

Role of media to highlight the rape case in India

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ABSTRACT

“Rape” one of the most horrifying crimes against women and children, and a big concern for the Indian justice system as the crime became so prevalent in India that even when this paper is been written somewhere someone might be facing such a horrible crime and no one would even get to know about it unless it becomes a media’s sensational news headlines. This paper aims to analyse the rape culture in India as it is the most sensationalized news recently after the Kolkata rape case and will also focus upon the role media plays in highlighting such issues, how some cases are highlighted by ‘media advocacy’ resulting in public rage and amendments in law concerning of rapes and sexual assaults, more over there will be certain example of how victim-blaming, lack of awareness, societal norms and lack of literacy impacts the life of a woman.

INTRODUCTION

Rape in India is becoming a concerning issue each passing day, even after so many laws regulations and amendments the situation is the same, there is not much change witnessed from 2012 when a horrifying incident occurred in Delhi which had shaken up the whole country, to 2024 when another incident occurred in Kolkata where a doctor was raped and murdered which again united the whole country to come up on the streets asking for justice. In the span of 12 years between both the cases came up, there are millions of women and children who would have faced such cruelty but went unaddressed, some because of societal norms and reputation and some because of loopholes in the justice system or even because the media had some more important news to show up such as elections. The issue is so big that it needs to be addressed from every aspect which are affecting and becoming a hurdle in justice. The recent scenario in the country had a huge impact on every individual which led everyone think, is it safe to send our girls out even to study? Is the tag of an independent woman really worth risking their life and dignity? Such questions make it important to talk upon the issues and find out where the problem lies.

OBJECTIVE

To understand the role of media Media to highlight study relevant issue.
To explore the public opinion about cases

LITERATURE REVIEW

India is a culture rich country with a huge history of diverse religions and cultures, along with culture there are certain misconceptions which are directly affecting women's life and dragging them backwards in the name of preservation of culture. Making culture and societal norms as a shield to exploit women to maintain a patriarchal dominance has become a trend, there are several texts depicting such issues not only in the present but from a the time of partition and even before that. "Legacies of Departure: Decolonization, Nation-making, and Gender" [Bhutalia,2007], is a text based on the situations faced by the people during the partition of India and Pakistan. The situation was bad for everyone but even worse for women, they were not seen as humans but as property which was used to prove dominance, power and revenge. Women were raped, killed and tortured to prove the dominance and encounter their family's respect and dignity, the text depicts that raping a woman is not just a sexual desire of a man, but it come out of rage and to establish dominance by making a woman's body source to humiliate the owner of her (her father, husband or brother). It was showcased that how women are treated as property, dummies who do not have a sense of taking a decision for herself.

Partition is a matter of dark history that left deep scars on everyone who faced the situation, even after coming forward in time nothing much has changed, women are still on the same page, living a life of her father's choice and then her taking care of her husband's family, and the one who went against this order faces crimes such as rapes and acid attacks. What should we call such incidents? A FATE WORSE THAN DEATH? [Menon,2012], a question raised in the book by Nivedita Menon, "Seeing like a feminist", where she talks about victim blaming, women are not human but a thing or a reward.

India being a diverse nation has different religions, and because if this diversity clashes in thoughts are seen very often but in the case of women independence every religion comes on a same page, "keeping women inside to keep them safe" [Hossain, 2013], an imaginary story created by Begum Rokeya, which showcases how a woman can roam safely at night when men are not at streets can just be imagined, she mentions how beautiful world could feel to every women if she can safely stay outside their house without being accompanied by her family, waring what she wants and walking the way she wants. But the reality hits different where a girl is not safe even in their own house and outside the home feels a forest full of predators.

There are a huge number of texts depicting and pitting over women's situations but very less when it comes to solution, everyone knows the problem, everyone feels pity, but no one thinks of solutions. In the name of solution, girls are killed before birth, kept uneducated

and confined inside their own homes, getting them married when they don't even know the meaning of marriage. Texts comes for awareness, laws and rules are made and changed for safety, but the situation remains unchanged, why? That is still a question.

Finding and Discussion

India is the most populated country in terms of population so as in crimes, we have witnessed world wars, colonisation, partition and an independent nation. The country became independent, but the women remained on the same page. If we look at news every day, we will see a murder or a rape or theft each day, but if we talk about the murder the person who killed someone is the one who is wrong, in case of theft, the thief is the bad person but in the case of rape, the questions comes out, at what time the girl was out, what was she wearing, why she was out alone, why is she working and not marrying or even she should have stayed inside, no one questions why is the boy was out at that time or why he dared to touched that girl, not only the people but the patriarchal mindset is so deep enrooted that the media shows the incident in a way that the girl is trailed first, the investigation starts with questioning the girl why is was out and the judicial system questions her caste, as seen in the case of “Bhanwari Devi rape case”, where the woman was working for a good cause, she was gang raped by some upper caste men and the court said “WHY WOULD THE UPPER CASTE MEN TOUCH A LOWER CASTE WOMAN” and on the basis of this argument she was denied justice for years. For Bhanwari devi getting justice, media played a considerable role in spreading the news and having the people in support of her.

The most recent case, Kolkata rape case was highlighted at a huge level which forced the justice system to work and make more efforts to give justice, but what about cases which are not highlighted at that level, recently on September 24, 2024, a ten-month-old baby girl was raped by a family friend in Gujrat, now who to blame? Why was the baby wearing short cloths? Or why she was out alone? A baby who cannot walk or speak are become a pray of such animal- like humans then why there is victim blaming going on in the society. This case is not much sensationalised by media, does that mean the baby will not get justice? She will but at what age that is the main question here, the justice system is so slow in India that even after media setting the agenda (agenda theory) and media advocacy resulting a huge protest all over the country “India's daughter, Nirbhaya” got justice after 10 years of that incident which took away her life Being a woman is difficult, and it is even more difficult for a woman to decide who to trust, a person go to the police when face something fearful or illegal, but what a woman should do if police itself becomes that fear, where should that woman go? In 2023 a police officer sexually assaulted a 34-year-old woman and then threatened her to rape her if she filled a complain, in such case who should that woman trust. Even the law protector is becoming law brakers. The safest place for a girl is her house, and

the people she trusts the most is her family, but what if her family becomes her biggest fear? A girl looks at her father as a superhero who will always protect her in every situation but when the superhero become the villain it feels heartbreaking, such case was reported recently on October 9, 2024 where a 15-year-old girl was raped by her own father for 2 years, after facing the horrible situation, she again made a mistake by trusting her elder brother and telling him everything she was facing, her elder brother instead of helping her, again raped her. Such cases give goosebumps out of fear, if a girl is not safe in her own house where should that girl go, hearing such news through media develops a fear in every woman which is the concept of “Cultivating theory” where some news impacts the people of fearing to be a victim themselves.

Hathras Case

In September 2020, a deeply tragic incident occurred in a small village. A 19-year-old woman, from the Dalit community, had gone out to the fields, just as many others do in rural India, to gather cattle fodder. What should have been a routine task turned into a nightmare that ended her young life.

On that day, four men—Sandeep, Ramu, Lavkush, and Ravi—suddenly attacked her. They grabbed her by the scarf she was wearing, violently dragging her across the ground. In their brutal assault, her spinal cord was injured, leaving her paralyzed. As she fought back with all her strength, the men tried to strangle her to silence her cries for help. In the chaos and terror, she bit her own tongue, causing a severe injury. Despite her agony, her screams echoed through the fields, finally reaching her mother, who rushed to her side only to find her daughter lying motionless on the ground.

Desperate and fearful, the family took her to the local police station, but they faced disbelief and dismissiveness instead of the help they needed. Days passed before the police finally registered the complaint, and it took even longer for them to listen to her side of the story. In her statements, she repeatedly said she had been raped and strangled, but her words seemed to struggle to make it into actions that could have helped her.

The young woman was initially treated in Aligarh, but as her condition worsened, she was moved to a larger hospital in Delhi. Tragically, despite the doctors' efforts, she succumbed to her injuries two weeks later, on September 29. The medical reports confirmed the brutality of what she had endured—her death was caused by severe trauma to her neck and spine, and the autopsy noted a history of rape and strangulation.

Before her death, the victim's mother revealed that two of the accused men, Sandeep and Lavkush, had been harassing them for months. But her pleas for justice were lost amidst a backdrop of disbelief, delays, and denial, leaving the family and their community to grapple with a profound sense of loss and injustice. This case highlighted not just the brutality of violence but also the enduring struggles faced by the most vulnerable in society—those whose voices are often silenced or ignored, even in the face of the most harrowing truths.

The tragedy of the young woman's death became even more painful in its aftermath. In the early hours of September 29, 2020—around 2:30 AM—when darkness still blanketed the village, the Uttar Pradesh Police took a step that left the grieving family devastated and enraged. Without their consent or even their knowledge, the police cremated her body.

Her brother later shared that the family was locked inside their home during the cremation, powerless and unaware of what was happening just outside. He said they didn't get the chance to say a final goodbye or to perform the last rites according to their customs. To make matters worse, he claimed that petrol was used to hasten the cremation, a detail that deepened their sorrow.

When news of the young Dalit woman's tragic assault in Hathras began spreading on social media, authorities were quick to dismiss it. Agra Police, the District Magistrate of Hathras, and UP's Information Department initially labeled it as "fake news." Soon after, a senior UP Police officer claimed that forensic evidence did not show rape and accused some of trying to create caste-based tension. Critics, however, pointed out that the forensic samples were collected too late for reliable results, raising questions about the evidence's validity. A retired officer emphasized that the absence of semen does not rule out rape and that other forms of evidence were needed. As the controversy grew, a video emerged showing the Hathras District Magistrate pressuring the victim's family to change their statement, warning them that the media would soon lose interest, but officials would remain. The family also claimed they were under intense pressure from authorities. Following public outrage, the state suspended several police officers for mishandling the case.

In response to mounting criticism, the Uttar Pradesh government hired a PR firm, which issued statements denying rape and suggesting a conspiracy to incite caste violence. On October 4, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath called for a CBI probe, despite the family's preference for a judicial investigation. The CBI began its work on October 10 amidst nationwide protests.

Shakti Mill Case

The Shakti Mills gang rape case of 2013 is one of the most heartbreaking and shocking crimes that took place in Mumbai, India. It involved not just one, but two horrifying incidents of sexual violence in the same location, the abandoned Shakti Mills compound. These crimes revealed the horrifying experiences many women face and ignited nationwide outrage.

A 22-year-old young woman who had interned as a photojournalist with an English-language magazine had gone to the deserted Shakti Mills compound on August 22, 2013, for an assignment. She was accompanied by a male colleague. As they were working, a group of five men approached them.

CONCLUSION

After looking at the situation in the country or we can say the situation of women in the world, it can be concluded that a girl is not safe anywhere on this planet, not even in her own family. To bring attention towards these crimes and waking the society up to unite against the heinous crime women like Nirbhaya, Bhanwari devi or the Kolkata doctor are losing their lives and facing the sexual brutality, and then even after the dead facing humiliation in the courts or even in media where some politicians very easily comments “THEY ARE BOYS, THEY MADE A MISTAKE, IT IS NOT A BIG DEAL”.

The only way forward to a better world is to have a better and speeded justice system, where before a woman is questioned what she was wearing or at what time she went out, the man who dared to commit such crime must be questioned why he was out at that hour. We need stricter laws; deterrence is the only option to have such incidents come to an end. Raping a woman and get away just like anything is the reason of fear in every woman and an encouraging factor for do such things without a fear of any punishment.

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