

NIGHT AND DAY: THE HINDU EDITORIAL ON SEXUAL ASSAULT CASES IN U.P.

Relevant for: Developmental Issues | Topic: Rights & Welfare of Women - Schemes & their Performance, Mechanisms, Laws Institutions and Bodies

[Unnao](#). [Hathras](#). And now [Budaun](#). The dirge continues as news of [another horrific alleged rape and murder emerged from Uttar Pradesh](#) on Sunday. A 50-year-old anganwadi worker, who visited a temple, was found brutally battered outside her home at a village in Badaun district. After she succumbed to the injuries, a depressingly similar pattern came to light: the police had dithered with both the post mortem and in registering an FIR. The culprits, a priest and his two associates, were arrested by Thursday night, with the State government saying that stern action would be taken. What came as a shocker, however, was the reaction of a senior member of the National Commission for Women who visited the family. [Chandramukhi Devi was quoted as saying](#), "I tell women again and again that they should never go out at odd hours under anyone's influence... I think if she had not gone out in the evening or was accompanied by any child of the family perhaps this incident could have been avoided." Such remarks worsen the situation for women who have to battle against skewed societal gender conditioning. When insensitive utterances emanate from a national commission actually meant to uphold women's rights, it reeks of a primitive mindset wherein lawlessness is overlooked and responsibility pinned, perversely, on the woman for ensuring her own well-being.

All the hard work put in by women in all spheres including science and technology comes undone by such crude statements. The equal rights movement means nothing if women are stopped from going out whenever they want to or need to, day or night. But it is also imperative that with society steeped in gender prejudices, the government, police and family must step up to provide a safe environment. In 2019, the NCRB data show 88 rape cases were recorded every day in India with U.P. reporting the second-highest number at 3,065 cases. But records never tell the whole story for many rapes are not reported due to social stigma. Although after the [Nirbhaya incident in 2012](#), the Criminal Law (Amendment) Act laid down the rules for stringent punishment, [crimes against women](#) continue, pointing at other issues that should be addressed from patriarchal mindsets to poor policing. For gender parity, more women must join the workforce, but thereby hangs another sorry tale. According to Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy data, women accounted for 10.7% of the workforce in 2019-20 and many lost jobs due to the pandemic. By November 2020, the CMIE reported that men recovered most of their lost jobs but not women. It is a matter of shame that even in 2021, women are asked to stay indoors at night instead of reaching for the moon.

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