The IPC defines rape very narrowly as sexual intercourse that takes place without the will or consent of the woman. There are a number of other ways in which a woman may be victimized sexually. For such cases, which include but are not limited to eve-teasing, molestation etc., are covered under Section 354 of the IPC which deals with “outraging the modesty of a woman”.

**Q. What is meant by “outraging the modesty of a woman”?**

The Supreme Court defines “outraging the modesty of a woman” as any act done in the presence of a woman that is suggestive of sex according to commonly held notions.

When the accused assaults or uses criminal force to outrage her modesty, section 354 of the IPC deals with punishments.

**Q. What is the maximum punishment that can be given to a person found guilty of outraging the modesty of a woman?**

A maximum sentence of two years or a fine or both may be slapped on an accused found guilty. This is a charge lesser than rape and invites lesser punishment.

**Q. What offences are covered under this section?**

Molestation, eve-teasing, fellatio, cunnilingus, groping are all covered under this section.

**Q. What is the nature of this offence?**

Outraging the modesty of a woman is a cognizable offence. It is bailable.

Charges under this section are easy to make but difficult to prove since the court will look for witnesses and other means to verify the commission of the offence.

--Ends