



Editor's Column

The 'Global One Billion Rising Campaign' (OBR) was held on 14th February, the Valentine's Day, across the world to end sexual violence against women. The campaign brought thousands together, irrespective of background or gender. Students, activists, professionals to young rag pickers, domestic workers and even hawkers joined the movement.

Instead of traditional signifiers of action on Valentine's Day, the OBR marked its day of action with plays, dances and marches to draw attention to the rising crimes against women and for a safer city for them. Balloons were released in London, there was dancing everywhere from Bangladesh to Amsterdam and marches in Afghanistan and Fiji, among other places.

While the countrywide protest that followed the gang-rape in Delhi

on December 16, pushed the central government to set up a three-member committee, the support for the victim gave many others the courage and confidence to come out and share their experiences of sexual abuse and harassment. One such person is musician Anoushka Shankar, who courageously admitted that she had suffered sexual abuse as a child at the



hands of a person, who was trusted implicitly by her parents. Her admission came just before the launch of One Billion Rising Campaign, started by American play writer Eve Ensler. This worldwide movement urges men and women to stand up against sexual violence and end the culture of rape.

Shankar's acknowledgement was particularly significant before the launch of the OBR because this would

encourage many victims to speak of their experiences of sexual harassment and help them to realize that they are not to be blamed, nor is there anything to be ashamed of. The revelations would also motivate the parents to speak up for their children of such incidents instead of brushing them under the carpet because in most of the cases, the parents are well aware of the person, abusing their child.

Admittedly, the December 16, gang rape has led to lot of deliberations and debates on women's security and safety as well as on violence perpetrated against them alongwith other women-related issues. It is hoped that the One Billion Rising Campaign will keep up the momentum and will help to bring purposeful laws to eliminate occurrences like what took place on 16th December, 2012 so that the death of the brave heart will not be in vain.

Release of NCW Guidelines for service providers

A one-day consultation, sponsored by NCW, was organised by the Mahaveer Shiksha Samiti at Bhopal, in which a book containing guidelines for various service providers was released. Releasing the book, the NCW Chairperson, Ms. Mamta Sharma said that the document made an attempt to provide a set of procedures to be followed by various stakeholders, including the police, the medical professionals, courts, social workers, counsellors and the media for prompt and effective concerted action as well as for providing expeditious justice to the survivors of crimes. The book also explains the rights of rape and sexual assault victims.



NCW Chairperson Ms. Mamta Sharma addressing the gathering

Dialogue with State Women Commissions

A two-day Inter State Women's Commission dialogue was organized by NCW in New Delhi. Member Shamina Shafiq coordinated the programme.



Smt. Meira Kumar lighting the lamp. NCW Chairperson and Members look on.

The Dialogue was inaugurated by Smt. Meira Kumar, the Speaker of Lok Sabha and was attended by Chairpersons/Members/Member Secretaries of State Women Commissions.

The dialogue was designed in the context of the present scenario of raging cumulative voices of young girls and boys, men and women against rising violence against women. The dialogue provided a platform to discuss women-related issues and come up with solutions to address them in a holistic manner with combined efforts.

Speaking on the occasion, NCW Chairperson Ms. Mamta Sharma, referring to the 16th December rape case, said that the need of the hour was to provide safety and security to women all over the country. She urged the State Women Commissions to visit remote rural areas, to empower women and work with the social welfare departments to bring enlightenment in the lives of women.

She urged Smt. Meira Kumar to recommend enhancement of the budget of the State Commissions so that they could fulfil their mandates. She appealed to the Speaker

to help in passing the Bill for 33% reservation for women in the Parliament and State Assemblies.

Ms. Sharma exhorted the State Commissions to take up issues like child marriage, foeticide, dowry demands, domestic violence to make women aware of these social evils.

Delivering the inaugural address, Smt. Meira Kumar lamented that though women are given a high status in the Puranas, in reality, they are treated as the inferior sex. If not higher, women should be given equal status with men, she said. Referring to the plethora of laws protecting women, Ms. Kumar said that they were not able to protect women due to lack of



Smt. Meira Kumar being felicitated by Smt. Mamta Sharma (left) and Ms. Shamina Shafiq (extreme right)

proper implementation. She urged women to bring up the new generations as 'Krantikaris' and help women victims of atrocities to merge into the mainstream of the society.

The technical sessions discussed the State Commissions and Social Welfare Boards - their powers, functions and challenges towards advancing women's rights. The last session analysed the challenges faced by State Commissions and the strategies to meet them, linkages between NCW and the State Commissions for strengthening institutional mechanisms and the strategies to be adopted in passing the Women Reservation Bill.

Important Decisions

- The government is set to revise the cut off age where, a woman can be said to be deliberately indulging in prostitution under the Immoral Trafficking Prevention Act (ITPA) from 16 to 18. The change will make the plea that the minor victim was a consenting prostitute untenable. The revised ITPA also provides for a jail term of 5 years or more for a first time offender, who visits a brothel for sexually exploiting a victim of trafficking, who is less than 18 years, regardless of whether the act of exploitation has taken place or not. The provision is in addition to the ten-year jail or life term and a fine up to Rs. 2 lakh for sexually exploiting a child. Under the existing ITPA, this invites a jail term of 7 to 10 years and fine.
- The Punjab and Haryana High Court has ruled that a wife is not entitled to maintenance when the couple is residing separately after divorce by mutual consent and the wife has accepted a lump sum amount of maintenance as full and final settlement.

National Consultation on Engaging Male Politicians from Youth and Student Organizations on Violence against Women

The National Consultation on violence against Women was recently organized by the National Commission for Women in New Delhi. The objective of the consultation was to engage young male leaders on the issue of violence against women and girls and provide a space for male political leaders to present their opinions on the socio-psychological dynamics surrounding violence against women in cities, smaller towns and villages as well as discuss legal advocacy ideas, non-legal measures and the way forward.

The workshop aimed to create self awareness among the male leaders' towards women and girls in stopping violence against women in both their personal settings and their roles as politicians.



Dr. Charu WaliKhanna addressing the consultation. Shri Rajkumar Verka, Vice Chairman, National Commission for Schedule Caste is sitting on the dais

State Level Seminar at Kota

The NCW organized a state level seminar on Violence Against Women at J.D.B. Secondary Girls College, at Kota. Speaking on the occasion, NCW Chairperson Ms. Mamta Sharma reiterated the objectives of NCW and urged the girls to know their legal rights. She recommended stricter legislations for crimes against women and urged the girls to raise their voice against evil practices prevalent in the society, like child marriage, dowry, foeticide etc.

While endorsing the views of the Chairperson, NCW Member Ms. Hemlata Kheria said that the basic objective of this seminar was to sensitize the girls about their legal rights. She lamented that often complaints were not made by the victims or hushed up by the family to protect their false honour. When victims keep quiet, violence increased. It was the need of the hour that administration, the police

and the civil society support the cause of violence against women.



Ms. Hemlata Kheria and Ms. Mamta Sharma at the seminar

Members' Visits

● NCW Member Dr. Charu WaliKhanna was the Chief Guest at a National Conference titled "Staying Alive" Implementation of Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005 in New Delhi.

Dr. WaliKhanna also attended a programme on National Girl Child Day in New Delhi as well as attended a programme on gender awareness organized by Zakir Hussain Evening College. The Member attended a Meeting of the Governing Body of NDTL, chaired by Minister of Youth and Sports Affairs in New Delhi. Dr. WaliKhanna attended "Gujarati Diaspora Day" organized by the Government of Gujarat in association with FICCI, Akhil

Bharat Gujarati Samaj at Vadodara. Speaking on the occasion, the Member said that NCW had developed guidelines for service providers in cases of violence against women and hoped that Gujarat would take a lead in implementing the guidelines. In the session "Guidance on Marriages to Overseas Indians", Dr. WaliKhanna informed the gathering about the perils of marrying an overseas Indian. She distributed the book "Abandoned Indian Women Trapped in NRI Marriage" developed by NCW.

● NCW Member Advocate Nirmala Samant Prabhavalkar visited Byculla Jail and interacted with women inmates and made suggestions for some improvement as per the jail

manual. She also visited Special Sub Jail Alappuzha which housed only 8 inmates. The inmates were happy with the prison food, cleanliness and the legal aid provided to them.

The Member also visited the Central Jail at Coimbatore where she found the condition of the jail quite satisfactory. However, the women prisoners said they were not able to meet their relatives, children, parents as well as advocates for their release on bail because of long distances.

Ms. Prabhavalkar also visited Regional Mental Hospital, Yerwada in Pune. The overall condition of the hospital was not as per the norms suggested by the National Human Rights Commission. The Member made some recommendations for improvement such as fixing CCTVs at strategic points, computerization of administrative work, periodic whitewashing and painting of the hospital, availability of emergency medicines, increase in the medical and psychiatric staff, better quality clothes and an expert committee member to monitor the diet and quality of the meals of the patients.

The Member also visited Yerwada Central Jail. The overall condition of the Jail was satisfactory. However, the Jail needed more manpower and facilities like computerization, video-conferencing with the courts, healthcare, with nurses and ambulance facilities, canteen, construction of additional barracks, income generating activities, etc.

● A conference on "Rape and Human Trafficking" was organized by NCW in collaboration with the Mizoram Commission for Women at Aizwal Club at Mizoram. The Chief Minister of Mizoram was the Chief Guest. Apart from representatives from Mizoram State Commission, the other participants comprised police personnel, officers from social welfare department, NGOs and the media.



NCW Member Wansuk Syiem speaking at the conference

Speaking on the occasion, referring to the 16th December gang rape, NCW Member Ms. Wansuk Syiem said that the gang rape was symptomatic of the growing trend whereby women of all ages and social groups were targeted for violent assaults. She said that women and children of the north-east have fallen prey to trafficking in order to earn a livelihood. To combat this menace, she said there has to be a change in the mindset of the society along with the police reforms and sensitization of police personnel as well as effective changes in rape and sexual assault laws.

● Ms. Shamina Shafiq attended a Legal Awareness Programme organized by Roshni National Sewa Gramudyog Sansthan at Roshni Computer Training Centre Ground, Khairabad (Sitapur) for the young girl students of the minority community.

She also attended a Legal Awareness programme at Mehandipurva, Block Parsendi, Sitapur (U.P.), organised by Navjyoti Seva Sansthan, which was attended by women from the marginalised sections of the society.

The Member also presided over a function organised on the eve of Birth Anniversary Commemoration of late Sh. Rajeev Sharma (Advocate and former President of DCC). At the function, people from different walks of life were honoured and awards were distributed among the social activists and other prominent citizens of Bareilly.



Member Shamina Shafiq at the function

Ms. Shafiq attended Hindi Salahakar Samiti meeting presided over by Smt. Krishna Tirath, Hon'ble Minister for Women & Child Development at Nainital. Discussions were held on the Hindi quarterly reports of NCW and the use of Hindi language in offices.

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