

## **Rape its Myth and the Reality in the midst of Lockdown**

<sup>1</sup>Dr. Umesh Mandloi, Professor, Sri Aurobindo Institute of Management and Science, Indore, M.P.

<sup>2</sup>Sunil Francis, Research Scholar, Madhyanchal University, Bhopal, M.P.

<sup>3</sup>Dr. Shine David, Assistant Professor, IMS, DAVV, Indore, M.P.

### **Abstract:**

*The increased amount of rape today is an obvious phenomenon in the Indian scenario. Rape brings several consequences in one's life and in the relational experience. Rape is a human right violation and it is an act of degrading the womanhood. The learning of rape, like criminal behavior, occurs within intimate personal groups- the family, the neighborhood, the school, and the peer group. Learning the crime of rape includes learning techniques of committing rape as well as the specific direction of motives, drives, rationalizations, and attitudes. Learning takes place in a socio-cultural milieu. It is thus, the socio-cultural milieu which gives rise to rape. The status of women in our society is inferior in as much as they are treated as things for lust. At this juncture one should be aware of the impact of rape on the survivor. Whatever the cause, rape is the fundamental violation of the dignity of woman and denial of their right to live. This inhuman act brings adverse effect on their mental health and shatters the womanhood.*

**Keywords:** *Rape, Status of Women, socio-cultural milieu*

### **Introduction**

A 19-year-old girl was allegedly gang-raped by seven persons, including three minors about 4 km from her village in Madhya Pradesh's Padhar on Wednesday 1 May 2020, in the midst of Lockdown. According to the police, the victim had gone to a petrol pump with her brother on his motorcycle. On their way back home, the headlight of the motorcycle developed a snag and while her brother was trying to fix it, they were attacked by three men who came on two motorcycles. The accused first attacked the brother and threw him into a well and thereafter took the victim to a stop dam nearby. At the stop dam, the three were joined by four others where they took turns to rape her.

According to the sub-divisional officer of police Padhar, the brother of the victim managed to come out of the well and called his family for help. "While searching for the victim, the family members managed to get hold of one of the accused. They informed the police but before help could reach them, the accused escaped from the spot leaving behind his shirt in which he was carrying his Aadhar card. The victim too was found by her family members near the stop dam in an unconscious state.

Based on the information provided by the victim's family, police cordoned off the entire area on Wednesday night and on early Thursday morning detained five people.<sup>1</sup> The increased amount of rape today is an obvious phenomenon in the Indian scenario. Rape brings several consequences in one's life and in the relational experience. Rape is a

human right violation and it is an act of degrading the womanhood. Rape shatters woman psychologically and brings horrific effect on their mental health.

## **I. Definition of Rape**

‘Rape is defined as any sexual act that is attempted or completed by force, threat of force or coercion against another persons’ will. Rape can be attempted or completed against any one.’<sup>1</sup> Section 375 of the Indian Penal Code defines rape as "sexual intercourse with a woman against her will, without her consent, by coercion, misrepresentation or fraud or at a time when she has been intoxicated or duped, or is of unsound mental health and in any case if she is under 16 years of age. Section 376 defines the punishment for rape. If rape is proved then, punishment can be up to seven years of rigorous imprisonment for raping an adult and up to 10 years for raping a minor.

Though the act ‘rape’ has a long history, at this juncture the changing attitude in gender relationship needs to be seriously taken into consideration. Furthermore, one should explore the reasons behind this changing pattern in the gender approach. Though India has been witnessing this cruel acts down through the centuries, yet the recent studies reports the increased amounts of rape cases. Today Irrespective of place and age India witness the rape, often more rape cases are reported from the urban centers.

Women are not safe across India, fear is a regular companion and rape is the stranger they may have to confront at every corner, on any road, in any public place, at any hour. As the India Today – AC Nielsen – Org – Marg opinion poll shows shockingly, one in every two women feels unsafe in the top eight metros and mini-metros. Increased job opportunities, advanced education system pushed the people to migrate in to urban centers. ‘But when women transcend from their protective boundaries provided to them by generations before them, they loose the protective umbrella of the family: they became anonymous.’<sup>2</sup>

The perpetrators use this situation to attain their goal. Though mass media brings the attention of the people on the increasing number of rape, often few cases are only reported due to various reasons. Often the culprits are not adequately punished by the government.

## **II. 1.Causes of Rape**

No single factor can be ascribed as the cause of rape, while researchers understand rape as a gendered violence address multiple levels of influence. ‘Some focus on individual characteristics of men who commit rape, other emphasis institutional or social causation. One contributing factor to this model is based on evolution, where the goal of sexual behavior is viewed as maximizing the likelihood of passing on one’s genes.’<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup>Jenne Stevenson Moessner, ed., *Through the Eyes of Women*(Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996), 223.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid, 62.

<sup>3</sup> Mary P. Koss and Laura Boesch, “Rape,” *Encyclopedia of Psychology*, edited by Alan E. Kazdin, vol. 7 (New York : Oxford University Press, 2000): 1-6.

Another factor that can be ascribed as the cause of rape is perversion. When the man in his childhood is deprived of security, affection and suitable identification, these may lead to perversion in him. Another motivating factor behind rape is sexual pleasure. Mary P Koss and Laura Boeschen based on number of studies states that “young men are more interested in partner variety, less interested in committed long term relationship.”<sup>4</sup> Another view is that rape is ultimately a problem of the society that spawns and perpetuates it. From this perspective, rape occurs in a socio cultural context and is viewed as one manifestation of gender inequality.

So understanding rape requires examination of the legal, economic, and physical power inequalities between men and women. Adults and children alike are bombarded with images that equate physical and psychological domination and abuse of women with sexual pleasure through television, film, magazines and music.<sup>5</sup> Through rape men exercise his aggression and dominance towards the women. Here the attention should be given to the view of “feminists who agree that pornography criticizes power and domination. The domination of women by men is the mainstay of most pornography. This arouses both men and women, which leads to the assumption that in sex, domination by and submission by women must be natural. If it is natural in sex, it must also be natural in other parts of social life.”<sup>6</sup>

Sexual violence may have its origin in a culture that privileges men. Thus, rehabilitating the culture to reduce gendered beliefs, sexist imagery, and the romance of sweeping a woman off her feet seems like a crucial element in reducing men’s sexual violence toward women.<sup>7</sup>

## **II.2. Causes of Rape in India**

When we study the causes of rape in India, we are confronted with two types. One set of causes is applicable to all societies but another set of causes is peculiar to India alone. The causes of rape in India can better be discussed under three heads: psychological, socio-cultural and social learning or life learning or life history of individuals. It should also be noted that the character and temperament traits associated with male and female are influenced by, and are the result of, the socio-cultural peculiarities to which its men and women belong. The socio-cultural milieu affects the behavior of men and women from the beginning of the making of personality, and moulds and shapes their behavior and attitudes so as to conform to the prevailing socio- cultural standard.<sup>8</sup>

---

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Veena Pani Pandey, *Problems of Women’s Marriage and Violence* (New Delhi: Mohit Publications, 2002), 155-156.

<sup>7</sup> Pepper Schwartz and Virginia Rutter, *The Gender of Sexuality* (United States of America: Sage Publications Ltd., 1998), 204.

<sup>8</sup> Margaret. Mead, *Sex and Temperament in three primitive societies* in *From the South seas*, New York, William Morrow 1939 p. 224-225

However in India the significance of *guna*<sup>9</sup> is no less important than that of *desa*<sup>10</sup> and *kala*.<sup>11</sup> All these factors combine in influencing the behavior of the individual. With this prologue let's look into the causes of rape in India.

## **II. 2. i. Psychological Causes**

There are various psychological interpretations of rape which lay emphasis on different psychological factors. One psychological interpretation locates the causes of rape in the conflict between instinct and social pressure. It is argued that every man is endowed by nature with the sex urges or what Freud called the Libido. Although, the sex urge is always active in all of us, there is a period of life when it is most intense and active. At that point, sex urges need satisfaction and channelization. But the society fails to provide an outlet simultaneously to all at that moment. The socially inhibited sex urges find outlet at times in rape.

A second psychological approach is popularly known as Psychoanalytical approach, it is argued that in the process of the development of personality, the superego of some individuals does not develop well and remains weak, due to which their *id* tendencies predominate and the ego grows weak. Such individuals fail to judge, and lack the capacity to control, the id impulses.<sup>12</sup> Rape is the result of such mal development of personality; many of the mal-development individuals become sexually perverse. Men with weak ego and superego are guided by the pleasure principle and, sometimes, indulge in sexual assault to satisfy the id impulses.

According to the third psychological explanation, many men suffer from several socio-pathic sexual deviations such as exhibitionism, sadism, masochism, homosexuality, zoophilia etc. sexual deviations relevant to rape are voyeurism, fetishism and redophilia among others. It can be reasonably said that some of these and other deviations cause the individual to make nuisance of himself /herself.<sup>13</sup>

A fourth psychological view holds that many men and women suffer from excessive sexual desire. When women suffer from morbid and uncontrollable sexual desire, psychologists term it *nymphomania* and when men suffer from morbid and overpowering sexual desire corresponding to nymphomania in women, it is termed as *satyriasis*. While such women extend invitation for rape, such men just jump over women in order to quench the thirst of their morbid and over powering sexual desire.<sup>14</sup>

Another psychological argument is that rape symbolizes a power trip, a masculinity assertion. Mackellar observes this tendency as follows: "the man who rapes does so

---

<sup>9</sup>ie., the natural psycho-biological properties

<sup>10</sup>ie., region or place

<sup>11</sup>ie., time, period

<sup>12</sup> Rekha. Pandey, *In Search of Causes of Rape in India*, in the Indian journal of social work, Vol. XLVIII No. I April 1987, p. 108.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> ibid.

because he lacks a better means for making the point, I am a man.”<sup>15</sup> Likewise Bart opines, “Psychiatrists say a gun is a substitute phallus... I find the reverse to be true. When it comes to rape, a phallus is a substitute gun. Rape is a power trip, not a passion trip. The rapist is more likely to rape in cold blood, with contempt and righteousness, than with passion.”<sup>16</sup>

## **II.2. i. Socio-cultural causes**

The socio-cultural perspective has two variants- functionalists and conflict both provide separate reasons for rape. For functionalists rape is a functional necessity and for conflict theorists it is the assertion of power. Functionalists treat rape to be consistent with the conventional structure of society. Rape is a symptom of dissociation between sexual aspirations and available sexual outlets for their fulfillment.

Levine hypothesizes four structural factors that are associated with cross cultural incidence of rape. Firstly severe formal restrictions on the non-marital sexual relations of females, secondly moderately strong sexual inhibition on the part of females thirdly economic or other barriers to marriage that prolong the bachelorhood of some males into their late twenties and fourthly the absence of physical segregation <sup>17</sup> of sexes.

The conflict theorists in contradiction to the functionalist locate the causes of rape in power. According to them, women's status is inferior to men in all the known societies of the world. Men assert their superiority over women in many ways. Rape is one of the many methods adopted by men to keep women under subjugation. A closer critical analysis gives us the picture that all social systems depend on force or its threat, including man and woman sexual relations. Rape is used to punish women and is considered as a male tendency to become genetically programmed in the fight for the survival of the fittest.

## **II. 3. The Indian Social Scenario Congenial to Rape**

There are basically two aspects of the socio cultural milieu which are perhaps at the root of rape in India today. One is the women's status in society and the other is the contemporary sex revolution.

### **II. 3. (a). Women's Status in Indian Society**

From the post-vedic era down the centuries to the modern times, the religious practices, rituals, scriptures, percepts and social traditions have been part of the historical forces which have created for women their existing secondary status in Indian society. With the exception of Vedic period, the woman appears to have enjoyed a low status in society throughout. In the Manusmriti, one can find a large number of restrictions imposed on woman which tended to deprive her of the status she used to enjoy during Vedic times. First of all, she was thrown into ignorance by making the study of the Vedas beyond her reach. Once the access to the source of knowledge was denied, she came to be treated on

---

<sup>15</sup> Jean. Mackellar, *Rape: The Bait and the Trap* New York: crown 1975.

<sup>16</sup> P. B Bart, “*Rape doesn't End with a Kiss*” *Viva*, vol.2. June 1975, p. 38.

<sup>17</sup> Levine, R. A. “*Gusii Sex Offences: A study in social control*,” *American Anthropologist*, 1976 p. 967.

a par with the shudra. She henceforth remained only a passive partner in the religious rites. The son came to occupy a higher place in the family and society, than the daughter, in religion, intellect, economic and affectional area. Thus the birth of a male child became the aspiration of the marriage and to fulfill it early marriage of the woman became the rule of the day.

The status of women became so low during the British period that Panikkar says, “the daughter was legislated out of existence, the wife became part of the husband’s family, and the widow was presumed to have died”<sup>18</sup> women virtually became the custodians of the most conservative element in the Hindu homes, despite all the efforts made towards raising the status of women, the traditional ideas still dominate the minds of leaders and intellectuals of the nation.<sup>19</sup>

The low status of women as mentioned above is not peculiar to India alone rather in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, social contract theorists argued that the relationship between the sexes must be grounded in the mutual consent of individuals. John Locke talked of tacit consent, “which implied that individual (men and women) is going peacefully about their daily lives, even though there are no expressions of it all.”<sup>20</sup>

Rousseau divides woman into the good and the dissolute, or whores. Women can remain good only if they stay within the shelter of domestic life. They are incapable of attaining the status of free and equal individuals. He maintains that men are natural sex aggressors; women are destined to resist. They must always say ‘no’ even when they desire to say ‘yes’. Apparent refusal of consent can never in a woman be taken at face value.<sup>21</sup>

### **II. 3. (b). Contemporary Sex Revolution**

Different from the known revolutions, a peculiar revolution the sex revolution is taking place in the life of millions of men and women. This sex revolution is changing the lives of men and women perhaps more radically than any other revolution of history.

During the past few decades every phase of culture and every institution in society have been invaded by sex. Look at the literature, its topics, personage, scenes and aims, are largely centered on sex, especially its pathological forms. In the last few years much literature has centered on the personalities and adventures of subnormal and abnormal people like prostitutes and mistresses, street urchins, criminals, brothels etc. The main themes in the literature have been various forms of abnormal perverse, vulgar, exotic and even monstrous sex adventures of urbanized cavemen and rapists, the lovers of adulterers and fornicators, of sadists and the like.

The literature of today contains the stories about rape, mutilated and murdered females and outmatching stories of males, it is pornography that appeals to man. The trend of

---

<sup>18</sup> k. M Panikkar, , *Hindu Society at the crossroads*, New York Institute of pacific Relations, 1956, p. 36.

<sup>19</sup> Kapadia, K. M, “*The status of women*” in *Idea, Marriage and family in India*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, Bombay: OxfordUniversity press. P. 257.

<sup>20</sup> John. Locke, *Two Treatises of Government*, ed. By P. Lasslett, Cambridge: CambridgeUniversity Press, 1967, p. 119.

<sup>21</sup> Op cit p. 114



sexualisation is manifest in the music of our time. It is vivid in the naked, seductive and adductive, lusty and perverse popular jazz and song hits, and in the bulk of music on the radio and the television. References of kissing, embracing and going to bed are essential to these lyrics. Their bleating is understood by their gyrations, contortions, and bodily rhythms all too clear in sexual innuendo and undisguised meaning.

The story does not end here; even other forms of popular means of entertainment stage, movies, televisions and radio are full of sex obsession and sex permeations in contemporary culture. Topics of movie are devoted to sex and the cinema plays passion and lust in their most primitive forms. Endless murder and sex plays have been brought into our homes by this new instrument of communication.

The print media is not alien from the influence of sex, both the yellow journalism and in the more respectable publications are under the influence of sexualisation. These show that we are completely surrounded by the rising tide of sex which is flooding every compartment of our culture every section of our social life. Under these circumstances, the bestial deeds and criminal acts of rape, of sadism and masochism for the satisfaction of lust are only to be expected.

History stands witness that it is the family that has been the pivotal institution the building block of society. What has happened to our families today? It is gradually giving up its original character in the wake of modernization and sex revolution. Sorokin views that, "increase in divorce and desertion and the growth of prenuptial and extra-marital sex relations are signs of sex addiction somewhat similar to drug addiction."<sup>22</sup>

He further says

*The excessive pursuit of sex pleasures means a growth of the sex drive, which, in turn changes the whole system of forces governing human behavior. This means that changes in the sex behavior of men and women presuppose a paralled change of their biological and psychological properties of their scientific, philosophical, religious, moral, aesthetic and social values; and also a change of the comparative motivational effectiveness of each of these factor-values. The central biological transformation consists of a set of anatomical and sex activities. This over stimulation may be due either to biological (glandular and other) alterations in the organism, or to the change in the psychological factors that inhibit and control sex impulses and activities. If, for instances, the motivational control and inhibition of these psychological factors weaken or if instead of inhibiting they begin to approve, glorify and justify the greater and more promiscuous sex freedom, the biological sex drive becomes progressively disinhibited and acquires a much greater "motivational power" in propelling the individual towards less and less restrained sex relations. In almost all sex revolutions on a mass scale, the increase of motivational power of sex drive is due mainly to the weakening of the controls of the psychological factors or values, and the replacement of the inhibiting psychological*

---

<sup>22</sup> Pitirim A. Sorokin, *Sene sex Orer*, Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1970, p. 12.

*factor values by those that approve sex passion, sex prowess, and more varied sex relations.*"<sup>23</sup>

Rape like other criminal behavior is the result of learning in interaction with other persons, especially intimate groups, in a process of communication. The learning of rape, like criminal behavior, occurs within intimate personal groups- the family, the neighborhood, the school, and the peer group. Learning the crime of rape includes learning techniques of committing rape as well as the specific direction of motives, drives, rationalizations, and attitudes. Learning takes place in a socio-cultural milieu. Since India's socio-cultural configuration, as sketched above is uncongenial for the woman, men learn to exert power over women in many ways, including rape.

### **Conclusion**

It is thus, the socio-cultural milieu which gives rise to rape. The status of women in our society is inferior in as much as they are treated as things for lust. Sex anarchy in the wake of sex revolution has created sex addiction in the mind of men and women, which is manifested in pre-nuptial and extra marital relations. Rape occurs where sexual chastity is ridiculed, nuptial loyalties stigmatized as antiquated hypocrisy and sexual profligacy and powers are proudly glamorized. The family has grown weak, individuals brought up in such a socio-cultural environments are most likely to be rape-prone.

Today the number of rape cases is widely increasing across the country. At the same time many rape cases are not being reported today due to various reasons. At this juncture one should be aware of the impact of rape on the survivor. Whatever the cause, rape is the fundamental violation of the dignity of woman and denial of their right to live. This inhuman act brings adverse effect on their mental health and shatters the womanhood. The significant socio-cultural causes, the poor status of women and the resulting sex revolution born and brought in such a milieu, the men are likely to be rape-prone.

### **End Notes.**

1. <https://www.indiatoday.in/crime/story/madhya-pradesh-gang-rape-lockdown-1673108-2020-05-01>
2. Jenne Stevenson Moessner, ed., *Through the Eyes of Women* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996), 223.
3. Kaveree Bamzail and Anjali Doshi, "Single and Unsafe," *India Today* (May-30, 2005): 60-61.
4. Mary P. Koss and Laura Boesch, "Rape," *Encyclopedia of Psychology*, edited by Alan E. Kazdin, vol. 7 (New York : Oxford University Press, 2000): 1-6.
5. Veena Pani Pandey, *Problems of Women's Marriage and Violence* (New Delhi: Mohit Publications, 2002), 155-156.

---

<sup>23</sup>Opcit. P. 13-14



6. Pepper Schwartz and Virginia Rutter, *The Gender of Sexuality* (United States of America: Sage Publications Ltd., 1998), 204.
7. Margaret. Mead, *Sex and Temperament in three primitive societies* in *From the South seas*, New York, William Morrow 1939 p. 224-225.
8. Rekha. Pandey, *In Search of Causes of Rape in India*, in the Indian journal of social work, Vol. XLVIII No. I April 1987, p. 108.
9. Jean. Mackellar, *Rape: The Bait and the Trap*” New York: crown 1975.
10. P. B Bart, “*Rape doesn’t End with a Kiss*” viva, vol.2. June1975, p. 38.
11. k. M Panikkar, *Hindu Society at the crossroads*, New York Institute of pacific Relations, 1956, p. 36.
12. Kapadia, K. M, “*The status of women*” in *Idea, Marriage and family in India*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, Bombay: Oxford University press. P. 257.
13. Pitirim A. Sorokin, *Sex and Society*, Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1970, p. 12.
14. <https://www.indiatoday.in/crime/story/madhya-pradesh-gang-rape-lockdown-1673108-2020-05-01> accessed on 07.05.2020.