



PROTIBAAD Forum Newsletter

Protesting Violence Against Women

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Editorial

The Unavoidable Truth : Rape is the Biggest Crime in India

The record of the India's National Crime Record Bureau identifies RAPE as the biggest crime trend in India. Our story of the month is about a gang rape which even the Supreme Court of India found to be **very disturbing**. The gang rape was ordered by the people, entrusted to run a village Panchayat, a legal institution in India, celebrated for upholding democracy and decentralization of power. A similarly appalling decision was taken by the same institution against another girl in 2010. There seems to be an institutionalized culture of violence against women which cannot be undermined as the act of a few bad apples.

A ray of hope and inspiration comes from the story of Soni Sori, an Adivasi school teacher in Jabeli village of Dantewada. This is a story of courage and determination to empower women to speak up against such violence and exploitation. She was caught in a violent conflict and suffered attacks from all sides, but continued her struggle for justice with her indomitable spirit.

Can technology provide support in meeting that challenge? Recent developments bring mixed feelings. We welcome new developments in the public safety system as a deterrent to crime against women; yet, valid concerns remain about efficient management of different electronic devices as parts of a nationwide integrated system to create a safe environment for women. Kolpita Basu's article examines some of the factors associated with economic empowerment of women and the urban-rural divide that seems to play an important role. Women can emerge as creators of economic and social wealth if and only if they get equal opportunities, she argues. Mousumi Mukherjee's story reflects on the society's acceptance of a culture of discrimination against women as a part of the past tradition, as the way of life. Her story represents the truth that more than anything else, the tradition and cultural 'norms' and 'social attitude toward women' represent the most significant cause of violence against women in the Indian society.

The Story of Soni Sori : A Story of Courage

Soni Sori used to teach tribal children in Dantewada, Chhattisgarh. Accused of trumped up charges of being an informant to the Maoist network, she was asked to sign a confessional naming several people as



part of the Naxalite-Maoist network. On her refusal to sign the statement, she was tortured and raped under police custody and then jailed for two and a half years.

In an exclusive interview with Tehelka, Soni Sori recounted her story and her determination to go back to her native Chhattisgarh to continue her work on educating the women. "All tribal and Dalit men and women must learn to speak up against violence and exploitation. I want them to fight for their rights, to stand up for themselves when they are wronged. "My experience in jail has not shattered me, it has given me power," declares the still undaunted woman. She would be taking a great risk going back to her native place—she thinks she may even be

killed—because she intends to recount the horrible torture of women while in police custody. "There are girls who were kept in police stations for 15 days, raped and tortured. There are others who were shot and are still languishing in jails. Some girls had to undergo operations. There was a girl who always stayed with me in jail. She told me that for one month she was kept in different police stations and sexually assaulted. For one month, she was beaten, kicked and raped. Then they shifted her to a police station in Sukma district where she was admitted to a hospital. After 15 days, they sent her to jail before she could recover. A few months later, organs that were probably her ovaries came out of her uterus, which she even tried to cut with a blade and she was then sent to surgery. There were complications later and another surgery was required," says Sori. She highlighted the fact that all these incidents took place in police stations and not in jails.

Soni Sori's story is an example of the inherent injustice meted out to tribal women almost on a daily basis in India. Caught in the cross-fire of insurgency and counter insurgency movement in Chhattisgarh, Sori suffered for a long time. Her three young children were separated while she was imprisoned; her father was shot in the leg by Naxalites on false accusations of land grabbing, her school collapsed. With enormous determination, she managed to flee to Delhi in 2011, and following an interview with Tehelka in 2011, the Supreme Court intervened. The civil society took up her cause as well and now Sori is free. This incredibly courageous woman has not given up her fight. "On my return to Chhattisgarh, I will help with my father's farming. I will rebuild my life. I will stay with my father at and live with dignity and fight with honesty. I will also return to teaching at some point" she said.

Find full interview here: <http://www.tehelka.com/i-think-they-will-kill-me-because-the-truth-scars-them/>.

Chhattisgarh cadre police officer Mr. Ankit Garg was awarded the Police Medal for Gallantry on 26 January 2012. He is the officer who allegedly supervised the torture of Soni Sori. In a series of letters to the Supreme Court, Soni Sori said Mr. Garg verbally abused her and directed police personnel to torture her. She alleged that Mr. Garg watched as junior police personnel stripped her naked, administered electric shocks and assaulted her. Her lawyers said, a medical examination found two stones in Ms. Soni's genital tract and another in her rectum.

Shame : Gang Rape Ordered By Indian Village Elders

A 20-year-old tribal woman was allegedly gang-raped in a West Bengal village on the orders of a 'Salishi Sabha', the state's equivalent of Khap panchayats. The 20-year-old victim says men she knew "as neighbours, as uncles and brothers" assaulted her throughout the night. She was reportedly attacked by the men in Subalpur village in West Bengal's Birbhum district. Her fault? Falling in love with a man from outside her community and then failing to pay the fine of Rs. 50,000 imposed by the Salishi Sabha. The family sneaked out of the village the following day and took her to the block hospital in Labhpur. After preliminary treatment she went to the police station with her mother and lodged a complaint. All of the accused, including the village headman who allegedly ordered and led the assault, have been arrested.

News of the gang rape in Birbhum shook the State, which is already reeling under a series of sex crimes against women. West Bengal government is facing immense anger from the citizens over atrocities against women. The Supreme Court described the alleged horrific gang rape as "very disturbing" and ordered a probe. While the State women's panel has taken cognizance, the National Commission for Women sent a probe team and demanded an action taken report from the chief minister. The incident is not isolated. In 2010, a 15-year-old tribal girl was forced to parade naked through



Some accused in Police custody

villages in the same district for falling in love with a boy from another community. Across India, village councils often hold huge power over people in rural communities and have often been guilty of running their own courts and delivering punishment. Large swathes of India are still governed by these Kangaroo Courts, primitive, powerful and potent, that take arbitrary decisions ranging from stealing of cows to inter-caste marriages. With the judicial courts neck deep in pending cases, the country's illegal parallel courts are dispensing justice quick and fast, often with deadly consequences.

White House Report : Women in US colleges at great risk of being Raped

A White House report, published on January 22nd, highlights a stunning prevalence of rape on college campuses, with 1 in 5 female students assaulted while only about 1 in 8 reports it. "No one is more at risk of being raped or sexually assaulted than women at our nation's colleges and universities," said the report by the White House Council on Women and Girls. Nearly 22 million American women and 1.6 million men have been raped in their lifetimes, according to the report.

The report chronicled the devastating effects, including depression, substance abuse and a wide range of physical ailments such as chronic pain and diabetes. The White House report said sexual assaults in campus are fuelled by drinking and drug use that can incapacitate victims, often at student parties at the hands of someone they know. Perpetrators often are serial offenders. One study cited by the report found that 7% of college men admitted to attempting rape, and 63% of those men admitted to multiple offences, averaging six rapes each.

President Obama, who has overseen a military that has grappled with its own crisis of sexual assaults, spoke out against the crime as "an affront on our basic decency and humanity." He then signed a memorandum creating a task force to respond to campus rapes. Obama said he was speaking out as president and a father of two daughters, and that men must express outrage to stop the crime. "We need to encourage young people, men and women, to realise that sexual assault is simply unacceptable," he said. "And they're going to have to summon the bravery to stand up and say so, especially when the social pressure to keep quiet or to go along can be very intense."

TECHNOLOGY

Cyber Security Device for Women

A Kerala firm has developed a new device to protect women from sexual offenders and other forms of violence. According Ms. Krishnashree Achuthan, Director of Kollam-based Amrita University's Centre for Cyber Security Systems & Networks, "The Amrita Personal Safety System (APSS) is an inconspicuous, wearable and easy-to-operate electronic device that will help women to trigger communication with family and police when in distress. A distinct feature of APSS is that it can function even in rural areas where the speed of communication is minimal. It can function indoors and outdoors with minimal power consumption."



Prototype APSS

The device integrates more than 15 features pertaining to women's safety and security. It can also be used as a safety device for mentally challenged people.

India plans US\$ 52M GIS-based Public Safety Response System

The Indian Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs has approved a proposal by the Ministry of Home Affairs to establish an Integrated Computer-Aided Dispatch platform that will effectively and efficiently respond to emergency calls by the public, and integrate with other emergency services such as medical, fire and disaster management. The system will track alarms generated by panic buttons, landlines, mobiles and mobile applications and the appropriate emergency response units will be dispatched to attend calls. With control rooms to be setup in 114 cities and districts nationwide, the project aims to cover 32.6 per cent of the total population or 391 million people.

Technological applications seem to be the thrust area of the Nirbhaya Fund set up by the Gol as well. The Transport Ministry advised setting up of GPS for tracking of vehicles which will cost nearly Rs. 17 billion. The Railway Ministry tabled the most expensive proposal worth Rs. 250 million of starting an SOS alert system in trains.

"Rape is a culturally fostered means of suppressing women. Legally we say we deplore it, but mythically we romanticize and perpetuate it, and privately we excuse and overlook it."—Victoria Billings, American Journalist

Empowerment through Economic Independence and Wealth Creation

How often have you seen your mother wanting to do something for her family, but had to resist because she had to depend on your father financially? I have come across this situation several times. There were examples in my family as well as in the families of friends and relatives.

Perhaps this prompted me to consider economic independence as the foremost criterion of my life. That independence came once I grew up. I was fortunate to get and create the opportunity that came into my life. My teachers inspired me and other fellow students to become economically independent. But not many women in our society have that economic independence or the opportunity. That, I think, is a fundamental problem.

Empowerment comes from within the family. And that comes through knowledge. That knowledge can be rightly imparted by parents. After all, education begins at home. If a child, male or female, sees his/her parents taking major economic decisions at home, s/he will grow up with that same sense of economic responsibility towards himself/herself, family and society.

Take the example of a rural household where both the man and the woman are directly involved in the means of production, namely agriculture. Like the man, the woman here too produces and markets the product. Case in point is our green grocers and our fish mongers. The women here take into account the profits and losses. They are not only empowered to provide food to their families, but also have the decision-making power to send their children to schools if the villages they reside in have that provision.

Nonetheless, this should not suggest that everything is honky dory at their end. (One cannot and must not forget the misery they go through.) But all I am suggesting is they at least have the means and power to raise their voices if and when they are wronged.

The urban middle class woman, in contrast, stays dependent on many socio-economic factors. Yes, the social mores are changing and we are seeing more women making a career. Yet, the economic responsibility lies more with the man. If there has to be a sacrifice in the family, it is normally assumed that the woman will give up her job and career. Hence, women's economic priorities lose significance to the 'immedi-



ate' priorities of, say, marriage and motherhood. If an economic decision is taken, it is usually taken by the man.

It is assumed that women are natural caregivers and homemakers - not career-driven or wealth creators. The problem is found at the workplace too, where men frown upon ambitious women or consider them too weak to assume a greater role. Women have to fight to get their due. It's a vicious circle, because men who think like that too have seen the same power play at their homes and schools since childhood.

Yes, there are the Indra Nooyis, the Anu Agas, Kalpana Morparias, Chanda Kochhars, Arundhanti Bhattacharyas, the Naina Lal Kidwais, the Zia Modys, but quoting the last person, "we are yet to break the glass ceiling". Women have to be economically powerful and emerge as wealth creators. For that, we need to have those opportunities and pass them on to the next generation of women, and men, to keep society on an equal footing. We need to create wealth through fair means and so that we can pass on that to those needy sisters and brothers who can use that wealth to empower themselves.

Not only will wealth through fair means destroy poverty, it will help root out crimes against women in the long run as we open gates of equal opportunities to both the sexes. Economic empowerment of both the sexes will widen knowledge. And thus allow smooth acceptance of men and women in a truly civilised society.

After all, how often have we felt the need to do something for society, but couldn't because we lacked the means?

—Kolpita Basu

UN European Ad Competition

Designers from Denmark, Kosovo and France won the top three prizes in the UN European Ad Competition, No to Violence Against Women, UNRIC, the organizers, announced in Brussels 19 October.

Danish designer Trine Sejthen won the first prize of 5,000 Euro for "Violence is not always visible." "Treat me like a woman" by artist Gjoke Gojani won the public vote prize. "Words" by Raphaëlle Moreau of France won the youth prize for participants under 25.



It was announced that a jury, chaired by French advertising guru, Jacques Séguela, had awarded the first prize to Trine Sejthen, a Danish designer and photographer. Over 2,700 entries from 40 European countries were submitted to the competition which was organized by UNRIC, the Brussels based UN Information Centre with the support of UN Women.

The aim of the competition was to increase awareness of a problem that affects one out of every three women worldwide. The winning ad will be published in several European newspapers at the conclusion of the competition on 25 November, the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women.



Gjoke Gojani : Treat me like a Woman

Grandma's Experience left a Mark on Me

I recently read an article in a science journal: *Grandma's Experience Leaves a Mark on Your Genes* (in the Discover-magazine.com). Instantly, a lot of my own feelings of anxiety, rage and passion started making more sense to me. I remembered my doctor back in India who once explained the cause of my gastro-intestinal health problems to my mother in the following way. "She is having all these health problems because of suppressed anger" he said. "Anger? My daughter is one of the coolest persons on earth. I have never seen her angry" my mother said. "There you go! How would you know? You all never even allow her to express her emotions" the doctor said. I also remembered how my paternal grandmother (Thakur Ma) would love to listen to the



My Grandmother 'Thakur Ma'



My Grandmother's mother

recording of Bengali theater personality Shaoli Mitra's "Nathabati Anathbat" in her cassette player and cry like a baby for hours. She asked me to buy her a set of audio recordings of the play after watching it on the stage once. I was in my first year of college. I used to wonder about my grandmother's deep emotional pain. Her eyes welled with tears while listening to these recordings over and again. (The play narrated the story of the great Indian epic Mahabhrata from the perspective of Draupadi.) Draupadi was unhappy to serve as the wife of five husbands against her own wishes and being humiliated by the male cousins of her husbands. Her life was full of pain, insult and loneliness.

My grandma had a very combative relationship with my grandfather, who was apparently a devoted, faithful and caring husband. She had to oppose and fight anything he would say before coming to some kind of compromise or giving up altogether. Household quarrels were a norm. My grandma was also very mean towards her two daughters-in-law, particularly my mother (my parents had a love marriage). Domestic violence and abuse, especially of my mother, were daily affairs. What was my grandmother's problem with life? The mystery of her pain started to unravel after her death. Her sister started recounting the harrowing stories of their lives moving from rural West Bengal to the big city of Calcutta.

My grandma was a child-bride and so was her widowed mother (my Baro Ma). The latter would stay with us sometimes when I was little. With no place to call her own, Baro Ma would stay at her two daughters' matrimonial homes alternately. She married a much older man and became a child widow with two daughters after her husband died within a few years of marriage. The life options, for a poor Brahmin widow in the early 20th century rural Bengal, were next to none. So, she married off her daughters, also as child-brides, to the first willing persons she could find. My grandmother was married at 13. She was a home-schooled voracious reader, who hated household work. I remember seeing my grandfather

helping my mother and aunt in the kitchen after he retired, but not my grandmother unless it was a special occasion like someone's birthday. I feel that my grandma and all the difficult experiences of my mother affected me emotionally and my views of the world. I think my father also felt deeply about his own mother's pain in spite of her meanness towards my mother, her initial rejection of me as a granddaughter and all the domestic problems. She is probably one of the big reasons why my father chose to invest in my education and decided not to have a son, though my grandmother was openly upset at the fact that I was born a girl. "Our society needs well-educated mothers," I remember my father saying to his friends and our relatives when I was a little school girl. He always championed girl's education.

I think that the deep passion I feel about injustices in this world, especially about injustices towards women, is not just based on my own life experiences but also because of the experience of older women in my family—my mother, my grandmother and her mother.

—Mousumi Mukherje

Women's Education

"Education is one of the most important means of empowering women with the knowledge, skills and self-confidence necessary to participate fully in the development process."—*ICPD Programme of Action*, paragraph 4.2

Education is important for everyone, more so for women and girls. This is true not only because education is a gateway to other opportunities, but because the educational achievements of women can ripple through the family, the community and across generations. Investing in girls' education is one of the most effective ways to reduce poverty.

Prior to discussing women's ('girls' included henceforth) education, we need a yardstick to quantitatively evaluate the state of 'education'. **Educational Attainment**, which looks at female literacy rate and how frequently women are enrolled in higher education, is one such tool. The Gender Gap Index (GGI) introduced by the World Economic Forum (WEF) to measure the inequality in achievements between the genders of a nation and the Gender Inequality Index (GII) of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) use it as one of the key areas of inequality.

In the WEF Gender Gap Report of 2013, India ranked 120 (out of 136) in the Educational Attainment indicator with a female-to-male literate ratio of 0.68. The

literacy sub-indices stack up as follows: Primary rank 52, ratio 1.00; Secondary rank 111, ratio 0.79; Tertiary rank 107, ratio 0.73. (See Figure below).



Figure 1. Education attainment sub-indices.⁴

Overall score: 0.68

Rank: 123

Median: 0.991³

Sub-indices: (1) Literacy rate (age 15 and above), (2) Enrolment in primary education, (3) Enrolment in secondary education, (4) Enrolment in tertiary education. **Cont'd** →



LITERACY RATE

According to the 2011 census, the effective literacy rates (age 7 and above) were **65.46% for women** compared to **82.14% for men** or 0.8 female-to-male literacy ratio. **Kerala** with 0.96 female-to-male literacy ratio (92% female literacy rate) was the top gender equal state/UT in India while **Rajasthan** with 0.65 literacy ratio (52% female literacy rate) was the least gender equal state/UT. Except Himachal Pradesh, all the northern states have literacy ratios below the national average (0.8). Gender gap in literacy rate is illustrated in Figure 2 below.

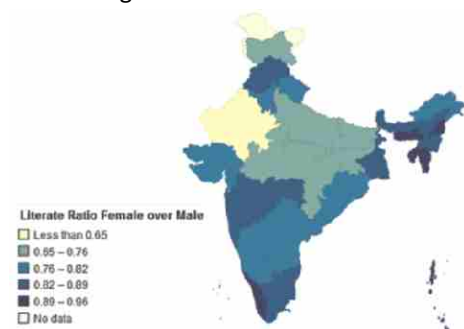


Figure 2. Literacy ratio female over male literacy rate. (Source: 2011 Census Data)

The low female literacy rate has had a dramatically negative impact on family planning and population stabilization efforts in India. Studies have indicated that female literacy is a strong predictor of the use of contraception among married Indian couples, even when women do not have economic independence. Illiterate women tend to have high levels of fertility, and mortality, poor nutritional status, low earning potential, and little autonomy within the household.

Surveys have shown that **infant mortality is inversely proportional to mother's educational level.**² A UNESCO project demonstrated that "each additional year of a mother's schooling reduces the probability of the infant mortality rate by 5 percent to 10 percent." The World Bank has estimated that for every four years of education, the fertility rate is reduced by about one birth per mother. The relationships among various population health statistics and the female literacy rate of India are illustrated in Figure 3.

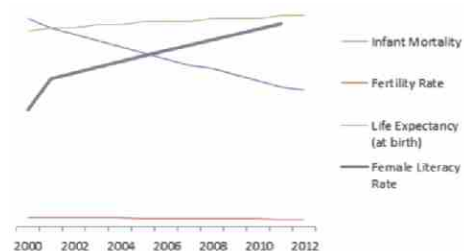


Figure 3. Female literacy rate vs. population health statistics (Sources: World Bank⁵, CIA World Factbook⁶)



Kerala has the lowest infant mortality rates, a fertility rate of 1.7 per couple and the highest life expectancies of all the states. Conversely, **U.P.** and **Bihar** (Bihar has a fertility rate of 4 per couple and a female literacy rate of 53.3%) have some of the lowest life expectancies found in India.

The education of parents is linked to their children's educational attainment, and the mother's education is usually more influential than the father's. An educated mother's greater influence in household negotiations may allow her to secure more resources for her children. Educated mothers are more likely to be in the labor force, allowing them to pay for some of the costs of schooling, and may be more aware of returns to schooling. And educated mothers, averaging fewer children, can concentrate more attention on each child.

In the 2001-2011 decadal period, the growth in female literacy rate (11.8%) was substantially higher than that of male (6.9%), which indicates a narrowing of the gender gap. About 72% of 'neo-literates' are women. Bihar and U.P. traditional laggards in education have shown maximum improvement both in improving overall literacy and in their female literacy rate. Many states have large rural-urban differences in female literacy. In 6 of the 24 states, 25% or less of the women in rural areas are literate. In Rajasthan, less than 12% of rural women are literate. The literacy increase overall and for women follows a decade in which successive governments have focused on school education like never before since Independence.

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[Next: Primary and Secondary Education]

—Subhudev Das

Name-and-shame Strategy in Sexual Harassment Undermining the Justice System?

Sexual harassment is a serious reality in the workplace, but the time has come to ask whether the educated women now coming out in the open to allege harassment by high-profile people ranging from former Supreme Court judges to famous editors are doing the larger cause any good. Two key features of this public fight against sexual harassment are a name-and-shame strategy and the media condemnation it evokes. Despite the fact that no one ought to be presumed guilty till proven so, the general attitude of these activists is to presume guilt till proven innocent. To date, too few women's organizations or independent analysts have protested against publish-and-be-damned approach to sexual harassment cases. By not speaking out against this pronouncement of guilt before any case is legally established, these women who often do not even file formal complaints with the police run the risk of ruining the cause of justice for women over the long-term. One can't see the logic or even the ethics of privileged women happily blogging about their own sexual harassment or other cases while refusing to file formal cases to bring the people to justice.

While it is possible to say that women have a choice on whether or not to take the

legal route in sexual harassment cases, the fact is they are worsening the climate for treating these crimes seriously and fairly for other less privileged women. Here's why.

One, by settling for media trials, they are essentially eating their cake and having it too. The damage done to the reputations of their alleged harassers is real, but they themselves have nothing to lose by making real or false allegations (if that is the case), or having to make their case in court. The usual rationale offered for this strategy is that the judicial process is typically burdensome and often traumatic for victims of sexual violence and harassment. For rape victims, the trial can often be as painful as the assault. But we



cannot use the system's flaws as an excuse to bypass it entirely. And when we do so in the form of name-and-shame strategies, we undermine any hope of reforming the judicial process, and violate its basic tenet which is the presumption of innocence.

Two, if even one such case turns out to have been made with malafide intentions, it will have repercussions for the conduct of such cases filed by women everywhere. If the courts and the police never too friendly to rape victims, leave alone sexual harassment victims, start believing that women unfairly get the upper hand in this battle, they will shift the burden of proof even more onto women litigants. Women who really receive the worst of both worlds are the underprivileged. They have no access to media or the police or the courts. This system will start turning hostile to such women as it already has in the cases of domestic violence and dowry, two crimes that have very tough laws and where judges are now beginning to discount allegations by women due to misuse of the law.

Three, while better off women may not pay a price, no one is going to deny them a job just because they made some allegations one cannot but assume that the overall climate for jobs will sour for women. While Cabinet Minister Farooq Abdullah was roundly condemned for his statement about not employing women for fear of future complaints, the truth is he was voicing concerns that many employers feel about how such complaints may be handled by the media. If you can be smeared without fear of consequences, who will take the risk of employing women, however competent? Thanks to this, a Tejpal continues to languish in jail for alleged sexual harassment even though other types of fraudsters and criminal are out on bail. Whatever be the crime of Tejpal, the point is to establish this fact in court with evidence, and not keep him in jail till public interest in his case wanes, or judicial whim dictates. While it is difficult for men to take up the cause of other men—more so when they are likely guilty of crimes against women since they then seem like apologists or defenders of the wrongdoing—I believe right-thinking women have to start speaking up against this gross injustice of trial-by-media in cases involving better off sections of women. By being partisan, these activists may be damaging the larger cause of justice for women, and that ought to be cause for concern for all citizens, irrespective of gender.

“Beauty provokes harassment, the law says, but it looks through men’s eyes when deciding what provokes it.”—**Naomi Wolf**. *The Beauty Myth: How Images of Beauty are Used Against Women*



On Feb. 14, 2014, the world witnessed the second spontaneous ‘rising’ of individuals across more than 200 countries in as many years. The **One Billion Rising for Justice (OBR4J)** event was a call to survivors to break silence and ‘release’ their stories, dancing and speaking out at the places where they need justice—courthouses, police stations, government offices, school administration buildings, work places, sites of environmental injustice, military courts, embassies, places of worship, homes, or simply public gathering places where women deserve to feel safe but too often do not.

In the run up to this year’s event, India held a number of ‘rising’ activities. On January 8, 2014, Mumbai along with several other cities around the globe organized forums called the State of Female Justice. At these events, leaders of activist groups, lawyers, thinkers and survivors talked about a more inclusive, multilayered story. The red light districts of Kolkata, under the aegis of ApneAap Women Worldwide, were holding an event almost every day to rise for justice.



On February 14th, thousands gathered at the Central Park in Delhi’s Connaught Place. Large number of people danced to demand an end to violence directed at women in India. Children from Tighri & Miranda House also sang songs in support of the campaign. People wrote strong messages about what they think can be done to end VAW. Several NGO’s highlighted the need to make public spaces and the transit infrastructure more accessible and safer for women and girls. Organizations working on Section 377 of IPC called for action against homophobia, racism and discrimination against people from the northeast and Africa.

Mumbai held its event at the amphitheater on Carter Road in Bandra. Among the speakers was Sneha Jawale, a burn-victim, who tearfully described how her in-laws burnt her because her family could not pay

“Rape’s not something where you just go, ‘Well, get over it’ or ‘Believe in love and peace, my child, and it’ll all be over’. Well, fuck you, that isn’t the answer. It’s a great thought, OK, but you can go and stick crystals up your butt and get on with it. I’m all for love and peace, but that’s not the side I work on. If somebody would talk about it, or worse, joke about it, I would be ready to kill. That’s not healing. It was a very long time after that before I was able to be with anyone again. And it has never been the same as it was before.”

—A rape survivor

full dowry. She asked victims of acid attacks and burns to stand up and fight for justice.



In Kolkata, sex workers from the city’s red light areas participated in street plays and dances and brought out a rally that began in Khidirpur. The play highlighted problems like trafficking of girls. The organizers submitted a charter of demands to police calling for steps to ensure women’s safety and to support witnesses of violence against women. Kolkata-based women’s rights organization ‘Swayam’, in collaboration with the Jadavpur University’s School of Women’s Studies, organized a workshop on Sexual Harassment of Women at workplace.



Other cities and towns in India also organized rallies, flash mobs, street plays, and speeches to commemorate OBR4J.

—SubhODEV DAS

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