INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF RESEARCH IN COMPUTER APPLICATION & MANAGEMENT



A Monthly Double-Blind Peer Reviewed (Refereed/Juried) Open Access International e-Journal - Included in the International Serial Directories

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OFFENCES AGAINST WOMEN UNDER INDIAN PENAL CODE

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ABSTRACT

Article 6 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights recognises personality before law. Unfortunately, though UDHR is a part of the Indian legal system still the 'personhood' to a woman in many cases is denied as discussed in various sections of the Indian Penal Code. Feminism is an alternative political movement which deconstruct male lore and myth of the society and reconstruct the legal system with their viewpoints, life experiences. Thus necessary ameliorative amendments, repealing are to be initiated to free the Indian Penal Code from bias of the mainstream views.

KEYWORDS

Women safety, feminism.

INTRODUCTION

tephen the famous jurist defined crime as "A crime is a violation of a right, considered in reference to the evil tendency of such violation- as regards the community at large".¹ Women are surely part of the community yet they are the worst sufferer of crime perpetrated against them.² The most unfortunate fact is Criminal law especially Indian Penal Code as such reflect male solipsism and at the best totally insensitive to the typical female experiences of life. Indian Penal Code as a general Penal statute fails to incorporate the female life experiences and thus suffer from overdose of male mainstream(so called) reason based categorisations. Subjectivism is dismissed as emotional nonsense whereas view of the dominant are held to be normal, standard and reasonable. We may discuss the following illustrations to grasp about the one sided biased outlook of the Indian Penal Code.

GENERAL PROVISIONS OF INDIAN PENAL CODE

Section 10 of Indian penal Code defines "Man "as a male human being of any age. The word Woman denotes female human being of any age.

Section 8 of Indian Penal Code provides that, "he" and its derivative are used of any person, whether male or female.

Section 477 of Indian Penal Code punishes any person whoever fraudulently or dishonestly attempts or cancels, destroys defaces any will, things or an authority to adopt a son. However Indian Penal Code is strangely silent about the Crime of attempt and destroying will or an authority to adopt a daughter.

Section 40 of the Indian Penal Code provides the word offence denotes a thing punishable under this Code, or under any special or local law as hereinafter defined. Section 27 of Indian Penal Code states that, property in possession of "wife" "clerk" or "servant" is deemed to be in the possession of the man. Thus property taken without permission of the man is an offence. However the reverse situation is not true. Strangely "wife" word is proximate to "clerk" and "servant".

SEXUAL OFFENCES

"Rape" is a grave sexual offence committed against women. It is violation of basic "Human rights" of women. To commit rape two basic elements are required (i) attempt to penetration and (ii) penetration. In RadhakrishnaNagesh(Appelant) vs State of A.P³ (Respondent);at paragraph 27, the Apex Court quotes TarakeshwawrSahuvs State of Bihar(Now Jharkhand)⁴. The Court held as under, at paragraph 10 " under section 375 Indian Penal Code,six categories indicated above are the basic ingredients of the offence.----- No offence under section 376 Indian Penal Code can be made out unless there was penetration to some extent. In the absence of penetration to some extent, it would not bring the offence of the appellant within the four corners of section 375 of the Penal Code. Therefore, the basic ingredients for proving a charge of rape are the accomplishment of the act with force. The other important ingredient is penetration of the male organ within the labia majora or the vulva or pudenda with or without any emission of semen or even an attempt at penetration into the private part of the victim completely, partially or slightly would be enough for the purpose of sections 375 and 376 Indian Penal Code."

In State of U.P, vs Babulnath,⁵ it is said by the Court "It may here be noticed that section 375 Indian Penal code defines rape and the explanation to section 375 reads as follows:

Explanation-Penetration is sufficient to constitute the sexual intercourse necessary to the offence of rape.

From the explanation reproduced aboveit is distinctly clear that ingredients which are essential for <u>proving a charge of rape are the accomplishment of the act</u> with force and resistance".

Paragraph 26 of RadhakrishnaNagesh⁶ provides that "The word "attempt" is not itself defined and must therefore be taken in its ordinary meaning. This is exactly what the provisions of section 511(Indian Penal Code) require. An attempt to commit a crime is to be distinguished from an intention to commit it and from preparation made for its commission".

Now if we go through Criminal Amendment Act 2013, we find presence of two elements; the requirement of penetration or attempt to penetration in committing rape under section 375. We may notice Explanation 2 of the section 375. It provides that consent means an unequivocal voluntary agreement when the woman by words, gestures, or any form of verbal or non-verbal communication communicates willingness to participate in the specific act.

Provided that a woman who does not physically resist to the <u>act of penetration</u> shall not by the reason only of that fact, be regarded as consenting to the sexual activity

In S. Pillaivs V.R. Pattabhiraman⁷ it was held that an explanation added to a statutory provision is not a substantive provision in any sense of the term but has the plain meaning of the word and itself shows that it is merely meant to explain or clarify certain ambiguities which may have crept in a statutory provision. One can note that explanation 2 is applicable for clause(a),(b),(c),(d) of section 375 of Criminal Amendment Act,2013.

Thus having established the ingredient of penetration or its attempt for rape one can question the necessity of these ingredients. Rape is recognised as seizure by force. Then why any assault on the female reproductive organ should not be recognised as rape? One can assume the male emphasizing of "penetration" is reflection of masculine ego of recognising sole ownership over the female genitalia by the husband and resultant child bearing. Further in section 375 (clause fourthly) of Criminal Amendment Act, 2013 it is said that a married woman shall be redressed by criminal law if she mistakenly believes somebody as her husband.

Unfortunately the statute is silent about the unmarried and widow in same situation. Criminal Amendment Act, 2013 is silent about the concept of marital rape and under section 376B sexual intercourse with separated wife is bailable offence only. One can argue that if rape law is changed in favour of women then there is chance of abuse of law. Then one can cite Sushil Kumar Sharma vs Union of India⁹ "It is well settled that, mere possibility of abuse of a provision of law does not per se invalidate a legislation. It must be presumed unless the contrary is proved, that administration and application of a particular law would be done "not with an evil eye and unequal hand."

In State of Kerala vsKundunkaraGovindan¹⁰ it was held that the word <u>insert means place, fit thrust ¹¹. Therefore if the male organ is inserted or thrust between the thighs there is penetration to constitute unnatural offence.</u> If the situation is so flexible for unnatural offence, then why not for rape?¹² Afterall rape is not about gravity of physical injury. It is about a humiliating psychological intervention which tends to diminish the status of a woman in the society. Thus even a fully clothed woman can be raped by injuring (As for example violent fingering) her reproductive organ even though there is no penetration or attempt to penetration.

Dowry Death-(Section 304B of Indian Penal Code):-Section 304B of Indian Penal Code punishes dowry death. Some ingredients to constitute the offence are (i) death of a woman is caused by any burns or bodily injury or occurs otherwise than normal circumstances,(ii)within 7 years of marriage,(III) soon before her death, she was subjected to cruelty or harassment by her husband or by any relative of her husband for or in connection with dowry.

Strangely, at first, woman must die to get a remedy under section 304B of Indian Penal Code. Second one cannot understand about the 7 years timeframe of healthy marriage. Legislature presumes that after 7 years there can be no demand of dowry. "Soon before her death" this provision gives the accused a great chance of escape, because penal laws are interpreted strictly.

Cruelty- Section 498A of Indian Penal Code punishes the husband or relative of husband of a woman for subjecting her to cruelty. Strangely, under section 198A of Criminal Procedure Code complaint can be lodged by person related to her by blood, marriage or adoption. Legislature assume in every situation either these three classes of people or the aggrieved shall be in position to lodge the complaint. No stranger how much public spirited he or she may be, is not able to interfere. Kidnapping- Section 361 of Indian Penal Code punishes the offence of kidnapping from lawful guardianship. Male below the age of 16 and female below age of 18 cannot be taken away from lawful guardianship. Legislature presume a girl of 17 years old is not mature enough to understand her own good. Thus she cannot marry her lover until she gets permission from the parents. There can be any possibility of kidnapping charge lodged by her parents and the man under the age of 18 is strong enough to deal with his own modesty. Strangely child marriage till date is not void, merely prohibited under Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006. Procreation- section 312-318 of Indian Penal Code relate to miscarriage, injuries to unborn children and exposure of infants and concealment of birth. All offences except section 312 ofIndian Penal Code are cognizable and non bailable. It reflects law framers perception of seriousness of gravity of the offences. These sections seems to be gender neutral and protective of women. But real fact in India is, male foeticide is rare and female foeticide is common. Thus female Infanticide Act, 1864 and Prenatal Diagnostic Techniques (Regulation and Prevention of Misuse) Act, 1994 were required to be enacted to deal with this problem.

Impregnating a woman regardless of her wish or against the advice of the doctor is not an offence under Indian Penal Code neither it is a crime to deny the pregnant woman the required medical care and attention during child birth and after.

Offences relating to marriage- Section 497 of the Indian Penal Code punishes the offence of adultery and section 498 of the same Act creates an offence of enticing or taking away or detaining with criminal intent a married woman. However no person other than the husband of the married woman can file a complaint under section 198(2) of Criminal Procedure Code. Proviso of the section authorise any person in the care of the woman to lodge complaint with the leave of the Court but not herself. Section 198(1) of Criminal Procedure Code authorise near family relatives to lodge a complaint but not herself. She is equated with idiot or lunatic¹³. Section 498 of Indian Penal Code is bailable and non cognizable. Thus it reflects legislative attitude of the seriousness of the offence.

CONCLUSION

Article 6 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights¹⁴ recognises personality before law. Unfortunately though UDHR¹⁵ is a part of the Indian legal system still the 'personhood' to a woman in many cases is denied as discussed in various sections of the Indian Penal Code. Feminism is an alternative political movement which deconstruct male lore¹⁶ and myth of the society and reconstruct the legal systemwith their viewpoints, life experiences. Thus necessary ameliorative amendments, repealing are to be initiated to free the Indian Penal Code from bias of the mainstream views.

REFERENCES

- 1. Kenny's Outlines of Criminal Law, 19th ed., (1966) Editor JWC Turner, appendix,p.532
- 2. See (2003)1 SCC 217, at p 220.By DHARMADHIKAR,J "Fraility thy name is woman", that is how in one of his plays Shakespeare describes one of the female characters in his play. This description is more and more evidence particularly in rural Indian society where married women, who are unable to muster courage to fight against cruelty and harassment meted out to them by their spouses and family members, find no escape other than ending their own life.
- 3. SupremeCourtOfIndia.nic.in.Accessed on 22.8.2015.
- 4. (2006) 8 SCC 560.
- 5. (1994)6 SCC 29 at p 34 paragraph 8.
- 6. Supra Note 5.
- 7. AIR 1985 SC 582
- 8. Section 375 of Criminal Amendment Act,2013. Fourthly- With her consent, when the man knows that he is not her husband and that her consent is given because she believes that he is another man to whom she is or believes herself to be lawfully married.
- 9. (2005)6 SCC 28.
- 10. 1969 CrLJ 818(Ker) cited at paragraph 20 of (2014)1 SCC
- 11. See section 375Clause(d) of Criminal Amendment Act,2013.
- 12. Already section 375 of Criminal Law Amendment Act, 2013 has incorporated part of unnatural offence. As for example clause(d) of section 375 Criminal Law Amendment Act provides that "applies his mouth to the vagina, anus, urethra of a woman or make her to do so with him or any other person.
- 13. Section 198(3) Criminal procedure Code.
- 14. Article 6 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights provides that," Everyone has the right to recognition everywhere as a person before law."
- 15. See Suresh Kumar KoushalvsNaz Foundation (2014)1 SCC at p 37. Section 2 of Protection of Human Rights Act, 1993 has domesticated Universal Declaration Of Human Rights.
- 16. Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary 6thEdition(2000) at p.466 states that" the belief and aim that women should have the same rights and opportunities as men; the struggle to achieve this aim". But Radical and Postmodern feminism tell us that women are different and they have typical aspirations. Constitution through Article 15(3) reflects this attitude by making scope for special provision for women. Unfortunately she is appended with class of children.

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