



Why are sexual crimes not stopping?

Musharraf Ali

Introduction: The Illusion of Strict Laws

Ever since the gang rape of a medical student in Delhi on December 16, 2012, sexual crimes have continuously remained a subject of discussion in the country to this day. It is a result of public pressure—built after the media prominently featured such news—that forced the government to enact strict laws against rape. As much as this incident shook the people, and as much condemnation and hatred toward sexual offenders came from the public, it felt as though fear would be instilled in them and that this heinous crime would decrease.

However, the way sexual crime incidents have emerged one after another following this event has shattered society's hopes. The severity of punishment, society's hatred, and the fear of protest are failing to create fear within the sexual offender. Apart from the rape of adults, such incidents happening with innocent young girls show that the roots of the problem lie somewhere else. Suggestions like hanging the sexual offender, castrating them, or stoning them to death are akin to beating a shadow. Such measures have not even the slightest effect on the object casting that shadow.

By offering such suggestions, people begin treating the symptoms of a disease instead of treating its root cause. Suggesting such punishments is also an expression of the feudal values suppressed within us. In the media too, discussions on the symptoms of the disease are rampant, but discussion on where the roots of the disease lie is almost missing.

The Root Cause: The Free Market and the Sex Industry

The reality is that this heinous disease has been born from putting the concept of the free market into practice. A free market means letting all kinds of economic activities run wild. The philosophy of the free market is that any business through which profit can be made—no matter how harmful it may be to society—should not be interfered with at all by society and the government.

When we consider the root causes of rising sexual crimes, the sex industry comes before us as the very first reason. Its most heinous form, which has a direct impact on the new generation, is the easy availability of obscene digital material. This obscene content alone is responsible for the massive increase in sexual crimes these days. The media discusses this in muffled tones. Open discussion goes against the economic interests of media owners, because media owners are the biggest supporters of the free market.

The internet has become the biggest carrier of such content. Earlier, such material was available on TV through CDs, but the communication revolution has made it available on computers and now mobile phones via the internet. Manoj, the sexual offender who raped a five-year-old girl in Delhi, admitted during interrogation that at that time he was watching an obscene video on his mobile phone. It was also reported that 12 obscene images were recovered from his mobile.

This is pornographic material that compels every mobile user to cross the limits of madness for sexual crime. Incidents used to happen earlier too, but occasionally and sparsely. However, the flood of sexual crime incidents since adopting the free market economic policy in the early 1990s



indicates that the cause is the promotion of free trade and the withdrawal of the government from economic activities.

The Battle Over Obscenity: The Legal and Political Struggle

On July 31, 2015, the Department of Telecommunications, operating under the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology, Government of India, issued a directive to all licensed internet service providers stating that under Section 79(3)(b) of the Information Technology Act 2000, the central government was banning 857 pornographic websites because, according to Article 19(2) of the Constitution, the government has the responsibility to uphold morality and decency.

This ban was not implemented by the government on its own initiative seeing the seriousness of the problem; rather, it was part of ongoing proceedings in a Public Interest Litigation (PIL) filed in the Supreme Court in 2013 by Kamlesh Vaswani, an advocate at the Indore High Court, seeking a complete ban on all obscene websites. The first hearing of this case was held in April 2013 by a bench headed by the then Chief Justice of India, Shri Altamas Kabir.

The petition requested the court to note that these obscene websites present a stereotypical and mentally ill image of women, which not only promotes sexual violence, but viewing such websites also poses a threat to national security, encourages violence, gives birth to socially unacceptable behavior, makes children victims of sexual exploitation, and views women disrespectfully.

The petition challenged that the government is failing to effectively implement the Information Technology Act 2000 regarding obscenity, whereas Section 67 of the same law considers transmitting and publishing such material a criminal activity. Vaswani stated that viewing obscene websites has a close connection with crimes against women and is the root cause of sexual violence against women and children. "My movement is against this vulgarity and shamelessness," he said.

During the hearing in August 2014, the government told the court that banning pornographic websites is a very difficult task because there are more than 40 million porn websites, and if one is blocked, another pops up. On July 5, 2015, Chief Justice of India Shri H. L. Dattu refused to issue an interim order banning obscene websites as prayed in Vaswani's petition, stating:

"The court cannot pass this interim order because any person can come to court and say that I am over 18 years old and I want to watch porn inside the four walls of my house. Stopping him is a violation of Article 21, the fundamental right to personal liberty. Imposing a ban is the job of the government, but the issue is serious and some steps need to be taken. We should wait to see what steps the central government takes on this."

The ball was put in the government's court by the judiciary, and the government issued a notice blocking the list of obscene websites provided by Shri Vaswani. Reacting to this notification of the ban, Shri Vaswani told *Hindustan Times*:

"This is the happiest day for me that the government took cognizance of its seriousness and took this step. This will reduce incidents of sexual violence and prove to be a step forward in the safety of women and children."



However, his happiness did not last even a week. On August 5, 2015, Union Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad told *India Today TV* that a new notification would be issued soon. The ban was partially rolled back: pornographic websites that do not feature child pornography would have the ban lifted. However, operators of pornographic websites refused to stop child pornography, stating that they did not have any mechanism to prevent it.

It was surprising that the government—which had been ignoring the protests of students at the Film and Television Institute of India (FTII) for two months and remained rigid on appointing Gajendra Chauhan as chairman—surrendered so quickly and easily to the opposition of people associated with the porn business and those serving obscenity in films.

Opposition from the Cultural and Economic Elite

Not only that, arguments began to be made regarding the lifting of the ban that such freedom has existed in our country since ancient times, as evidenced by the sculptures on the temples of Khajuraho and texts like the *Kamasutra*.

While film director Ram Gopal Varma called the government's move to impose the ban a regressive step, actress Sonam Kapoor tweeted that fools who think a ban will change the mentality of the Indian male are mistaken. Chetan Bhagat wrote that this step was anti-personal liberty and not a very smart move by the government. Musicians like Vishal Dadlani, director Shirish Kunder, Arshad Warsi, and others also opposed the government's step.

In reality, the opposition from the film fraternity was natural because 80 percent of India is missing from their films. Yes, the section of society they make films for considers obscenity a necessity of life. To fulfill this necessity, they try to get their actors to strip off as many clothes as possible so that their films can run. This is why the biggest opposition to the ban came from film folks and, subsequently, from neo-liberals, meaning proponents of the free market.

Chetan Bhagat's opposition was from the perspective of free-market advocates. It was meant to remind the government to return to its old values and its commitment to "minimum government." The government quickly returned to its "minimum government" avatar because it remembered that pornography is part of the sex industry and this step of theirs was an intervention in the market. Lawyer Kamlesh Vaswani's statement in court that most sexual offenders were watching pornographic films prior to committing sexual crimes proves the justification of the ban.

The Global Scale of the Sex Industry

The center of this global sex trade is the West, especially America. According to the International Labour Organization (ILO) and other sources, the sex industry spread across the world generates an annual revenue of more than \$69 to \$180 billion. After weapons and drugs, this is the third-largest industry. America's annual income from the sex industry is higher than the total revenue of all professional football, baseball, and basketball franchises combined.

Any effort to stop this trade is labeled by advocates of the free market as a return to "Inspector Raj" or the quota-permit system. Proponents of the free market believe that such government intervention hinders the development of capitalism. The corporate media deliberately takes caution in its debates to ensure that the discussion does not center around the global sex trade. It keeps the focus shifted toward other causes.



Misguided Debates and Statistical Realities

Suggesting brutal, barbaric punishments for sexual offenders and appealing to a declining sense of morality in society are nothing more than attempts by this corporate media to distract from the root causes. Even people who carry a legacy of progressivism fall victim to this media propaganda. They suggest that there is a need to provide co-education from classes 1 to 12 that eliminates gender discrimination. They claim that because Mumbai has co-education, boys and girls share much healthier relationships there. In contrast, they argue that boys living in remote areas and small towns of India only come into contact with girls around the age of 20 to 22, which turns them into beasts, and that co-education would eliminate this evil.

There is no doubt that co-education is necessary; however, considering the absence of co-education as the sole reason behind incidents of sexual crime is incorrect. Furthermore, justifying the youth living in metropolitan cities like Mumbai while blaming youth coming from small-town or rural backgrounds reflects a flawed method of analysis. Just when discussions began regarding Asaram Bapu raping the minor daughter of his follower, a rape incident in Mumbai shook the people.

While the intentions of such progressive people cannot be doubted, this kind of bias and emotional method of analysis not only distracts people from properly identifying the disease, but this misinformation also spreads ignorance.

Data from the National Crime Records Bureau, cited in a report by Aditi Mehrotra and Saptarshi Dutta on the *India Real Time* website, shows that in 2011, a total of 24,206 rape cases were registered across India. Out of the 2,174 rape incidents recorded in western India—which includes Maharashtra, Gujarat, Goa, Dadra and Nagar Haveli, and Daman and Diu—the highest number, 1,701 cases, were registered in Maharashtra alone.

A report prepared by the United Nations on sexual crimes, covering data from 65 countries between 2003 and 2010, revealed that out of the 250,000 rape cases registered worldwide in 2010, the United States alone accounted for 84,767 rapes. This translated to 27.3 cases per 100,000 population. In England (including Wales, Northern Ireland, and Scotland), 16,932 cases were registered, which at 28.8 percent per 100,000 population was even higher than the United States. In contrast, India recorded 22,172 cases, which was only 1.8 percent per 100,000 population.

Why are the statistics for rape touching the sky in England and America when they have complete co-education and lack gender discrimination of the kind found in India? These statistics show that the absence of co-education is not the root cause. Instead, the real cause is the unbridled expansion of global capitalism following the breakup of the Soviet Union in 1990.

At the same time, this reality cannot be denied: gender discrimination has filled women's lives with suffering and turned their existence into hell. Gender discrimination is precisely what lies behind the rise in dowry deaths and domestic violence. People who suggest marrying girls off at the age of 16 are themselves not ready to marry off their sons without a dowry. No parents keep their daughters sitting at home unmarried by choice; treating women as lower-class citizens is the fundamental cause that has given birth to numerous social problems.

The Scale of Digital Addiction and Child Exploitation



Google Gemini reported that there are currently 25 to 30 million adult or pornographic websites. According to data research organizations like BuiltWith, over 700,000 live websites providing adult content or related services are registered on the internet. When counting individual pages, billions of adult pages exist on the net. According to an estimate, adult content in video and digital formats alone occupies more than 10,000 petabytes of memory on the internet.

People have become addicted to these porn sites. Children aged 8 to 16 watch these obscene videos online, with 90 percent of them doing so while doing their homework. Capitalism is so unethical when it comes to making money that children's cartoon characters (like Pokémon and Action Man) have been linked to thousands of pornographic websites. When children download cartoons, pornographic websites open up as well.

A report stated that 9.4 million women visit porn websites every year. Sixty-five percent of churchgoers and 35 percent of pastors are addicted to watching adult videos. People involved in the sex industry generate 3 billion dollars every year from child pornography. In America, business from strip clubs—where shows featuring naked women are organized—amounts to 7.7 billion dollars every year. This generates 5 million dollars in annual revenue for the U.S., with approximately 4,000 licensed clubs active in this industry.

This very sex industry is behind the rising incidents of child rape, having forcefully pushed 10 million children into it at present. Every minute, two children are forcibly driven into this industry. Sexual relations with children are considered a primary preference globally. In the West, the average cost to establish sexual relations for the first time with an 8- or 9-year-old girl or boy runs into hundreds of thousands of dollars, and their primary clients are doctors, lawyers, and businessmen. Children in brothels are beaten, given drugs, and even tied to beds to be raped.

Cultural Commodification and Conclusion

The impact of the free market on films, TV serials, and even sports has become so profound that nobody noticed when kissing scenes from English films entered Indian movies, when the traditional dance style of moving the waist side-to-side transformed into simulated sexual acts, or when "item girls" and "masala girls" became a necessity in this industry.

Even in cricket, when players began rubbing the ball near their genitals—and who instructed them to do so—has never been discussed, but one thing is clear: none of this was accidental. It was a well-thought-out effort to attract female viewers, arouse them, and boost TRPs. In the IPL, as we can see, half-naked girls are made to dance to attract audiences, while film heroines and call girls are presented to players for match-fixing.

This method of transforming cultural tastes into a business was borrowed from the West. By "the West," I do not mean its contributions to humanity. The human values of liberty, equality, and fraternity gifted by the French Revolution, its promotion of rationality and reason—for which "Temples of Reason" were opened everywhere—and its great contributions across every field of science can never be forgotten. However, the vulgar and uncivilized economists of the West who pushed aside these human values and scientific contributions to declare economics a "value-free science" deserve the utmost condemnation.

If they start calling the unbridled movement of the sex industry "liberalization," and if capitalism—driven by its greed for profit—labels its unholy task of spreading this disease across the entire world



as "globalization," should we accept it? No. If we want to stop these heinous sexual crimes, we must stand against this free market alongside imposing a complete ban on obscene websites.

Bio-note:

Musharraf Ali is a translator and author of many Hindi books like, *Smart City*, *Rahat ya Afat*, *Chunav Jeetne ka Naya Hathiyar*, *Digital Political Marketing*, *Niuntam Sarkar*, *Notebandi*, Member Editorial Board: *Udbhawana*—Hindi literary monthly magazine, ex- central committee member: *Janvadi Lekhak Sangh*.

Email: Musharraf.ali2@gmail.com