



Editor's Column

In spite of the Supreme Court's directives to regulate the sale of acids and make acid attack a non-bailable offence, the recent attack on a lady doctor in Delhi by two motor cycle – borne men, shows little have been done to enforce the order. The horrendous act was captured in a CCTV camera installed outside a shop of a local market.

A study conducted by "Stop Acid Attack", an NGO, has found that acid is easily available in many shops in Laxmi Nagar and there was no follow up on the Supreme Court order. Reacting to the attack, the Home Minister approved of measures to crack down on acid attackers and control of open sale of acid.

Admittedly, acid attack is one of the most heinous crimes, which are regularly committed on women by men, who had been spurned by them. What is terrible about these horrific incidents, it will be easy for the

perpetrators to get out on bail while the victims struggle for their lives. And even if they do survive, their trauma will last a life time, as such incidents leave behind permanent scars on body and soul of the victims, often resulting in disfigurement and even blindness. In a society, where people have little respect for the disabled, one can easily imagine the plight of the acid attack victims.

FOCUS

Acid Attacks

Rehabilitation of the victims also becomes difficult as plastic surgery, skin grafting or reconstructive surgeries are not only expensive but chances of complete correction are minimal. Even educated and previously employed women lose their jobs and suddenly become financially dependent on others with little societal support.

The Supreme Court has come out heavily on acid attacks on women

calling them "worse than murder". The truth is that little has been done to ensure that acid remains out of the reach of the people, unless they have the requisite permits for it and reasons for its use. The court has also ordered the states to pay high compensation to victims such as 3 lakhs as aftercare and rehabilitation cost within two months.

Every time such an attack takes place there is the usual outcry about women's safety but the focus must be on prevention because nothing can be done unless strictest punishment is given to anyone selling acids. No society can be considered civilized if it does not act to prevent, at least minimise, disfiguring or disabling women in such a horrific manner. Campaign must be launched against this practice by social activists, the civil society and men and women, but along with that, in the meantime, the government must ensure that acid, the cheapest weapon for taking revenge, does not fall into wrong hands.

Making a Difference

Challenging a male bastion, a group of 12 women dressed in green saris practice drum beating every day. The women are members of "Nari Gunjan Sargam Musical Band" of Dhibra village of Danapur district, Bihar.

All these women belonging to the scheduled caste communities were earlier working as agricultural labourers earning Rs. 100 a day at the most. But since July, last year, the band has been performing at different events, including luxury hotels. For each performance, every member earns Rs. 500, which has made a huge difference to their lives. Besides earning well, they even reach out to women in distress.

When drunken men beat up their wives inside their houses, the members of the band start beating their drums before their houses to attract attention of other villagers. As villagers gather round their houses, the husbands immediately stop beating their wives for fear of disgrace.

Initially, the menfolk did not take kindly to their drum beating and used to taunt them when they practiced but since they started earning well, the men do not have any problem.

Discussion concerning women with disabilities

A roundtable consultation was jointly organized by the National Commission for Women and Samarthyam, in the Conference Hall of NCW in New Delhi. Member Shamina Shafiq, in her welcome address, highlighted the purpose of the roundtable and Ms. Anjlee Agarwal, founder of Samarthyam thanked the Chairperson and Members of NCW for organizing the roundtable to discuss critical issues concerning women with disabilities.

Speaking on the occasion, NCW Chairperson Lalitha Kumaramangalam pointed out that for the first time discussion on women with disabilities had been organized by NCW. She said she would be writing to the concerned ministries and departments for implementation of the recommendations emerging from the discussions.

The presentation made by different participants focused on 4 critical issues. (a) Education of girls with disabilities (b) Deprivation of right to access basic services and facilities with focus on accessible toilets (c) Sexual harassment and violence in families, homes/institutions, workplace and public spaces (d) Sexual and reproductive rights: forced-detention, sterilization and forced medication such as ECT on women with intellectual and mental disabilities.

The roundtable concluded with positive commitment from the Members to take these recommendations forward and of the support of NCW in organising similar state-level discussions with State Commissions. The Samarthyam team proposed a vote of thanks to Chairperson, Members of NCW and to all civil society organisations' representatives/individuals for their active participation and valuable suggestions.



At the consultation, the Chairperson (Centre), NCW Members and Ms. Anjlee Agarwal (4th from right)

Inner Wheel District Conference

The conference of Inner Wheel District 326, comprising Odisha, Chattisgarh, Eastern MP was held at Puri in Odisha. NCW Chairperson Lalitha Kumaramangalam graced the occasion as the Chief Guest.

Speaking on the occasion, she appreciated the noble work done by the Inner Wheel Clubs all over the district. She said that the attitude of service is inherent in women from childhood and, thus, they take up jobs as well as do social service alongwith discharging regular responsibilities at home. She expressed her anguish over atrocities committed against women and encouraged the members of the Inner Wheel Clubs to help women in distress.

Presiding over the conference, the District Chairman Ms. Anita Pati called for awakening in every individual and urged the members to work for women's emancipation and empowerment. The conference, attended by 300 women leaders of district 326, also included a large number of Rotarians as well.



The Chairperson addressing the Inner Wheel Conference of District 326

Government to Set up Special Units to Probe Crimes against Women

The Centre has proposed to set up 150 Investigative Units on Crimes Against Women (IUCAW) to probe crimes like rape, dowry harassment, acid attack, human trafficking, etc. The IUCAWs will be set up by the centre on a pilot basis in most crime prone districts of each state on 50-50 cost sharing basis with the states. The Home Minister, in a letter to the Chief Ministers, emphasised the need to strengthen investigation, trial and prosecution in cases of crimes against women. The investigating units may comprise 15 personnel each, of which 5 will preferably be women.

The units, he said, would also perform additional functions such as proactive policing, intelligence gathering, tackling organized crime, monitoring proper implementation of the legislative provisions, awareness generation and promotion of community participation in checking crimes against women.

National Consultation on Voices for Beijing +20

As a conclusive effort in preparation to the UN Women Beijing +20 Global Review, the Centre for Social Research (CSR), supported by Asia Foundation, hosted a National Consultation which brought together stakeholders, including government representatives, activists, NGOs, professors and consultants to suggest recommendations to advance the process of women empowerment. These recommendations will be discussed in New York during the 59th Commission on the Status of Women in March.

Over the last few months, CSR mobilized thousands of students by holding ten forums in the Universities with the aim of involving young people in the assessment of the status of women empowerment in India .

Speaking on the occasion, NCW Chairperson Lalitha Kumaramangalam acknowledged the gender gap in the society and the importance of including opinions of the youth in governmental discussions on gender equality. She also stressed on the urgency to promote preventive policies to tackle violence against women starting with education at school and college levels.

Dr. Patricia Barandun (UN Women Deputy Representative) highlighted the UN Women's priority to engage with the civil society and the youth to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. CSR Director, Dr. Ranjana Kumari, talked about the idea of involving young people in the Beijing +20 Review Process and said she was confident that the Indian delegation would at some point integrate their recommendations in their agenda.

A panel of field workers, researchers and police personnel provided insights into the topics of human trafficking, the status of minority, safety and security of women, child marriage and the pressing issue of declining sex ratio.

The recommendations will be included in the final report on the status of gender equality and will be released in March, 2015. Dr. Ranjana Kumari will discuss the report with a global audience at the UN Women Beijing +20 Global Review in New York in March, 2015.



NCW Chairperson Lalitha Kumaramangalam lighting the lamp as Ms. Ranjana Kumari (2nd from left) and others look on

Jaipur Induction Ceremony

The inaugural function of the 2nd Phase of Shalini Fellows was held on 5th January, 2015 at Govt. Girls Sr. Sec. School, Malviya Nagar, Jaipur. NCW Chairperson Ms. Lalitha Kumaramangalam was the Chief Guest and Mrs. Gowri Ishwaran CEO of the Global Education and Leadership Foundation was the Guest of Honour.



The Chairperson honouring a long time volunteer

Women Leaders and Social Entrepreneurship

A panel comprising industry leaders and academicians discussed several aspects of women leadership and its current situation at IIM, Ahmedabad. The panelists included NCW Chairperson Lalitha Kumaramangalam, Ms. Archana Garodia Gupta, the President elect of FLO, the women wing of FICCI, Prof. Anil Gupta, Dr. Indira Nityanandam and Prof. Asha Kaul of IIM Ahmedabad and Uma Sen of SEWA.

The discussion touched upon the differences between men and women leadership and what role can men play to make a difference in the way women leadership is seen in India . The panel felt that getting out of house and facing men was still a major constraint for many. Not only men but women are also responsible for their limited exposure. Women should treat their sons and daughters equally in terms of education and nutritional requirements. The panel highlighted the limited presence of women in social entrepreneurship and how women could improve the situation. The panel lauded SEWA and mentioned how their initiatives on women empowerment were changing the overall scenario in India.

Members' Visits

❖ Member Hemlata Kheria was the Chief Guest in a programme organised by Manav Adhikar Mission on “Manav Adhikar Avam Mahila Jagrukata Abhiyan”, at Jamtara in Jharkhand. Speaking on the occasion, she talked about women’s legal rights, increasing violence against women, in general, and specifically, against tribal and scheduled caste women. ● The Member visited the villages of Mihijam and Deoghar in Jharkhand and interacted with Santhal and Ghatwar adivasi women and discussed issues related to health, medical facilities, poverty, economy, water, education and cultural practices.



Member Hemlata Kheria with the Tribal women of Jharkhand

❖ Member Shamina Shafiq attended a meeting organised by Human Rights Watch on “The Path to Dignity and Inclusion: Ending Abuses against Women and Girls with Psychological or Intellectual Disabilities in Institutions in India”, in New Delhi. ● The Member visited Bangalore jail to enquire into a report of alleged sex racket in the jail. ● Ms. Shafiq attended a dialogue of script writers and TV serials on issues of “Portrayal of Children in TV Programmes in India” at Mumbai. ● The Member attended the seminar organized by Media Association, Meerut on “The Role of Media in Nation Building”. She said that the media could build a nation’s character and reputation by being gender sensitive. ● Ms. Shafiq was the key-note speaker at a meeting organized by the National Judicial Academy, Bhopal, on the “Role of Family Courts and Presiding Officers”. She said that the purpose of the Act was to do away with adversarial nature of advocacy in civil/criminal disputes. Later, she held a meeting with the officials of Action-aid, Bhopal, regarding marginalized workers. ● She also held a dialogue with women sex workers of Bedia community at Narsinghpura and also visited the One-Stop-Crises centre in Bhopal, which provides legal advice, psychological counselling, medical facilities, etc. to the victims. ● The Member attended the Mahila Adhikar Abhiyan at Ferozpur, in Punjab organized by the National Commission for Women to spread awareness of women’s rights, specially, among the youth.

Important Decisions

● After the recent Uber cab incident in New Delhi, where a woman passenger was raped in a cab, the Ministry of Road, Transport and Highways has proposed to set up control centres to monitor all public transport plying on roads. The government wants to set up a GPS system under the National Authority of Road Safety, where all information will be electronically transmitted to police stations and PCRs, so that time is not lost in rescuing a victim. ● The Walmart Foundation will train 12500 women factory workers in India by 2016. The Foundation has tied up with Swasti Health Resource Centre and has already trained 12000 women working in 30 factories in Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Gujarat . The training programme teaches critical life-skills related to communication, hygiene, reproductive health, occupational health and safety identifying personal strength and gender sensitivity. ● The Delhi Police has launched an initiative under which girls from unprivileged strata of society will be trained in driving and self-defence with a view to empowering them both physically and financially. Police will tie up with licence radio taxi service providers like Meru, Easy Cabs, and others, who can employ these girls for their fleet. ● The Supreme Court has ruled that cases of dowry deaths should be tried as murder, if there is evidence to indicate that the death was homicidal. Noting that the general practice by police and courts to pass off any death of a married woman that occurs within seven years of marriage as dowry death, the court suggested that this approach needed to be changed. Dowry death is punishable with a minimum of 7 years imprisonment while homicidal death requires a higher standard of proof as punishment can extend beyond 10 years to even life term.

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

Published by the National Commission for Women, 4 Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Marg, New Delhi-110002. Editor : Gouri Sen. Printed at Akanksha Impression, 18/36, Street No. 5, Railway Line Side, Anand Parbat Indl. Area, New Rohtak Road, New Delhi-5