

Time to change Remember 16th December 2012?



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H8



That dreadful day, three odd years ago, when a 23 year old physiotherapy student, known to the world as 'Nirbhaya', the brave heart was brutally gangraped on a bus and left to die on the road.

She was young and full of dreams and hope, celebrating her life like any young woman of her age would be doing. Unaware of the dreadful fate awaiting her, she along with her friend, Awindra Pandey, boarded a bus at Munrika for Dwaraka, South Delhi.

They were 6 men or rather 5 men and a juvenile, according to our law books. The six, raped and beat her and her friend and threw them off the bus. She succumbed to her horrific injuries 13 days after the assault. The extend to which she was made to suffer was so brutal that the doctors who treated her added that they themselves felt the pain to explain her situation.

As every details of the case unraveled,

all dinner table conversations were centred around this particular case and how women are never safe in India. Some of them even went upto the extent of questioning what she were and accused her for being out at 9.30pm. with a boy, which were later echoed by one of her rapists, Mukesh singh in an interview for the controversial BBC documentary, 'India's Daughter'.

The case rose to global prominence with massive protests of the scale India had never witnessed recently, breaking out in the capital, demanding justice for the girl, now a symbol of defiance of thousands of women facing sexual assault daily in India. Under immense pressure, death sentences were awarded to the 5 adult convicts-Ram, Mukesh, Pawan, Vinay and Akshay, while the juvenile escaped being tried along with them as he was six months short of adulthood.

Now let us end these name games of 'Nirbhaya' and 'Juvenile' once and for all. She was Jyoti Singh Pandey and I am not ashamed to name her, nor should you be. People who commit heinous crimes like rape should hang their heads in shame and not the victims.

A major point of debate in the case has been the juvenile convict, who was said to be the most brutal among all the six. Yet, just because he was 17 years old at that time, he wasn't tried along with the other 5 men, who were sentenced to death. As per the law (before the amendment on De. 22, 2015), he was tried as a juvenile and was sentenced to a maximum of 3 years in a correctional facility. Now, was that fair? The fact that, he was old enough to rape meant that he was an adult. He was neither thinking like a child, nor behaving like one. "Crime has won and we have lost" was what Asha Devi, Jyoti's mother said, who broke down hearing that the juvenile will walk free. Well, that just meant, since he was just a few months short of being 18, he could do anything including a monstrous

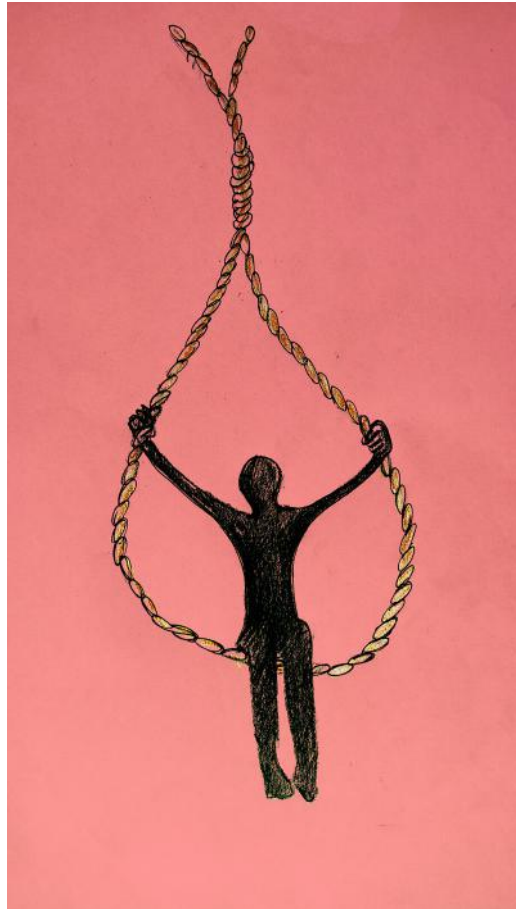


cold blooded murder and get away so easily! At 20, he has now become a street smart person, who knows how to use the system in his favour. Is such a person not detrimental to the society as a whole?

The only upside of all this uproar was the speedy administration of the new Juvenile Justice bill 2015, which allows for juveniles 16 years or older to be treated as adults for heinous offences like rape and murder. The bill has however been criticized for violation of the UN convention on the Rights of the child which mandates that all children under the age of 18 years be treated equal. But this argument dies away in the face of the cruelty of the verdict in the case of Jyoti Singh.

Even then remain some questions remains unanswered. This was perhaps the ultimate attack on the women in this country. Even after all those candle light vigils and massive protests staged across the country which shook every Indian's conscience, has anything really changed?

The attitude remains the same. A lot of us still questions the way a girl dresses and the time she is going out . If we hear of a rape, we still want to know what was she wearing or why was she out alone at that time. We judge her morality if she goes out with any of her male friends to a party. We blame her for enticing men and that she was inviting rape by wearing such and such clothes. This is what's wrong. This victim blaming. Our mental set up. Years of prejudices and stereotypes have hardwired our brains to be like this (I am not gonna bring in patriarchy & feminism to this as that is a whole different dimension to be addressed). It's high time for this to change. We cannot deal with rapes until and unless we ourselves change as a society. Are you willing to change?



The Poet

I hunt the beasts inside me
and sell their skins to you.

Rex Mathew
E8

monoliths

