



Editor's Column

The first conviction in an acid attack case in Bihar since the stringent provisions of the Criminal Law (Amendment) Act 2013, will have a very strong deterrent impact. The law was amended after the horrific December 16, 2012, gang-rape case in Delhi. The accused has been meted out 10-year prison sentence along with a heavy fine. In another case, the Delhi High Court has awarded life term to an auto driver, who had forced a 30-year old married woman to drink acid for refusing to stay with him. These convictions will have a salutary effect on the offenders, indulging in such heinous crimes.

Previously, the Indian Penal Code did not have a specific section targeting acid attacks. As a result, it was difficult to prosecute the offenders. Moreover, it was very

difficult to apprehend the accused in the first place as they would invariably flee the scene of crime in a jiffy. Consequently, even such attacks committed in broad daylight could not be taken to its logical conclusion. The new law, which makes it mandatory for any accused in an acid attack case to be charged under Sections 326A and

FOCUS First Conviction Under New Acid Attack Law

326B, to ensure harsher punishment will help significantly in this regard. Another important reform in law that has helped in this context is the Supreme Court's directive to ban over the counter sale of acid and other such corrosive substances, thus making it difficult for perpetrators to find access to such acids. The Supreme Court has also made it mandatory for retailers to keep records of acid buyers, which will make it easier for the investigating

agencies to catch the perpetrators.

These measures have also left an impact on the acid attack victims themselves. Previously, the victims would be scared to lodge complaints and would lock themselves away from the world. Now, with the change in perception that the attackers can be caught and punished, more and more victims are registering their complaints. As per figures given by the Union Ministry of Home Affairs, in 2014 alone, 309 acid attacks were reported, more than the total number of cases registered between 2010 and 2013. Moreover, awareness campaigns by the victims and the government has helped to bring the agony of the acid attack victims to the forefront.

Admittedly, throwing of acid on helpless victims, mostly women, is a dastardly and cowardly act and the same has to be controlled with an iron hand.

Women Security after Nirbhaya

A dialogue on "Women Security After Nirbhaya", was organised by NGO Sampurna in New Delhi. Various women personalities from different fields came together to demand equal rights for women in India.

The event on Nirbhaya's birthday was chaired by NCW Chairperson Lalitha Kumaramangalam. While addressing the gathering, she appealed to the people to educate girls so that they would be aware of their rights and would gradually become successful in all spheres. Ms. Shobha Vijender, the founder of Sampurna said that women in India were still hesitant to register crimes against them. "Our NGO trains women to stand on their feet. We encourage and motivate them to speak for their rights," she said.



Ms Kumaramangalam speaking on "Women Security after Nirbhaya"

Challenges before modern day women

A group of intellectuals and academicians (GIA) consisting of doctors, engineers, professors, artists, lawyers, writers, social workers organized a programme titled “Challenges before the modern day women”, in New Delhi.

Addressing the gathering, Ms. Lalitha Kumaramangalam, the Chief Guest said that women should not be apologetic about being peace makers. She said that lack of respect and trust among men and women for each other was a major concern. Ms. Vimla Mehra, Special Commissioner in Delhi Police said that it was important to sensitize men towards women in a patriarchal society and added that financial independence played a vital role in building a women’s confidence.

The first issue of the quarterly magazine TEJASWINI with a collection of articles on topics ranging from feminism, cultural nationalism, obesity, domestic violence and justice, was inaugurated on the occasion.



Chairperson speaking on “Challenges before modern day women”

Empowering Women in IT

Ms. Lalitha Kumaramangalam addressed the 9th Anniversary of eWit (empowering women in IT), a voluntary forum in Chennai. In her address, she talked about the gradual change in the patriarchal society mindset and approach. Earlier, there was no case of men being hanged for committing rapes but now not only such cases are heard very seriously but punishments are strictly implemented against such offences. She was happy that today’s girls have a voice and they should raise it because time has changed and they will be heard. Now women want equal opportunities, proper healthcare, education, skill development, nutrition and economic empowerment. She said that large companies such as Infosys have acknowledged that flexi-timing for women helps to increase their efficiency. She also emphasised that industries need to provide long leave to women, to look after their young children, whenever necessary. The Chairperson reiterated that financial independence, particularly owning a house, helps to bring down domestic violence and added that the Commission was talking to the academic institutions to study this observation and provide scientific data.



The Chairperson (right) at the release of a booklet by eWit

Making a Difference

The Ahmedabad District collectorate is creating a *Beti Van* to bolster the “Save the Girl Child Campaign”. In a pilot project, that would stretch up to 2020, a sapling will be planted for every girl child, who is born in Shela village of Sananad taluka in Ahmedabad district. The tree would be in the girl’s name with a plaque on it.

After the tree matures, 67 percent of the sale value of the wood from it or the earnings from the fruits of the tree will be deposited in a bank account created in the name of the girl child. The rest of the revenue from it that is 33 percent will go towards the development of the village. This is an initiative to support the girl, when she may need money for her education and marriage. The *Beti Van* at Shela village will be dedicated to every girl child born on or after January 1, 2011 and is born up to December 31, 2010, with a tree planted for each.

Lady Shri Ram College Annual Day

NCW Chairperson Lalitha Kumaramangalam attended the Annual College Day of Lady Shri Ram College in New Delhi. Speaking on the occasion, she said she considered herself fortunate to belong to a politically aware family that had encouraged women to excel in every field. She drew on her own experiences to inspire women to be fearless and bold in order to pursue their dreams. She said that a society could only progress if women were given the freedom to achieve their potential. At the same time, she warned women against stereotyping all men as dominating and exploitative towards women and stated that feminism should not be equated with male bashing.

Later, the Chairperson presented the distinguished alumna award to Dr. Meenakshi Gopinath, who retired after 26 years as Principal and tokens of appreciation to staff members, who completed 25 years of service in the college. This was followed by prize distribution to students, who had distinguished themselves academically, and in extra-curricular activities.



The Chairperson (center) lighting the lamp at the function of Lady Shri Ram College

Consultation on Muslim Women

The NCW jointly with Rambhau Mhalgi Prabodhini, organized a one-day consultation on “Mainstreaming of Indian Muslim Women: the Way Forward” at Pune. Muslim Women, across various districts of Maharashtra participated in this programme. Addressing the audience, NCW Chairperson emphasised upon the need for education and empowerment of Muslim women. She said that domestic violence against women was less in cases, where women had property in their own names. Later, she interacted with the participants in an interactive session.



The Chairperson (center) lighting the lamp at the function of Lady Shri Ram College

This is India!

In a shocking incident, which should stir the conscience of every Indian, a minor Dalit girl was beaten up by higher caste women in Ganesh Pura village after the girl's shadow fell on a muscle man belonging to their family. According to the complaint lodged by the girl's father, the problem began when his daughter was fetching water from a village handpump and her shadow fell on the man belonging to a higher caste, when he happened to pass from there.

The incident enraged the family of the men to such an extent that the women of the family severely beat the girl and threatened that if she was seen again at the handpump, they would kill her. The family also tried to prevent the victim from going to the police station but they somehow managed to reach there. A case under Sections 323, 341, 506 of the IPC has been registered against the accused.

Members' Visits

❖ The Meghalaya State Commission for Women in association with NCW organized a national consultation on issues related to “Single Mothers” at Shilong. Welcoming the participants, Ms. Theilin Phanbuh, Chairperson of Meghalaya State Commission said that single motherhood was sometimes a matter of choice or due to circumstances. The number of single mothers in the state was high due to many social problems, the major being unemployment. Delivering the keynote address, Ms. Laldingliani Sailo, Member NCW said that single mothers, which included widows, divorcees, separated and deserted wives, often face stigmatization and financial hardships and hence empowerment of women in social, economic and educational fields to face these challenges was the need of the hour. Fortunately, women in the North East are strong-willed and educated to tackle such problems. However, the government must take initiative in reducing early marriages, create enabling environment to provide care and security to single mothers, establish day-care centres, provide skill development and vocational training programmes, pension schemes, counselling centres, training institutes etc. In this context, Ms. Sailo added that single mothers perhaps deserved a separate set of schemes and programmes for their wellbeing. Shri A T Mondal, Hon’ble Speaker of Meghalaya Legislative Assembly, also spoke on the occasion. The recommendations emerging out of the consultation would be send to the concerned authorities.



Ms. Sailo, addressing the National Consultation

Important Decisions

- The Supreme Court has said that divorced Muslim women are entitled to seek maintenance from their ex-husbands under Section 125 of the Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC), which provides relief to wives, children and parents.
- The District Authorities of Rohtak in Haryana have decided to reward the residents giving specific information about sex-determination tests. At a recent meeting, Rohtak Additional Deputy Commissioner announced a cash reward of Rs. 20,000 for information about sex-determination tests. The ADC said special Central teams would also visit the district and stage awareness programmes, including films and street plays, to fight the evil of female foeticide.
- The Maharashtra government has decided to amend the Factories Act, allowing women to work night shifts from 7pm to 6am, easing work conditions for labour and preventing inspectors from harassing factory owners over minor issues.
- Special women cops of Delhi Police comprising 1205 constables and 142 probationary Sub Inspectors are undergoing one month rigorous commando training at the Police Training College in Jharoda Kalan to enable them to protect and safeguard women in the capital. After completion of their training, they will be deployed for mainstream functions of Delhi police at police stations, railways, metro rail, IGI airport and PCR units.

Do you know?

Usha Multipurpose Cooperative Bank, in Kolkata, formed and run by former sex workers for women from the same trade has been adjudged the leading cooperative bank in the state. The bank has been named as the “Best Managed Cooperative” in West Bengal for 2014 at the 61st All India Cooperative Week. The bank has created a record in recovering loans at the rate of 98 percent.

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

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