Introduction

Chapter: I
I. RELEVANCE OF THE STUDY:

At the outset I would like to emphasise that very little is available in sociology and the social sciences on rape. However, rape is widespread, occurs almost in every society making it an almost universal issue and most importantly it is on the rise.\(^1\) Even if we grant that this can be accounted for by the women’s movement and a more gender aware media, the fact still holds good that rape is a growing problem.

Attached to this paucity of literature is an added dimension of 'mystery' and 'silence' which shrouds the issue of rape. In the course of this study this silence and non-availability in a way provided a clue to my understanding of rape. The literature which is present suggests that rape is aberrant behaviour. Statistics however reveal a different story. Rape occurs everywhere but there seems to be a difficulty in studying or talking about it. It is widely prevalent, people are aware of its presence yet choose to remain silent about it. This sort of silencing makes it more difficult but all the more urgent to actually attempt to study it.

Because rape is an invasion of one’s most intimate being, it is no surprise that there is such silence around rape reporting. In India, a woman’s sexuality is circumscribed within notions of purity, pollution, auspiciousness, inauspiciousness, shame, stigma and honour. As a very grave and outrageous act, it is assumed to be an unusual occurrence, and this assumption is thought to justify the fact that rape isn’t much talked about. In fact, as mentioned earlier rape is widespread, it happens very often and is happening with greater frequency everywhere. But like incest and wife-beating, it was for a very long time one of those embarrassing facets of the human condition that one simply did not mention. This silence reflects the opinion that even if rape occurs it should not be made public. As far as the victim is concerned, the prevailing attitude is that rape is shameful and degrading to her, and the less said about it

\(^1\) A rape a day puts Delhi on top of national list. Almost every day a woman or a minor is raped everyday, this being the approximate figure as most cases go unreported. The figures of rape are said to be the highest in the country (\textit{The Times of India} 27.10.99).
the better. Advertising the fact that one has been raped is an open invitation to social disaster. The net effect of this conspiracy of silence is to discourage many rape victims from reporting the offence. Silence perpetuates the misconception that rape does not happen very often; it reinforces the view of rape as a shameful and degrading experience; and it reflects the belief that 'nice girls don't get raped'.

There is also silence in terms of the literature available on this issue. Sociology has not addressed the issue of rape and rape has mainly been viewed as an 'aberration', as an outcome of breakdown of norms. There is a need to see how sociology would look at rape, probably the way common sense would address the issue. To a great extent, sociology operates on an assumption of gender neutrality while dealing with social issues and social problems. It is feminist scholarship which addresses the issue of rape as not an aberration but a 'normal', widespread phenomenon. Feminist sociologists have emphasised that sociological categories may operate differently between men and women. The literature which is available is widely influenced by western thought, contexts and ideas. In the west, the first onslaught of feminist writings noted the invisibility of rape related topics in the professional literature. The second wave went to criticise the theoretical content of what limited literature was available. Susan Griffin (1979) was quick to point out that rape was not widely discussed by male intellectuals who described almost every other form of male activity. If the west was slow in making rape 'visible', the 'invisibility' of the subject in our society is only understandable. There is a tendency for western feminists to highlight rape as a western problem. This is untrue because it is very widespread in India, but the study of rape has been limited. Breaking this silence and studying rape in the correct perspective is what is needed. If one

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² Silence on this issue is so overpowering and has been highlighted by Urvashi Butalia in her book, *The Other Side of Silence* (1998). In the course of her research on the Indo-Pakistan partition, she mentions that during the partition, abduction and rape of women, the physical mutilation of their bodies took place on a large scale yet no mention was made of this kind of violence by any victims' families or the state or historians. However, she does mention that these acts were universally condemned.
examines the nature of rape and the treatment of rape victims by the judicial system, as well as societal attitudes towards rape, we can infer the reasons why women would not report rape (as the study will discuss subsequently).

The study of rape therefore affords a possibility of doing a feminist inferred sociology. The need for such a study is inevitable. It becomes relevant for the discipline of sociology to study rape as a sociological phenomenon and to do so it needs to provide feminist scholarship with the desired inputs in the form of sociological concepts and categories.

There is an urgent need to study rape because it is one of the most crude gender specific forms of violence against women. In India the morning newspapers recount frightening incidents of rape from all parts of the country. These cases are only some of the reported incidents which reveal the proverbial tip of the iceberg. Irrespective of caste, creed, class and regional variances the phenomenon of rape reduces all females to the position of potential victims of this atrocity. Rape, provides a problem not only for the victims, or even for the much larger number of women whose actions are constrained by fear of rape, but also for society as a whole. This form of violence threatens women with physical, sexual and psychological violation and limits their choices about their lives. Sociologically it is important to ponder over the deeper attitudes, values and beliefs which people hold at large which help further in sustaining this heinous crime. Very closely related to this is the attitude of people towards rape and victims of rape. Rape is not just a physical assault on a woman’s body but also a mental assault of the worst kind. The mental trauma undergone by the woman, when she has to endure the humiliating ordeal of callous policemen, insensitive doctors, inadequate rape laws and trials which question her character has often been termed “The Second Rape”.

Rape is probably the most sensationalised and most misunderstood of all crimes. Only a few of the rapists are ever convicted and when an accusation of rape is ever made, the victim often becomes the focus of attention. Violent, degrading and traumatic, it is also the only crime in which the victim is liable to
become the object of public indifference, hostility, ridicule and even blame. To regard rape as an expression of sexual desire is not only an inaccurate notion but also an insidious assumption, for it results in the shifting of the responsibility for the offence in a large part from the offender on to the victim. The act of rape is the violent abuse of a woman's body, dignity and autonomy. It is in this context that the concept of human rights fits as the question of human rights is closely associated with the right to live with dignity. It is an act of unrestrained hostility, anger, an assault unique in the degradation it inflicts. The suffering it causes is profound.

It is often felt, as one observes, that no other subject is regarded so differently by men and women as rape. Women deeply dread and resent it to the extent that men cannot recognise. Men may recognise it as wrong but at a certain point they often say "but what was she doing there at that hour anyway?", or "rape is mainly a provocation from the woman's side." Such attitudes and widely held myths on rape go further in perpetuating the 'rape culture'. The concept of 'rape culture' encompasses a design of beliefs, ideas which govern attitudes towards rape and allow the crime to be perpetuated over time. For example, negative societal attitudes towards rape victims would only help in maintaining the rape culture. This concept shall emerge throughout the study (explicitly and implicitly) and will be discussed further in the latter half of this chapter.

Even if they don't think about it very much, most women have incorporated into their lives routine precautions along lines prescribed by general culture. From a woman's earliest days she is attended by injunctions about strangers and warnings about dark streets, she is told to get home before it is dark. She internalises these lessons therein, that to break certain rules is to invite or deserve rape. Also, the idea of sexual punishment for disobedience is learned very early, and is accepted. So if a woman is raped, she feels, besides outrage, deep guilt and a need to find out what she has done wrong to account for it. To the extent that a woman can convince a jury that she was neither careless nor
seductive, her attacker may be found guilty and she may be absolved from guilt; but more often in rape trials something is found in her behaviour to 'account for her fate'. The main point is that whatever the circumstances of rape, social attitudes and legal processes at the present time make the victim guilty of her own rape. Even the most innocent victim is likely to be told family members "I told you never to go there", and this is the attitude held by most people.

As an anti-social crime, rape is kept alive in the public conscience by sensational newspaper articles and presented as warnings to young women about the dangers of hitch-hiking or any other 'uncalled for' conduct. This again reinforces what every woman has been taught from childhood (often indirectly), that rape is the worst thing that can happen to a woman. There is a contradiction in the public attitudes towards rape. At the level of law and public pronouncements, we repudiate rape as a serious offence. However, at the level of actual practice, women have found little actual real protection in the judicial system. Few cases come to court; fewer rapists are convicted, few people even report the rape and the victim rather than the rapist, is put on trial. Therefore rape remains a serious threat to all women. It is therefore clear that without a deeper understanding of what rape is and why it occurs, we can never eliminate the problems surrounding it, much less eliminate rape itself.

Social attitudes, legal and judicial processes all conspire (indirectly, if not directly) to keep women from exercising their political and human rights. Despite the fact that laws against rape exist in the books, ostensibly for women's protection, there are effective social and legal constraints which prevent women from utilising their legal rights. Women are afraid and made afraid, to seek the protection and the redress of the law. Therefore they land up remaining silent while it is the rapist who has most to benefit from the silence. It is hard to escape the conclusion that social attitudes, and their articulation in the legal process, operate to protect not the victim but the rapist. As things stand, it is the person

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3 One of the victims I spoke with (the victim of gang rape) claims that she gets threatened by her assailants and they harass her in all possible ways so that she withdraws her case against them.
who is raped who is punished. These issues will be discussed in detail as the thesis proceeds. The arguments outlined here will run through the study in some form or another.

As mentioned earlier, rape has largely been viewed as a 'sensational' issue rather than a sensitive issue (in the media and otherwise). The subject is also trivialised to a great extent. The acceptability of the crime is low, the reporting of the crime is even lower. The deep pain and anguish caused by the crime cannot be highlighted by anyone so vividly except by those who have been victims of it. The horror it entails is beyond the comprehension of most people. It is therefore very important to highlight this pain through the narratives of victims. The narratives will reveal what exactly victims of rape go through in terms of the trauma and pain, how they cope, and how they are mostly left alone to deal with their pain and sorrow.

Rape is therefore too complex and too serious a matter to push aside. It represents a deeper social malaise in society, a society in which we all live. It is therefore very important to pursue research in this field as it affects or could affect half the population of the world. Its relevance cannot and should not be denied.

II. OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY:
As mentioned earlier, the 'silence' on the subject of rape at once highlights the need to study rape as a sociological phenomenon. This study attempts to understand the phenomenon of rape in society, to study rape as not an aberration (as is commonly believed) but as a part of the production and reproduction of patriarchal forms of social control. For this understanding feminist scholarship borrows from sociology to arrive at a broader understanding of rape as a social phenomenon. While seeking to represent the

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4 This point about trivialising a grave issue will be brought out also with the help of some information on the way rape is represented by society. I will try to analyse this issue with particular reference to representation of sexual violence on the Internet.
voices of rape victims (and victims of other sexual offences), the study at once looks at the manner in which the government, the legal system and social institutions addresses the issue of rape. Here, the use of the term government encompasses the police system and the administrative system and other arms of government machinery. I have sought to highlight women's perspectives on sexual violence, to the trauma of rape and the negative consequences of institutional responses to victims of sexual violence.

As would be self evident, it has been extremely difficult to locate rape victims and be able to interact with them. However, one has been able to interact with 15 such victims, which took years of work to accomplish. Also, it is important to mention here that in some parts of the text voices of victims of sexual assault/ violence (not amounting to rape legally) have also been mentioned. This has been done mainly to highlight the trauma of such victims, this is also to highlight the similarity between the victims of rape and other forms of sexual violence in terms of their post assault experiences with society. This study seeks to voice the anguish of these victims. On the other hand it attempts to review the manner in which the government, the legal system and society at large look at them and treat them. By government policy I refer to the functioning of the police, the bureaucracy. By law I refer to the existing legal codes, the attitudes of the legal personnel etc. Very closely related to this is the issue of human rights which will be addressed only in the way it relates to the crime of rape/sexual violence. Human rights will be essentially tied up with government policy and the legal system assuming therefore that it is an important part of policy now. The text will also highlight how rape is a human rights violation. I will highlight that rape is not primarily a sexual offence. By being an offence of violence, it is an obstacle to the achievement of the objectives of equality, development and peace. This crime (as also other forms of violence against women) both violates and impairs the enjoyment by women of (their universal) human rights and fundamental freedom. Also, it goes against the primary obligation laid down in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.
The uncomfortable relationship between these structures (government, the legal system and other social institutions like the family and community) and the victims will be highlighted. It is my intention to highlight the apathetic attitudes faced by the victim vis a vis these structures and social institutions. It will be seen in the course of the text how victims view themselves as helpless and defenceless in an aberrant society. Not only do victims of sexual violence find themselves questioning their own personal worth, but they see themselves as radically different from everyone else (as does the society around them). No longer does anyone- even those close to them understand their plight. In fact old equations of relationships give way to new ones. The importance of a supportive society, or social institutions are critical in a victim's survival, but in reality, in a sense, victims are often ‘thrown out of society’ of which they are an important part. I will demonstrate the widespread acceptance of stereotyped, prejudicial attitudes toward victims of sexual violence. These attitudes, which tend to trivialise rape and denigrate and blame victims, are an inevitable product of patriarchal male-dominated societies. It will also be highlighted that rape myths underpin both individual and institutional responses to victims of sexual assault and how attitudes, myths and beliefs perpetuate rape. Rape myths tend to affect the treatment of victims of sexual violence and influence institutional processing of sexual offences by the medical, legal and social institutions in general. In addition, evidence has suggested that these negative attitudes and perceptions are ultimately internalised by rape victims themselves and have detrimental psychological and social consequences for their recovery from sexual assault.5

The attitudes of the government and legal systems and the society (social institutions like the family and community) towards the victims will emerge mainly through the narratives. It is through the narratives that issues of apathy, beliefs and attitudes will be brought out. On the other hand, I will also analyse certain beliefs and attitudes held by members of society towards the crime of

5 It is in this sense that the ‘throwing out’ (very symbolically) of the victim takes place gradually from society. The victim is isolated from the very society she was a part of.
rape and victims of rape (these include the myths of rape). The victim finally emerges as an isolated individual vis a vis society. These attitudes and beliefs will be revealed throughout the text (implicitly and explicitly) in the form of comments, foot notes.

Rape is therefore a 'misunderstood' crime in many senses of the term. How it is misunderstood will be revealed throughout the text. The victim, in the end lands up becoming the 'accused' and the very act of violence gets lost in the confusion of beliefs, attitudes and myths thus trivialising a crime so grave as this.

The study will also reveal certain prevailing myths and attitudes held by some members of society. Attitudes will also highlight to a great extent what people feel about rape and issues related to it. They would be a manifestation of deeply embedded values and conditioning created over many years. Certain beliefs created by society like good girls don’t go out at night and liberal women ask for it etc., help only in sustaining a culture which is conducive to rape/sexual assault. Also, when the reality of rape can no longer be denied, patriarchal visions attribute blame to the woman. The reaction of the members of society toward a victim of sexual violence/assault are often due to widely prevalent myths of rape. These myths are espoused by the police, the courts and the general public, victims' families and then the victims themselves. The myths are so pervasive and deeply ingrained that they are rarely subjected to critical scrutiny in everyday life. Rather, they are taken for granted, as givens which direct the manner in which men and women relate to each other. Also, rape myths often induce victim blaming, limit an individuals' capacity to offer social support to survivors of sexual assault and subsequently affect a victim's recovery from related trauma. More explicitly, it will be seen how pervasive

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5 I have come across many girls, women, and men who use words like 'fast' to denote the character of a girl. For instance, a girl once told me about another girl who was molested in a public transport, “actually woh bahut fast type ki ladki thi, kya pata........”. Attitudes like these only help in blaming the victim from the start, and thereby shielding the accused.

6 Over a period of time, the thin line between what is a myth and what is a hard fact gets blurred and often fades. People view myths as truths.
rape myths, in general, and the attitudes and perceptions of significant others, more specifically, are often accepted and internalised by victims themselves. Influenced by societal values and interpersonal interactions, victims frequently blame themselves. The resultant self-blame, in turn, mitigate against psychological recovery from sexual violence. It will be my effort to highlight how these rape-supportive beliefs, attitudes and values held by individuals and reinforced by institutions may in turn actually perpetrate rape thus allowing a rape culture to emerge in society.

A major objective therefore, of this study would be to review and synthesise what we know about all-pervasive rape ideologies through empirical studies, incorporating research on attitudes, stereotypes, prejudice, attributions and values, including a range of methods such as case studies. To consider practical applications of this research, such as the effects, both indirect and direct, of rape myths on victims of sexual assault. The study will highlight the negative consequences for rape victims of biased and prejudicial perceptions of sexual violence by society. The impact of these attitudes on victims’ self-perception is discussed. On the one hand the crime of rape is all pervasive, affecting every aspect of the victim’s life, where the victim is left alone to take care of her emotions, where her negligence of herself leads her further into believing that she was to blame. She is isolated as a result of the sexual assault on her person. On the other hand are social institutions like the family, community, and state who, instead of being supportive and helpful are apathetic and insensitive to her. Therefore, the relationship between the individual (the victim in this case) and society is perhaps one of the most significant areas to be researched in the attempt to understand rape.

What will also be highlighted in the study is that often other forms of sexual violence (besides rape) could have very similar negative affects on the victims
but are often not recognised as such. The voices of some victims of sexual abuse will form a part of the study.

The role of media in shaping our ideas and beliefs cannot be undermined. In this context, the role of media will be highlighted. The media intervene between our experiences and our understanding of reality. These constructions of reality is accepted as given and for most of the time we are happy not to question them. However, in recent times, feminists have made rape a visible issue, and this has resulted in an increased media focus on the issue of violence against women (rape included). The study also will make an attempt to view the representation of sexual violence (rape) in the media. The media holds a key position in modern times and therefore has been viewed as a key social institution. The importance of the media is immense in contemporary society and takes many forms but what is used specifically in this study is the Internet. This new reference is gaining momentum. Therefore this study would include particularly the representation of rape and sexual violence on the Internet. It will highlight how rape is trivialised and how sexual violence is portrayed as a ‘titillating’ act. By such depiction and representation the seriousness and gravity of the crime gets hidden. It also then helps in the perpetuation of the culture of rape.

III. SCOPE OF STUDY:
It must be kept in mind, first and foremost, that I am dealing in an area where very little is available in terms of research. The subject is still taboo to a great extent. It was a very, very difficult task to break the ‘silence’ and meet and talk with victims of rape. To avoid confusion and superficiality, the study must therefore be viewed in the light of such limitations. Rape can be studied from

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8 This also becomes a case for arguing legally to change the very definition of rape which tends to ignore many forms of violence which may actually cause immense damage (mentally or physically or both) to the victim, but because legally it does not fit the definition of rape, the punishment accorded for such a crime is much less in proportion to the crime committed. This would be highlighted in detail on the chapter on law. In some countries, for example, the law recognises all such crimes under ‘sexual assault’ (thus attributing similar gravity to all such sexual crimes).

9 I will specifically be highlighting the issue of violence/rape on the Internet.
many angles and perspectives. However, it is my aim to see how rape is understood sociologically in society.

The present study will attempt to make an analysis of what perpetuates the crime of rape. Why is a crime of such a heinous nature allowed to persist overtime? It will study the different forms taken by rape (as revealed by the various narratives). The study will critically analyse the effectiveness of legal measures in dealing with rapists, it will do so in the light of certain well-known cases. The legal statutes shall be viewed critically.

The role of the government and other social institutions (as they deal with sexual violence/rape) will be studied in the light of the narratives. The narratives will reveal much of the issues discussed earlier. Also, any efforts made by the government and other organisations in dealing with such issues will be discussed. The role of the family, community will revealed through the cultural patterns of society.

The attempt is to understand what rape is, what rape means to the people. Attention will be brought to pervasive rape myths, prejudicial attitudes about rape and rape victims which trivialise sexual violence and reflect victim blame, denigration and disbelief. It will be revealed how these myths have negative consequences for women and society. These myths shape the actual treatment of victims on both institutional and personal levels. Often, myths tend to become hard facts over a period of time. People actually believe myths as though they were hard facts.

I will not be doing a statistical analysis of rape cases, I will however just mention a few data only for reference, if required.

This study does not provide a complete understanding of the crime of rape because there is no complete understanding of the crime of rape at this time. For instance, throughout the study I will speak only of the female victim and the male rapist. The primary reason for this being that majority of rapists are male and victims are female.
The role of the government and law will not be discussed in detail per se but only with reference to rape and sexual violence. Also, the narratives will bring out these responses. Human rights will be closely linked to the legal aspect and rape as a human rights violation will be studied. The study is not a detailed analysis on human rights.

IV. METHODOLOGY:
I have by now made clear the sheer difficulty of projecting information about rape. While a silence envelopes the real issues and incidents of rape, sensationalisation and myths dominate discussions of rape. One mode of research would be to ignore the 'myths' and search for 'facts'. But as sociology trains one to see that myths are as much of reality as so called 'hard facts', I therefore seek to do both. These are revealed through narratives, anecdotal sources and in every day life experiences.

I must confess that when I started off to research in this field I wanted to limit the field of study only to victims of the Uttarakhand violence in Muzaffarnagar (October 2, 1994). I tried locating victims of rape and molestation for about two years after the incident. I did not get support from anyone. Journalists were very sceptical about my intentions, they would always remind me that a 'shameful' crime like rape would not be discussed by the people of Uttarakhand openly. I also met some women of the organisations supporting the cause of Uttarakhand, who were victims of molestation. The issue of rape was hushed up by one and all. In fact, even when I brought the topic up it was ignored. I tried very hard to meet victims but was mostly unsuccessful. It was only later that I decided to widen the perspective and meet other women. Even

10 The Uttarakhand society is a very conservative one. Questions of izzat, honour, shame and family pride are of prime importance to them. The social set-up is very patriarchal.
11 I must highlight here that family members of victims of sexual violence were mostly unhelpful. In one case, it was a rape victim's husband (a lawyer by profession) who refused to let me meet her. My pleading, requesting was all in vain till I was told to 'keep off' from the victim even by phone. Incidentally, her number was acquired by me with great difficulty and whenever I would call I was told that she was not at home. Her husband did not want to reason out with me at any cost.
tracing these victims has been a very difficult task for me. At the level of reality, the taboo on the subject is widely prevalent.

In order to carry out this study, I have relied on theoretical, empirical, journalistic, anecdotal sources. Explanations and interpretations have been discussed in the light of other studies in the area. I have relied heavily on direct social observation at the level of everyday life and therefore given importance to the methods of everyday experience and of ordinary language over the quantitative measurement of human conduct and the elaboration of highly abstract conceptual schemes. Methods which are primarily based on day to day observations have been used and what is emphasised is the importance of experience in understanding the reality of victims of rape/sexual violence.

My 'field' does not entail a definitive physical boundary. What is meant by this is that rape is not a crime which is easily talked about and therefore the possibility of meeting with real life victims has been very tough. Therefore, it is just impossible to get 'sample type' of cases. The voices have emerged with great difficulty from various 'fields'. I have tried to highlight the experiences of individual rape victims and victims of other sexual violence to elaborate the phenomenon of rape and to identify the attitudes which affect that experience. In this sense, I will favour descriptive methods set in real life contexts. I will study women (in this case victims of sexual violence and others) in their everyday life. The study of women, therefore, will be brought out by narratives in the form of case studies. I also have also highlighted 'other voices' which will facilitate the understanding of rape as a societal phenomenon. I have sought to understand the inner most feelings and emotions of victims of sexual violence, particularly rape. To explore the aftermath of rape, the ideas and beliefs of the victims along with responses from members of society besides the victims are studied.

The methodology to carry out this research is multifaceted. For the purpose of this study I constantly maintained a diary in which I recorded day to day issues of importance, observations. For instance, even a conversation or observation was recorded. Throughout the text there are many such cases
mentioned at random, wherever the need arises. I have spoken and observed respondents at a personal level. Observation has played a very important role in my research. I have made notes wherever I have thought it necessary and have maintained a diary for the same. The effort has been continuous and spontaneous from the beginning of the research. Often, I have spoken about the issue of sexual violence and rape with people from all walks of life, young and old. I have not followed any strict technique of questioning in that sense. This sort of an issue did at times become a ground of discussion also.

For studying the prevalence of rape myths, beliefs and attitudes towards rape I administered a questionnaire to 70 respondents, 35 male and 35 female respondents from the ages 19-40 years belonging to the educated urban middle class people from Delhi. This questionnaire is more in the nature of a supplement to my field work, and in no way can it claim an exhaustive study. The questionnaire was not structured in the strict sense of the term, people were allowed to write additional statements if they desired. This too proved a difficult task as many people declined to fill the questionnaires, it seemed to intimidate some people instantly. Notwithstanding its limitations it provided a broad insight into the attitudes of the middle class towards rape.

For my field work I have used the technique of interviewing, though unstructured, to know the responses of victims. Questioning would be structured around the rape experience, before, during and after the rape, the reactions of others, in her words. Interviewing techniques involve open-ended, informal, involved, interactive methods which allow more freedom to the respondents. Through the narratives most of the aspects of anguish, pain and trauma are revealed. The narratives also reveal the interaction of rape victims with social institutions. It is from the narratives that inferences about rape myths and attitudes have been drawn. The victims' interactions and experiences with social institutions have been revealed through the narratives. The presence of

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12 Observation helps in understanding those aspects which get negated while speaking with a person, for instance, body language. Often, grave and long silences reveal much of the pain which speech cannot.
'other voices', besides the victims' voice is evident too. The interviews are designed to elaborate the victims' experience of sexual violence. However, as mentioned above, to study the attitudes and rape myths I used questionnaires at one level and simple dialogue and talking at another level.

I have also sought to study the manner rape has been recorded in public documents. I have also examined the depiction of rape in the media (print and visual), including news reports and magazines, as well as professional literature in the field of law and the social sciences as well as other documents on the topic of research. These documents are potentially rich sources for tapping the cultural expression, production and perpetuation of the patriarchy. To view the representation of rape in the media, I have made an attempt especially to study how rape is depicted on the Internet. This involved intense browsing of the Internet.

In the context of research on rape perceptions and attitudes, I often used hypothetical examples of sexual violence cases in which characteristics of the victim and/or the offender are systematically varied to assess their impact on responses such as the attribution of blame, fault or responsibility for rape. This field study therefore relies on multiple methods and may include observations and interviews in addition to archival research. Often, the research process may commence with observation, working through description, and explanation as the field of investigation broadens and develops.

My field work entails multiple methods of study. It is my contention that a complex phenomenon like rape cannot be studied by any one method and hence the importance of a multiple approach. Direct behavioural observations has been additionally supplemented by other research methods such as survey, discussion and dialogue and field data from secondary sources. This is definitive of a multi-

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13 Rape attitudes are believed by many to be part of a wider implicit ideology about the relations between women and men and the structure of society as a whole. Attitudes and perceptions, however, are hypothetical constructs. They can be inferred from other sources such as self report, behavioural observations or archival records (this is how most of the rape myths are revealed).
method, qualitative approach of research. Here, a synthesis of feminist theory and sociology has contributed to a broader understanding of sexual violence.

V. A SOCIOLOGICAL APPROACH:
The social sciences have been criticised for not being explicit enough to deal with the issue of sexual violence especially rape, for often neglecting and misrepresenting women in its research endeavours. In this research, however, feminist scholarship has been emphasised.

The first onslaught of feminist writings noted the invisibility of rape related topics in the professional literature. The academic and clinical literature of the time placed emphasis on the psychopathological nature of sexual offenders—suggesting that they were inherently different from other men—and the clinical characteristics of victims—implying that their traits or dispositions contributed to sexual victimisation.

Feminist critiques have contributed to a more comprehensive understanding of rape by incorporating an interdisciplinary perspective and a wide range of research methods in the investigation of sexual assault. On the theoretical level feminists have argued that rape is the consequence of deep-rooted social tradition of male dominance and female exploitation. In essence, rape is the result of differentiated and unequal gender roles and social stratification. While feminist theory has not considered itself with attitudes in the same way as social psychology or sociology, certain rape myths have been identified, and arguments have been advanced that attitudes, norms, values and tradition of inequality constitute a world view which promotes 'rape-supportive' cultures (Russell:1982). Feminists have maintained that attitudes toward men, women and their sexual interactions underpin the social conceptualisation of rape and are reflected in the institutional treatment of sexual violence.

Feminism has been credited by a number of scholars while defining rape as a significant social problem, and feminist writing on sexual violence has had a major influence on the reconceptualisation of rape. Undoubtedly feminism has
affected theory and research in a range of disciplines and in a number of ways. Sociology is one such discipline which can, along with insights from feminist theory provide a qualitative study of rape as a social phenomenon. It is my contention that even though feminist theory is applied to study rape it is sociology which can provide the much needed sociological concepts and categories to do so. In this study I rely heavily on such sociological concepts to study the societal phenomenon of rape. These sociological inputs will emphasise that rape is not an aberration, as is generally believed, but a social phenomenon which is a part of society. The prevalence of attitudes, myths and beliefs only perpetuate the crime of rape and it is social institutions which are also carriers of such beliefs and myths.

At this stage I would also like to highlight the notion of ‘rape culture’ as it is an important part of the study. This study will highlight (through the narratives and other findings) how the culture of rape develops in society and how it persists overtime and for years to come. It is important to therefore expand on the concept of rape culture. Since most of our actions are dependent on culture and cultural aspects we must look at the way rape culture emerges and persists in society (even though it does so invisibly). Firstly we should view the concept of culture itself. Culture is a way of life of a people. It consists of conventional patterns of thought and behaviour including values, beliefs, rules of conduct, political organisation, economic activity and the like, which are passed on from one generation to another, through the process of learning. Culture provides a set of principles for explaining and understanding human behaviour. People acquire ideas, beliefs, values of their society and these provide the basic materials by which they think and perceive. Now, if the word rape is added to the word culture a new concept emerges. Rape culture would then encompass a design of ideas, beliefs which govern attitudes towards rape and allow the crime
to be sustained overtime.\textsuperscript{14} For example, negative societal attitudes towards the rape victim would only help in maintaining and sustaining this rape culture.\textsuperscript{15}

In this study, the understanding of rape as a social phenomenon has been done in the light of social institutions and for this purpose a sociological understanding of institutions is imperative. What will emerge is how social institutions like the family, community, state and the media operate to perpetuate rape (directly and indirectly).

Throughout the text the use of the term victim is apparent. The rationale is to signify the outrage of rape. Rape is an hostile act done to an innocent person who is changed unwillingly as a result. A victim denotes one that is injured, destroyed and sacrificed. The victim of rape becomes a `survivor' (as some western feminists have used this term for victims) only if she has endured, prevailed and has been able to rebuild the meaning shattered by rape. Why I am using the term victim throughout the study is because it is our society (social institutions through their perpetuation of attitudes, myths and beliefs), which does not allow a victim to become a survivor. It is to highlight the anguish of the victim that I use the term victim throughout.

It is my belief that the synthesis of feminist theory and sociology (through concepts and categories) will contribute to a broader understanding of sexual violence in general and rape in particular. I therefore opt for a multiple method of study.

VI. CHAPTER OUTLINE:
This study is divided into various chapters to facilitate research.
Chapter II will encompass a review of literature in the field of rape. Here, textual definitions of rape will be given, a sociological classification of rape will be made followed by feminist writings of rape in India and the West. What will

\textsuperscript{14} The beliefs would essentially include the myths of rape which influence the thought pattern of most people.

\textsuperscript{15} There are many such examples which will emerge in the course of the study. These myths only help in perpetuating the crime and creating a negative, insensitive atmosphere for the victim.
be highlighted in this chapter is the paucity of literature on rape in sociology. The emphasis therefore will be on a feminist inferred sociology. Since feminist scholarship has dealt with rape in a broader sense the nature of the literature and understanding of rape will be made.

Chapter III will study and understand rape in the light of social institutions. A sociological understanding of institutions will be given. Starting with the premise that rape is a social act of violence and not a sexual act, I will analyse the role which society plays in perpetuating the crime of rape. Four key social institutions have been discussed: the family, community (in the sense of face to face interactions, locality), state and the media (with reference to the Internet). It will be seen how social institutions perpetuate rape. Each institution will be discussed critically with respect to the phenomena of sexual violence/rape. Through the analyses, the concept of 'rape culture' will emerge and it will be highlighted how society is the biggest perpetrator of violence and how as a result of this victims are 'thrown out' of society.

Chapter IV will discuss the prevalence of rape myths, attitudes and beliefs among some members of society. This is done to see how people from 'normal' settings view the crime of rape. In addition to the secondary literature discussed I administer questionnaires to 35 men and 35 women in the age group 19-40 years, of the middle class of urban Delhi. This is a sort of a supplement survey. Because rape is sociological the importance of attitudes, beliefs and myths becomes evident.

Chapter V narrates the voices of victims. This chapter is based on my field work and the narratives discussed here will throw up certain theoretical and other issues discussed earlier. The real life working of social institutions will be revealed through the narratives. The narratives are first hand experiences of the victims of rape (and in some cases, molestation). Voices other than the victims' are also present. These voices are important in revealing the importance of 'the other' in a subject like rape.
Chapter VI will critically interrogate the legal system vis a vis the crime of rape. This will entail a critical look at the Indian rape law and laws on other sexual offences. Biases and loopholes of the laws will be made. To understand the deficiencies of the present legal statutes on law. A comparative study on rape laws will be made between three countries. Finally, a special case has been put in this chapter, it is the real life case of Aruna Shanbaug (whose rape and trauma story came out in the form of a book recently). This has been discussed to reveal the ambiguous nature of the Indian rape law and its implementation, to reveal the role of society in the perpetuation of a heinous crime.

Chapter VII the Conclusion will wind up the text, highlight issues of importance which have been mentioned earlier and discuss some changes towards the prevention of rape. It will discuss the major findings of the study and reiterate the need for a sociological approach to study rape as a social phenomenon. Finally, rape will be discussed as a grave violation of human rights of a person.