



## Editor's Column

One of the cruelest forms of gender-based violence in India is the practice of witch hunting, which includes extreme violence and deep-rooted beliefs leading to inhuman torture and murder of alleged witches almost throughout the country.

Of late, there has been a spate of such incidents in different parts of the country. Very recently, a gruesome incident took place at Kanjia village, 45 km from Ranchi, in which five women branded as witches were dragged out of their homes and then brutally killed by the superstitious villagers.

In another case, in Assam, incited by two women, who claimed to be incarnations of goddess Durga, people from six villages ganged up and paraded a widow as a witch, killed her and buried the body at an isolated place.

Very recently, similar incidents occurred in Bishnupur and Giridi. Admittedly, it is a matter of deep shame that though we have entered the 69th year of Independence, the country is yet to be liberated from superstition and social evils.

Labelling and targetting a woman as a witch, disrobing and parading her, tonsuring her hair, blackening her face,

or forcing her to eat human excreta would be some of the worst forms of atrocities perpetrated particularly on single women or widows either to usurp their property or settle a personal vendetta. Women are also branded as 'Dayans' and held responsible following illness or death or extreme conditions like excessive rainfall, drought or floods, poor harvest or famine conditions.

Presently, only five states in India - Jharkhand, Bihar, Chhatisgarh, Odisha

### FOCUS

### Witch Hunting

and Assam have laws to tackle this social evil. The Rajasthan government has drafted a legislation suggesting stringent punishment for those, who torture or kill women by accusing them of being witches.

As per the statistics given by the National Crime Records Bureau, 2097 murders were perpetrated between 2000-2012, where witch hunting was the motive. Obviously, these practices persist in India not only due to the social sanctions given to witch-hunting but also because the police do not treat these crimes as murders.

Since, 2010, the Commission felt the need for a national legislation to prevent

these kinds of atrocities and subsequently in association with Partners for Law and Development organised a national consultation with diverse stakeholders.

Again in February, 2014, a two-day consultation was held at Jaipur, which reiterated the need for a model stringent national legislation, which will address the problem with the seriousness it deserves, and not be neglected as any other offence in IPC. Thereafter, a draft bill was prepared in consonance with the recommendations from various stakeholders by the University School of Law and Legal Affairs, IP University and put up before the Commission for its approval. The Commission set up an expert committee to look into the various aspects of the Draft Bill and suggested that the Bill should be examined thoroughly by legal experts before recommending it to the concerned ministry.

The draft was sent to the Ministry of Child and Development who, in turn, sent it to the Home Ministry for its approval. It is hoped that the new legislation with its strict provision will act as a deterrent and end witch hunting that continues to plague the remote parts of India.

## Profile in courage

Sadan, a brave tribal mother, fought with a panther for ten minutes to save her two-month old daughter. The panther attacked her while she was breast-feeding the child in the courtyard of her mud hut situated near a jungle. The incident occurred in Dagalfala village about 60 kms from Udaipur. As soon as the panther approached her, she threw the child on the ground. Despite bleeding profusely, she fought with the panther for ten minutes. Meanwhile, her pet dog joined in the fight. Hearing her cries, her brother-in-law and her neighbour Goma rushed to her help. The fight continued for another 20 minutes, forcing the panther to take refuge in a room. Later, a rescue team took out the panther from the room after it was tranquilised through a hole in the wall and taken to Udaipur zoo. Payal, the child is safe though she suffered injuries when her mother threw her on the ground. Sadan received severe injuries on the leg and Goma received 15 stitches.

## Dialogue on Gender Parity

The National Commission for Women in association with Ministry of Information and Broadcasting and ASSOCHAM organised a national dialogue on “An Equal Space : Gender Parity in Media and Entertainment Industry”, in New Delhi.

The objective of the dialogue was to suggest policies and programmes for addressing limiting factors in the media and entertainment sector and to propose deliverable solutions to increase participation, parity and ownership of women in the creative and decision-making domains as well as suggest policy recommendations for addressing issues like wage disparity, limited access to resources, unhealthy competition, lack of due credit for creative work or any other relevant issues.

The dialogue was divided into three technical sessions - (i) Equal opportunity for women in Media and Entertainment Sector; (ii) Enabling and empowering women in Media and Entertainment workplace; and (iii) Skill and capacity-building.

Delivering the inaugural address, Shri Prakash Javadekar, Union Minister of State for Environment, Forestry and Climate Change said that the world has lost a great deal of talent by not partnering with women. He said that steps should be taken to sensitise men on bringing gender parity in the media and entertainment sector to end discrimination being faced by women. “With education, awareness and empowerment, and the result-giving ability, I think the day of equal opportunity is not very far”, he added.

He said that women have the power of four CS - compassion, conviction, consistency and courage and with these women would gradually outshine men and break the glass ceilings.

Speaking on the occasion, NCW Chairperson Lalitha Kumaramangalam said that through this dialogue, the Commission would highlight the facts that women face huge disparity in the media and entertainment sector. They are not only denied wage parity, conducive working environment and recognition of their creativity, maternity leave, creche facilities but often become victims of sexual harassment. Moreover, their participation in media and entertainment sector as directors, cinematographers, writers, makeup artists is still meagre. She hoped this dialogue would come up with strong recommendations to be sent to the concerned Ministries for taking affirmative action to ensure gender parity.

Other eminent speakers included justice Reva Khetrpal, Addl. Solicitor General Pinky Anand, Ramesh Sippy, Preeti Malhotra, Nina Lath Gupta, Rajat Kapoor, Rahul Kanwal, Nirupama Kotru, Sagarika Ghose, Kiran Juneja, Divya Dutta, Kulmeet Makkar, Sunit Tandon, Fatima Karan, Nadira Babbar, Nalin Kohli, Siddharth Zarabi, Kadali Rao, D.S. Rawat, Usha Ananthasubramanian, Ira Bhaskar, Vandana Kohli and NCW Members, Laldingliani Sailo, Rekha Sharma and Sushma Sahu.



*NCW Chairperson welcoming Shri Prakesh Javadekar*



*Chairperson speaking at the dialogue on gender parity*



*At the national Dialogue (sitting from left) Ms. Lalitha Kumaramangalam, Member Sushma Sahu, Member Rekha Sharma, Preeti Sudan, Economic Advisor, Ministry of Women and Child Development*

## NCW gets new Members



A 1981 batch officer, belonging to the Indian Economic Service, **Ms. Preeti Madan** joined as the Member Secretary in the National Commission for Women on 30th July, 2015. Graduating from Lady Shree Ram College, she did her Masters in Economics from the Delhi School of Economics. Widely travelled in India and abroad, Ms. Madan has held various assignments in Government of India, including in the Ministry of Textiles, Women and Child Development, Minority Affairs, NIFT. Associated with Integrated Women and Child Protection programme, she was also incharge of Social Welfare Board and CARA,

handling social welfares schemes for women empowerment. With her vast and varied administrative experience and rich exposure to the working of different Ministries and Welfare Board, Ms. Madan will be an asset to the Commission. We wish her a very successful and productive tenure in NCW.



An alumus of prestigious DAV College, Dehradun. **Ms. Rekha Sharma** graduated with Political Science, History and English Literature. She also has a diploma in Marketing and Advertising, Fashion Designing and Higher Diploma in Computers System Management. Ms. Sharma joined the National Commission for Women as a Member on 6th August, 2015.

Married to an Army officer, she has proactively taken part in various family welfare activities within the Army to promote better standards of living and education among the wives and children of soldiers in order to make them self-reliant and face challenges of army life.

An erstwhile Member of the District Consumer & Redressal Forum of Haryana, she used to run her own event management center named 'Chavi'. She had organized various seminars, debates, talk shows on meaningful socially-relevant events affecting women at large. She has to her credit of establishing a registered NGO called 'Haryana Mahila Uthan Samiti', which works for empowerment of rural women of Haryana. A social and media activist, since the proliferation of internet environment in the country, Ms. Sharma has made significant contributions in the field of women empowerment. We are confident that Ms. Sharma will enrich the Commission with her varied experience. We welcome her to NCW.



A former President of Mahila Morcha, Bihar and Ward Councillor in Patna Municipal Corporation, **Ms. Sushma Sahu** joined the National Commission for Women as a member w.e.f. August 17, 2015. From a young age, she was encouraged by her family to take interest in women-related issues and fight against injustice meted out to them. She did her Masters in Home Science and also B.Ed. and M.Ed. from Patna University. She had served as a lecturer in Magadh University. She is committed to the cause of social justice and women empowerment having held many important posts in political and social organisations. Her experience as an administrator and a social activist will help her to work effectively in the National Commission for Women. We welcome Ms. Sushma Sahu to NCW.

## Muslim Women want ban on oral talaq and polygamy

A recently-released survey report conducted by Muslim Mahila Andolan across 10 states of India says that Muslim women want a ban on oral and unilateral *talaq* and have rejected polygamy. 88.5% of the total women surveyed want action against the clerics for sending notice of oral divorces and 93% stated they wanted arbitration to be made mandatory before a divorce. 91% women, speaking against polygamy said that a Muslim man should not be allowed to have another wife during the subsistence of the first marriage and 83.3% Muslim women believed codification of Muslim family law will help them to get justice with regard to age of marriage, divorce, polygamy, maintenance and custody of children.



## Engaging Youth in Social Responsibility

Splendour Foundation and Amity University organised a brainstorming session on 'Engaging Youth : Individual Social Responsibility' at Amity University campus in Lucknow. Addressing the students, Abhishek Mishra, UP Minister for vocational education and skill development exhorted the youngsters to give up negative attitudes and divert their attention towards individual social responsibility to make the society strong.

Speaking on the occasion, NCW Member, Chief Guest Laldingliani Sailo said it was payback time for the young generation to work for a better society and better world. Guest of honour, IG Police Navneet Sakeira called upon students to always raise their voice against injustice and use the power of social media to bring such issues into limelight. Ms. Shamina Shafiq, Vice-President Splendour Foundation also addressed the gathering.



NCW Member Laldingliani Sailo addressing the gathering

## Important Decisions

- The Supreme Court came to the rescue of a 14-year-old rape victim, who was earlier denied permission by the Gujarat High Court to terminate her pregnancy, by ordering that the requisite surgery may be done if the gynaecologists and clinical psychologists permit it, with the consent of the girl and her parents.
- The Rajasthan Chief Minister has asked all district collectors to adopt atleast two children identified from the field of sports or education and bear all their responsibilities.
- The Delhi Government has decided to induct 1500 women constables for 'Operation Shishtachar'. These women will deal firmly with anyone, who is caught harassing women. They will also act against those men who, stare at women. Started by police in various districts of Delhi only earlier this month, the initiative involves women in plainclothes visiting busy markets and travelling in public transport. If they detect any eve-teasers, or men ogling at women, they will take them to the local police station and summon their parents. The offenders will be taught how to behave with women and imparted spiritual lessons. They will be released after tendering an apology.

## Do you know?

- When the government is trying hard to implement the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace Act, a recent survey carried out by a company on compliances of the Act has shown that 90% of organisations are not aware of the law and its implementation.
- Indian women are the biggest participants in 'Adventure tourism' in South Africa with a majority of them taking part in sports like bungee-jumping, sky diving, shark diving, going on mountain trail, said country Head South Africa tourism.
- The latest National Crime Records Bureau figures show that Delhi topped in sexual crimes in 2014, with 7,849 cases of sexual offences, which included more than 2000 rapes.
- 23 cases of rape in police stations and other places involving police personnel have been reported in the 14 month period between January, 2014 and February, 2015. 29 policemen were named in these cases, 11 were arrested, while two surrendered in court. However, after investigation, 8 policemen were let off as charges against them were found to be fake.

*for further information visit our website at : [www.ncw.nic.in](http://www.ncw.nic.in)*

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