Rape and other forms of sexual assault, though inhuman and perhaps the basest of crimes, when scars children emotionally when perpetrated on them in their formative years. It prevents them from enjoying their childhood and even adult life.

The Indian Penal Code deals with rape and has no special sections that deal exclusively with the rape of a minor (woman less than 18 years of age). Sections that deal with intercourse with a minor are present in clauses and sub-clauses of various sections.

There are also strict sentences imposed for forcing women and minors under the age of 18 into prostitution.

**Q. If I am a victim of harassment, who can I call?**

Law enforcement agencies across the country are aware of the problem and have set up various toll-free helpline numbers for women to call on at any time of the day or night. You can get more information on women helplines here [link to helpline page].

**Q. With internet penetration on the rise, are there any provisions relating to pornography - particularly child pornography?**

Yes. The IT Act has a number of strict provisions regarding publishing and transmitting pornography. Details on these provisions can be had here [insert link to pornography act in IT Act].

**Q. Under what conditions is intercourse with a woman considered rape of a minor?**

Sexual intercourse is considered rape in the following cases:

- When a man has intercourse with his wife and the wife is under 15 years of age.

- Sexual intercourse with a woman under 16 years of age is considered rape even if she consents to the act.

**Q. What does the law say on prostitution of women and minors?**

The laws on procuring a woman or minor girl or forcing a woman or minor girl into “illicit intercourse” is a serious offence. The following scenarios will invite punishment:

- Kidnapping, abducting or inducing woman to compel her marriage, etc. with intent to compel her to marry any person against her will or force her to have illicit intercourse.

- A person who uses criminal intimidation on a woman to force her to go from place to place for illicit intercourse.

- Importing a girl from a foreign country (or from Jammu & Kashmir) who is under twenty one years of age with intent or knowledge that the girl is likely to be forced or seduced to illicit intercourse with another person.

- Selling, letting to hire a minor for under 18 years of age for prostitution. The burden of proving otherwise lies on the accused.

- Buying a minor for prostitution or illicit intercourse.

**Q. What is the maximum punishment that the courts can award?**

In each of the above cases, the courts can award the guilty imprisonment that may extend u to ten years and may also impose a fine.

**Q. What is “illicit intercourse”?**

Section 372 of the IPC defines illicit intercourse as sexual intercourse between persons not united by marriage, or by any union or tie which though not amounting to a marriage.

--Ends