns out to be more important than education of women by men. Here are the slides for my talk: <http://homes.eco.auckland.ac.nz/dban008/Vivekananda%20Conference%202013%20ver38.pdf>.

These conferences brought a number of distinguished people with a widely different viewpoints and expertise to reflect on the problem of VAW and that seemed to be a good starting point. It gave me an opportunity to discuss our Forum's activities with Kaushik Basu who was quite favourably impressed with our objectives and efforts. When I brought up the topic of promoting awareness of men about the humanity of women, through various media events and conferences, he got emotional and said "Debasis, you are speaking my heart". He encouraged me to follow up with the idea of a conference. He gave me an informal commitment to participate, if it is held in 2015.

—Debasis Bandyopadhyay

<http://www.womenempowermentinindia.com>



The website [WomenEmpowermentInIndia.com](http://www.WomenEmpowermentInIndia.com) has been created with the purpose to spread awareness about empowerment of women. This is a place where people can discuss, share their views and promote and demonstrate constructive ideas.

We found this website quite informative.

■ BANGALORE

Six convicted in Bangalore : A lower court on Sept. 4 convicted six persons who were arrested in connection with the alleged gangrape of a 21-year-old student of National Law School of India University (NLSIU) from Nepal last year. The Fifth City Civil and Sessions Court Judge K.B. Sangannavar pronounced conviction of the six persons. The law student was raped by an eight-member gang inside the adjacent Jnanabharathi campus of Bangalore University in October last year. The seventh accused Raja is still absconding. The eighth accused is a minor and the trial is going on at a Juvenile court in Bangalore.



■ DELHI

Muslim Personal Law can't override criminal law: Holding that Muslim Personal Law cannot 'override' criminal law, a Delhi court has rejected the bail plea of a Muslim man, accused of kidnapping and raping his



17-year-old lover belonging to the same community. The court said that the law of the land should be applied uniformly and constitutional concept of equality before law cannot be diluted by one set of legislation for Muslims and a different one for non-Muslims. Additional Sessions Judge Kamini Lau said, "Merely because both the girl and the accused happen to be from the same religion whose Personal Law provides for a different age of marriage than the one provided under the statutory law of the land, does not mean any special indulgence is required to be given to the accused in so far as criminal law of this land is concerned." Under the Muslim Personal Law, a girl can marry as per her choice if she has attained puberty. "I may observe that India is governed by secular concepts provided under the Constitution and Sharia cannot override the same. The Muslim Personal Law only applies to cases relating to marriage, divorce and personal relations but has no applicability in case of a criminal liability," the judge said. The accused was arrested under provisions of the IPC dealing with kidnapping and the Protection Of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act dealing with sexual assault. ■■■

IS IT NOT THE TIME TO REVIEW THE JUVENILE JUSTICE ACT ?

Even as voices demanding a relook and review of the Juvenile Justice Act resonate louder after the incidents of Dec. 16 in Delhi and Aug. 22 in Mumbai, a report in the Times of India reminds us of just why it is about time for that change.

A juvenile offender Vishal (name changed) was found guilty of the rape and murder of a 6-year-old girl in a 2007 case, by a trial court and handed him a death sentence. But, the Delhi High Court (in last November) held that he was a juvenile when he committed the crime, after which he was allowed to return home as he had already served a prison sentence of five years. The trial court handed him a death sentence holding his age to be 20 years. But, relying on a bone ossification test which put his age between 17-20 years at the time of the crime and statements by his sisters, Delhi high court declared him a 'juvenile'.

The Juvenile Justice Act (last amended over 10 years ago) allows for a maximum term of just three years in a reform home for a person below the age of 18, who has committed a crime. The Act does not consider the nature of the crime. Vishal was spared death despite conviction thanks to the Act, though he had brutally raped and murdered his minor victim, chopped her body and threw the parts in two public toilets.

Vishal who lives in Delhi's Rohini area, still lives only a few hundred metres away from the family of the six-year-old girl he brutally raped and killed. The newspaper reports that earlier this year, he allegedly threatened to do the same to their younger daughter. The family lodged a case of criminal intimidation and criminal trespass with the local police, but he was released on bail soon after. "Our family just can't digest the fact that the killer is living right in our midst and the police and

judiciary can't do anything about it," Manoj, a relative, told. The Delhi Police told the newspaper that it plans to cite Vishal's case before the Supreme Court to push for reforms in the Juvenile Justice Act (JJ Act) and hope that it helps initiate a reform. Just as all those voices demanding a relook will.

FIND NAVARUNA : ONLINE PETITION

12-year-old Navruna, a class-VII student of St Xavier's Public School in Muzaffarpur had gone missing from her house located in Ghirnipokhar locality in Muzaffarpur on September 18 last year.

After the initiative taken by the PMO, the Bihar government ultimately recommended a CBI inquiry into the kidnapping of Navruna. The state govt. issued a notification—exactly one year after the girl reported missing—on 20th Sept. Initially the state government had ordered a CID probe, but without any result.

PROTIBAAD FORUM has put an online petition to the CBI Director to find Navaruna expeditiously. Navaruna's cousin Navajeet Chakravarty and our Forum Administrator Aparajita Sen are mainly behind the online petition. Forum members are requested to sign the petition and inspire others to sign the same. Finding the girl is important and also important is the truth behind her abduction. Please find the petition at <<https://www.change.org/en-GB/petitions/find-navaruna>>.



DELHI GANG-RAPE JUDGEMENT

On Friday, 13th September 2013, the Trial Court at Saket, New Delhi handed out death sentences to Akshay Thakur, Vinay Sharma, Mukesh Singh, and Pawan Gupta convicted on charges of rape and murder of Jyoti Singh Pandey. Following the brutal assault by six intoxicated men, the young woman succumbed to her injuries in a Singapore hospital on 29th December, 2012. Following public outrage and wide spread demonstrations all over India, a fast track court was set up for a speedy judgment in January 2013. The sentence comes after seven months of legal wrangling and innumerable delaying tactics used by the defense lawyers. One of the main accused, Ram Singh, died in police custody on 11th March, 2013. The sixth perpetrator, a minor at the time the incident took place, was tried by the Juvenile Justice Board that ordered a three year sentence in a reform facility.

In India, death sentences can be pronounced only in the 'rarest of rare cases'—the extraordinary brutality of the perpetrators that resulted in the untimely death of Jyoti Singh Pandey is indeed rare, even in a country where rape and violence against women is ubiquitous. In fact, it seems that the majority of the Indian population was expecting the verdict. "Cheers went up from a crowd inside and outside the Delhi courthouse when lawyers rushed out to announce the sentence", reported Reuters, and there were spontaneous celebrations all over India. While human rights activists questioned the judgment, the family members of the victim were happy. So was the common man. 'Hang the rapists' screamed banners and posters. 'Nirbhaya has Won' proclaimed others. Leaders of the political parties came out in support of a death sentence: it would "set an example for the future" declared Sushma Swaraj (BJP). In other words, the death sentence is expected to act as a serious deterrent for all future acts of violence against women in India.

Now that the initial wave of excitement, statements and counter statements has subsided, let us take a closer look at how the justice system in India works. The death sentence pronounced by the Trial Court will now have to be confirmed by the High Court. On 24th September, the Delhi High Court said that "it would hear the trial court's reference for confirmation of the death penalty awarded by it to four men convicted in the December 16 gang-rape case on a day-to-day basis". Now the hearing has been postponed to 1st October after the counsel for the four convicts submitted that "they did not have the same set of documents with which prosecution will present the case before it". The initial

As Prime Minister, Golda Meir was once asked to place a curfew on women to end a series of rapes. However, she refused, saying, "But it is the men who are attacking the women. If there is to be a curfew, let the men stay at home."



trial took seven months. It is a matter of conjecture how long the High Court will take to confirm the death sentence. But definitely not before the end of the year, especially with the beginning of the festival season and court holidays in October and November.

Once the judgment is validated, the convicted have the right to appeal to the Supreme Court and finally to the President of India for a mercy plea. In other words, Akshay Thakur, Vinay Sharma, Mukesh Singh, and Pawan Gupta will not be hanged tomorrow—probably not in the months to come. Just a reminder, almost 500 people in India are currently on the death row awaiting execution. So will this death sentence actually have the expected deterrent effect for fighting violence against women in India? It seems to be a legitimate question to ask, especially since the media continues to report the atrocities committed against women almost on a daily basis. Now that the sentence has been pronounced, will the same media keep reporting about the daily proceedings in the High Court and beyond? Will public interest be sustained?

On 23rd September, the Wall Street Journal published the story about Akshay Kumar Singh's wife Punita Devi and her two year old son. Both of them are likely to face ostracism and destitution in the days to come because of the crime committed by her husband. In a way, Punita is a victim too, but would anything be done to ensure her survival as well as the survival of her son?

Heinous crime requires harsh punishment—there is no doubt about it. But wouldn't this death sentence somehow eclipse the real and deep rooted problems in India that has to do with education, law and order and the legal system? The brutal incident shook a whole country out of its collective apathy, and this would have been the right time for the government, for the political parties and above all for the civil society to engage in a constructive dialogue for initiating the much required reforms.

—Aparajita Sen

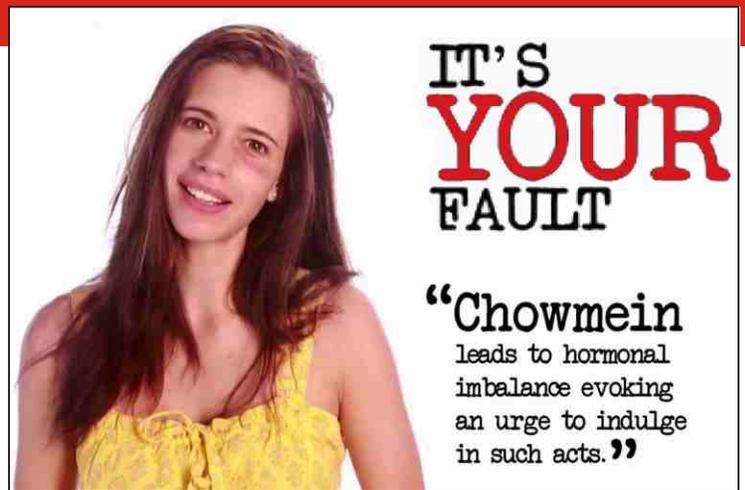
'IT'S YOUR FAULT' TOUCHES A RAW NERVE

SUBHODEV DAS: A satirical video titled *It's Your Fault* featuring actress Kalki Koechlin and VJ Juhi Pandey has gone viral on social networking sites. The video, which blames rape victims, has got around 125,000 hits in less than 48 hours of its release on September 19, 2013. A group of four standup comedians called 'AIB' Tanmay Bhat, Gursimran Khamba, Rohan Joshi and Ashish Shakya has made the video, in the wake of cases of sexual assault and violence against women in India. The group on YouTube said, "Every sexual assault case in India inspires a string of stupid and hateful remarks against women. This is our response to those remarks."

The video starts with Kalki Koechlin who says, "Ladies, do you think rape is something men do out of a desire for control empowered by years of patriarchy. You clearly been misled by the notion that women are people too, because let's face it ladies. Rape, It's your Fault."

The 3-minute, 36-second clip showcases popular topics such as the provocative clothes women wear that triggers sexual assault, marital rape or late night parties, going out with boys and others. It also mocks comments made by politicians, spiritual leaders and media personalities, such as a well-known personality claiming that 'chow mein' leads to hormonal imbalance. Rohan Joshi, one of the AIB comedians, spoke about how the video is about bringing a positive change to the issue. "We want to contribute positively to the conversation about the subject. We hope it makes some people feel like idiots, and we also hope it tells women that we're not all idiots; a lot of us are on your side, and will always be vocal about it," he explained.

The response to the video has been overwhelming and people want the creators to dub it in other languages to reach a wider audience. "Hopefully, we will have a Hindi version out soon and others will follow," says Kalki Kochelin. The actress admits that everything adds to the debate and it is not one thing that will change the society. Kalki says, "As long as we keep the conversation going and we don't forget



about the problems that we have, it will help. And the debate causes some change."



SANGBREETA MOITRA: A satirical video aimed at the rise of sexual assault cases in India has made a lasting impression on social media, in India and abroad. Titled "It's your fault", it mirrors the various forms of VAW (Violence against Women) issues such as rape, molestation, domestic violence; and the apathy towards the victim and the common trend of victim-blaming on attire, travelling alone or marital rape. Indian female actors Kalki Koechlin and Juhi Pandey smile through the sarcasm-ridden video, accepting all blame as rape victims; a dark reminder of the strongly patriarchal undercurrents that dominate the Indian democratic society. A brain-child of the Indian comedy podcast "AIB", the video has become hugely popular and viral on social media with over 1,00,000 views in less than 48 hours of its release. The video was created as a backlash in the wake of misogynist comments against women and VAW-victims by spiritual leaders, media personalities and politicians. The video and its content resonate with the growing resentment against female oppression in urban India. The video ends with a series of Indian women, facing the camera and the nation accepting the one harsh reality "It's my fault".

HELPFUL LINKS ON VAW

<http://protibaadforum.wordpress.com> • <https://www.facebook.com/SaveNavaruna>
http://www.who.int/mediacentre/news/releases/2013/violence_against_women_20130620/en/
<http://www.un.org/en/women/endviolence> • <http://www.un.org/en/women/endviolence/>
<http://indialawyers.wordpress.com/category/crime-against-women/>
<http://nlrd.org/womens-rights-initiative/supreme-court-latest-orders-and-judgements/landmark-judgments-on-violence-against-women-and-children-from-south-asia>

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