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## **RAPE: ITS EFFECT ON WOMEN AND SOCIETY**

**AAKARSHIKA SHREE**

B.A.LLB (10th Semester)

BINOD BIHARI MAHATO KOYALANCHAL UNIVERSITY

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### **ABSTRACT**

Rape has become a common thing in today's time. Rape is committed against a woman of any age, whether she is a three-year-old girl, a school or college teenager, an adult female doctor, a corporate employee or an eighty-year-old woman. It has become a global concern. It is the eternal truth of nature that both men and women are the two wheels of life. Both are important for life. In the contemporary world, every aspect of life has changed. Many kinds of advancement have been witnessed. New successful endeavor have been made with the help of new advanced technologies. It has been observed that with the rapid increase in technology development, new scopes are widening in various fields for every individual. The emergence of new technologies, new technological devices and artificial intelligence has brought revolutionary changes in the perspective of life and society. Opportunities are becoming available for everyone without classifying anyone based on gender, age, caste, ethnicity, etc. All these developments and progress are being affected due to the rapid increase in crimes like rape and sexual harassment, which is a threat to a significant section of the society. A patriarchal mindset, inadequate education and psychological disorders are factors that influence the practice of such crimes against women.



## Introduction

In today's contemporary era, girls are moving ahead in every field. Be it education, astronomy, sports, the highest post in the country or any organisation or defence, women are achieving every milestone, setting examples and breaking the stereotypes of age, gender, status, caste and many more. They are achieving all successes by crossing the barriers. They have proved that they can manage their education, career and family responsibilities. From the President to the corporate employee, teacher and sweeper, women are making all endeavours successful. Despite all these successes and developments, women are not safe. They are not safe from the same species. Rape, molestation, assault and many more are not new in the society. These have been prevalent since very old times. It is a serious violation of human rights, which has far-reaching consequences for both the victim and the society<sup>1</sup>. Although many new laws and fast-track systems have been established to provide speedy justice to the victims, such cases of rape and assault are on the rise and the victims are still yearning for justice. After **Mukesh & Anr Vs State for NCT of Delhi & Ors.** also known as **the Nirbhaya rape case** in Delhi in 2016, fast-track courts were established so that speedy trials take place and the victim gets proper justice. However, across the country, these crimes have not stopped but are increasing day by day. The recent case of Moumita's rape and murder in a hospital shows the failure to change mindsets. Sometimes only academic degrees and qualifications are not enough to change mindsets and behavior. According to the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), more than 30,000 cases of rape have been registered in 2023 and there is an increase in it in the year 2024. Rape is termed as a serious sexual crime that involves forceful or non-consensual sexual penetration or other forms of sexual assault<sup>2</sup>. In society, women face different types of rape like stranger rape, acquaintance rape, date rape, statutory rape, marital rape, gang rape, etc. Day by day, we hear news of rapes and assaults which are increasing day by day. It is very important to understand the causes of such crimes which cause physical, mental, psychological and emotional harm to the victims and society.

## Causes

Rape is a sexual assault or sexual intercourse that is done without the consent of a person. It can be said that it is the act of forcing a person to engage in sexual intercourse without consent. It is done by using physical force and abusing authority. There are many reasons for rape. These are as follows:-

- **Patriarchal Norms**

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<sup>1</sup> Van Noorloos, M. (2021). A critical reflection on the right to the truth about gross human rights violations. *Human Rights Law Review*, 21(4), 874-898.

<sup>2</sup> McPherson, R., Burgess, N., Gormley, J., & Tata, C. (2021). *Sexual offences involving rape*.



It has long been believed that our society is a patriarchal society that values men more than women<sup>3</sup>. When Indra Deva disguised himself as Sage Gautama and deceitfully had sex with his wife Ahalya, Sage Gautama cursed his wife Ahalya instead of Indra Deva and questioned her character. This is an example of a patriarchal society where a woman is considered wrong and punished even when she is not at fault. This mindset of society allows men to become aggressive, dominating, rude and emotionless individuals<sup>4</sup>. Toxic masculinity means that society expects men to be dominant, assertive and emotionless. These patriarchal norms perpetuate male supremacy and reinforce harmful gender stereotypes<sup>5</sup>. The belief that a man is a woman's protector and fulfils her needs leads to power over women which also contributed to the possession of her body without her consent<sup>6</sup>. The progress made in the education of girls has hurt the ego of some people with conservative and patriarchal mindsets and they consider this type of harassment as a way to satisfy their ego and this mindset of theirs has encouraged them to take advantage of women.

- **Insufficient education**

Insufficient education about assent, boundaries, ethics and healthy relationships leads to miscommunication and can result in forced and non-consensual sex<sup>7</sup>. People who do not have such education about these ethics and norms do not understand and respect boundaries and they consider themselves to have supreme authority over women.

- **Mental and psychological disorders**

Specific mental health issues and psychological disorders such as rape fantasies, misconceptions about women, sexual frustration and antisocial personality disorder can increase the likelihood of

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<sup>3</sup> Hossen, M. S. (2020). Patriarchy practice and women's subordination in the society of Bangladesh: An analytical review. *Electronic Research Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities*, 2, 51-60.

<sup>4</sup> Richter, A. (2022). How toxic are we really?: To what extent are negative social media comments towards men showing feminine traits related to toxic masculinity and what other factors are influencing their opinion? (Bachelor's thesis, University of Twente).

<sup>5</sup> Alsawalqa, R. O., & Alrawashdeh, M. N. (2022). The role of patriarchal structure and gender stereotypes in cyber dating abuse: A qualitative examination of male perpetrators experiences. *The British Journal of Sociology*, 73(3), 587-606.

<sup>6</sup> Idriss, M. M. (2022). Abused by the patriarchy: Male victims, masculinity, "honor"-based abuse and forced marriages. *Journal of interpersonal violence*, 37(13-14), NP11905-NP11932.

<sup>7</sup> Stewart, B. (2021). An exploration of sexual consent, sexual non-consent, and nonverbal sexual consent communication behaviors, amongst community stakeholders (Doctoral dissertation, The University of North Dakota).



committing rape<sup>8</sup>. These people may lack compassion and impulse control, resulting in harmful behaviour<sup>9</sup>.

- **Social and traditional norms**

The culture and attitude that promotes discrimination between men and women is a big factor in maintaining cultural and social norms that perpetuate violence, discrimination and misogyny<sup>10</sup>. This leads to rape culture. This includes normalizing violence, objectifying women and blaming the victim. In various interviews with rapists<sup>11</sup>. They have admitted that these outcomes are due to the upliftment of women, their education, and their careers. According to them, women's job is to manage the house and cook food, not to study, work, party, focus on their career, etc. This mindset of society has worsened the condition of women and they justify themselves by blaming women, their dress, career-oriented thinking, etc. Rape is used as a means to establish power and control over someone<sup>12</sup>. It is due to dominance, revenge or a desire for authority. Some men use it to show their dominance and satisfy their ego. Many social and economic factors influence violence and unrest such as inequality, poverty and lack of availability of resources which lead to depression, anxiety and frustration which result in violence and aggression<sup>13</sup>.

- **Degrading Media and increasing Pornography**

The speed of the internet and advanced technology have also contributed to the degradation of morality<sup>14</sup>. The availability of adult content and pornography alters a person's ability to think and understand<sup>15</sup>. Children often fall prey to such websites, making them curious and addicted to them. Exposure to violent

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<sup>8</sup> Więcek-Durańska, A. (2023). Women committing sexual violence (rape) with cruelty. In *Handbook of Anger, Aggression, and Violence* (pp. 1107-1123). Cham: Springer International Publishing.

<sup>9</sup> Phillips, W. J., & Hine, D. W. (2021). Self-compassion, physical health, and health behaviour: A meta-analysis. *Health psychology review*, 15(1), 113-139.

<sup>10</sup> Ajayi, C. E., Chantler, K., & Radford, L. (2022). The role of cultural beliefs, norms, and practices in Nigerian women's experiences of sexual abuse and violence. *Violence against women*, 28(2), 465-486.

<sup>11</sup> Hanson, S. (2022). "Weaponized sexuality" to the normalization of sexual violence: Rape culture and the non-consensual distribution of intimate imagery (NCDII) (Doctoral dissertation, University of Winnipeg).

<sup>12</sup> Metz, J., Myers, K., & Wallace, P. (2021). 'Rape is a man's issue': gender and power in the era of affirmative sexual consent. *Journal of Gender Studies*, 30(1), 52-65.

<sup>13</sup> Lanchimba, C., Díaz-Sánchez, J. P., & Velasco, F. (2023). Exploring factors influencing domestic violence: a comprehensive study on intrafamily dynamics. *Frontiers in psychiatry*, 14, 1243558.

<sup>14</sup> Puspitosari, H. (2020). *Cybercrime in The field of Decency: Information Technology and Morality*.

<sup>15</sup> Bernstein, S., Warburton, W., Bussey, K., & Sweller, N. (2023). Mind the gap: Internet pornography exposure, influence and problematic viewing amongst emerging adults. *Sexuality Research and Social Policy*, 20(2), 599-613.



or abusive media and smut and making a person prone to violence promotes harmful attitudes towards women and proves their masculinity<sup>16</sup>.

- **Inadequate law enforcement**

Lack of adequate law enforcement, failure of proper support systems with well-established and strict law enforcement, and failure to hold perpetrators accountable and support victims fuel rape culture<sup>17</sup>. All these causes are interconnected and can occur simultaneously, and a complex web of factors influencing rape is created<sup>18</sup>. Rape affects the victim and society deeply. It crushes self-confidence, trust and the purpose of life<sup>19</sup>. Addressing these challenges requires a very comprehensive and holistic approach that includes education, community participation and changes that are much needed to change society's unequal perception.

### **Effects on Victims**

Rape is a brutal and non-consensual act that defiles a person's physical and emotional boundaries and causes severe physical, emotional and social damage that can last a lifetime<sup>20</sup>. It is considered a horrific and disturbing experience that has across-the-board consequences for both the individual woman and society. Rape has a multi-faceted impact on various aspects of women's lives, from their physical and emotional health to their relationships and overall aspects of their lives<sup>21</sup>. Rape promotes the practice of violence, fear and mistrust by reinforcing harmful gender discrimination and power dynamics<sup>22</sup>. This, in turn, diverts resources from other essential areas and places substantial economic constraints on healthcare, law enforcement and social services.

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<sup>16</sup> Cacace, K. M. (2023). Getting in the way: new approaches to rape joke discourse and women's comedy about sexual violence (Doctoral dissertation).

<sup>17</sup> Gonu, V. K. (2021). Crimes against Women: Investigation Techniques.

<sup>18</sup> JK, R., M Pillai, P., Rajeevi, P., CR, S., Rajkumar, E., Joshua George, A., & Greeshma, R. (2022). Socio-cultural and psychological aspects of rape: Perspectives of young men from Kerala. *Cogent Social Sciences*, 8(1), 2064589.

<sup>19</sup> Stella, S. (2021). Key Characteristics Empowering Sexual Abuse Victims to Survive Suicidality: A Collective Case Study.

<sup>20</sup> FACHERIS, AGNESE. "Rape as a war crime: an assessment of international courts' case-law." (2021).

<sup>21</sup> Flynn, J. A. (2022). Long-Term Health Outcomes for Adult Women Who Experienced Sexual Assault (Doctoral dissertation, Duquesne University).

<sup>22</sup> Kreft, A. K. (2023). "This Patriarchal, Machista and Unequal Culture of Ours": Obstacles to Confronting Conflict-Related Sexual Violence. *Social Politics: International Studies in Gender, State & Society*, 30(2), 654-677.



It is important to understand the effects of rape on women and society, including the physical, psychological and emotional effects on victims and the social and economic consequences<sup>23</sup>. It is very essential to identify the complexity of these effects, to create a society that supports victims, holds rapists and molesters accountable and prevents rape and other sexual violence<sup>24</sup>.

- **Physical Issues:**

They suffer several serious physical injuries including bruises, broken bones and sexually transmitted infections (STIs)<sup>25</sup>. Rape victims may also suffer from persistent pain, headaches and sleep disturbances<sup>26</sup>. In some circumstances, rape can lead to pregnancy or reproductive health complications<sup>27</sup>. This also includes several bruises, scratches and lacerations.

- **Emotional Breakdown:**

Victims of rape and assault experience emotional and psychological effects of rape such as anxiety, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and even suicidal thoughts<sup>28</sup>. They also experience and struggle with feelings of shame, guilt, and self-blame resulting in decreased self-esteem and self-confidence<sup>29</sup>.

- **Social Boycott:**

Women who are victims of rape and assault face social boycotts. These women are usually ignored by their family and community. They are suggested to forget the incident so that the reputation of the woman

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<sup>23</sup> Tenaw, L. A., Aragie, M. W., Ayele, A. D., Kokeb, T., & Yimer, N. B. (2022). Medical and psychological consequences of rape among survivors during armed conflicts in northeast Ethiopia. *PLoS One*, 17(12), e0278859.

<sup>24</sup> Richards, K., Death, J., & Ronken, C. (2021). What do victim/survivors of sexual violence think about Circles of Support and Accountability?. *Victims & Offenders*, 16(6), 893-911.

<sup>25</sup> Ikokwu, G. M., Oseghale, I. D., Ralph-Okhiria, O. H., & Ighile, E. F. (2023). Protecting Your Health: A Comprehensive Review of Sexually Transmitted Illnesses. *International STD Research & Reviews*, 12(1), 25-45.

<sup>26</sup> Sigurdardottir, S., & Halldorsdottir, S. (2021). Persistent suffering: The serious consequences of sexual violence against women and girls, their search for inner healing and the significance of the# MeToo movement. *International journal of environmental research and public health*, 18(4), 1849.

<sup>27</sup> Endler, M., Al Haidari, T., Chowdhury, S., Christilaw, J., El Kak, F., Galimberti, D., ... & FIGO Committee for Human Rights, Refugees and Violence Against Women. (2020). Sexual and reproductive health and rights of refugee and migrant women: gynecologists' and obstetricians' responsibilities. *International Journal of Gynecology & Obstetrics*, 149(1), 113-119.

<sup>28</sup> Machisa, M. T., Chirwa, E., Mahlangu, P., Nunze, N., Sikweyiya, Y., Dartnall, E., ... & Jewkes, R. (2022). Suicidal thoughts, depression, post-traumatic stress, and harmful alcohol use associated with intimate partner violence and rape exposures among female students in South Africa. *International journal of environmental research and public health*, 19(13), 7913.

<sup>29</sup> Strauss Swanson, C., & Szymanski, D. M. (2022). Sexual violence and psychological distress: The roles of coping self-efficacy, self-blame, shame, activism, and feminism. *Sex Roles*, 87(7), 419-434.



and her family can be saved in society. Due to such news of rape and assault, the entire family of the victim faces backlash. The woman faces a lot of judgemental attacks and character assassination<sup>30</sup>. In these cases, it results in feelings of isolation, loneliness further trauma, social isolation and alienation. They often face difficulties in their work, school, career and daily normal activities.

- **Fear of Police:**

After rape, victims are usually in shock and trauma. They can hardly trust anyone. Due to fear and justified persecution, victims are hesitant and afraid to report rape and assault to the police. The result is that rapes are under-reported and the perpetrators benefit.

- **Pressure:**

Victims of rape and sexual assault are pressured by their families to settle the case so that their family prestige is maintained, and they are also pressured to withdraw the cases<sup>31</sup>. They experience various social pressures which result in various consequences such as depression, mental instability and suicide attempts.

- **Cultural Disgrace:**

Due to cultural stigma, rape victims are generally viewed as tainted and used products<sup>32</sup>. They may be seen as "tainted" or "damaged goods". Due to such attitudes, victims often blame themselves for the incident. This attacks their self-confidence and trust. Many times they are unable to face society and lose many important opportunities in their lives.

## Effects on Society

- **Fear and incredulity in society:**

Due to rape, fear and mistrust are spread among communities, which mainly results in the breakdown of social and communal solidarity.

- **Victim-blaming:**

Rape eternalises a practice of blaming the victim and this supports the rape myths and generalises violence and aggression.

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<sup>30</sup> Bhattacharjee, S. (2021). Shockwaves of Rape and Shattering of Power in the Contemporary Indian Web Series: The Case of Delhi Crime, Made in Heaven, and Judgement Day. *The Politics of Emotional Shockwaves*, 123-145.

<sup>31</sup> Bedera, N. (2021). Settling for less: How organizations shape survivors' legal ideologies around college sexual assault (Doctoral dissertation).

<sup>32</sup> Delker, B. C., Salton, R., McLean, K. C., & Syed, M. (2020). Who has to tell their trauma story and how hard will it be? Influence of cultural stigma and narrative redemption on the storytelling of sexual violence. *Plos one*, 15(6), e0234201.



- **Social Undevelopment:**

This not only adversely affects the education and career of girls but also hinders their higher education and their personal and social development due to the fear of unfortunate circumstances like rape<sup>33</sup>. This is pushing society far behind in development and proper growth. The entire male section is suffering due to some bad elements in society and such ill practices. The entire male community is looked at with apprehension and fear and is being suspected. This creates a sense of self-doubt, shame and accountability for such a heinous act among the rest of the sensible people of the society. They are not being trusted completely, even if they are not of that kind of criminal mindset.

- **Linguistic barriers:**

Most of the marginalised communities face ethnic and linguistic barriers, which prevent them from reporting such crimes and demanding help and support.

- **Unification shock:**

The practice of rape results in the trauma of amalgamation and the dynamics of the family that also influence the forthcoming generation and the relationship of the family and their growth.

- **Deteriorating social norms**

Such heinous acts lead to a deterioration in social norms and values, leading to greater tolerance towards violence, hostility, and disrespect for human rights in society<sup>34</sup>.

## **Dealing with the Effects of Rape**

The after-effects of rape are severe, leaving victims with feelings of loneliness, helplessness, and worthlessness, with many experiencing difficulty accessing the help and resources they need to heal and rebuild their lives<sup>35</sup>. Addressing the impacts of rape is an important and complex issue for which varied approaches and strategies are required<sup>36</sup>. Through dealing with the impacts of rape, a society that gives importance to and respects the physical independence, dignity, and also human rights of people is created.

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<sup>33</sup> Martha, O. I. ANALYSIS OF THE PSYCHOLOGICAL EFFECTS OF RAPE ON THE ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF PUPILS: AN EMPIRICAL INVESTIGATION FROM THE NIGERIAN DAILIES.

<sup>34</sup> Ruwan, I. I. F., Ishaya, D. S., Okorie, A. O., Jose, C., Fadare, G. O., & Garba, M. Y. (2020). CAUSES OF RADICALIZED AND VIOLENT EXTREMIST BEHAVIOUR:“A SOCIETAL CHANGE THEORY.”. Sapiaentia Global Journal of Arts, Humanities and Development Studies, 3(3).

<sup>35</sup> Kakon, A. (2021). The anatomy of silence: decolonizing the female body in rape narratives.

<sup>36</sup> Dworkin, E. R., & Weaver, T. L. (2021). The impact of sociocultural contexts on mental health following sexual violence: A conceptual model. *Psychology of Violence*, 11(5), 476.



The effects of rape can also be expanded beyond the individual, affecting families, communities, and the whole of society

It can also be said that the damage and the suffering can deteriorate and stop the victims from demanding the appropriate support and assistance<sup>37</sup>. It is required to address the effects of rape carefully and comprehensively with the help of the priorities and the requirements of the victims of rape and assault.

It is very important to address these challenges and a collective effort from healthcare suppliers, social assistance, law enforcement, and community organisations is necessary to be provided so that, a woman who has suffered rape and sexual assault is provided with the required and supportive equipment that is necessary. Addressing the outcomes of rape is a morally important, as well as a compulsory step towards creating a more defensible, more legitimate, and impartial society for everyone<sup>38</sup>.

### **Ways for addressing the outcomes of rape**

- **Aid and Reforms for Victims**

It is necessary to provide convenient, and personal support services for victims which comprise guidance, admonishment, medical supervision, and also legal aid to support victims in navigating the complicated procedure of aspiring for justice.

- **Education and Awareness**

Education and awareness campaigns are very important and they also play a vital role in promoting healthy intimacy, consent and rape prevention<sup>39</sup>. Parents, as well as teachers, should teach children about consent, boundaries, behaviour, equality and respect from childhood. Education is very important to change the conservative mindset of society, promote equality and take society in a positive direction for healthy development.

- **Justice**

Providing speedy justice and responsibility for perpetrators is very essential for addressing the outcome of rape and sexual assault<sup>40</sup>. It mainly includes the strategies and the approaches that prefer victims and

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<sup>37</sup> Dworkin, E. R., & Weaver, T. L. (2021). The impact of sociocultural contexts on mental health following sexual violence: A conceptual model. *Psychology of Violence*, 11(5), 476.

<sup>38</sup> Keenan, M., & Zinsstag, E. (2022). *Sexual violence and restorative justice: Addressing the justice gap* (p. 417). Oxford University Press.

<sup>39</sup> Sa, Z., Tian, L., & Wang, X. (2021). Evidence for a comprehensive sexuality education intervention that enhances Chinese adolescents' sexual knowledge and gender awareness and empowers young women. *Sex Roles*, 85(5), 357-370.

<sup>40</sup> Crivatu, I. M., Horvath, M. A., & Massey, K. (2023). The impacts of working with victims of sexual violence: a rapid evidence assessment. *Trauma, Violence, & Abuse*, 24(1), 56-71.



provide support and assistance through the legal procedure and it also encourages the restorative initiatives for acquiring justice. In India, many new acts and laws have been made to providing speedy justice for cases of rape and according to new laws, also amended the penalties for committing rape<sup>41</sup>. Fast-track courts have been established for speedy trials. States like Kolkata also passed bills to strengthen the laws regarding rape and other sexual offences. In India, there were several provisions established for the protection of women and punishments for rape and assault. In the case of “**Vishakha Vs State of Rajasthan, 1997**” was a landmark ruling by the Supreme Court which established the guidelines for the protection of women from sexual harassment in the workplace.

- According to section 375 of the Indian Penal Code, 1860. Rape has been defined as a crime against women which consists of sexual acts without the consent of women.
- Section 376 of IPC, 1860 deals with the punishments for committing rape.
- Section 64 of Bhartiya Nyay Sanhita states that a person who is committing rape shall be punished with minimum 10 years of intense imprisonment to life imprisonment and fine

## Conclusion

Rape is a serious sexual crime that involves forced or non-consensual sex or other forms of sexual harassment. It has profound and long-term effects on both the victim and the society. It is a matter of global concern. Rape not only causes physical damage, but it also deeply affects the emotional, mental, psychological and social behaviour of a person. It can be said that these crimes and rapists have the potential to increase manifold like Raktbeej. Therefore, strong power is required to defeat a person with such a criminal mindset. Girls and women should be provided with the necessary advanced self-defence techniques. Governments are making important laws and amendments to prevent these crimes. Many NGOs are also working towards providing proper awareness and education for girls' safety. Many mobile applications have been launched for the safety of women. However, it is necessary to recognise the severity and complexities of the effects of rape and a strong approach and strategies are needed to deal with it. It is important to stop blaming the victim, taking out candle marches and blaming the failure of the system to protest against rape. It is important to teach morality and respect for everyone in our homes from childhood and it is also important to establish a strong law and order system so that no action can be taken against rape. In this paper, various causes of rape have been discussed that include Patriarchal Norms, Inadequate education, psychological disorders, stereotypes, degradation of Media and the

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<sup>41</sup> Mishra, D. K. (2024). A Critical Review of Rape Laws and Its Application in India.



increasing rate of growth of Pornography. It has discussed various effects of rape on women and society as a whole. It also includes the importance of addressing the effects of rape and also the different ways that could be used for addressing the effects of rape and sexual assault. It is very important to work together to build a society that understands the importance of consent, respect and compassion, and thus some positive steps can be taken to reduce these incidents of rape and help individuals affected by this ruinous crime.