

Kulkarni, Sudha.: Claiming Our Sexuality. In: Our Lives Our Health Edited by Dr. Malini Karkal. Co-ordination Unit. World Conference on women. Beijing '95'. Aug 1995. p.76-82.

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## Claiming Our Sexuality

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To be healthy one needs to breath fresh air, drink pure water, eat nutritious, wholesome uncontaminated food - And also to think and act in an unpolluted social environment.

To breath, drink and eat are requirements of all species.

To be a 'human' being, you need something more.

We talk about ecological balance. It is important that all the elements in nature be well balanced. A slight tilt in the balance and the living world would have to pay dearly; Scientists caution! Encroachment of man on nature ultimately would cost him too much. It's like a chain-each link is dependent on the other to stay in place. It cannot be called a chain, if all the links are separate. For existence, the links have to have mutual connection-not separate existence, in isolation from each other. Can we not learn from Nature's Balance?. Must we assume that ecology and ecological balance are something which have meaning independent of human life inner life of human being ?. To be healthy--mentally, intellectually, that is culturally, we need this balance-Cultural balance. In an on going parlance--'Cultural Ecology.'

In what sort of ecology Jalgaon scandal can happen?

We were saying up till now----'Rape is a crime of violence which uses sex as a weapon'. This definition would now prove perhaps narrow, not encompassing the newest sort of crime which is being committed not only as violence against women, neither out of lust alone, but for the sake of something else also. It is done for the insatiating thirst for power which comes with money or which can be sought sometimes with money. It is a game of power and money!.

One is easier to get with the help of the other. And the best way of come up in this racket is by trading the sex vulgarly, hediously, obscenely. The woman merely becomes a tool in this game, much more demeaned. And technology has helped tremendously in it. Unwittingly of course!

One can not blame advancement of technology, because, by itself it does not teach us these uses. But if the mind, which uses this technology - is not groomed, tuned properly, it can corrupt, twist anything to its own advantage.

We cannot call a person possessing such a mind, mentally healthy. Mental health is closely linked with the happiness the person creates for oneself, expanding it to the happiness of his family and the happiness of society. That is what psychologists assert. Otherwise it would be a perverse happiness. Should we say that was what exactly behind what happened in Jalgaon and other places!.

A brief account of what happened and how, is like this ---

Jalgaon is a small but industrially prosperous town on the map of Maharashtra - a major State in India. One fine morning, on 24th June 94, the news flashed. Some hundred girls and married women had fallen prey to some local masterminds.

How was it being done?

The modus operandi was something like this

By cheating or by tricking the girl: She falls in the trap. Once she enters the trap, it closes around her and forces her to repeated acts. Unfortunately, it is not mere mechanical repetition for her!. All the more repulsive thing in the entire episode was the degradation of the word 'LOVE'. It was not an act of love! but 'acting'. The simple method used stepwise was --(1) Acquaintance. (2) meeting. (3) More meetings planned. (4) Filmy style assurance of love at first sight or a small variation was, taking advantage of the girl's economic difficulty and trap her promising help. (5) Promise of marriage sometimes. (6) Coaxing her to meet privately in a hotel. (7) Challenging her to prove her love, or making her unconscious with drink. (8) Final act, for which, the stage was set with hidden camera's and peepholes. (9) Blackmailing her (and her family) to extort money with the help of those photos and films and threatening her of terminating the lives of her near and dear ones-brother-kids-husband, if she refused. (10) By the same technique using her further, forcing her to entertain friends or customers. (11) Forcing the victim to involve her friends-using her as a contact person. (12) Selling out and/or showing in parlours the video films of so-called one act. "Twelve steps to success"?. That too directly under the nose of the police. And 'innocent' police force, could not even smell a rat though stationed at a stone's throw distance across the road, and in the broad day-light. And we hear this was going on not for a month or so but for ten or twelve odd years!.

These women and girls from mainly middle-class society, outwardly protected under the safety of their families-forget the dispute over the number-whether

they are 147 or 135 or only 35-were being used as 'Comfort-women', tricked into flesh market. Not crudely as was happening during World War II in Japan; where the Korean women were sex-slaves for the comfort of soldiers for months on end. 'Comfort' which devastated these women's entire lives!. And these women now after fifty years, in their old age are gathering courage to tell tales of their torture.

A gap of fifty years. It is but a tiny step in the history of mankind (for womankind!). After fifty years, in some other part of the world women are being used as sex-slaves for 'comfort!', whose comfort? But, of course this gap of 50 years has given one advantage to flesh traders over their predecessors - the uses of ultra-modern technology. Now they can have-added dimension to their business--titillating films along-with 'comfort' - money also - or money first and comfort' an added bonus to the exploiters.

In the case of the Korean women it was excuse of war. Now? what sham excuse? Here there were not soldiers, but, 'respectable' men in the society; politicians, doctors, lawyers, businessmen, the - cultural cream. One interesting point is that this racket gained, momentum after the alleged criminal gained power through their election to municipal council, three years back.

Whom should we hold responsible for this?

Why these women kept silent for so long. Not even one of them could come forward to protest. Here is a news item. One rape victim was burnt alive when she decided to expose them. Another opted for suicide.

Now the fact that there were (28) twenty eight Councillors with criminal records glares at us in bold type! And the doubt in the minds, that, with their political connections, criminals can have the last laugh!

Why even one victim was not prepared to come forward to register FIR - to 'Lodge a complaint against those who were blackmailing her? Fear (of them) is one reason. The other-humiliation she will have to suffer in the court and permanent social stigma on her name, which made her behave as if she was the criminal-not them! "Viewing rape as unconnected with the social fabric of daily life, makes it seem almost happenstance that the woman is the victim"

(Women Realities, Women's Choices)

Following example will prove the point

In urging the House of Delegates to approve a resolution calling for a redefinition of rape, Connie K. Borkenhagen of Albuquerque, New Mexico, point out one reason why most rape victims prefer not to press charges by 'imagining' how it might sound if a robbery victim were subjected to the kind of cross-examination, that rape victim usually must undergo'

"Mr.Smith, you were held up at a gunpoint on the corner of First and Main Street?

"Yes."

'Did you struggle with robber?'

'No.'

'Why not?'

'He was armed.'

"Then you made a conscious decision to - comply with his demands rather than resist?'

"Yes."

'Did you scream? Cry out?'

'No I was afraid.'

'I see. Have you ever been held up before?'

'No.'

'Have you ever given money away?'

'Yes, of course.'

'And you did not willingly?'

'What are you getting at?'

'Well let's put it like this, Mr.Smith. You've given money away in the past. In fact, you have quite a reputation for philanthropy. How can we be sure that you weren't contriving to have your money taken from you by force?'

'Listen, if I wanted...'

'Never mind. What time did this holdup take place, Mr. Smith?'

"About 11:00 PM."

"You were out on the street at 11:00 PM.? Doing what?'

'Just walking.'

'Just walking. You know that its, dangerous being out on the street that late at night. Weren't you aware that you could have been held up?'

'I hadn't thought about it.'

'What were you wearing at the time, Mr. Smith?'

'Let's see a suit. Yes a suit.'

"An expensive suit?"

"Well-yes. I'm a successful lawyer, you know."

"In other words, Mr. Smith, you were walking around the streets late at night in a suit that practically advertised the fact that you might be a good target for some easy money, isn't that so? I mean, if we didn't know better, Mr. Smith, we might even think that you were asking for this to happen, mightn't we?"

(American Bar Association Journal, 1975)

"Uprisings, riots, revolutions and minor skirmishes with racial and political overtones all have provided outlet and sometimes even an ideological excuse, for men to practice rape" - says Susan Brownmillar. But, what should we say about such Jalgaon happenings, when there is not even a trace of any such excuse?

When the criminalization of politics gives boost to the criminalisation in society, and vice-a-versa, the society becomes like a fruit that has attractive outer appearance and is rotten inside!

This rottenness degrades the language of communication. Communication by loving touch, by loving words, looks, gestures, delicate actions without spoken words-all this is a language of communication between two human beings. This

communication is snapped the moment one person snatches something from the other by force, by superiority of status, by using money power or muscle power by blackmail.

This might not be totally new-this sort of blackmailing. But the scale on which it took place in Jalgaon must be very rare, probably unique. And what is more disgusting and cruel is that these criminals had safety of power.

They themselves do not like to marry anyone who has been "used", but they do not mind "using" any woman regardless. Is it not a gross discrepancy!?

(Mass) rapes-but not for the revenge, not, for the lust-but planned professionally (calculatingly) like a cold-blooded murder. I do not know if there is any parallel elsewhere.

This is all the more serious - as the State of Maharashtra has recently declared a 'Policy for women, which emphasizes empowerment, of women-equity-self reliance of women. And in its wake exploded these scandals in various parts of the State, one after the other--, Jalgaon-Parbhani-Sawantwadi-Dhule (much like the Bomb blasts in Bombay last year!) which in a way can be a mockery of this policy, if not handled properly.

By the way, this scandal came into light accidentally while investigation was going on about bomb blasts. and one prime suspect involved in the blasts spilled the beans about these underground explosions going on in Jalgaon and his involvement in it!

Here is the latest national yearly statistics about various atrocities committed against women, given on 19th Nov. 94 given by no less a person than the Chief Minister of Maharashtra.

<b>Rapes</b>	28,000	
<b>Dowry Death and Torture</b>	60,000	
<b>In other Words</b>	<b>Per Hour</b>	<b>Every Day</b>
<b>Rape</b>	3.19	76.71
<b>D.D &amp; Torture</b>	6.84	164.38
<b>Victims of other atrocities</b>	1.25	30.13

<b>Total</b>	11.38	271.22
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That is every five minutes one stifled cry.

These figures are of registered crimes. How many times should we multiply these figures, considered unregistered-husband up, atrocities against women? Does it not mean, that, before the first stifled cry subsides a new cry from somewhere else rents the air? The air vibrates constantly with these mute cries!

That this should happen during the 'year of Family' declared by the UN, make us examine the relationship between parents and children-family members.

In India, people take pride about closeknit family relationships, grooming of children, especially 'Sanskars' (cultural conditioning). How is it, then, that these men have not felt even a slight guilt about their doings? How could they do it? And, whether these girls and married women were tight-lipped about this harassment, because of the absence of security they feel in their own homes? Lack of confidence, that their family would be able to protect them from such circumstances! If so, then it is a serious reflection on society.

Criminalization of society and criminalization of politics cannot be separated. One gives birth to the other. In a way it is like that eternal question-which is first? The egg or the chicken? But, one becomes bolder by the help of the other.

Political affluence begets economic affluence and/or economic affluence can dictate its own terms even in political arena. And both thrive under each other's protection. How (and why) otherwise a father can say protectively about his sons, who participate actively in these episodes; that 'after all they are merely kids!' A father who is somebody in local politics! Or how a municipal President can criticize 'this issue is blown out of proportion!'

'Rape is a product of a diseased, deranged mind'-says Susan Brownmiller.

If so, how all these minds become deranged at the same time? What sort of virus infects them? Or is it a calculated step of these minds diseased with pervert greed? Then my point is how can we call such a society healthy where these minds are free to perpetrate such acts in groups!.

We cannot call persons possessing such minds mentally healthy, as mental health is closely linked with the happiness of society.

Marx and Engel's developed the theory of class-oppression, and used words like 'Exploitation' in the economic context. But they were strangely silent about rape. They perhaps could not envisage this newer form of exploitation of women by men for economic gains!

Colin Wilson in his 'Origins of sexual Impulse' has written---'Man has possessed another 'sense' that distinguishes him from the animals-imagination, the power of anticipating events ... Imagination has increased man's autonomy. Next step is intentionality. 'All creation might be called an act of faith in intentionality'----' sex is a projection of the evolutionary intentionality'.

The writer then says Shaw is right when he suggests that 'human beings in the course of their evolution will lose interest in sex in the sense of having instinctive sexual urges'.

How true Shaw has been proved! Because now sex has become 'intentional', not in the primary motive to beget for the continuation of species, but imagination has brought forward a shoot, which is mixed with 'Intention' in a different sense.

Perversely Intentional Imagination-which is a by-product, made possible with to-day's scientific progress or revolution.

Alongwith evolution, there was, as we say, a creation of 'Culture'. But if what we see is made possible with the help of this revolution, then man's imagination has played havoc in mankind's, 'culture-culture in ethical sense. Should we say there is going to be some kind of war between this hi-tech revolutionary progress and culture? And that, a culture - in the sense of Ethical Cultural Values - doesn't necessarily accompany this progress.

Mental and physical health of woman reflects the health of the society she lives in.

Where should the victim find that 'Right to say No? What are the measures to ascertain the health of society as there are measures to ascertain health of a person? If the pulse shows rhythmic heart beats, blood pressure, thereby giving indication of health then all these happenings like Jalgaon episode are indications of the pulse of society disclosing social disease. If so, what should we hope for? Will the future with our women's movement bring in reality to our dream of Equity Development and Peace?