



## Editor's Column

The recent death of 23-year-old Preeti Rathi, after battling for life for a month in various hospitals, has added one more number in the list of women, who are put to death in the most cruel and horrific way by becoming victims to acid-throwing.

Preeti came to Mumbai on 2nd May from Delhi to work as a nurse at INS Ashwini, the Naval hospital in South Mumbai but she never made it. Fate had deemed otherwise. As she came out of the train, she was attacked with acid. She succumbed to her injuries on 2nd June.

What is terrible about these horrific incidents that it is easy for the perpetrators to get bail while the victims struggle for their lives. Even if they do survive, their trauma would last a lifetime, as such incidents leave behind permanent scars on the body and soul, often resulting in disfigurement and even blindness.

Rehabilitation becomes difficult as skin grafting or reconstructive surgeries are not only expensive but chances of complete correction are minimal. Many educated and previously-employed women lose their jobs and suddenly become financially dependent.

Considering the gravity of the impact of the acid attacks, NCW had suggested a scheme on the lines of relief and

### FOCUS Acid Attack

rehabilitation to victims of rape. The Commission recommended an amount of Rs. 5 lakhs to be paid immediately for medical treatment up to a maximum of Rs. 30 lakhs and 5 lakhs earmarked towards rehabilitation of the victim.

Admittedly, we have no real data on the number of such attacks across the country. Accurate numbers are difficult to get as many cases are not reported to the police or reported by the media.

One such survivor is Sonali Mukherjee from Jharkhand. Her life was devastated when three brutes threw acid on her when she did not respond to their advances. She suffered impairment of her vision and after 27 surgeries, there are many more surgeries to undergo. Though the men were caught, they were let off with a light sentence. If the incident had happened today, as per the new Criminal Law Amendment Bill, 2013, the men would have been sentenced to minimum of 10 years of imprisonment, and fine.

Preeti's tragic death has once again brought to the fore the cruelest form of violence against women. Stringent laws and restricted sale of acid may bring down crime figures but unless there is a real change in the psyche of India's rejected men, who feel that a woman must be destroyed if she cannot be possessed, there would not be any appreciable reduction in the number of crimes against women.

## Nirbhaya Bhawan

The President of India Shri Pranab Mukherjee laid the Foundation Stone of Nirbhaya Bhawan, the future headquarters of the National Commission for Women at Jasola at a function organized in New Delhi.

Speaking on the occasion, the President said that Commission had distinguished itself through its sincere initiatives for the rights, dignity and development of women in our country and it was only appropriate that after 20 years of dedicated service to the cause of women, the Commission should have its own permanent headquarters.

WCD Minister Smt. Krishna Tirath said that the Indian Constitution has given equal rights to men and women; as such the government has started several schemes for their benefit. She urged the civil society, NCW and the NGOs to work together to combat domestic violence, dowry system, female foeticide, sexual harassment at workplace, etc.

NCW Chairperson Mamta Sharma said that NCW was honoured to have the presence of Shri Pranab Mukherjee, Smt Krishna Tirath and Shri A.K. Mittal, DMD National Board of Construction and felt happy that the work of NCW office building would commence during her tenure.



The President lights the lamp as Smt. Krishna Tirath (left) and Smt. Mamta Sharma look on.



## Chairperson's visit to Odisha

NCW Chairperson Mamta Sharma undertook a two-day visit of Odisha on 22nd June, 2013. From Bhubaneswar airport, she drove straight to the Chilika region in Khurda district. Her first stopover was Sunakhela village, where she visited Sunakhela hospital to review facilities for women patients. She expressed dissatisfaction with the service given to them and urged the authorities to immediately improve the facilities. Later, she visited Gambharimunda in Banpur block of Chilika region. During her visit to the Public Health Centre, (PHC) she found there was not even a single doctor in the PHC, though thousands of women in the nearby-areas depended on it. She assured the gathered women that she would take up the matter with the authorities to make the PHC functional as soon as possible.



*The Chairperson at the Public Health Centre*



*Ms. Sharma visiting a villager's hut*

Later, she left for Niladriprasad and Damia Barabara, two large tribal pockets of Khurda district. Addressing a meet at Niladriprasad, Ms. Sharma reiterated the commitment of NCW to reach out to tribal women living even in most inaccessible areas in order to empower them.

She then visited the nearby villages to have a first-hand experience of their problems and get apprised of their living conditions. She found that most of them have not received assistance from the government sponsored schemes meant for them. She was aghast at the sight of women preparing their main course food from "mango kernels". Neither BPL rice nor Annapurna Antodaya Yojana have reached them so far. Likewise, though 95 percent of the village

women tested positive for malaria, there was not a single doctor in the PHC in the entire area. Ms. Sharma directed the local BDO and other officials to distribute the benefits of all government sponsored schemes to these women and file a compliance report with the Commission within one month.

On 23rd June, Ms. Sharma inaugurated the "National Meet on Empowering Rural Women" at Tarapi near Balugaon, organized by Odisha Yuva Sanskritik Sansad (OYSS) in association with NCW and presided by the national head of "Honour for Women National Campaign" and founder of OYSS Women' Ms. Manasi Pradhan.

Inaugurating the meet participated by over 5000 women delegates, Ms. Sharma said that NCW was committed to bringing about a qualitative change in their lives by making them empowered. The women delegates said that most of them were unaware of their own rights and different government schemes. At the end of the sessions, a draft proposal was drawn up taking into account various concerns and suggestions put forward by the delegates.

The Chairperson visited village Beladal in Puri Sadar and met the parents of a 14-year-old blind girl, raped and murdered in Puri / Konark Marine Drive. While reviewing the progress of the investigation and compensation to the victim's parents, she found several discrepancies in the investigation and demanded suspension of the investigating officer for issuing two conflicting death certificates. She said an NCW enquiry team would soon be sent to investigate into the incident in a professional manner suggesting remedial measures.



*The Chairperson addressing the gathering.  
Ms. Manasi Pradhan is on her left.*



## Members' Visits

❖ NCW Member Dr. Charu WaliKhanna was the chief Guest and keynote speaker at a symposium on "Witch Hunting in India – a scandalizing reality" organized by Human Rights Defense (India) at Indian Law Institute. ● Dr. WaliKhanna visited Goa and paid a courtesy call on Governor of Goa, Shri Bharat Vir Wanchoo and discussed gender issues. ● She was the guest of honour at Rashtriya Pratinidhi Sammelan organized by Akhil Bharatiya Safai Mazdor Sangh in New Delhi. ● Dr. WaliKhanna was the Chief Guest at the International Domestic Workers Day held at Thyagaraj Stadium in New Delhi. ● The Member attended a PHD Chamber of Commerce & Industry Board meeting on Task Force on Women and Child Development in New Delhi. ● She was the Chief Guest at a workshop and training programme on 'Prevention of Sexual Harassment', organized by Central Warehousing Corporation in New Delhi.



*Dr. Charu WaliKhanna (third left) at the Domestic Workers Day workshop and training programme on 'Prevention of Sexual Harassment', organized by Central Warehousing Corporation in New Delhi.*

❖ Member Hemlata Kheria was the Guest of Honour in a programme on "Employment and Creative Fair", organized by Alert Sansthan at Gogunda, Udaipur, Rajasthan, attended by tribal men and women. During the interactive session, Ms. Kheria defined the basic objectives of NCW and acquainted the participants with the main sections of the NCW Act relating to protection and safeguarding the rights of women. ● Later, she visited Sunderpur and Matugawada Panchayat at Dungarpur as well as Bagidauda and Gahatol Panchayat at Banswara, Rajasthan and discussed with village women issues relating to child marriage, malnutrition, witchcraft, female foeticide, dowry, education for girls, availability of toilets, water, medical facility and crimes against women. Hearing about non-availability of teachers, she recommended that schools should be provided with teachers at the earliest by the state government. ● The Member visited the district jail at Banswara and met the female inmates. She recommended that a legal counsellor be appointed to provide legal aid as well as counselling for women prisoners by an NGO and along with vocational training.



*Member Hemlata Kheria addressing the gathering*

❖ NCW Member Adv. Nirmala Samant Prabhavalkar while inaugurating the Mumbai Chapter of the National Bar Association of India (NBAI) said that such organisations could play a very effective role in partnering the activities of the NCW, particularly, activities like financial and medical help to victims of acid attack, sexual violence and destitute women. It could also give free legal aid in cases of divorce and domestic violence occurring in the society. She said that NCW can be a partner of NBAI if they come forward to organize district level legal awareness programmes and seminars for sensitization of public prosecutors, the judiciary and the police. ● The Member released three books written by Adv. Neelima Kanetkar of Adipath Foundation, which would be extremely useful to the law students, NGOs and general public. The Member acquainted the audience about the work undertaken by NCW in marital counselling and facilitating mediation in marital disputes. She said NCW has been able to reduce and redress grievances of complaints registered through 'Post' or 'Online' or through individual reporting.



*Ms. Prabhavalkar addressing the gathering*



◆ Member Shamina Shafiq was the Chief Guest at a programme organized by Sampadak Welfare Association on the eve of Hindi Patrikarita Diwas at Khairabad in UP. ● The Member also attended “Sangoshti and Abhinandan Samaroh” organized by the Media Association, Meerut on “Grammen Vikas Main Mahilaon Kee Bhoomika” at Bulandshehar, UP. Speaking on the occasion, the Member stressed the need for women to safeguard their rights. ● Ms. Shafiq was the Chief Guest at a workshop on Capacity Building of Women Managers in Higher Education, sponsored by UGC and organized by Women’s Studies Centre at Srinagar. The Member urged women to be socially, economically, politically and psychologically empowered in order to fight for their rights. ● The Member conducted three hearings during this period.



Ms. Shafiq (2nd from right) at the Media Association programme

## Safety Tips for Women

◆ What should a woman do if she finds herself alone in the company of a strange male as she prepares to enter a lift in a high-rise apartment late at night? Experts Say: If you need to reach the 13th floor, press all the buttons up to your destination. No one will dare attack you in a lift that stops on every floor. ◆ What to do if a stranger tries to attack you when you are alone in your house. Experts Say: Run into the kitchen. You alone know where chili powder and turmeric are kept and where the knives and plates are. All these can be turned into deadly weapons. If nothing else, start throwing plates and utensils all over. Let them break. Scream. Remember that noise is the greatest enemy of a molester. He does not want to be caught. ◆ Taking an Auto or Taxi at Night. Experts Say: Before getting into an auto at night, note down its registration number. Then use the mobile to call your family or friend and pass on the details to them in the language the driver understands. Even if no one answers your call, pretend you are in a conversation. The driver now knows someone has his details and he will be in serious trouble if anything goes wrong. He is now bound to take you home safe and sound. ◆ What if the driver turns into a street he is not supposed to -and you feel you are entering into a danger zone? Experts Say: Use the handle of your purse or your stole (dupatta) to wrap around his neck and pull him back. Within seconds, he will feel choked and helpless. In case you don’t have a purse or stole, just pull him back by his collar. The top button of his shirt would then do the same trick. ◆ If you are stalked at night. Experts Say: enter a shop or a house and explain your predicament. If it is night and shops are not open, go inside an ATM box. ATM centers always have security guards. They are also monitored by close circuit television. Fearing identification, no one will dare attack you.

## Supreme Court Issues Guidelines on Foeticide

The Supreme Court has laid down guidelines for strict implementation of the “Prenatal Diagnostic Act (PNDT) to check female foeticide and directed the Central Supervisory Board and the State Supervisory Boards to hold their meetings once in six months to supervise and oversee effective implementation of the Act.

The Court opined that use of prenatal diagnostic techniques is widely prevalent in this country leading to a decline in the female child sex ratio due to elimination of female foetus.

The Advisory Boards have also been directed to ensure that all manufacturers and sellers of ultra-sonography machines do not sell any machine to any unregistered centre and the list of the persons, to whom the machines have been sold, should be prepared on a quarterly basis and sent to the respective state governments and the Centre. The Court also directed various courts in the country to take steps to dispose of all pending cases under the Act within six months.

## Enquiries Undertaken by NCW

◆ NCW Member Dr. Charu WaliKhanna was the Chairperson of Enquiry Committee to enquire into an incident reported in a newspaper “Adivasi mahila ko nutra pilakar ki nirmam pitai” at village Nandiya, district Hoshangabad, Madhya Pradesh.

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

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