

## ONE STOP RAPE CRISIS CENTERS

While watching the programme Satyamev Jayate by Amer Khan which commenced on Star Plus from 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2014, I learnt about the proposal of the Usha Mehra Commission for setting up of **one stop rape crisis centers** in order to provide relief and justice to the rape victims without her being harassed by the three agencies crucial in providing her relief :police, hospitals and judiciary.

Amir Khan in his inimitable manner started with the Nirbahay case which shook India and led to formation of fast track court which delivered the judgment in record time, and proceeded through interaction with activist, victims, parents and relatives to demonstrate that at the ground level reality was different: there was very little impact. Basically it is the apathy, attitude of society and prejudices at various stages of the system required to be traversed by the victim which instead of facilitating her getting justice become road blocks. Police apathy and indifference towards the victim not only breaks the moral of the victim but may give impetus to further derogatory action by the culprits. This was demonstrated through narration of events, depiction of cases and interviews with the parents of the victim. Many a time the police stations -Amer Khan informed do not register an FIR which it is their duty to record.

After the Police, the next stage for relief to the victim is the hospital for medical assistance as well as examination for necessary evidence. Attitude of the medical staff is to avoid the medical examination as they do not wish to be implicated in the court case. They therefore take recourse to either deter the victim through grave consequences or terrorize by wrong information of painful procedures of medical examination such as the whole hand will have to be inserted inside to check the veracity of her claim etc and also incorrectly demanding the presence of police as witness. The treatment is worse for victims from under privileged classes.

One of the reasons for this attitude is that they do not consider such condition as a disease but only a requirement of evidence and also they are over worked. Further no training has been given nor any procedure laid down for conducting it is given. They are also not given the necessary instruments required. Hence attitude building, proper training and focus is required to be given to the medical staff for such medical examination which besides being evidence collection also need to take care of the other aspects such as trauma, HIV, wounds and hemorrhage which the victim is likely to suffer. A beginning has been made by some NGO's and a guide and kit are being supplied.

But the quest for justice has another road block .Our Judicial system. A case study of a woman teacher who was raped by a cousin of her landlord amply demonstrated it .She made an FIR , got a medical test and the victim was arrested .She however found that getting Justice was impossible .The humiliating questions asked in the court by the defense council made her re-live the trauma .The final blow came when the culprit not only got a bail on surety and the appeal for bail cancellation was not accepted .The culprit is now absconding and the files are missing ! The case is still on after 21 years .The man moves around scot free where as she has to live with her anguish.

This was not the only example presented .Several Instances reported demonstrated that the callous indecent questions and lurid descriptions in the court led many women to close the case . Hence it could be seen that the law procedure are culprit centric and the victim is only a witness who only has the government prosecutor to put up the case .The Prosecutor as is well known is already over burdened with a plethora of CASES . But the culprit will get the best defense lawyers he can afford and he is able to get cases postponed on flimsy grounds leading to delay in finalization of cases for decades .Delay leads to breakdown of morale and is humiliating to the victim . Hence to take care of speedy redress for the victims the USHA MEHRA Commission suggested a one stop rape crisis center (which are in operation in South Africa Malaysia and BanglaDesh) .It envisages :Notified hospital for medical test ,attaching a senior officer at the police station to oversee such cases and making available forensic help so that proper evidence can be collected and thereafter in 15days the challan presented in court and the case decided in 2months time . One can only hope such Crisis Centers will soon be set up .

But the most important and crucial factor is the attitude of society who ostracizes the victim considering it to be her fault even if she is a small child The programme busted the general belief that it is the manner a girl dresses which provokes rape through the results of a survey which indicated that of the cases reported 38%were wearing burqa and sari and 43 percent were in salwar suit and other dress forms and only 20 percent wore frocks as they were under the age of fourteen . Thus dress is not the provocative factor .Nor is age an impacting one :victims vary from 2months to 83 . The impetus behind the crime is not sex but power . The Power to Destroy a woman to make her into a living corpse .If society also treats a victim as a living corpse and blames her , the culprit and his ilk will get encouragement .

On the show were two women who had defied society after being raped and were not afraid to disclose their identity as they had support of their near and dear ones .Urmila from Madhya Pradesh and Suzette Jordon from Kolkata

Painful and Moving and Informative The show is compulsory viewing .