

Opinion Piece on
**International Women's Day and
Women of Kashmir**

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The evolution of this planet called earth has seen immense changes. Many civilizations tried to conquer this world. But history has seen many civilizations, which trampled the honor of human race and created the divide of upper class, lower class, owner and servant. It completely destroyed the sanctity of relations, specially the feminine. Woman was the biggest victim of slavery. The fact was totally neglected that the woman is a very important part of this society; she can be a daughter, mother, sister or wife. Poet of east Allama Iqbal has explained this as:

شرف میں بڑھ کے شریکے شریکے خاک اس کی
کہ ہر شرف ہے اسی دُرج کا ڈرکنوں

*Her handful clay is superior far to Pleiades that so higher are
For every man with knowledge vast, like gem out of her cask is
cast*

وجود زن سے ہے تصویر کائنات میں رنگ
اسی کے ساز سے ہے زندگی کا سوزدروں

*The picture that this world presents from woman gets its tints
and scents
She is the lyre that can impart pathos and warmth to human
heart*

In the era of ignorance, the newly born girl was buried alive or was kept as a slave. Freedom of expression was curbed and injustice was up to its limit. Justice was a mere dream. Societies reshaped and the progress in the field of science and technology is a milestone itself, but unfortunately the days of ignorance are back and the rights of women are robbed again. The international organizations like United Nation, European Union and uncountable organizations have designed several laws to protect the rights of women, but their implementation is still questionable. Still today hundreds of women are becoming victims of these crimes.

The international community came together in year 2000 and formed a plan for next 15 years and agreed upon 8 Millennium development goals and astonishingly, it did not involve the issue of violence against women. Perhaps they assumed that this issue is of less importance or it will be resolved by the progress of society. There cannot be a bigger misery than that the women has become prey for lustful gaze of many. Women are being used for selling the top brands every day. The hoardings on the highways, ads in the magazine or newspaper and the commercials on the television screen are trading the detoxification of women. This is not only an example of slavery, but slavery itself.



The corporate media is reluctant to declare it as slavery because the woman is that specie, which is used as medium of trade since the age of stones. This concept has badly damaged the protection and honor of women. For the protection of women rights and freedom, a women's day is celebrated on 8th March every year since 1909. This day is to celebrate and cherish the greater role of women in our society and also to pledge a promise that the women will be

given equal rights and freedom to live in society.

In today's modern world of development the women of our society are oppressed and 70% of them are spending the life under the line of poverty. It is an eye opener for the international organizations and women rights activists. Today in this civilized society, on many places women are living under the constant fear and on one raise their voices on this modern slavery. The live example for that is the woman of Kashmir, who is being suppressed by the Indian forces, but astonishingly the international organizations and civil societies of the world are keeping a blind eye on the events in Kashmir.

The Indian forces have illegally occupied the territory of Kashmir against the will of Kashmiri people and unprecedented force is use to suppress the women. It includes rapes, bullying & harassment, destroying financially and torture in prisons. With the use of all these torture tactics, Indian forces are trying to suppress the voice of peaceful Kashmir movement and big majority of women have become disabled because of these tortures. There are no words to explain that horrific experience which the women of Kashmir are going through.





In Kashmir, since 1990 approximately 10,000 women have been raped and Indian authorities have not prosecuted any single offender and they are even reluctant to condemn these shameful acts. The deepest sorrow is that nobody is prepared to raise this issue. In Kashmir, since 1990, 20,000 women have been made widows and many of the daughters of Kashmir are living lives as a 'half widow' and they haven't got a clue about their husbands, whether they are dead or illegally detained by the Indian forces. You can only imagine the figure by this fact that only in Baramullah; approx. 1500 women are searching their missing husbands. This very fact is hard to digest that why the women right activists, human rights heroes and international organizations have criminal silence on this issue. Who will raise their voices on the international forum? When Kashmiri women will receive the rights they deserve?

The psychological impact of these rapes and torture is unimaginable and is of deep concern. With killings, torture, rapes, molestations, disappearances and detentions becoming the order of the day in Kashmir, psychiatric disorders have seen a sharp increase post-1989. In 1989, about 1,700 patients visited the valley's lone psychiatric hospital and by the year 2003, the number had gone up to 48,000. The Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), one of the psychiatric diseases, which were completely unrecognized before 1990, has witnessed a major upsurge. Major Depressive Disorder (MDD) follows this. There are other mental diseases like bipolar disorder, panic, phobia; general anxiety and sleep disorders that have also shown four-fold increase. Dr Mushtaq Marghoob, a leading psychiatrist of the valley states that women bear the brunt of every tragedy. They have to support the family after the death of their husbands, fathers, sons or brothers.



Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative

The story in India itself is not very different either. According to the official data from National Crime Records Bureau of India, the rape cases have been doubled between 1990 and 2008. In 2012 alone 24,923 rape cases were reported to the authorities. The average figure for 2007-2011 is 22,000 rapes per year. Most shocking fact is that the Indian police are widely involved in rapes. Often in rural areas, the women are being raped on the false charges of petty crimes. The Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative (CHRI) condemned the role of police officers in shielding the accused.

"There can be no hope of preventing or minimizing rape if our law enforcers are apathetic to it. A message must be sent that this kind of criminality will not be tolerated, particularly against minors, by ensuring that all the penal provisions on gang rape and murder are invoked, including the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, 2012."

Ruchira Gupta, founder and president of NGO 'ApneAap' Women Worldwide, echoed similar sentiments and stressed the need to hold police accountable.

"To stop rape, we need police to be held accountable. As long as police are part of the problem, poor, low caste women have nowhere to turn to for justice from men who rape them, buy and sell them."



Gupta said in a statement. This fact is quite similar in India and the occupied Kashmir, that the law enforcement authorities are involved in violence against women. Rape cases in Kashmir particularly increased due to the extra judicial powers given to the Indian forces in 1990.

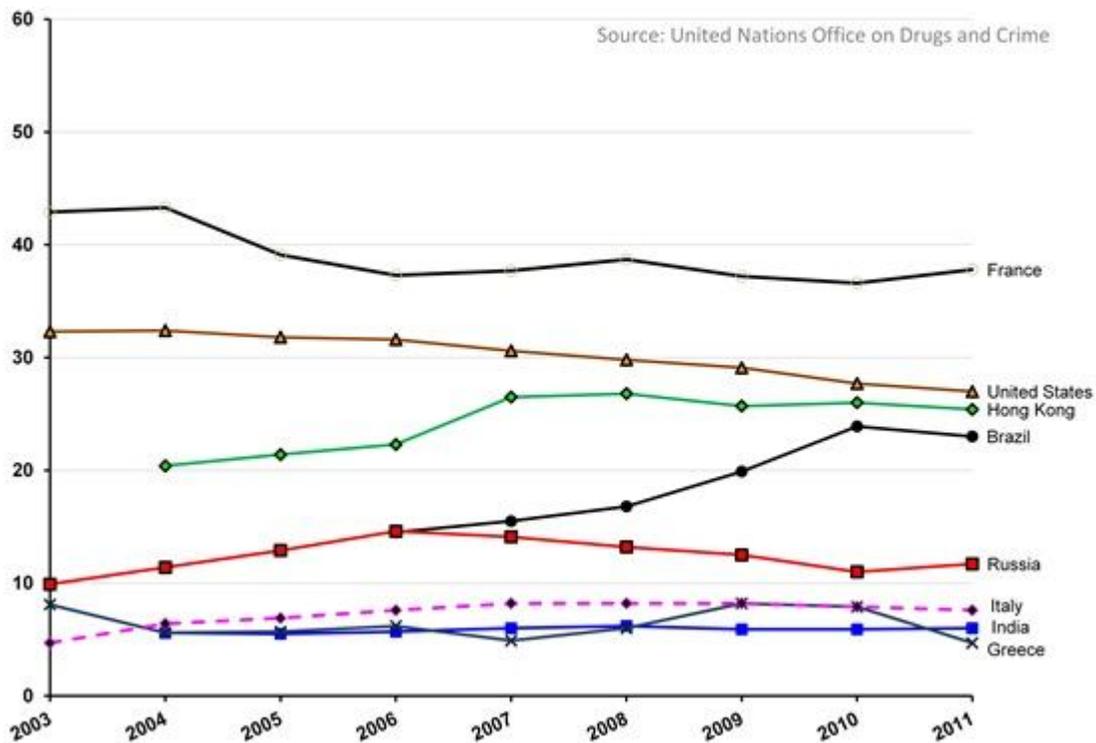
In June 2014 a UN convention was held to discuss the role of women in peace building. Altaf Hussain Wani, who is senior Kashmir freedom leader, Indian occupied Kashmir made very shocking comparison of rapes in India and Jammu Kashmir. He said:

"India's army used rape as a tool of war in Kashmir, now whole India is engulfed in rape epidemic."

Mr. Wani also said that history has shown that a woman is best binding force for her family and society, but the conflict which I belong, Kashmir, there is no pace for women to come out and practice peace building, because Indian army pushes them back. Indian soldiers harassed them, sexually assaulted them, and their husbands and children are killed. He added further that there is a good reason behind the comparison between India's 'rape policy' in Kashmir and the breakout of rape epidemic in India's mainland. This tells us that when states fail to implement the UN convention and do not account for the culprits, they suffer a large consequence and India is facing that consequence.



The following chart will give an insight of rapes in India from 2003-2011; it is showing annual rape and sexual assaults per 100,000 people for India compared to selected nations.



India has the lowest number of reported cases in the world, because people are often very frightened or they fear mistreatment from the society. Reports suggest that when parents of victims approach police to file a complaint, the officials refuse to do so and sent them away. Although rapes are becoming more frequently reported, many go unreported or have the complaint files withdrawn due to the perception of family honor being compromised. The more important fact, which is mentioned above that often Indian police is widely involved in rapes and people, do not have the power or courage to raise their voice against the authorities. Other violent crime against women involves martial rape, domestic violence, acid throwing, dowry deaths, honor killings, abduction, insult to modesty, human trafficking and forced prostitution.

Various days are celebrated during the year, like women's day, human rights day, and the days associated with the history of Kashmir, these days can really help us to understand the problems of not only Kashmiri women, but the women all around the world. It requires consistent struggle, so that the international community can realize this sensitive issue and the Indian authorities must be pressed on these issues.