

# The Delhi Gang Rape: The role of Media in Justice

Rishikesh Kumar Gautam<sup>1</sup> & Sonalee Nargunde<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Lecturer, Kasturbagam Rural Institute

Kasturbagam, Near- Tejaji Nagar, Khandwa Road, Indore, (MP)

[rishi.news24@gmail.com](mailto:rishi.news24@gmail.com)

<sup>2</sup>asst. Professor, Davv, Indore. India

## Abstract

*The response to a recent horrific gang-rape and murder case has highlighted the power of media to stimulate debate and change attitudes. The gang-rape and murder of a 23-year-old medical student in New Delhi last month has grabbed headlines around the world, with rights groups and members of the public condemning the attack and calling for stricter laws related to women's abuse in India. The media in India has also focused on Jyoti Singh Pandey's case, providing comprehensive coverage of the fallout from a story which has shocked the nation.*

**Keywords:** Delhi Gang Rape, Gang Rape, Judicial Activism, Media, Justice, Power of Media

16 December, 2012, had been unusually cold in New Delhi. Nirbhaya, a 23-year old paramedical student, was returning home from a movie with her male friend. When the driver of a private bus pulled over offering to give them a ride to their locality, they agreed to hop on. Little did they know that the doors would be locked shut by the five other occupants inside and the journey would unfold into a ghastly nightmare? Over the next 30 minutes, the two were brutally beaten into submission,

stripped and Nirbhaya gang raped by all six men inside the moving bus, including the driver during all this, the bus passed through police checkpoints escaping detection because of the dark-tinted glass on the bus windows<sup>3</sup>. Because Nirbhaya was fighting back, the rapists inserted iron rods into her private parts, ripping her intestines. They then threw the two unconscious, naked bodies out on the road. In the next 48 hours, while the boy managed to recover with no fatal injuries, the entire nation watched Nirbhaya battle for life at New Delhi's Safdurjung hospital as television media doggedly telecasted live coverage. The facts of the story being told on repeat mode by angry reporters on television news channels. She since had a number of surgeries performed. On 26 December 2012, she was moved to Singapore for further treatment. The victim continued to be in a critical condition and died on 29 December 2012 at 4:45 am at the Singapore hospital after suffering severe organ failure. However, the Delhi gang rape has shocked the nation and became the focus of television, newspapers and online media coverage. Because of media and youth the incident generated widespread national and international coverage and was condemned by various women's groups both in India

and abroad. Subsequently, public protests against the Government of India and the Government of Delhi for not providing adequate security for women took place in New Delhi. Similar mass protests took place in major cities throughout the country.

The case presents the sequence of events that occurred in Delhi, on December 16, 2012. It presents the challenges faced by democracy due to poor governance and lethargic judiciary system. Democracy has been stinking since long and patience of the citizens is been tested with the Delhi gang rape case. Then the case highlights the role of print media in taking public opinion to decision making process of government. This journey was started by almost all leading print media houses. But destined platform could not be reached. Media optimally utilized participative journalism and tried to protect the democracy but sunken judiciary flushed away its efforts. The case narrates the changing scenario in media industry and also highlights that how media has devised a new type of journalism for the demanding youth in today's Indian democratic scene. For the first time, the Indian media have made a concerted effort to bring this issue to the forefront of the national agenda. "Brutal gang-rape in India was never new to us. The national media hiding past brutal gang rapes is responsible for today's situation. Corporate driven national media never try to reach the poor and deep root of the society.

## Some Facts-

The case has once again highlighted the question mark which still currently hangs over the issue of women's safety and security in India, where gang-rapes are an unfortunately common occurrence. The central Indian state of Madhya Pradesh has witnessed perhaps the highest number of gang-rapes in the country. Despite some 824 gang rapes having been reported in the state's assembly records over the past two, these attacks rarely make headlines in national newspapers. In India, a woman is molested every 26 minutes, raped every 34 minutes and kidnapped every 43 minutes, according to the Home Ministry's National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB)<sup>8</sup>. (See box on left: Rape Capitals<sup>9</sup>.) In 2012 alone, there were 24,923 registered rapes with police stations across the nation, representing only a fraction of the actual rapes<sup>10</sup>, given that less than 2% of women who have been sexually assaulted in India report the crime to police<sup>11</sup>. These figures are alarming, especially when one looks at the larger gambit of crimes against women nationwide, which have steadily increasing from 195,856 cases in 2008 to 244,270 in 2012<sup>12</sup>. According to NCRB, these include kidnapping/abduction, dowry deaths<sup>13</sup>, molestation, sexual harassment and cruelty by husband/family, apart from rape.

And yet it was Nirbhaya's story that struck a chord with the middle class, mobilising tremendous public support in campaigning for women's safety. As Shoma Chaudhary

of *Tehelka* magazine writes, “Why did it need an incident so unspeakably brutal to trigger our outrage? What does that say about our collective threshold as a society? Why did hundreds of other stories of rape not suffice to prick our conscience?” Media analysts might say that the story of Nirbhaya was a tipping point unleashing much pent up anger in women about their sexual abuse in Indian’s patriarchal society. The positive outcome in this, if any, was the unanimous cry for change – in social attitudes, policy and laws.

Compared to the sex ratio of 972 females per 1000 males in 1901, 2011 figures showed 914 females per 1000 males. The skewed sex ratio had been worrying policymakers for long. In addition to traditional factors, the strong preference for a male child over a female was known to stem from the desire for social mobility<sup>15</sup>. While having a boy implied he would be a wage earner and look after the parents during their old age, a daughter was seen as a liability driving the parents to indebtedness as they scrounged to pay for her marriage and dowry<sup>16</sup>. Traditional Hindu and Sikh beliefs held the view that the funeral rites of a parent should rather be performed by a criminal son than a noble daughter. In much of north India, especially states like Punjab and Haryana, the gender ratio was alarming, with the 2011 census showing a sex ratio of 895 and 879 females respectively for both states per 1000 males, while the national average was 940.

In 2007, when the sex ratio had dropped to 874 females per 1000 males, the

Government of Punjab had called the situation a social emergency, with the health minister Laxmi Kanta Chawala famously stating that it was a matter of great shame that while a buffalo was sold for Rs. 30,000, a woman could be bought for as cheap as Rs. 3000. She said after 1947, the Punjabis had killed more daughters than the number of people killed during partition.<sup>18</sup> According to a study conducted by the Chandigarh-based Institute for Development and Communication for the Punjab Government, in 2006 every seventh household revealed it had practiced female foeticide and 89% of those interviewed revealed that there was no harm in gender selective abortions stating “a male child is our need.”<sup>19</sup> According to a study published in the British medical journal *The Lancet* in 2006, almost 10 million female fetuses were aborted in India in the preceding 20 years.

There had been several government measures to curb female foeticide across India – from Tamil Nadu Chief Minister Jayalalitha’s controversial cradle baby scheme<sup>21</sup> which left cradles at public spaces such as hospitals for parents to drop their unwanted baby girls to be sent to adoption centres, to several state governments rolling out schemes to compensate families of girl children for their education and wedding/dowry expenses. Yet these measures were slow change agents. To tackle the public mindset of a billion plus population was no easy task.

## Role of Media -

This case in Delhi had shocked the nation and became the focus of television, newspapers and online media coverage. For the first time, the Indian media had made a concerted effort to bring this issue to the forefront of the national agenda. Media also adopted rightly pointed philosophy for Democracy by Mr.Narendra Modi “development is possible only with people's participation. What our country needs is institutionalizing of ideas. The people don't need ACTS, they need ACTION.” And hence it could change the definition of democracy from just being “of, for and by the people” to “of, for, by and with the people”. Media is almost like the backbone of the Indian democracy. The roots of media can be traced back to the times of the Nationalist Movement in India. Ever since those times, media has been a crucial role in guaranteeing the citizens their rights and liberties. Besides playing these important roles, media has evolved as a much needed agent of change in the society. All over the world, the impact of media and social media has been witnessed in recent years, with online platforms becoming increasingly powerful mechanisms for mobilizing popular support.

## Voice of Media -

India is no exception, and the media coverage of this particularly horrific case and the online response had applied pressure to the authorities to deliver justice

as soon as possible. Mindsets had been changed and it seemed that people are no longer willing to accept rape and sexual assault as “a simple fact of life.” People in India started demanding change, and they are harnessing the power of modern media to make their voices heard. In a way media has been successful in bringing the change in the mindset of the people for better. (Refer Exhibit 1). But good intentions and constructive efforts of media in this case were diluted by sunken Indian Judiciary. Till now investigative journalism came into focus during the murder of Delhi model Jessica Lal by Manu Sharma, Anna Hazare when protested against corruption in the society. Above highlighted case is perhaps among the most prominent cases of media interference seeking justice as a new dimension 'PARTICIPATIVE JOURNALISM' was innovated to protect democracy and society. Henceforth media has helped to form public opinion and has been quite successful in this role. There are a number of newspapers, magazines and local TV station with rich history. Hindi print media fraternity is one of the oldest, reputed and pioneer of media. Now the geographical boundaries are not limited, every media is making its mark on national scene because of its quality journalism & technical excellence. Media has successfully instituted norms of credibility and truthfulness for an ideal medium, focused at unbiased and non-prejudiced reporting. Media is focused on how to reach a larger base of people. Media now has to its credit some great innovations. It is very similar to what McDonalds do to its menu in every region –

'cater to the taste of people there'. Media prospers on the back of excellent editorial content - fair reporting and quality printing and believes in the core values of credibility, integrity, innovativeness, entrepreneurial respect and appreciation. Since last 10 years many media houses have assumed the role of an opinion maker and creator of public opinion as one of the CSR Philosophy. They have not left a single stone unturned in the 16/12/2012, Damini case (Refer Exhibit 2). All Media were keeping track of each and every happening in the Damini case also it gave path to the anger of youth in the city. 'PUBLIC OPINION' is taken on any issue by almost all media houses and the procedure of converting public opinion into decision making which is quite unique in itself has been adopted. First the research team takes nappointment with policy makers, state ministers, central ministers and various politicians in the power and opposition. It takes their stand on a particular issue, and then onwards it seeks public opinion on the same issue. It does not mean that it is simply a mediator but it crucially controls the sentiments of people and even does correction in public opinion .As a result, it has compelled government and the judiciary system to consider public opinion in decision making. The response to the recent horrific gang-rape and murder case has highlighted the power of media to stimulate debate and change attitudes. The police and the law were pressurized by the media and the people for a fast-track verdict. Protests, both silent and candle-lit, sent out messages of contempt for the victim's

family and pressure on the Indian Judiciary. In the above stated case, media interference dramatically changed the course of the case. The intervention of media was very much desired as media helped the case to be highlighted as an example of gross injustice. Media unveiled the corrupt Indian system and the level to which they favoured those with power and money. The mass protests that it sparked resulted in some serious amendments in the Indian judiciary system. From then media conceived the role. This leads us to the point that media activism of a powerful kind, of a type that jolts people out of their comforts and brings them on a same pedestal calling for both, meaningful dialogue and action for a better future, is not to be shunned, but actively promoted. The media does not require to stay out of the courtroom, as was ordered when the accused went to trial, but continue doing its job, though according to the rules. Media advocacy is not about outrage, shrieks or passing judgments. It is about bringing people out of their closet and empowering them with skills and data to tell stories on their own.

### Print media –

An important part in raising this debate was played by the media, both national and foreign. It was amid these reverberations that the media, including print, electronic and social, was accused of activism. As it catalysed anger among the civil society groups, prominent dailies such as The Hindu, The Times of India, The Indian Express, Hindustan Times, and

others, continuously published protesters' movement and promoted the movement among masses not only through print but also through their electronic version.

On December 19, 2012, TOI dedicated its front page to 'Times View' with the headline 'Enough Talk. Let's make women safe'. The 'Times View' also included '6-Point Action Plan' with respect to such cases – 1) Harder Punishment 2) Sensitise Police 3) Fast Track Courts 4) Better Patrolling 5) Use Technology 6) Database of Public Transport Personnel. The Hindu organised a public forum on December 28, 2012, bolstering the fight against sexual violence from various perspectives: Legislation, law enforcement, social activism, media and from the perspective of students. The foreign media also stood behind the demonstrators. Reporting on the death of the victim, The New York Times stated, "Revulsion and anger over the rape has galvanised India, where women regularly face sexual harassment and assault, and where neither the police nor the judicial system is seen as adequately protecting them"; the Washington Post reported, "The brutal rape shook Indians out of their usual apathy".

### Electronic media –

In present scenario in India the television networks have been the largest players in Indian news coverage. Social media haven't changed that, but have instead provided new avenues for news-gathering and story distribution. In the months preceding the events, Indian newspapers

and television had covered a number of rape cases. But the December Delhi gang rape proved to be different. The brutality of the attack and the scale of the protests brought international attention to India's problem of violence against women. Some journalists we spoke to highlight the role of protest in democratizing India's media. Anchor of Hindi news channel Aaj Tak Mr. Saeed Ansari said that "I believe through this case, media played an important role to pressurise the government to take some measures for protection of women. I hope because of media the family will also get justice for the girl. He also added "I agree there are hundreds of cases of gang rapes in India, which are not reported at all. Maybe because this case took place in the capital, we are more interested in covering it".

### Social media -

Another important aspect of recent coverage has been the role of social media. For perhaps the first time, internet and social media have been utilised as tools to mobilise public support throughout India. People are now raising their voices through Twitter, Facebook and other social media, expressing their frustrations against the government and administration. Following news of the case reaching the masses, the huge crowds of protestors taking to the streets provide an indication of the growing strength of the internet and social media in harnessing public support. People have contacted each other and established platforms from which they have campaigned for

governmental action, with the intention of ensuring justice for the victim and offering protection for all Indian women. This outpouring of public outrage was not accidental; it was organised through social media and other messages which brought people – especially Indian youth – together in support of a cause which they feel has become extremely important in their country. Platforms such as the Facebook group ‘Gang Raped in Delhi’ and ‘Justice for Raped Girl in Delhi’ have united people in expressing their hopes for a future free from similar cases. Hashtags related to gang-rape and rape have been trending in recent weeks, with many taking to Twitter to spread news about the case. Numerous other online groups have also been formed, including ‘Delhi Women Safety’ which offers updates on the case, as well as information and advice for women on how best to protect themselves. All over the world, the impact of media and social media has been witnessed in recent years, with online platforms becoming increasingly powerful mechanisms for mobilising popular support. India is no exception, and the media coverage of this particularly horrific case and the online response has applied pressure to the authorities to deliver justice as soon as possible. Mindsets have been changed and it seems that people are no longer willing to accept rape and sexual assault as "a simple fact of life." People in India are demanding change, and they are harnessing the power of modern media to make their voices heard.

## Effect of Damini gang rape - Redefining the law against rape

Justice Verma’s team decided to begin approaching the problem by looking at the three key sections of the Indian Penal Code that concerned sexual crimes against women – section 375 and 376 that pertained to rape, section 354 that concerned physical molestation, and section 509 that dealt with verbal and other types of non-physical harassment.

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 the rape is proven, then punishment can be up to seven years of imprisonment for raping an adult and up to 10 years for raping a minor.

In a nutshell, penetration was sufficient to constitute the sexual intercourse necessary to the offence of rape. <sup>24</sup> The only exception to this was sexual intercourse by a man with his wife – the wife not being under fifteen years of age, would not be considered rape.

Women’s rights groups and civil society had for long been campaigning for change in the archaic IPC definition. Some of the issues that were placed before the Verma committee were as follows:

### *A broader definition?*

Rape was still being defined primarily by penetration. If a rapist was somehow stopped/caught before the act of penetration, all his actions leading up to it such as using physical force on the victim, harassing her or undressing her, only qualified as “attempt to outrage the modesty of a woman” under section 354 of the IPC, for which the accused would face a minimal punishment of two years in prison, and that too bailable. Civil society organizations protested, pointing out that the attempt to murder (section 307), attempt to commit culpable homicide (section 308), attempt to commit suicide (section 309) and attempt to commit robbery (section 393) were criminal offences under the IPC, but not the attempt to rape.

National Commission for Women (NCW) had been campaigning for long to factor in what it termed as ‘Sexual Assault’ which would include: “the introduction to any extent by a man of an object or a part of the body (other than the penis) into the vagina or anus or urethra of a woman” or child, as well as “manipulating any part of the body of a child so as to cause penetration of the vagina anus or the urethra of the offender by any part of the child's body.”<sup>27</sup> In the instance of the Delhi gang rape case, iron rods were inserted into the victim's private parts, ripping her intestines.

Additionally, to consider was the recommendations from Women and Child Development Ministry for sexual harassment to be included. The idea

initially stemmed from the various ragging and ‘eve-teasing’ cases on the rise among Indian youth. “Eve-teasing” is the slang term for sexual harassment and includes anything from lecherous glances to unwanted touching<sup>28</sup>. The humiliation felt by girls who have been victims of eve-teasing has long been a driver for their committing suicide.

Who could forget the famous case of 14-year-old Ruchika Girhotra, a budding tennis player from Haryana who had been molested by the Inspector General of Police S.P.S Rathore in 1990<sup>29</sup>? Because Rathore was the powerful top man in the police department, her family's attempt to file a complaint was met with humiliation and harassment to her and her family. Ruchika was mysteriously expelled from her school on false grounds, her brother was beaten up, handcuffed and paraded, and her father was fired from his bank job slapped with, what media claimed as, false charges of corruption. On 28 December, 1993, unable to fight any further, Ruchika committed suicide by consuming poison<sup>30</sup>. After 19 years, 40 adjournments, and more than 400 hearings, on 22 December, 2009, the court finally pronounced Rathore guilty under the same Section 354 of the same IPC (attempt to outrage the modesty of a woman) and sentenced him to six months imprisonment and a fine of Rs. 1,000. This was seen as a grave injustice to the crimes he had committed.

December 2012 itself saw several eve-teasing cases tucked away in between



newspaper columns. The girl in Ranchi, who was upset over being eve-teased by some boys, came home, poured inflammable substance upon her and set herself ablaze. Mumbai claimed to witness a 69% jump in eve-teasing cases within the local trains in 2012, with men entering exclusively ladies' compartments.

## What is the reason of increasing rape cases - ?

### **Bollywood and porn to blame?**

Some Indians felt that the origins of the entire problem could be traced to how Bollywood's portrayal of women reinforced sexist stereotypes. Speaking about Bollywood's plotlines and characters, Independent Indian filmmaker Onir said, "They are suggesting that women being molested is entertainment. You treat her badly, you humiliate her, but at the end of the day she will come around."<sup>38</sup> With item numbers becoming a must in every film, "Goal" director Vivek Agnihotri was of the opinion that songs with sexual innuendos did affect the psyche of people. More than rape scenes it's the subliminal messages which affect the psyche. These come from perverted songs, dances, gestures, dialogues which are meant to titillate the audience," Agnihotri said to the media. Take the controversy around rapper Yo Yo Honey Singh. Singh was a London-based Punjabi rapper, known for his lewd sexist lyrics and was gaining tremendous popularity amongst the youth. His notorious song,

"Ch\*\*t," or "Cu\*t" had the following lyrics:

*"They say the whole village has had you're a\*\*/my d\*\*\* is prepared today/If I don't have you today then I'm not a jatt/You love sex but you scream when I thrust/Your panties will be drenched in blood as you scream 'Badshah'."*

In the verses that followed, Singh rapped about beating her with a shoe and then moving on to other things. Singh was wildly popular in Punjab and Delhi NCR. In September 2012, he ranked number one on the iTunes world charts. In one month, Singh had performed for packed houses in Mumbai, Bengaluru and New Delhi as well as Patiala, Raipur and Bhopal. His fans now included top Bollywood stars. Singh had signed up to perform for a packed audience at a hotel in Gurgaon on New Year's Eve 2012. But when Nirbhaya was gang raped and could not be saved, the nation watched aghast and something changed. The introspection that followed led to several civil society groups wanting to ban Honey Singh. An FIR was also registered in Lucknow against the controversial singer for the explicit and demeaning lyrics of two of his songs, "Rape rap" and "C\*\*\* t". IPS officer Amitabh Thakur, on whose complaint the FIR was registered, said: "These songs are vulgar, lewd, indecent and act as catalysts for crime against women." Demands for banning the concert, the tickets of which ranged from Rs.14,000 to Rs.25,000, gained ground as activists shot off emails to the general manager of The Bristol

hotel42. With all the negative publicity, the hotel finally decided to call off the show, much to the disappointment of his fans. “Bollywood should and must portray reality, including the dismal treatment of women. But surely portraying reality or realistic situations is different from inviting your audience to leer and demean with you?” wrote a Reuters reporter in the aftermath of Nirbhaya’s death. Was the solution then to have a stringent censorship committee for the entertainment industry as some were suggesting? And what about the porn industry that was the crux of much heated debate in India off late?

The porn debate had recently reached new heights when it was found that there was a positive correlation between porn and rape. A report in the Rice Standard was of the opinion that porn played a significant role in creating rapists and abusers<sup>44</sup>. It said: “Women continue to live in a rape culture which eroticises violence and the degradation of women. Pornography has evolved from the soft Playboy images of “the girl next door” to sadomasochist movies ridden with bondage and violence. Technological advancements have aggravated this epidemic.”

Nine million-plus Indians download and view proscribed adult content (pornography) on their mobile phones, according to a 2012 report on telecom portal Themobileindian.com. Although possessing or watching porn was permitted in India, distributing it was illegal. And now, the authorities were moving to crack down on web porn — even as the country

seemed to be growing more liberal in its attitude toward sex<sup>45</sup>.

News magazine *India Today* reported that mobile phones were used nearly 4.1 million times a month on average to search with the keyword “rape” over the past year, according to Google AdWords. Search keywords included "Indian girls raped", "raping video", "raping stories", "raped in public", "little girl raped", "raping mom", "father raping daughter" and "raped to death". This again didn't include people who went out and buy their fix of sleaze-on-the-go from mobile repair shops, the street corner DVD rental stores or the overly friendly cyber cafe owner.

In February 2013, a year-long survey of 964 collegians by Rescue, a Mysore-based 'moral consciousness' group, concluded that 75% of all male undergraduate or pre-university students regularly consumed porn. The study also reported that the boys were "six times more likely" to view the proscribed adult content on mobile phones. The nine million Indians estimated to be using mobile devices to download porn, spent an average of Rs.5,500 every year on procuring content. The US-based Strategy Analytics estimated that smartphone penetration in India would touch 33% of all mobile users by 2015. The Bangalore-based Convergence Catalyst, another mobile industry watchdog, predicted that India's smartphone market will double over 2013 crossing 44 million handsets.

While people still debated the lack of concrete evidence on whether the use of

mobile phones resulted in more voyeuristic behaviour, there was an increasing number of rapists who not only raped, but videoed their act to circulate or even sell on the underground porn market. In January, 70-year-old Niyaz Raza of Govandi, Mumbai, was arrested after he allegedly raped a 13-year-old girl, his sixth victim, and circulated a 12-minute mobile phone video of the teenager performing oral sex on him. More recently, a 22-year-old garment factory worker, Manoj Sah, and 19-year-old, Pradeep Kumar, admitted in police custody that they had watched porn on Sah's mobile phone before raping a neighbour's five-year-old child in East Delhi. But was the flood of smut really to blame for an epidemic of violent gang rapes? Should porn be banned?

The defenders of porn refused to agree. Anja Kovacs, the founder and director of the New Delhi-based Internet Democracy Project, "Sexual expression is a part of free speech and the Internet does give space for people to experiment with these things. So that's another important avenue of expression that you're closing down. But the right to freedom of expression is also the right to receive information. And [with a ban], people can no longer make those choices [of what information to access] themselves."

## Conclusion

### Many Nirbhayas -

The year 2012 had been nightmarish for women across India. The year began with

the rape of two year old toddler in January, by a 25-year-old daily wage worker who lived in the vicinity in Colva. The worker raped the child after finding her alone at home and absconded immediately. The police who had initially registered the case as molestation later changed it to rape upon finding medical evidence<sup>81</sup>. In February, 38 year old Suzette Jordan was gang raped in a moving car as she was returning home from a night club. The prime accused was still roaming free, with an administration in denial mode. In July, in a horrific incident a young girl was groped and harassed in public on the streets of Guwahati to the open gaze of passers-by, none of whom stepped forward to stop the harassment. The entire episode was filmed and broadcast by a local Guwahati television channel. Moments after the video was uploaded in the net, it went viral. With pressure from national news media the journalist lost his job and the police claimed their search for the accused was "still on". In August, a 26-year-old PHD student studying in IIT Powai was raped on the campus of India's premier Institute of Technology in Mumbai. Civil society raised its voice but the case was still pending. The month of September saw three harrowing nights for the women of India. While a young school girl was returning from her evening tuition classes, she was raped in the streets of Dabra in Haryana, a state known to have the lowest number of women. Struggling to get justice for their daughter, when the family approached the police, they refused to file a rape complaint, blaming the girl's character. Unable to protect the "honour"

of his daughter, the father committed suicide. Within days of this incident, the region witnessed the gang rape of a married woman. She was also described as being a woman of “loose character” by the police. A third incident followed when a young school girl was raped in broad daylight. In October, two young girls were raped by their college staff in their institute in Rajasthan. Like many others they had come to the institute to round off their education and to establish their careers after finishing their studies at Banasthali Vidyapeeth<sup>82</sup>. There were also others, ranging from toddlers to school girls to college students to working women to married middle aged women. Women across all ages, locations and socio-economic statuses were equally unsafe in India.

Finally the year ended with Nirbhaya, shocking the nation, waking it up to the brutality that had never reached such heights earlier. The Verma committee had to give its recommendations keeping in mind all cases of sexual assault in the recent past. It was not just one Nirbhaya who died fighting her rapists. That was the story everywhere.

#### **Public cries for justice -**

There were reasons why Nirbhaya’s case caught fire in the public imagination more than any other rape in recent times, garnering widespread national and international media coverage.

#### **Mob justice -**

Nirbhaya’s death saw some radical fall outs in the way the Indian public

responded to any injustice against women. Primarily, it was an uncontrollable seething anger and a pent up desire for revenge. Some women lawyers in court suggested that Nirbhaya’s was an “open and shut case” and the accused should be “handed over to the public”.

## References

- [1] "special fast track courts by January". *Dainik Bhaskar*. 29 December 2012.
- [2] "CJI Promises Swift Justice for Crimes against Women". *First Post*. Retrieved 2 January 2013.
- [3] "Delhi Gang Rape: Protests go Viral Nationwide, Unstoppable Public Outpouring as Gang Rape Victim Dies". *Dainik Bhaskar (New Delhi)*. 29 December 2012.
- [4] "Delhi gang-rape case: Delhi police confirm fifth accused a minor". *Zeenews.india.com*. 22 December 2012.
- [5] "Delhi Gang-Rape Victim Shifted from Hospital, to be Flown Abroad for Treatment". *The Times of India*. 26/12/012.
- [6] "Delhi Gang-Rape: Need Stronger Laws, says Meira Kumar". *DNA*. IANS. 19 December 2012.
- [7] "Failure of Governance Root Cause of Crimes Against Women: Verma Committee". *The Hindu*. 23 January 2013.

- [8] "Medium for the Masses: How India's Local Newspapers Are Winning Rural Readers - India Knowledge@Wharton". Knowledge.wharton.upenn.edu. Retrieved 2012-03-09.
- [9] "President Signs Ordinance to Effect Changes in Laws Against Sexual Crimes". *India Today*. 3 February 2013. Retrieved 4 February 2013.
- [10] "When Words Fail, a Dot Speaks Volumes." TOI article on black dot". *The Times of India*. 21 December 2012. Retrieved 30 December 2012.
- [11] "Bill against Rape Accused being Proposed in the Loksabha", *Dainik Bhaskar*, 20 March, 2013 .
- [12] "Debate Regarding Decreasing the Age Continued throughout the Nation", *Dainik Bhaskar*, 15 March, 2013.
- [13] "Decision of Juvenile Justice Board Came Where the Sixth Accused Declared Minor", *Naidunia*, 29 January 2013.
- [14] "Final Verdict Came that the Age of Sex Will Not Be Decreased and the Full Credit of this Decision Went to the Youth", *Dainik Bhaskar*, 19 March, 2013.
- [15] "Moral Education and Importance of a Girl", *Naidunia*, 31 December 2012.
- [16] "Outrage Displayed by Delhi Youth", *Dainik Bhaskar*, 23 December 2012.
- [17] Gardiner Harris (3 January 2013). "Murder Charges Are Filed Against 5 Men in New Delhi Gang Rape". *The New York Times*.
- [18] Kaul, Vivek (24 December 2012). "Shinde-Speak Shows all that is wrong with overnment". *FirstPost*.
- [19] Mandhana, Nikarika; Trivedi, Anjani (18 December 2012). "Indians Outraged by Account of Gang Rape on a Bus". *The New York Times*. Archived from the original on 30 December 2012. Retrieved 30 December 2012.
- [20] Neyazi, Taberez Ahmed (2010). "Cultural Imperialism or Vernacular Modernity? Hindi Newspapers in a Globalizing India", *Media, Culture and Society*, Vol.26, No.6, pp.907-924, Sage, London.
- [21] Sengupta Pallavi (11 September 2013). "Nirbhaya Rape Case Verdict, Key Takeaways", *One India News Channel*.