

India & rapes: Punish the police. Remove the senior police officers for duty violation

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The popular anger is being sought to be handled over the fresh round of rape cases, by a bunch of politicians trying to outdo each other in making strongly worded statements. Unfortunately they are not sitting for a test on their linguistic skills. The reality is, people are angry, not merely because rapes are occurring, but because the police is in a permanent denial mode. Whether on 16th December or in the recent terrible cases, the police's first response is to deny rape. In Chinsurah, West Bengal, after a woman brought in an accusation of rape, the police arrested the accused on a charge of drunk and disorderly behaviour and let him go with a bail. After the husband of the woman committed suicide and a tremendous explosion of anger all around, the police finally arrested the man. The police officer who had talked to the media prior to the mass outrage had simply said there was no evidence against the accused but declined to say whether the woman had been medically tested or not.

In Delhi of course it is not a case of one complaint. It is a case of rape after rape. While politicians, beginning with the President of India and moving through Sonia Gandhi to Sushma Swaraj and Sushil Kumar Shinde, make noises, the reality is far different from their pretence. The public anger is in the first place against the police, for systematically refusing to take cognizance of rape accusations. All the playacting about demanding death penalty for rapists is beside the point. As of now, the issue is not whether rapists should be given death penalty, chemical castration, or seven years' RI. As of now the issue is whether the Delhi police will be firmly punished for not taking action?

A girl, aged only five years, is battling for her life after being raped by a neighbour. When her parents went to the police they first refused to file an FIR, and then tried to shut them up by offering them two thousand rupees. A young woman who protested against the behaviour of the police at the hospital where the girl had initially been taken was publicly slapped by an Assistant Commissioner of Police.

Another rape case that has come to light was that of a thirteen year old who was kidnapped, gang-raped, and once again, when the family et to the police they refused to accept an FIR. In desperation the girl tried to commit suicide.

What the police do is clear. Real criminals are shielded. False cases are lodged when some 'forward movement' has to be shown. Criminal gangs are routinely protected. And politicians are actually firmly behind the police.

So what does the picture really look like? Rapes on workers, peasants, lower middle classes, are the bulk of rapes, and these are routinely sought to be hushed up by the police. Governments are unabashedly cynical about such hush ups, as when West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee accused a rape victim of being the wife of a CPI(M) man (and hence of making a false claim that she had been raped).

So the inescapable conclusion is, if you are part of the toiling people, rape on you or on your family

members is not a serious issue that the police will follow up diligently. It is not a matter where the might of the state will be exercised to ensure that justice is done. The state power protects its own minions, who routinely take cut money, protection money, or the like.

What the struggles have to focus on today, is that every police officer seeking to hush up rape cases have to be sacked from their jobs. Let the politicians braying for the supposed blood of rapists (by demanding the death penalty) instead fight to ensure that all laws are properly applied in rape cases and over police action.

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