Rape and Social Institutions

Chapter: III
I. INTRODUCTION:

Rape happens within society. Yet the silence that surrounds it gives an impression that it is an aberration. It is, in the language of the functionalist sociologists a 'deviant behaviour', a feature of institutional failure. This research however suggests that rape flows from some basic anomalies, the more obvious being gender inequality, within which institutions function.

Social institutions, through the functionalist understanding has emphasised a harmonious and integrated society. The functional premise is one of order, harmony and equilibrium. A gendered understanding of institutions however can make institutions look totally different. As feminist understandings suggest, most social institutions operate within a patriarchal frame. Therefore, rape could be one of the fall-outs of gender inequality. Academic sociology has varied definitions of social institutions, though there may be points of overlap. However, to understand the interplay between social institutions and society one needs to view social institutions more critically. I discuss the broad sociological understanding of social institutions and then seek to analyse how rape needs to be seen with respect to certain social institutions.

One of the most important contributions which feminists of the West made was to force people to see rape in a larger social, economic and political perspective (Clark and Lewis:1977). The social scientists who tried to deal "objectively" with the problem of rape never seemed aware that rape takes place within a social setting, and that it cannot be treated or analysed outside the larger framework of social attitudes and practices in which it is embedded. Whatever claims may have been made about the "objectivity" of the social sciences, even a cursory study of rape literature reveals much to contradict it.

There is a belief that rape is an aberrant sexual act. But this study based on secondary literature and primary field work suggests that social institutions contribute in a certain sense however mediated to perpetuate the crime of rape over time. To do so, I have dealt with four key social institutions: the family, the
community, state and the media. These will be studied vis a vis their relation to sexual violence, in particular rape (directly or indirectly).

II. SOCIОLOGICAL UNDERSTANDING OF INSTITUTIONS:
Institutions are often called the fabric of society and are defined in many ways. In Sociology as in common English usage, this word denotes that which is established, or constituted in society. A specifically sociological use, however, may be found in Spencer's *First Principles* where he described as institutions the organs that perform societies' functions (Mitchell: 1987). Sumner in *Folkways*, 1906, held that an institution consists of a concept (idea, notion, doctrine, interest) and a structure. The concept part then dropped from the discussion, and he explained that most institutions grow from folkways into customs, developing into mores and maturing when rules and acts become specified. At this point a structure, i.e. and apparatus or role structure, is established and the institution is complete (Mitchell: 1987). Thus an institution is a kind of 'super folkway'- more permanent because rationalised and conscious, whereas the folkways and mores are habitual unreasoned ways of acting. Later he claimed that an institution is not one action or norm, but the crystallisation of a set of mores- Sumner's examples- marriage, religion, banks- leave the term with referring both to abstracts and to concrete organisations. Eventually he relegated marriage to the category of 'imperfect institutions' since, 'it lacks structure or material element of any kind'.

Later usage varies. All authors agree that an institution is an established way of behaving. But the behaviour to which the term is applied varies among authors, from simple routinised acts to vast complexes of standardised procedures governing relationships between roles in large sections of the social order.

E. Chinoy, *Society*, 1962, noted that there was an increasing measure of agreement that the word *institution* should be used to refer only to patterns of approved or sanctioned behaviour, and that other terms should be used to
denote the organisational aspects of such behaviour and the group of persons involved. To W. Hamilton in *The Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences* institutions are group procedures, from which deviations by members will be sanctioned with various degrees of severity. Yet they are more complex than mere folkways or mores. He cites the money economy, or democracy as examples (cited in Mitchell: 1987). It is believed that this usage is common to many authors of elementary texts.

R. M. Maclver and C. H. Page, *Society*, 1949, highlighted that institutions are 'established forms or conditions of procedure characteristic of group activity'. Cooley, *Social Organisation*, 1909, and Davis, *Human Society*, 1948, connoted institutions as vast complexes of norms established by society to deal in a regularised way with what are seen to be its fundamental needs. Davis saw them as sets of folkways, mores and laws interwoven around one or more functions, forming parts of the social structure, set off by the closeness of their organisation and the distinctiveness of their functions.

Institutions are thus being viewed as the major order units of societies. Pure functionalism envisages them as forming mutually sustaining wholes. However, some authors have stressed the autonomy of institutions, and even the belief that elements of the same institutions may be oriented to different ends.

'An institution is a cluster of roles and statuses designed to meet a certain social need' (Smelser: 1991). We live in an institutionalised society. Our educational system is an institution. It consists of the resources and roles required to pass knowledge and cultural traits from one generation to the next. Economic institutions produce and distribute goods and services. The family, too, an institution- it produces and socialises new members for the society. Thus, even the smallest kinds of interaction are the building blocks of complex institutions.

**Social Needs:**

One of the ingredients of an institution as widely understood in a corpus of sociological writings is social need. People cannot exist without forming
collective units—communities and societies—that are meant to persist over time. This tendency appears to be rooted in the biological dependence of people on one another, the survival advantages of cooperation and division of labour over the strivings of isolated individuals, and the exceptional capacity of the human species to mediate relations with one another by means of symbolic communication. It is known that societies don’t survive automatically. Some of a society’s energy must be devoted to perpetuating the society itself. Social scientists refer to this kind of requirement as social needs or social functions.

Virtually all social theorists have made an effort to identify what must be done for a society to survive. Some social theorists have looked at the notion of social needs in different ways. Herbert Spencer (1897), obviously thinking of society as analogous to a biological organism, speaks of the need for “offensive and defensive activities” (such as the military); the need for activities to provide “general sustenance”; the need for exchange (through markets, for example); and the need to co-ordinate these different kinds of activities (through the agency of the state, for instance).

To take a more modern example, Lenski and Lenski (1970) listed what they believed to be the basic elements necessary for the continuity of society:

- Communication among the members. There is no known society that doesn’t have a spoken language.
- Production of goods and services that are required for the survival of the society’s members.
- Distribution of those goods and services.
- Protection of the members from physical hazards (such as storms, floods and cold), other organisms, and human enemies.
- Replacement of members, both through biological reproduction and through socialisation of individuals into the culture.
- Controls on the behaviour of the members, both to ensure that the work of the society gets done and to control conflict within the society.
These social needs are not met automatically. Organised efforts must be made if they are to be satisfied. These organised efforts are institutions. Economic institutions— including productive units such as factories and markets—are organised efforts to satisfy needs 2 and 3 on the above list. The family and educational institutions are devices organised to address need 5. Medical institutions contribute both to the protection of members of societies and to biological reproduction (through obstetrics and paediatrics). And legal and governmental institutions (such as courts, police, and prisons) contribute to controls on the behaviour of the members.

**Resources:**

Institutions not only have to organise people to co-operate in meeting social needs. They also must make use of the society’s resources. For instance, a family cannot sustain itself without some means— for example, wage income— to secure material needs, some level of love and commitment between parents and children, and some investment of authority in the parents, to mediate conflicts within the family. Educational institutions require physical plant, instructors with an adequate level of knowledge and expertise, and at least a minimum level of willingness on the part of pupils to learn and be socialised.

Institutions, then, are human devices designed to channel society’s resources into stable patterns of interaction that are intended to meet one or more social needs. One essential function of the institutions is to stabilise different people’s activities into more or less predictable patterns of roles. Thus, in the family we have roles such as husband, wife, mother, father, son, daughter, sister, cousin, uncle, and aunt. All of these roles carry various rights and obligations, and these always include interaction with others involved in the institution, and these in turn, call for certain patterns of interaction among people in these roles.

The variability and change in institutions have been highlighted by many theorists. In primitive and peasant societies, economic needs are met mainly through the institution of the family and kinship systems, within which most production takes place. In peasant families, for example, parents, children, and
sometimes other kin work the farms, and the “hired hand” who is not a family member or relative is virtually unheard of. In commercial and industrial society the family’s productive role is much reduced, except for household maintenance and child care; most of the production of goods and services takes place in organisations. It must also be stressed that institutions are very seldom stable over time. Conditions that effect them are always changing.

I will now attempt to critically analyse four key social institutions, namely family, community, state and the media. These institutions form the fabric of society and hence are crucial in the lives of people. Human beings as ‘social’ beings cannot live in isolation from the family or community. They often identify their ‘self’ vis a vis these institutions. For example, in the case of victims of sexual violence, especially rape, the role of the family and community tends to effect the post-rape recovery process of the victim. Also, much of the myths perpetuated by them influences the way a victim perceives herself. The state also in a sense regulates, through legal statutes, through police and government policy the treatment of the crime of rape. Finally, the role of the media has gained much importance in modern times. Much of the influences on society happen through the media and often these impacts may be negative or positive. In this study I have done an analysis of the way the Internet (the newest form of information technology) has treated the issue of rape and how this, in turn, may influence the thinking process, attitudes and beliefs of most people across society. However, I begin with the discussion on the family.

III. THE FAMILY:
III.1. Broad Definitions:
Although sociologists are convinced that the family is the basic unit of social organisation, the term itself remains one of the most loosely defined in their

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1 In rural India, much of the economic needs are met through the family. However, with the liberalisation economy setting in there are bound to be changes and the productive role of the family could be reduced in some way, even if minor.
vocabulary. E.W. Burgess and H. J. Locke, in their book *The Family*, 1953, attempted a definition in the following terms:

The Family is a group of persons united by the ties of marriage, blood, or adoption; constituting a single household, interacting and intercommunicating with each other in their respective social role of husband and wife, mother and father, brother and sister; creating a common culture.

A definition given by Kingsley Davis who defines the family as a "group of persons whose relations to one another are based upon consanguinity and who are therefore kin to one another".

Many sociologists have regarded the family as the cornerstone of society. In general, the family has been seen as a universal social institution, as an inevitable part of human society. G. P. Murdock claims that the nuclear family is indeed universal and defines the family as follows, "The family is a social group characterised by common residence, economic co-operation and reproduction. It includes adults of both sexes, at least two of whom maintain a socially approved sexual relationship, and one or more children, own or adopted, of the sexually co-habiting adults" (Haralambos: 1980). The structure of the family varies from society to society. The smallest family unit is known as the nuclear family unit and consists of a husband and wife and their immature offspring. Units larger than the nuclear family are usually known as extended families or joint families. "In the nuclear family or its constituent relationships we thus see assembled four functions fundamental to human social life- the sexual, the economic, the reproductive, and the educational" (Murdock: 1949).

The basic structure of the family, it has been held, depends upon incest taboos. This is the prohibition of, or avoidance of, sexual relations with near kin, usually primary relatives (parents, siblings, children). Writers differ considerably in their definitions of what constitutes 'incest', and hence which sexual relations are in fact 'taboo'. Sometimes it is confined to members of the
family; sometimes it is simply a synonym for forbidden sexual relations with any kin. Most theorists agree that some form of taboo on sexual relations with some near kin, and particularly primary relatives, is virtually universal, although there are significant exceptions (Mitchell: 1979).\footnote{In spite of the strong incest taboo prevalent in India, a recent study conducted by a voluntary organisation concluded that two out of five sexually abused women from Indian middle and upper middle class homes undergo incestuous abuse at least once in their lifetime (The Times of India, 29 September' 1998). Incidentally, many of the young women I spoke to also claimed to have been sexually assaulted by near male kin when they were younger. Also, the incidence of father-daughter rape is widely reported now days.} For some anthropologists, the incest taboo is of interest primarily because it is differently defined in different societies (the principle of cultural relativism), but for Levi-Strauss on the contrary its interest lay in its universality as a signifier of the transition of humankind from a state of ‘nature’ to one of ‘culture’ (Uberoi: 1998). It was this universality that suggested the incest taboo as the real key to the understanding of the basic nature and true function of kinship systems elsewhere.

Notwithstanding changes of considerable magnitude over time, the family continues to perform some important functions. Through it, membership is replaced and the physical maintenance of society is ensured. It regulates reproduction and provides the minimum conditions of survival, such as nutrition, shelter, and care of the sick. It provides for the socialisation of the young; within its setting they internalise the norms of society and learn to conform to appropriate forms of behaviour. It also controls deviant forms of behaviour among its members, especially the young. The family provides the necessary emotional support- affection, appreciation, and encouragement. Above all, it is an important economic unit. It used to be a unit both of production and consumption. While the urban family is tending to become a unit only of consumption as it depends on its income from work outside, in India as a whole, the family still remains an important unit also of production.
III.2. Feminist Perspectives on the Family:

It is claimed that the study of the family becomes complicated. It is very hard to pinpoint where common sense leaves off and academic sociology begins. There has been reluctance to address the subject of the Indian family and this stems not from the unimportance or marginality of the field, but rather from its importance and sensitivity.

According to Uberoi (1998), what is still missing from our sociological reflections on family and kinship are qualitative dimensions of love, sex, marriage and family life. Sociologists have fought shy of chronicling the emotional tenor of family relations. Also, very few studies have been conducted on interpersonal relations in the Indian family.

However, contemporary feminist theory offers interesting leads. The other concerns the recognition and understanding of violence within the family, for family is also a site of exploitation and violence. The question is whether the family is ideal in the true sense of the term, is it always a 'safe haven' as many of the functionalists maintained? Sociologists tend to eschew issues of social pathology, at least in regard to the family. These issues need to be confronted.

There is evidence of a body of literature which concerns itself with inequalities within the family or household: not simply the authority structure, which of course is important, but related questions of the division of labour and the distribution of resources among family members. In this perspective, the family is viewed as a site of what economist Amartya Sen has called 'cooperative conflict', a reference to the paradox that the family is at once a cooperative unit vis-a-vis the outside world, and an institution, legitimated by the society's dominant ideology, that favours some categories of members over others. On the basis of empirical case studies conducted in India, Sen shows how the allocation of three important resources—food, medical care and education—among family members is crucially influenced by the factor of gender (Sen, 1983).
Male sexual violence must be seen as one of the defining characteristics of patriarchal societies. While the form and nature of male sexual violence may be situationally defined and thus varied across culture and through time, the presence of male violence is a feature of all societies characterised by male supremacy and female subordination-the social relations of patriarchy. It serves as a means of reinforcing women's role as subordinate to men, in the public world, at work and in the home-the family.

In our endeavour to understand the nature and forms of violence against women in particular, which have steadily increased, we must understand the function of violence as a maintenance mechanism of a patriarchal society. Here the term patriarchy has been seen as the male potency principle which in its extreme form legitimises male domination in the family so that power and authority are vested on him through various legal rights and cultural norms such as total claim to property and assets within the family. At a broader societal level this principle of male domination enable men to arrogate for themselves all avenues of power and authority, access to economic resources, power and prestige. Patriarchy cannot be seen as a unidimensional form of society, but which manifests itself differently in various socio-cultural groups. The common denominator of all forms of patriarchy is that, the avenues of power are in the hands of men, and is usually perpetuated through the process of socialisation. Patriarchy, unlike its earlier usages as father right, is now understood more as a distinct system of control that men have over women's labour, sexuality, mobility in family, work place and society in general. Patriarchy as a system may operate at the ideological as well as material levels.

A pan cultural feature of all patriarchal societies is the subordination of women as a category. This means that the roles played by women in society are generally devalued and not allocated a high status. Within these principles of societal organisation, violence against women is always rationalised and motivated. The widespread violence against women is seen as both an indicator and a means of perpetuating the low status of women, which also manifests
itself through various not easily recognised forms of structural violence such as low health status, lack of access to education, employment etc. (Desai: 1987).

III.3. Family and Socialisation:

The process by which individuals learn the ways of their society is termed socialisation. Sociologists define socialisation as the ways in which people learn the skills and attitudes relevant to their social roles. Primary socialisation, probably the most important aspect of the socialisation process, takes place within the family. By responding to the approval and disapproval of its family members and copying their example, the child learns the language and many of the basic behaviour patterns of society. We all learn to play specific social roles: we learn to behave as children, students, employees, spouses, parents and so on. Socialisation has another purpose beyond allowing us to interact through our social roles. It also ensures the continuity of society. Even though the membership of a society constantly changes through birth and death, socialisation preserves the society itself by instilling ideals, values, and appropriate behaviours in its new members. Other important agencies of socialisation include the educational system, the occupational group and the peer group- a group whose members share similar circumstances and are often of a similar age. Within its peer group, the young child, by interacting with others and playing childhood games, learns to conform to the accepted ways of a social group and to appreciate the fact that social life is based on rules. Socialisation is not, however, confined to childhood. It is a lifelong process.

Every society values certain traits over others, and children pick up those values through socialisation. Depending on the nature of the valued traits, however, socialisation techniques may vary greatly from one culture to another.

These cultural values are the basis for norms. Norms are expectations and standards that regulate interaction among people. Some norms are embodied in

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3 We often hear parents telling their children to act their age. When young girls are growing up they are told by their family members to 'behave' in a particular manner conducive to the role of a young woman. They are told not to talk or laugh too loudly in public. Nowadays one hears of
laws: Laws against theft, assault, breach of contract, and so on are social norms, and people who break them are liable to punishment. Some norms are stronger than others: Breaking the law against murder is far more serious than breaking a traffic rule. Most norms, however, are not written into law at all. For example, the thousands of expectations that shape our daily behaviour. We're expected to be polite to others, to give up our seat to the elderly or the handicapped in a bus. These kind of expectations are passed on to children. Norms are not the only influence on behaviour. The cultural ideals of each society also have a great effect on people's acts and aspirations.

Some of the basic cultural orientations towards men and women in contemporary Indian society have been shaped by received understandings of classical texts, teachings of religion, factors of historical development and the persistence of regional and local traditions. However, contemporary developments have brought about some modifications in them, but the convert norms have not changed to a considerable extent.

For instance, the contradictory attitudes expressed about women in classical texts persist in contemporary society. On the one hand they are regarded as the highest embodiment of purity and power- a symbol of religiousness and spirituality; on the other they are viewed essentially as weak and dependent creatures requiring constant guarding and protection. While the former view occasionally gets overt expression, covert norms defining her actual position are essentially determined by the latter.

Women, Socialisation and Violence:

It is important to view violence within the family in the context of wider power relations; violence is not necessarily a deviant form of exercising power since the actual use or possible use is a part of most societies. Thus violence cannot be accurately viewed as a set of isolated events but must be placed in an entire social context. The social contexts of family violence have gender and institutes which have started conducting classes on preparing young girls for marriage or a school on etiquette.
generational inequalities at their heart. There are patterns of violence between intimates which only an analysis of gender and of its centrality to the family can illuminate.

In many cases, violence against women and girls occurs in the family or within the home, where violence is often tolerated. Often, socialisation takes place in a manner which tends to condone violence, and also encourage the culture of silence to grow. This may happen directly or indirectly.

The Indian girl child, in the light of her class, caste, background my face many forms of violence. The forms of violence may be physical, one of extreme neglect, mental or psychological. These forms of violence may result in a range of symptoms known generically as post traumatic stress syndrome (PTSD) (Karlekar: 1997). Violence against girl children begins even before they are born, foeticide being a case in point. The practice has become popular with the spread of amniocentesis (a medical technique, which among other things can establish the sex of the child). For those women who undergo sex determination tests and abort on knowing that the foetus is female are actively taking a decision against equality and the right to life for girls. A more serious manifestation of an ideology which devalues girl children is the recent resurgence of female infanticide. The prevalence of a dominant ideology which confines girls and women to definite obligations and roles leads to their discrimination and devaluation in multiple areas. The basic assumption is that

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4 Such trauma are experienced largely by rape victims or victims of any form of sexual violence also. Most of the time the victims and people around them are not even aware of such a condition. Evidence suggests that the impact of these disorders can often be far greater and last much longer than the immediate act or event of abuse. And when the victims are children, the trauma takes on the dimension of affecting the vulnerable. The mental health aspect of violence has been largely ignored by most organisations, the government or the police.

5 Here again women as agents of patriarchy are a party to the act of violence. In many cases, though, the women are not independent agents but merely victims of a dominant family ideology based on preference of male children.

6 A study reveals that female infanticide is rampant in the Salem district of Tamil Nadu. The study covered Christians, Hindus and Muslims, however, the practice of female infanticide was found only among the Hindus. Poverty, ignorance of family planning and the cost of dowry are considered the possible causes of infanticide (study cited in Karlekar: 1995). However, Karlekar feels that to pin all evils on the fear of dowry is a rationalisation, shrouding a range of motivations.
girls are inferior, physically and mentally weak, and above all, sexually vulnerable. In a society where stress is laid on purity and pollution, various oppressive structures including early marriage are encouraged, which in turn confine the physical mobility of girls' and women. The distribution of resources such as health care, nutrition, education, material assets is usually in keeping with a family ideology, which finds expression in the household. Evidence indicates that girls are usually far less privileged than boys in access to resources (Basu; Ranjana Kumari, 1989 cited in Karlekar: 1995). Lack of equal access to resources is a form of violence as it is based on deprivation, discrimination and denial. A declining sex ratio (929 women to 1000 men) suggests endemic female mortality and morbidity caused by consistent neglect and sustained discrimination, both manifestations of oppression and violence. Thus, the low female-male ratio in the Indian population and the lower life expectancy of women in India are matched by evidence of serious extra deprivation of women in terms of other basic capabilities.

An area which is not talked of much is that of child abuse within the home. This may include sexual aggression, beatings. The overall attitude of secrecy and suppression which governs any discussion or reference to sex makes it difficult to conclude the extent to which sexual abuse is prevalent within the family. However, figures reveal that of almost 10,000 reported cases of rape in 1990, an alarming rate of 25 per cent are of children below the age of 16, and a fifth are of those under ten. (Karlekar: 1995). An analysis done by the Crimes Against

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7 This kind of restriction of mobility of girls and women are often used to justify total control of them in order to avoid violence. Victims of sexual violence are first and foremost questioned by society about their actions, where they were, why they were out of the house at a particular time and what was the need to go out. Since childhood, girls are encouraged to be back home before dark especially for fear of getting raped. The fear of sexual violence, particularly rape is rampant in people even though they remain silent on the issue.

8 One of my close family members very 'openly' keeps the cream of the milk, the best of fruits and curd for her grandson (she did all of this and more for her son too) even while the two grand daughters look on helplessly when their share is not given to them. Such behaviour leaves mental scars on the young mind and often girl children, from the very beginning accept their plight as normal and themselves internalise this sort of behaviour where the male is favoured.

9 Nowadays, the newspapers are filled with reports of rape where the age of the victims is usually less than 16 years as also of those below this age. It is getting worse by the day.
Women Cell, Delhi Police, points out that of the 143 rape cases registered between January and June 1992, almost 75 per cent involved victims in the age group of seven to 18 years. In 114 cases, the accused knew the prosecutrix; of these 40 were immediate neighbours and seven were relatives. Such alarming figures are indicative of the sexual vulnerability of the girl child in and around her home and a social climate which encourages such violence.

Other members of the family, relatives, teachers, peers and the media also serve as influential socialising agents in shaping a girl's personality. Often, very early in childhood girls learn, recognise to accurately perceive and conform to the patriarchal images of femininity in order to maintain the love and approval of the family. The girl child learns through differential treatment, rewards, and punishments and indirectly through observational learning and modelling. Girls also learn that gender distinctions are important. Submissiveness, sacrifice, and silence are inculcated as desirable 'virtues' (of a woman) in the girl child.

Late childhood marks the beginning of an Indian girl's deliberate training in how to be a 'good woman', and hence the conscious inculcation of culturally designated feminine roles. She learns that the 'virtues' of womanhood which will take her through life are docility and submission as well as skill and grace in the various household tasks. According to Manu:

She who, controlling her thoughts, speech, and acts, violates not her duty towards her lord, dwells with him (after death) in heaven, and in this world is called by the virtuous a faithful (wife, sadhvi). But for disloyalty to her husband a wife is censured among men, and (in her next life) she is born in the womb of a jackal and tormented by diseases, the punishment of her sin.

(The Laws of Manu, Muller: Reprint 1996)

10 Girls mostly internalise the stereotypes associated with their roles. If guests are visiting, it is unfailingly the girl who helps out in the kitchen. It is the 'right' thing for girls to do and hence she reacts at the correct moment. That is, sex-typing results from a readiness on the part of the girl child to encode and organise information on the basis of the culture's definition of sex-roles. Girls are expected to assist in household chores and learn all about the domestic realm.

11 These 'virtues' are mostly responsible for violence against women because it is virtues like these that teach young girls to behave in a way whereby they should silently suffer in pain, come what may. The issue of 'silence' is something I noticed in most women I spoke to about sexual abuse. They kept silent because of the deep internalisation of such values.
A woman's self-image clearly varies with her socio-cultural and religious background. There are many women who identify their self-worth with strict adherence to greatly restrictive tradition- and religious based practices, such as rigid dress codes, prescriptions for widows or divorcees, strictures on public appearance and socio-religious activities. The attitude of submissiveness stems at least in part from psychological conditioning to the passive receiver role.

Women who could not be fitted within the framework of the ideal patriarchal kinship structure were, not surprisingly, condemned. This is evident from the list of women who (among others) were considered polluting, and whose gifts of food could not be accepted. These include the courtesans or prostitutes as well as the woman who was without a husband or son (Manusmriti IV cited in Sarkar & Butalia: 1996). Such condemnations would have reinforced the notion that women could receive social recognition only when they submitted to subordinate identities locating them within the patriarchal family.

In the case of sexual violence, the ideological underpinnings of patriarchal power relationships serve as ample justification for violence against women. If maleness is superior to femaleness, then females must be described in terms of some basic flaw, some trait that makes their subordination both necessary and legitimate. Not only is masculinity defined in opposition to femininity, but males are seen as self-reliant, courageous, competent, and rational. In contrast, females must therefore be dependent, emotional and evil. Yet another dichotomy lies within the construct of femininity itself: between the ‘good’ woman and the ‘bad’ woman. The ‘good’ woman becomes the wife and everything which is expected of her. The pressure to achieve ‘goodness’ is a powerful mechanism of social control. However, becoming a good woman in order to secure protection from male violence is rather dubious bargain; the home is hardly a haven from

12 In day to day forms of existence, women are taken for granted in the way they are treated by men. An oft heard remark made by most males when an accident takes place on the road is “must be a woman driver!” This remark goes a long way to describe the mentality of people vis a vis women.
sexual assaults, nor does marriage shield women from non family attacks. In sum, all aspects of male supremacist ideology provide a justification for sexual violence as a means of keeping women in their place and thus reinforcing the gender stratification system of patriarchy across time and place.

III.4. Family and Marriage in India:
There is an important, but rather marginalised tradition of micro-sociological work on the Indian family and a number of contributions by scholars concerned with gender and with questions of the reproduction of social inequalities in the family and society ( Uberoi:1996). Kinship systems in India have wide regional and local differences; in fact, even individual castes have certain special characteristics in this field. However, they have one common feature- kinship is lineally reckoned. Traditional rules of descent govern identification of individuals and families, emphasising either the patriline or matriline.

There is great diversity in the forms of family in Indian society. These forms can be distinguished on several different bases- descent, residence, membership, and number of mates. In most communities in India descent is traced in the father's line. This is called patrilineal descent. Mention, however, should be made of matrilineal societies in India- Garo, Khasi, and Pnar in the north- east, and Nayar, Mappilla and several tribal and non- tribal groups in the south.

In India, inter- personal relations within the family are often explained in terms of norms that should be applied to certain categories of relations, such as

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13 The 'good'/ 'bad' woman ideology is used extensively in court rooms by lawyers and judges when they scrutinise the character of a rape victim. For instance, a woman with a past sexual history is a woman of bad character and hence a 'bad' woman and therefore a consenting party to her rapist. Such biases come out in a big way in many rape cases.

14 Ideology plays a very important role in the formation of values, belief systems and stereotypes. The effectiveness of ideologies depends on how broadly and thoroughly they are disseminated and how they are given concretness.

15 It is important to note that though women in matrilineal groups are important, in most fields they are not the effective decision makers, major management functions are vested in male members ( Dube: 1990). For instance, the Khasi matrilineal system may not actually favour women although certain aspects of their ideology and their inheritance rules may give a contrary impression. Women possess only token authority in Khasi society; it is men (especially male matrikin) who are the de facto power holders (Nongbri: 1988).
between the father/mother and son; between brothers and sisters; between sisters, the mother-in-law and daughter-in-law; between husband and wife and between brothers-in-law and sisters-in-law. These norms spell out the ideal and provide guidelines for appropriate behaviour. But there is considerable variation in their observance. The underlying principles behind the norms—age, sex and distance in kinship scale—are important. It is expected that deference be shown to age. In patrilineal groups women are expected to give precedence to men. Distance in the kinship scale has to be observed. A woman is expected to avoid close contact with her husband’s father, uncles, and elder brothers. In traditional north Indian homes a woman may still cover her face in their presence. She must speak with them if at all, only in a low tone. These relationships are termed ‘avoidance relationships’. On the other hand, privileged familiarity is permitted between certain categories of relationships and these relationships are termed ‘joking relationships’. A joking relationship involves a particular combination of friendliness and antagonism between individuals or groups in certain social situations. For example, in north India there is a recognised ‘joking relationship’ between a man and his wife’s younger sisters and a woman and her husband’s younger brother. It is important to note that as time passes, the warmth of some relations cools off. Distance in space also

16 It is widely observed in most of India, where the male, be it a child or a grown-up, is given preference as compared to the female. As a child, the male child would be fed more and healthier food as against his sister, who could even make do with the left overs. Interestingly enough, it is mainly the mothers who perpetuate such discrimination.

17 An ironical fact is that many women often face the sexual advances of these males who are to be avoided. Cases of father-in-law raping daughter-in-law have also been reported. A woman known to me, who was widowed at the age of twenty-nine had to deal with the sexual advances of her dead husband’s brothers. This sort of violence is often depicted in movies.

18 In many societies persons or groups who stand in particular relationships avoid each other. As a mode of behaviour avoidance always expresses respect. The extent of avoidance varies from society to society.

19 Often the jija-Saali relationship has a hint of a potential sexual relationship between the two. Often people are heard making jokes of it and many go as far as saying, “Saali hoti hai aadhi gharwali”, meaning that the sister in law is half a wife! This phrase is very common in north India and much is heard about it in movies. On the other hand, the Dewar-Bhabi relationship is one where the bhabi (or older brother’s wife) often takes the mother-like figure for the younger brother-in-laws. This has been widely accepted through the Ramayana where Sita and Lakshman
alters the nature of interaction between relations; form is often maintained but the sense of closeness goes (Dube: 1990).

It is important to highlight that the cultural beliefs work through the various social institutions mentioned above. To be a man or a woman in our society, does not imply only a biological description, but a whole set of social expectations about conduct, appearance, roles and activities. Therefore, one's social identity is determined on the one hand by a biological designation, sex, and on the other hand by a cultural definition, gender. While most societies agree on the biological ascriptions, they vary widely on what is deemed gender appropriate (Oakley: 1972). If we are to understand the complex dynamics of power relationships between the sexes, we cannot do so outside a historical framework, which also takes into account other relationships of power operating at the same time.

For instance, one of the most glaring forms of oppression in India revolve around the complexities of caste. The notion of 'caste' is a concept which is as historically specific as gender, in India the ideology of caste has been utilised in creating clear relations of oppression which extend beyond class determinations, and have distinct material consequences (though now class considerations are becoming important). An understanding of violence against women in the Indian context can also be situated within a social framework which acknowledges the relations of caste oppression, because against this background one can analyse how for example caste rape can be used to reinforce both casteist and patriarchal ideologies.

A woman's status in society is determined by her relationship to men: first her father, and in her adult life it implies marriage. Here she is valued for three major roles: her domestic productivity in maintaining a household; her reproductive capacity in producing and raising children; and her sexual and emotionally supportive role. A woman who remains single is seen to have

are the ideal brother-in-law, sister-in-law pair. "(The feet of the) wife of one's brother, if she be of the same caste (varna), must be clasped everyday" (Muller: 1996, The laws of Manu).
failed' to get married. Thus every women is socially contextualised in relation to the ideology of marriage and the family.

There exists in most social theories a conceptual separation between the private and public realms, and this division is also perceived within real life. It is assumed that they represent the social milieu of women and men respectively. Another assumption which devolves out of this separation, is the apolitical nature of sexuality, since it is fundamentally conceived of as private and personal. It is within this context of a depoliticisation of family relations, and the privatisation of sexuality that the power relations operating firstly between family members, and secondly between sexual partners becomes doubly obscured in a rhetoric of individualised problems.

Inserted into the private-public split are expectations that women and men should fulfil different social roles. While a man is expected to go out of the home to perform wage labour, women are expected to remain at home engaged in domestic labour.\(^\text{20}\) This unpaid labour entails the daily domestic maintenance of the household, the nurturance and early socialisation of infants, as well as emotional care for all other family members. Because it occurs in the private sphere, domestic work has been feminised and is either overlooked completely or regarded as inferior work.\(^\text{21}\) Motherhood is seen as the pinnacle of any women's life, implying both a biological function as well as a social expectation. On the other hand, fathering is mostly regarded in biological terms. While the social responsibility for nurturing children rests almost entirely in the hands of the female parent, the control of reproduction is in the hands of men.

Besides the prescriptions of domesticity and maternity for women, there are also standards for appearance and conduct generally subsumed under the term 'femininity'. This usually applied to the manner in which a woman is expected to behave in relation to a man. The overarching quality of femininity is passivity:

\(^{20}\) One of the main reasons given for increased divorced rates in the urban Indian context is the fact that women have started 'moving out' and working, earning.

\(^{21}\) I have heard educated, high profile men often asking their housewives what they have done for the family. Thus negating domestic work entirely.
women should be decorative, coy and frail. They should not initiate any interaction with a man, but wait until he approaches her, she should not enter the public arena without one. It is precisely within the prescriptions of femininity that the majority of rape myths are located: who gets raped by whom and why are questions which inevitably place the onus of appropriate feminine behaviour on the shoulders of the rape victim.

III.5. Significance of the concepts of Honour, Social control and Stigma:
In the Indian context, with reference to the family, concepts like honour hold immense importance. With regard to an issue like rape the concept of honour gets more highlighted.

As most often believed, women are supposed to personify the honour of their family in particular and the community at large. To save the family honour at all costs is of immense importance. I asked a woman what family honour meant in today’s times and this is the response I got:

A family’s honour is of most importance and come what may, it should be defended at all costs, even if a girl loses her life, she must not open her mouth and that is top priority as far as a family’s pride and honour is concerned. Even if any undesirable thing happens, like rape, sexual exploitation, mental violence or physical violence or whatever it might be, the girl should keep it to herself. In that case most of the girl’s will not even confide in their family members, even their mothers for the fear that their family’s name will be tarnished.

Since childhood certain advice is drilled into children, the most common and often repeated one is that, ‘never do anything which will put your family’s name to shame.’ The burden always seems to be mostly on the female members. From childhood till the time they are wed, they are told this.\(^{22}\) That is probably one of the main reasons why many women keep facing torture and pain at the hands of others without speaking a word. Because retaliation of any form would question

\(^{22}\) For instance, from the time a girl is getting married she is told not to do anything which would tarnish the family’s name and honour. She mostly represents the ‘izzat’ of the house and therefore needs to abide by social pressures to stay within limits.
her character, nature and her background. This sort of pressure in turn encourages the culture of silence and in turn violence.

Rape and other forms of sexual abuse of girl children within the family by adult male members of the family and significant others is an area of silence. A woman, who approached Sabala Sangh, a women’s group, for help shared her traumatic experience,

When I first realised that my husband was raping my six-year-old daughter, I was horrified. For a few days I could not tell anyone because it would tarnish our family honour and I was worried about society’s response to my daughter. I was also dependent on him. But then I decided that even if my home breaks or I starve, I have to save my daughter (The Sunday Observer, April 14-20, 1996). 23

When the abuse is within the family the decision to disclose is the toughest as none wants to send a relative to jail. As a result, it is felt that the family is an area where child sexual abuse flourishes either directly or because of the maze of shame and fear that govern its disclosure (The Times of India, June 26, 1995).

The notion of social control is very closely related to violence. Patriarchal social order is built on gender inequality and this inequality is maintained by social control mechanisms. Further, any tendency to upset this inequality is ‘named’ as deviance and accordingly taken care of through social control mechanisms. The term social control is used in the study of social order and stability. Social order is the result of individuals/group behaviour being regulated through internalisation of social norms. Thus social control is generally associated with normative compliance. However, there is another dimension to social control. A review of contemporary sociological literature on social control indicates that the concept is encountered in the analysis of deviant behaviour.

23 For similar reasons young women who get abused by male family members keep silent. Some women I spoke to also said that naming the culprit would mean demeaning his honour and status in the family.
Talcott Parsons, for instance, defined it as a process by which, through the imposition of sanctions, deviant behaviour is counteracted and social stability maintained. Also this literature on social control shows a second dimension i.e., the use of physical force. The concept of social control could, therefore, be broken down into regulation of behaviour achieved by the direct use of force and regulation outside the boundaries of force, achieved through normative compliance.

Taking the concept of social control in the light of violence we can infer that fear of violence often operates as an effective deterrent to the weaker group daring to act in a manner contrary to the wishes of the stronger. This threat of sexual violence aims at restricting women's physical mobility and to punish women who flaunt social norms in most societies. Rape and other forms of sexual abuse are not individual acts, but they often have social sanction and even when they do not the victim is blamed for the aggressor's act (Poonacha: 1990). Rape acts as a threat and constantly curtails women's freedom and mobility. This kind of control of women adds another barrier to women's ability to perform wage labour produce for the market or obtain access to necessary services. The need to control a women's sexuality, reproduction and productivity are implicit within patriarchal ideology so that women who do not subscribe to this dominant pattern are deemed deviants and punished through violence, for instance, the rape myth which says 'she was asking for it....' (in case of a woman's clothing being viewed as 'provocative'). Sexual harassment of women is both the ugly manifestation of women's oppression and the specific means through which the status asymmetry on line of gender is reinforced. It highlights how in a patriarchal society, violence against women is used to enforce powerlessness of women in order to achieve the social control of women through the subtle pressures exerted through the power of ideology, socialisation and frequently with open brutal reprisal.

The fear of sexual violence (as seen earlier) has been a powerful factor in restricting women's behaviour and sense of freedom. Overt control of a woman's
sexuality, through either forced pregnancy or forced abortion by the male. Finally, emotional abuse is a category that effects countless women: whether through threats of reprisals for failing to conform to expected behavioural norms; through confinement; or through forced marriages.

Very closely related to the concept of honour and shame is the stigma attached to a particular group or individual as a result of some misfortune, say in this case rape. A family whose honour has been tarnished also gets stigmatised. It is hard for certain people to manage impression to their advantage. Such people carry a stigma. In fact Goffman (1963) writes, "we believe the person with the stigma is not quite human." A stigma is a characteristic of a person or group that is viewed as a defect and evokes efforts to punish, isolate, or otherwise degrade people who are thought to have that characteristic. Once someone has been labelled as deviant, he or she may undergo some kind of punishment. This can be as mild as 'cold shoulder' or as severe as hospitalisation or a prison sentence.

A victim of rape also becomes a person with a stigma. When I asked people about rape the first thing often said was that rape left a stigma on the victim for life. That is also one of the main reasons why women hesitate from making complains about sexual violence. In the case of victims, they are isolated from 'normal' life also because of the stigma they carry with them. 'Normal' people also invade the stigmatised person's privacy- by staring, pointing fingers at or name calling. For instance, in the case of the Uttarakhand rape victims, some were called 'Muzaffarnagar walis'. This too is a form of preventing these victims from leading 'normal' lives. They are labelled so for life. A victim is not allowed to become a 'survivor'. The society (through social institutions) manages to stigmatise a victim for life.

Later, this victim begins accepting this new identity (by being treated differently). She too gets caught up in the image of the victim who has been stigmatised by the rape. The process of being 'caught up' in this image is termed
role engulfment by Goffman. The attitudes of family, community and society in general have a strong effect on how much role engulfment takes place.

Stigmas discredit the owners and to some extent, the person is held in contempt or pity by those who view it.24

II.6 The concept of ‘Throwing Out’:
The concept of ‘throwing out’ is very significant. My research and field work drew my attention to the ultimate isolation which the victim feels vis a vis the family, community and the rest of society. This isolation and anguish depicted a person who is ‘thrown out’ of society. It is this form of isolation faced by a victim, that I chose to call ‘throwing out’.

As observed earlier, within the family, mental, or psychological violence is very common but not recognised by most people as a form of violence. Mental torture, verbal abuse and humiliation may lead to a person developing long term physical problems as well. This kind of violence may be inflicted on any member of the family on another. Here I would like to focus on the neglect and isolation faced by victims of sexual violence. This too, is a grave form of violence. The rape victims, after being raped are mostly unable to share their trauma and pain with members of their family. In a sense their anguish and isolation reveal that they are ‘thrown out of society’. This ‘throwing out’ often begins from their home where apathy, isolation and neglect often leads to a negative influence on the victim. This anguish is revealed by one of the victims I had met. She said:

Earlier my parents were sympathetic but not anymore. My sisters don’t talk to me properly anymore. I feel like the accused because this incident has brought too much shame to me and my family. My sisters, who are of marriageable ages aren’t getting married because of this incident and this has angered my parents even more, now they dislike me and most often ignore me.

4 For instance, in the questionnaire I administered, to the question, “Do you think a rape victim is a less desirable woman?”, most answers were in the affirmative. Here too, stigma leads to a loss of identity for the rape victim.
This concept of `throwing out' is very close to the concept of `social death' used by Uma Chakravarty (1998) where she talks of widowhood as social death. She found the concept of social death useful in capturing the peculiar status of the widow, that of a non-being. The widow's marginal state means that she is, in a manner of speaking functionally incorporated into the household while being considered an outsider. The problem itself is that although the widow is socially dead she remains an element in society. There are two modes of representing the widows: one is intrusive where the widow is conceived of as someone who does not belong, she is an `outsider'; the other is extrusive where the widow becomes an outsider because she no longer belongs (Chakravarty: 1998).

IV. COMMUNITY:
The word community has so many usages and connotations that it is almost impossible to define it precisely. Sometimes it refers to people living close to one another and participating in a daily rhythm of collective life (Hawley: 1950). Other meanings refer to groups that have some status or characteristic in common but whose members may not occupy the same locality- as in professional community. According to F. Tonnies (1955), community is called `Gemeinschaft' and is defined as `intimate, private and exclusive living together, and Tonnies gives examples of the family or kin group, the neighbourhood. A community is also defined as a population rooted in one place whose members

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25 Uma Chakravarty (1998) describes how the social death of the widow made her permanently into a non-being, an indelibly defective state which weighed endlessly upon her destiny, someone who could never be brought to life again. The widow's social death stems from her alienation from reproduction and sexuality, following the loss of her husband and her exclusion from wife (especially if she is childless) she ceases to be a `person', neither daughter nor daughter-in-law.

26 In a manner similar to the widows, I found that victims of rape also become mere elements of society without actually being socially active in any sense. Most of them were isolated by family members, neighbours and society in general. As a result of the apathetic treatment meted out to them they became mere elements of the system, not socially acceptable.

27 Rape victims, in a similar sense are perceived as outcasts. They are often viewed as the accused. In the case of some of the victims of the Uttarakhand violence, they were later
are interdependent on a daily basis and perform many activities that satisfy the population's economic and social needs. Therefore, the word community describes all kinds of human groupings. Communities according to Anderson & Carter (1978) are described by a distinction between place, nonplace and kinship communities.

The way community is used in this context is closer to the one called place community. It is defined in terms of geographical boundaries and might consist of a city, town or neighbourhood. Residence often defines community membership. Here by community is meant people living in close proximity, with a sense of interdependence. Probably something like a locality, neighbourhood. However in some cases on-lookers could be brought into the general definition of community. Nonplace communities are innumerable. In this case membership is defined not by residence but other attributes shared by community members. For instance, a 'religious community'.

For the purpose of this study I am adhering to the definition given by Tonnies where community is referred to a neighbourhood, locality. The reason for doing this is because during fieldwork, it was this definition of community which fell closest to the victims' perceptions of 'the other'. Also, it is this meaning which the victims were most concerned about. The whole concept of log kya kahenge (what will people say) was in the minds of all the people related to the victim, directly or indirectly.

Victimisation researchers agree that rape is a significantly underreported crime. As seen earlier, knowledge and fear of ill-treatment by police officers, court officials, and medical and mental health providers contribute heavily to a victim's reluctance to report. Whatever the public pronouncements of local officials may be in the aftermath of rape, ill-treatment and inadequate treatment reveal the community's lack of awareness and concern and lend institutional

addressed as Muzaffarnagar wallis by members of her neighbourhood. Most victims become 'visible' socially but at the same time socially unacceptable.
legitimacy to 'rape supportive belief systems' (Weis & Borges: 1973).\textsuperscript{28} Central to these belief systems are myths and misconceptions that foster ill-regard and rationalise poor treatment (e.g., 'Every woman secretly wants to be raped' and 'You cannot be raped by someone you know').

Rape victims, like other citizens, often share community values and beliefs and interpret their experience in light of community values and traditions. Tragically, it is therefore probable that widespread and unanalysed acceptance of rape-supportive beliefs further encourages underreporting by preventing victims from acknowledging their experiences as rape. The victims who acknowledges her experience as rape but anticipates poor treatment from an ill-informed community may not report and may or may not seek care. The victim who shares many or most of the beliefs that underlie ill-treatment may very well deny that her experience is rape. She will almost certainly manage the emotional aftermath of rape in troubled isolation.

The impact that communities have upon the psychological experience of individuals is best understood in terms of the functions that communities perform for community members. Most authors agree that communities grant a sense of belonging and an identity to community members, serving as contexts for the development and expression of personal identity. If, in the aftermath of rape, a victim's membership in the community is confirmed, her recovery will be facilitated by awareness of the support and concern available to her. On the other hand, if rape marks her as deficient or causes her to be shunned and avoided, the community will have exacerbated her trauma.\textsuperscript{29} For instance, the following quote makes clear the role of a community in the perpetuation of a crime:

\textsuperscript{28} These 'rape support belief systems' in turn help in perpetuating the culture of rape.
\textsuperscript{29} Whatever typology is used to classify communities, the rape victim, like other individuals, will undoubtedly belong to a number of communities at once. Each may influence her experience of rape and each will facilitate or make difficult her recovery from that experience. For instance, in the event of ethnic or communal violence the identity of an individual is viewed in terms of religion or race. During the post partition phase of 1947 in India, it was this identity of particular religions which was being threatened. Women were particularly vulnerable, fearing they might get raped by men of the 'other' community (read, religion).
The National Commission for Women's (NCW) recent enquiry report into the gang rape of a student in a Rajasthan University hostel contains chilling revelations. The gang rape was part of one student's celebrations for having been selected to the police services. The festivities included a blue film, drinks and dinner. *A number of students watched the assault on the helpless victim and cheered the perpetrators on.* The University administration *took no action* whatsoever, forcing NCW to act. The inclusion of rape as part of a treat offered by a future police officer to his buddies and the fact that fellow students rejoiced while another was being brutally violated shows how acute violence against women has become (cited in *The Times of India*, 21 November, 1997)\(^3^0\).

This event gives graphic illustration to the premise that rape is a community issue and demonstrate the profound effect the relationship between victim and community can have upon the rape victim's psychological experience recovery process. The effect is no less profound when the rape is unpublicised and possibly unreported. What does community mean and how important is it?

Communities often teach and foster traditionally valued behaviours and provide members with a vehicle for expressing community values and traditions. In too many communities, the victim's behaviour is called into question most of the time. They find themselves explaining, for example, why they did not scream or fight back, why they went here or there, why they did not scream or fight back, why and how they ever found themselves in a situation of risk. The inquiry can heighten a victim's sense of responsibility and complicate her recovery by promoting an unfounded sense of shame.\(^3^1\)

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\(^3^0\) The italics are entirely my own. I wanted to highlighted the apathy and neglect of some members of a community (student community in this case) who chose to look the other way when a fellow student was being raped. They also cheered the heinous crime thus giving messages that whatever was happening was 'a done thing'.

\(^3^1\) In Hindi though there is a word for rape (*balaatkaar*), it is very rarely used by women. Instead they use *izzat lootna* which translates as 'losing one's honour'. A woman who has been raped is seen as having completely lost her honour and the honour of her family (could be stretched to honour of her community if it takes a communal angle). In this fact lies the power of shame. Though the law may claim rape to be a crime, the social and cultural discourse already puts woman's body and herself at the centre.
Also, communities socialise members to prescribed norms, formally and informally defining their rights and their community responsibilities, and shaping individual identity within a context of social responsibility. Rape supportive belief systems, when adopted by community settings, encourage victim isolation and blame. Communities that affirm as normative a woman's right to go where she chooses, dress how she chooses, and say 'yes' or 'no' as she chooses to sexual advances by men are prepared by these values to aid the rape victim's recovery and ameliorate her pain with evidence of community indignation at her experience.32

Communities also mediate between individuals and the larger society, enabling community members to influence and adapt to a larger, more encompassing world. For the rape victim, the community is an environment in which she experiences her own social value. The community can play a major role in rehabilitating the victim of violence by being supportive. In performing or failing to perform these functions on her behalf, each community of which the rape victim is a member will help or hinder her physical and emotional recovery from rape. If the geographic community where she resides makes available to her a wide array of timely, accessible, and sensitively provided services, the woman raped will experience compassion, advocacy, and a continued sense of belonging. If such services do not exist or if sexist/biased values and rape-supportive myths prevail in the communities from which she draws her identity, then the victim's needs will undoubtedly go un-addressed. Her sense of social identity will be threatened, and her continued membership in the community

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32 In Gujarat’s Wadia village, the traditional profession followed by people of this community is prostitution. As soon as she reaches puberty, a girl is initiated into prostitution - the vocation the women of this village are bound to follow. The mother teaches her daughter how to ‘dress for the role’. Among this community the responsibility of earning lies with the women. The men bring in the clients, drink, laze and complain of poverty. They claim that often the daughters don’t want to get into it and cry a lot, but the men folk claim they are helpless because it has been a custom with them from time immemorial (The Times of India, 15 November, 1998). In this case, the traditionally valued behaviour among this community is entirely different from any other. Their norms are very different from regular norms. For them, for instance, young girls acting coy to lure customers is viewed as perfectly normal and girls are actually encouraged to ‘entice’ men.
may itself be placed at risk. The reactions a victim receives from members around her would be of a varied nature. On the whole, some communities may intensify a victim's sense of identity and belonging; some will act in new advocacy of her; and some will actively or passively exclude her from continued membership. Together these reactions will define the victim's position relative to the larger society and will contribute to or detract from her sense of personal and social power. The way the society reacts to a victim, in a very big sense will determine what her sense of self would be.

Although communities can be differentiated by a variety of typologies, all perform essential functions for community members and each can have tremendous impact upon the physical and emotional prognosis for rape victims. Because the victim is always a member of diverse communities, she will experience a wide range of reactions: compassion and hostility, advocacy and abandonment, service and scepticism. Every community can be seen as an “ecosystem” in which the community's reaction to rape is influenced by the nature and stability of its varied resources (Koss & Harvey: 1991).

I would like to confine my use of 'community' to the more immediate sense of face to face interaction. For it is here that the victim, victim's family face either the greatest support or the worst victimisation. However mention of 'community' understood in a larger sense of 'nation', 'race', 'religious group' and understanding of honour and rape may not be out of order here.

'Societies whose social values derive sanctity from and whose discourse of power is rooted in women's complete subjugation to men, tend to turn women into autonomous and inanimate symbols or carriers of social honour, often even into embodiments of the sovereignty of the state' (Agarwal: 1995). 34

33 This often happens very symbolically. It may take the form of social boycott, rejection. In the case of Bhanwari Devi who was gang-raped, people around her boycotted her and her family members after the rape incident.
34 The construction of women as a symbol of national honour and sovereignty of the state is well highlighted in the Indian state's response to the problems of women abducted during the partition riots of 1947. The government's policies were formulated with a view to retrieving the 'national honour' and not with the perspective of woman as an individual who could have her say in her own destiny.
As emphasised earlier, in all patriarchal world-views, more than anything else, it is the woman who symbolises the honour of family and community. Exclusive control of her sexuality by the legitimate 'owner' is the practical aspect of the notion of honour. That is why it is expected that an ideal woman should end her life, which is incidental anyway, if her chastity has been defiled. While this holds true in the context of honour, where the community is concerned, an ideal woman is expected to offer herself for the supreme sacrifice even if there is merely a probability of defilement. Here, such sacrifices become a spectacle and celebration in collective memory (Butalia: 1998). By the same logic, in struggles between different communities woman is metamorphosed into a metaphor of both sacredness and humiliation. And the virility of the community comes to hinge upon defending one's honour and humiliating the 'other' through the agency of the sexuality of woman.

In the post partition period, the rape and abduction of Hindu and Sikh women by Muslim men formed the backdrop against which accusations were levelled at Pakistan for being barbaric, uncivilised, lustful. The very formation of the nation of Pakistan out of the territory of Bharat became a metaphor for the violation of the body of the pure Hindu woman. The Indian state was regularly assailed for its failure to protect its women and to respond to Pakistan, the aggressor state, in the language that it deserved (Butalia: 1998). A discussion on the fate of abducted women took place in the pages of newspapers and journals at the time. At the time, The Organiser, the mouthpiece of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) took on the issue with a story entitled 'Pakistan the Sinner: 25,000 Abducted, Thousands Sold.' The story (as quoted in Butalia: 1998), ran as follows: 'For the honour of Sita, Sri Rama warred against and destroyed

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35 Hindi movies are one of the biggest propagators of this view and whenever a woman is raped in the movies, the first thing she does is try to commit suicide. The terms often used by the victim after the rape are 'mein barbad ho gai' or 'mein kisi ko muh dikhlane layak nahi rahi'. Implying, she is ruined.

36 In the Mahabharata, Duryodhana could think of no better way than ordering the public disrobing of Draupadi to decisively emphasise the humiliating and final defeat of the Pandavas in the game of dice.
Ravana, when filthy Khilji besieged Chitoor its thousands of women headed by Rani Padmini all clad in gerua (saffron) saris, mounted the funeral pyre smiling, ere the mleccha (impure) could pollute a drop of the noble Hindu blood. Today, when tens of hundreds of Hindu women are spending sorrowful days and unthinkable nights in Pakistan, the first free government of the Union of Indian Sovereign Democratic Republic has nothing but a whimper for them.

The easy equation of manhood and nationalism was not unusual- it needed men to protect the honour of the motherland. If the severing of the body of the country recalled the violation of the body of the nation-as-mother, the abduction and rape of its women, their forcible removal from the fold of their families, communities and country, represented a violation of their bodies as real- not metaphorical- mothers.

As reported by Butalia (1998), the violence that women faced in the aftermath of Partition is shrouded in silence. Little is heard about rape and abduction of women in historical accounts, and what is known of violence in general is related only to the men of the 'other' community. There is little acknowledgement that Hindu and Sikh women could have become targets of Hindu and Sikh men. It was revealed that the greatest danger that families, and indeed entire communities, perceived was the loss of honour through conversion to the other religion. Mass and forcible conversions had taken place on both sides. Among the Sikhs particularly, the men felt they could protect themselves but they were convinced that the women would be unable to do so. Their logic was that "men could fight, die if necessary, escape by using their wits and their strength, but the women had no such strength to hand. They were therefore particularly vulnerable to conversion. More, women could be raped, impregnated with the seed of the other religion, and in this way, not only would

37 The country, whether referred to as Bharat, or Hindustan, was imagined in feminine terms, as the mother, and partition was seen as a violation of its body.

38 National honour, the honour that was staked on the body of Mother India, and therefore, by extension, on the bodies of all Hindu and Sikh women, mothers and would-be mothers (Butalia: 1998).
they be rendered impure individually, but through them, the entire community could be polluted for they would give birth to 'impure' children. While the men could thus save themselves, it was imperative that the women- and through them, the entire race- be 'saved' by them” (Butalia: 1998).

V. STATE:

Max Weber defined the state as 'a human community which successfully claims the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force within a given territory' (cited in Bottomore: 1979). Thus the state is one of the important agencies of social control, whose functions are carried out by means of law, backed ultimately by physical force.

The duality of the state is evident in all domains of social policy, but particularly in questions relating to gender and the sensitive issue of male and female sexuality. For instance, the state is expected to protect the special interests of women, and at the same time is seen to endorse the control of men over women; to guarantee individual liberties and yet to define the criteria of normal sexuality and deviance. On the one hand, the modern state is vested with the responsibility for maintaining the moral social order, ensuring social justice and promoting social development. On the other hand it is seen that the state is not always a neutral instrument of these purposes, but often forwards the sectional interests of those groups which have privileged access to state power or whose support is necessary for the continuation for the regime (Ubertoi:1996).

One thing is clear, while some activists continue to direct their efforts towards the state- demanding new legislation, amendments to existing laws, heavier penalties, more effective enforcement, etc.- others believe that invoking the power of the state to achieve social reform objectives inevitably replaces consensus with coercion and increases the scope for the abuse of state power and the expanded control and surveillance of a passive citizenry. They insist that the
recourse is the strengthening of vigorous and vigilant democratising movements within the civil society (Uberoï: 1996).

Many writers see the family, the community and the contemporary state (in continuity with the colonial state) as essentially aligned- as patriarchal institutions- on gender issues. Assuming that the state is a major player in the enterprise of social reform, it needs to be emphasised that the legal system should be viewed as that part of the government that needs serious interrogation from a gender-sensitive perspective.

"The state as such, despite protestations, is not only seriously concerned with the social issues concerning women. Worse, where its own interests are concerned, it will sacrifice the rights of women to the protection of its own police and administrative officials" (Sangari:1988). The question of the state is therefore controversial.

V.1. Women, Violence and the State:
The relation between state and women is extremely complex but for my purpose I am confining myself to state and violence. While dealing with the issues of violence against women, the women's movement has to encounter the state machinery in most of its campaigns and actions. The relationship of the women's movement with the state apparatus is full of tension. Unequal power relations in society get reflected in the way the state apparatus operates vis-a-vis women. Women's issues have to utilise existing provisions and facilities, howsoever limited they are, granted by the state. On the one hand, the women's movement demands equal treatment and gender justice from the state, on the other hand it is worried about increasing encroachment of the state in the day-to-day affairs of the society. In the context of rising protest movements of dalit, tribal, agricultural and urban working class women the repressive role of the armed police, military and para-military forces is well known.

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40 This is exactly what happened in the case of the Muzaffarnagar atrocities. The officers who were responsible for their inaction in protecting the victims from violence (which too was unleashed by the government) were later given promotions and benefits by the government.
The role of the state has been extremely oppressive as far as violence against women is concerned. The Mathura rape case (1972) exposed the harsh and cold blooded legalism of the Supreme Court. Around 1977, an open letter was written by four lawyers who criticised this form of violation of constitutional law and justice. The supreme court had reversed the verdict of the Bombay High Court and acquitted two policemen accused of raping a fourteen-year-old tribal girl from Maharashtra named Mathura. The judges believed that Mathura had willingly submitted to sexual intercourse with the policemen. They justified this claim by saying that there was “no reasonable evidence of guilt on the part of policemen” (Haksar & Singh:1986) and that there was reason to doubt Mathura’s character, she had a boyfriend to whom her family had raised objections, and there were no signs on the men’s bodies of her having resisted their sexual advances. So her unwillingness for sexual intercourse was a lie and the case an attempt to defame the two men. Once again the victim had been doubly victimised. The absurdity of the arguments, the male and pro-police bias of judgement angered many progressive individuals and organisations.

Many of the early, successful agitations were against the protectors of law or public servants such as policemen, army men or other government officers in remand homes or jails, men who make use of their power and office to molest, rape and sexually abuse women. Mathura’s case is an example of such misuse.41 The repressive dimension of the state became distinctly visible during the emergency rule established in July,1975 42 (Krishna Raj :1986). The post emergency period was marked by an escalating number and intensity of caste and communal violence in which along with looting, rampage, beating and killing, mass rapes of women were reported. Various reports of human rights

41 Recently, there have been many such cases. The Muzaffarnagar incident is a case in point. It has been discussed in the text.

42 Thousands of women active in the student’s movement, mass movements of peasants, tribals and urban working class were imprisoned, tortured and sexually violated in West Bengal, Andhra Pradesh, Kerala, Bihar and North-Eastern states of India.
organisations revealed that the state machinery was taking a partisan role in such disturbances against subordinate groups.

The state in India never set out to fundamentally restructure relations of hierarchy and power within the family or to enable women to have independent access to property and other resources. In a study of the Green Revolution it was observed that the new agrarian technology denies women employment opportunities and stereotypes as purely female all those jobs which pay less and require less skill, thus inhibiting women from taking up other, more enriching jobs (Kelkar, 1981). As a consequence, women as producers in the economy have become less visible and credible, and have lost ground to traditional and decision making roles. A report on the rights of women observed:

The treating of family as a private area governed by religious and social customs, regarding of women as peripheral to economic development by the state, the inability of the legal system to recognise their unique status, the bias of the police and court in relations to crimes against women, are all parts of these social values (Inside Family, A Report on Democratic Rights of Women, 1984).

Rape is often used by the police, corrupt forest and other government officials and landed gentry as a weapon for reprisals against tribals, scheduled castes and agricultural labourers. If they assert themselves to get their just dues and attempt to stop the injustice and exploitation constantly unleashed against them, their women are raped. A report from the Peoples’ Union for Civil Liberties (PUCL) alleges that the police in the Bastar district of Madhya Pradesh have become more lawless than the Naxalites whom they are supposed to counter (The Times of India, June 30’1990). Also, Amnesty International called on the world governments to stop one of the most demeaning human rights violations

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43 Recently, some women protesting against the construction of yet another dam in the Narmada valley complained of being ill-treated by the police. It was claimed that too much force was being used against women protesters. Women have been singled out for the use of physical force and sexually abusive language by the police. There is evidence that women were lathi-charged, their clothes were torn, their hair pulled and body trampled (The Times of India, 24 July 1998). This kind of violence, accompanied by vulgar and sexual abuses, is a big blow to the empowerment of women.
inflicted on women—being raped or sexually abused at the hands of soldiers, police and prison guards reported by PTI (The Times of India, February 6'1992). Amnesty International claimed that "When the rapist is a government agent, that rape is torture or ill treatment and the state is responsible for it."

During 1977-79 women's groups and democratic rights organisations took up cases of gang rape by policemen of a beggar woman Laxmi in Punjab, Rameezza Bee and Shakila Bee in Hyderabad, mass rapes in Santhal Parganas (of tribal women) and in Marathwada (of women of untouchable castes) etc. In all these cases the protectors of law and order, the police and other state repressive forces proved themselves to be notorious perpetrators of violence against women. It was in this background that the Mathura rape case sparked off the nation wide anti-rape movement throughout the country. The blatant anti-women judgement gave birth to a nation wide anti rape movement which demanded the re-opening of the Mathura case and amendments in the rape law. During the early eighties, women's groups used to face a lot of hostility while dealing with rape cases. Even to get the FIR lodged, they had to organise militant protest actions like demonstrations, rallies and media publicity.

The relationship of women's movement with the state apparatus is full of tensions and uneasy collaborations. Basically there are three streams of thought among the Indian women's movement that colour their approach towards existing state provisions. The first one has total faith in the state machinery. They feel that gender sensitisation through proper training programmes, legal amendments and networking with the state apparatus can deliver the goods. Such organisations also take the support of state fundings and maintain amicable relations with the police, administration, government hospital staff and legal system. They get represented in several committees, cells, advisory boards and high power bodies to deal with violence against women. Such organisations shy away from protest actions and depend solely on petitioning and personal contacts with the powerful people in the state apparatus. The second group is totally distrustful of the state apparatus. They have a negative approach. They
rely on their show of strength and direct all their energies to mobilisation of public opinion to combat violence against women. They organise 'people's courts' to sort out issues such as domestic violence, rape etc. Mass organisations of poor people- tribals, dalits and other rural poor have bitter experiences of the state machinery where police, administration, forest departments openly ally with the perpetrators of violence against women. They find it useless to approach the state apparatus due to its anti-people and anti-poor stance. One to total erosion of trust of the state machinery, these mass organisations rely on their own strength. The third trend in the women's movement tries to seek space for women in distress knowing fully well that the state machinery works mainly in favour of the status quo. This group is aware that the Indian state may project an image of a benevolent and protective force, nonetheless, this group believes that women's groups must use the facilities provided by the state in terms of legal aid, criminal and civil laws, enforcement machinery, institutions for rehabilitation of women in distress. After all it is a democracy and the government is answerable to the people. The cost of the facilities is borne by the tax paying public. Through public pressure they try to induce the state apparatus to provide immediate redress to women victims of violence. Most of the women's groups adopt this approach. They are watchful about all moves of the state apparatus, whether they are of 'co-operation' or 'co-option'. In the final analysis they rely on the collective strength of women and strike in a united fashion while dealing with the issues concerning violence against women.

Feminist analysts criticise the state and its patriarchal nature. Nonetheless, certain women continue to prefer to depend on the state rather than on individual men or families. Women are divided by class, caste, ethnicity and other differences and political events as they are unfolding in India have placed the Indian women's movement in a quandary and the need is felt for a new discourse (Agnes: 1995).

A recent article in the news will highlight how difficult it is for women to work with the state machinery. Officials and police in Haryana are allegedly
sabotaging funded project aimed at empowering women to become self-reliant and aware of their rights to combat social evils like child marriage, dowry and alcohol abuse (The Times of India, June 17'1998). It was held that Sanjeevani (as the organisation is popularly known), charged that the district administration and the police had virtually placed them under surveillance, insulted some of them and subjected them to routine harassment. One of the women claimed that her husband was brutally beaten up when she refused to give up her work and the other claimed that the policemen were threatening her with dire consequences if her work with the project continued. Over ninety women involved in the project have approached the New Delhi based National Commission for Women to intervene on their behalf. The NCW was informed by the women that once the authorities realised that harassment had failed to dampen their enthusiasm, they threatened to turn their wrath on their relatives. The threat was carried out in some cases. Appeals to state officials and ministries in Chandigarh fell on deaf ears. Violence against women has proved to be an effective bogey for the political parties to silence their adversaries. When they realised that the Indian women were serious about the issue, they also joined the bandwagon. For the opposition party, it became a law and order issue which could be used to defame the ruling party. Coming in the wake of the publicity which surrounded Maya Tyagi, charged with dacoity, and gang-raped in a police station in 1980, the nation-wide anti rape campaign initiated by the autonomous women's groups made the political parties aware that women were a constituency. The incident was capitalised upon by the opposition to prove how inefficient the ruling party was. All political parties have been guilty of making opportunistic use of cases of gender violence. Women's groups in Pune and Bangalore have demanded that all candidates standing for elections (from the village council level to the Parliament level), should be boycotted if they had records of ill-treating women (Patel: 1998). Vimochana's campaign in Bangalore against such candidates resulted in all of them losing their seats in the last election. In rhetoric, the parliamentary parties have included the issues of gender violence in
their election manifestos.44 Before the elections, the prime ministerial candidate for the Bhartiya Janata Party advocated death penalty for rapists. He said that his party would strictly enforce the law to punish rapists and those guilty of sexual assault on women. He said that if present laws fail to act as a deterrent, the death penalty would be considered for rapists (The Times of India, January 4'1998).

Legal awareness about the constitution to deal with gender violence is given major importance by the Information and Broadcasting Ministry of the Government of India. The scripts for films or serials, panel discussions and educational programs on the theme of gender violence have received top priority in recent times on the electronic media.45 The unequal sex-ratio (929 women to 1000 men), the lowest in the history of the census, has shocked the policy makers into realising that violence against women is the root cause that effects the survival of women. The first comprehensive document on Indian women, Towards Equality, published in 1974, had ignored this issue, but the latest document, the National Perspective Plan for Women (1988-2000 AD), had incorporated the demands of the women's movement in India. The National Commission for Women set up by the Government of India has taken up several cases of violence against women perpetrated by the custodians of law and order in different parts of India.46 However, the National Commission for Women also feel helpless because of the apathy of the government towards women's issues. After completing a three year term as the chairperson for the NCW the chairperson maintained that after submitting as many as 300 recommendations

44 In praxis, the parties come up with contradictory positions; for example some leaders of the Bhartiya Janataa Party advocated voluntary sati. Only on the issue of antenatal sex determination tests, the All party parliamentary committee had a consensus, but when it came to passing the bill, none of them demanded prompt action.

45 A lot of talk shows deal with issues of violence against women. Topics which were considered 'taboo' earlier are now discussed with ease on television. Such programmes bring awareness among the public.

46 Mandated to safeguard women's rights, the National Commission for Women has undertaken the task of scanning laws pertaining to women. With the Expert Committees constituted to study, advise, formulate and frame laws and suggest amendments to the existing legislations...
to the government on women-related issues, not a single one had been taken up. Meaning that the government was not serious about women's issues. It was claimed however, that the awareness about the commission among women had increased.\textsuperscript{47} More power for the commission was demanded.

State sponsored violence is on the rise. As the masses have got alienated from the over centralised and unjust policies denying people their just demands many regional level movements have come up in the last decade and a half. Some of these have adopted secessionist slogans. Rather than find political solutions to these problems, the State has resorted to violent means which are defended in the name of putting an end to insurgency. In many states women have been made victims of attack from the security personnel. Many have been doubly victimised, by the militant terrorists as well as the state security personnel. In addition, state violence has been directed against women with a view to generally creating an atmosphere of terror, more so in the states where the political tide may be turning against the ruling party. The targeting of women is becoming an important element of political suppression. The phenomenon was displayed in the wake of atrocities inflicted on women rallyists coming to Delhi in October'1994 to demand a separate state of Uttarakhand. In any violent, political upheaval women from the oppressed sections suffer the most. Often there is no record of this violence. Humiliation and maltreatment inflicted on them is often not even seen as a crime, and highlighting their suffering also becomes a sensational issue which causes further pain.

The relation between the media and women is comprehensive. Therefore, in the following section I will deal specifically with the media and its relation to violence, with emphasis on rape. Here, in particular, I have discussed the way rape is represented on the Internet.

\textsuperscript{47} As compared to 430 complaints in 1992, the number of complaints in 1998 increased to 7,500 (cited in \textit{The Times of India}, 21 July'1998).
VI. THE MEDIA AND VIOLENCE:

The media intervene between our experiences and our understanding of reality. Feminists have made rape a visible issue now, and this has resulted in an increased media focus on the issue of rape.

One of the components of sexual violence is propaganda and the avenues for this are modern mass media: television, radio, films, advertising, the print media and now the Internet/ multi media. Be it movies or song lyrics, women are many times depicted in a poor light. In most Hindi movies the display of violence is immense and most often than not women become easy targets for rape and/or battery. Movies often reinforce stereotypes and many people get inspired to imitate what they see on screen. Lyrics of some rock music groups are offensive enough to elicit an agreement from record companies to provide warning labels. Many music videos and advertisements present women primarily as props or objects to decorate and arouse, to stroke men's egos and satisfy men's fantasies and needs for power, sex and violence. But the propaganda of sexual terrorism is most fully embodied in the books and films and paraphernalia exclusively devoted to the sexual degradation of women—pornography. The word itself is derived from the Greek 'porne', referring to the lowest class of sexual slave. The portrayal of women is essentially demeaning, and potentially dangerous, as objects for men to be used for their satisfaction. Most pornography articulates a male fantasy world in which women are typically depicted as depraved and insatiable, and therefore appropriate objects

48 For example, in the Hindi film Darr, the hero plays the role of an obsessive stalker and harasses the heroine till she almost loses her mind. After the movie was released newspaper reports claimed that many men tried stalking women. A couple of them were caught too. When asked why they did it, they said they were inspired by the movie. In fact, they almost got the idea from the movie so that they could trouble the women they always desired.

49 One of the heavy metal rock bands' performer, Axl Rose, sings about rape as a cure for boredom and another rapper Ice-T, raps about raping a woman with a flashlight (Lott: 1994). Many new Hindi movie songs have sexual connotations which are degrading for women.
for rape, mutilation or even murder.\textsuperscript{50} The ultimate power of pornography seems to be terrorisation. The extreme manifestations of physical violence found in much of pornography are considered by many people, to pose a threat to the safety of women and girls in so far as these images normalise sexual abuse and raise the level of tolerance for such behaviour.

Ideology and its spread through propaganda are both necessary and sufficient causes of overt violence. Sexual violence, then, is violence perpetuated on girls and women simply because they are female, as when the fear of sexual assault keeps many girls and women in a state of fear, regardless of their actual risks.

VI.1. Women and the Media:
The popularisation of rape in the media forms part of a complex orchestration of patriarchal ideology. The foundation of rape myths is the masculine perception of women's place: women derive their social status from their position relative to men. Myths about who can be raped demonstrate that single, independent women are unprotected. If a woman assumes an independent position, she forfeits the protection of the patriarchal system: she is then considered to be sexually available for any man. This often forces women to see men as their protectors: not because individual men will protect them, but because the patriarchal system promises them protection when they are the property of a man. Yet this 'protection' is a thinly disguised form of social control, and has many unrealistic if not impossible conditions prescribed within patriarchal ideology.

Representation of Rape on the Internet:
Modern media technologies, in a sense, have made pornography ever more widely available. The newest developments are in the field of computerised images which can be networked all over the world. One of the problems of computer pornography is that porn which, in its printed or video form, is

\textsuperscript{50} All these issue will be brought in when I will be highlighting the depiction of women on the Internet. I will be emphasising on the representation of rape on the Internet in a separate section.
relatively difficult (but by no means impossible) to obtain, but child pornography, images of women and animals, images of the rape and torture of women - is much more easily accessible in computer format (Butterworth: 1993).

The new wave on the media in India is the Internet. Through this system any individual can view and often communicate with a whole array of images, graphics, articles and what not. All of this and more, by sitting in front of the computer. As it is said one can have the world at one's feet. Through the Internet one can browse through millions and millions of sites. The new generation of urban Indian children and youth are almost 'hooked on' to the net. What is disturbing is that there are many sites which might be objectionable for young minds to view. They may leave a negative impact on young minds for always. Such sites are pornography sites which reveal graphic photos and write-ups on 'X rated' issues. These sites can be easily accessed by anyone. Even though these sites claim that all those above the age of 18 years should view these sites, the system is not fool proof. Any and everyone who knows how to browse the net can get access to it. Women's experience and reality have been distorted by the propaganda of the pornographers. Interactive pornography means that the consumer is no longer just the consumer, he is, in a sense, the producer as well. Not content by gazing passively at the images of women, he can now enter into the fantasy by directing the action.

While I too was browsing the net I found certain sites extremely deplorable, degrading and humiliating for women/girls. These sites revealed an issue so grave and serious as rape in a very poor, casual and mocking light. I think it is a very serious issue because a heinous crime like rape should not be included in sites like pornography or other sex sites. These sites are often present for pleasure purposes. 51 Below, I will highlight the nature of the presentation and representation of rape.

51 I would also like to mention that there are also sites which deal with child pornography and paedophilia. This should be of grave concern for one and all. The question is how can the Internet be made safe for the young minds?
However before talking of rape one can talk of the representation of violence in general, on the net. For instance, there is a particular site called Hatchoo.com which offers a surfer a chance to play his repressed fantasies. Although some of these fantasies are quite innocent, there is one section (name withheld even in the paper which reported this) that is potentially dangerous. It offers a surfer a chance to play an executioner. By clicking on the mouse and the site the surfer will be taken into an execution room "somewhere in the USA" flashing the image of a death row prisoner pinned to an electric chair. As the gory drama unfolds- and as one clicks on- innocent fun turns macabre. As the 'virtual' execution happens, the prisoner's body twitches and writhes on the screen. The electric current which flows through his body, is shown as a blue zig-zag line. The gory scene ends with the web designers awarding the surfer an executioner's certificate. Such sites can have a very damaging effect on the psyche of an adolescent surfer. A noted psychiatrist feels, "someone who is emotionally vulnerable will find it something to identify with. A medium through which he can act out his most violent impulses" (cited in The Times of India, 20 April, 1999).

Below, I will highlight certain issues related to violence against women in general and rape in particular:

Virtual Reality: The next step from looking and interacting with 2-dimensional images and data is looking and interacting with 3-dimensions. With a graphic display realistic enough and sensors that are accurate enough, one can almost imagine that the object one is looking at is real. To all intents and purposes, it is reality one is experiencing, this is virtual reality.  

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52 When I talk of the representation of rape on the Internet, I will talk of a concept called 'virtual rape'.

53 One of the harmful ideas that is at the core of all pornography, including so called 'soft-core' as well as 'hard-core' porn, is that all women are sexually available to any man, at any time, and in any way he wants. This kind of propaganda reinforces men's (and via them women's) conceptions of the 'inherent' dominance and subordination in sexual and other relations between the sexes.
There is a site which is entitled "Virtual reality & the Net". Here, it begins by saying.....Dear Virtual Reality and "Information Superhighway" Hype Merchants,

Do virtual rape victims bleed? Is virtual rape a crime? Should it be? Should people be encouraged to explore the darker elements of their psyche in environments where no physical damage is done? Because no physical harm is done, does this mean that no harm is done at all?

An example of virtual rape is given in another site called 'virtual rape'. It reads:

The first reading this week is about a place called LambdaMOO where a rather nasty player decides that he will have some fun with some of the other players.\(^{54}\) He rapes two of them in the living room. While virtual rape isn't the same as actual rape- the obvious reason being that nothing physical has actually occurred, I still think that there would be profound effects on the victim. There needs to be some way to stop this behaviour, apart from removing the player who did it. As with the article, they can just come back with another name. Any ideas???

There are several technical ways to punish a cyber-offender, but the effectiveness of them is questionable as you and the article state. What we really need is some way to identify a person no matter what Internet account they use, an Internet security card?? That way being banned from a system will have more than a symbolic meaning. Of course there are several other issues related to such a device, in that it goes against the 'freedom' of the Internet. Of course the ideal solution is to change human nature!

The above statement misses out the real issue and that is that rape is an invasion of someone's person against their will. It has nothing to do with being able to police the net or not. The point is that virtual societies are used for escape, people can get online and be whoever they want, whatever sex they want and on one is accountable. The fact is that there is too much freedom. It is claimed that the Net encourages free speech and a lot of the participants on these chat

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\(^{54}\) The italics emphasis are entirely my own. I wanted to highlight the point that rape here is described as merely having fun or rather, a nasty way of having fun. It is treated very lightly.
lines/sites adopt different personas to escape their bounded "real" life. The Net enables people to do, via text, what they otherwise wouldn't be allowed to do in real society without getting punished through established laws and court system. This is a dangerous sign. The fact is that although it is not a physical violation, it is a mental one. It is easy for the perpetrator to do as they remain unseen and anonymous. It is also easy enough to say why not just switch off the computer, but even the first few 'actions' or words can be disturbing. People have to have real responsibilities to each other and society, even if we are talking of Virtual spaces.

I am concerned about the development of new technologies. The above text and the ones which will be presented later tend to worry me about the way things are going. Over-hyped technologies such as 'Virtual Reality' and the 'Information Superhighway' are attracting many enthusiastic people looking for something to keep them amused. I just hope that people get an opportunity to explore the many positive ways these technologies can be applied rather than using them to perpetuate problems that plague traditional reality.

There is another site I came across which is called 'How2rape page'. This has the heading 'It is absolutely impossible to rape a woman!' This page tries to convince readers that it is not possible for a woman to be raped. According to the author of the site all a girl needs to do to avoid rape is to cross her legs tight. He also recommends, 'Try it sometime with your girlfriend.'

The following are some sites mentioned in the Search Results. What is to be noted, is the way rape figures in these sites:

- **Vampire Rape** Top Torture Sites** WARNING For your own safety, please visit the garlic home page before entering! BDSM TopList This site explores the Dark World of VAMPIRES and the Dark Fetish of RAPE! Please don't ever consider entering this site.

55 Sites such as these trivialise the crime to a great extent. They are totally apathetic to the seriousness of the crime.
• Stories Links.com A COMPLETE listing of erotic stories Sites- Hundreds of Free Erotic Sex Stories on many different subjects such as incest, wife sluts, rape, threesomes, group sex, gang bangs, virgins and teens.56

• Rape pictures! HARDCORE! FISTING! RAPED! PICS! BONDAGE! WHIPPED! WOMEN! SCHOOL GIRLS!- Tired of the same old shit on the net? Want to see some extreme hardcore? CLICK HERE TO VIEW THE MOST EXTREME HARDCORE SITE ON THE INTERNET! NOTHING IS BARRED.

• MORE FREE PICS!!!!- 1000's of Porn Channels....Porn TV.com MIRROR of this Site. It may take 10 seconds to load this page....MORE FREE RAPE PIXS.

• RAPED!- Thumbnailed pictures of rape fantasy and light bondage.

• Adult Erotica Collection- bondage, rape and group sex stories.

• rape pics rape teens father AND son teen boys gay stories free gay videos-

Rape The Largest site accessing over 20,000 sites with over 250,000+ pics, videos, live 1on 1 chat rooms. Rape teen stories father AND son teen boys.

There is a web page entitled Rape fantasies. It reads thus:

This is an adult site about rape fantasies. Many links to sites with rape stories, rape films, rape pictures.

WARNING!!

Before you can enter this site, you must read through this first and accept it.

I am over 18 years

I don't find fantasies of rape offensive. I understand it is only fantasies.

Still another site which includes the word rape gives a warning to the readers. It says

56 Rape, in this site is included under the heading of the 'erotic'. Again, the question of rape is trivialised.
WARNING!!!
This site contains Extremely Graphic material as seen through the eyes of serial rapists and sex offenders.
The material is of an adult nature which includes Nudity, Graphic Violence, and other explicit sexual acts.
To enter this site, you must be at least 18 years of age, and this content must be legal in your community.
ENTER

A site is also named Gang rape! It reads:

Graphic rape pictures, fantasy images beyond this point
Adults Only Please, if fantasy rape pictures offend.
DO NOT ENTER
If Not. Welcome To GANG RAPE!

Further, it reads thus:

TOP TORTURE SITES
You Have Entered The World Of Violence And FORCED SEX...The Brutality Of RAPE!!!
The Material Offered Inside GANG RAPE! Is So Extreme... It Will Change The Way You View Porn!!!!!!!
By Joining Now....You Will See Porn The Way You Never Thought Possible!!
Below this it says, “Enjoy your visit”

The title of a particular website reads RAPE PICTURES!!

“Rape Pictures! We reviewed this Rape Pictures site and found many free pictures of Women Being Raped------ CyberSex Reviews. Site also has free movies that play on your screen------ CyberSex Reviews, 1998.
Welcome to the Internet # 1 RAPE PICTURES! Website.

57 Here, a serious crime like gang rape almost sounds like the most pleasurable thing to do. The statement 'Welcome to gang rape' makes it sound like a game.
58 The site actually recommends the surfers to enjoy all the brutality and violence by stating "enjoy your visit". By putting gang rape in the category of pornography is trivialising the gravity of the crime of rape. Rape here is viewed as only a sexual act, an act of pleasure. That is what rape is NOT.
Our Website Contains
BIZARRE FETISH PICTURES.
These Are Graphic Pictures of Women Bound & Gagged Against Their Will!
THIS INCLUDES PICTURES OF SEX CRIME VICTIMS. WOMEN WHO HAVE BEEN RAPED & STRANGLED.
Due to EXTREME sexual content, you MUST be over 18 years of age to access any pictures on the website. Entry into our website will give you FREE access to Over 100,000 Pictures and Movies That Play on Your Screen!

Above, one has seen how rape has been trivialised. Viewing such deplorable sites can have a grave negative effect on the minds of most people, especially young minds. They probably would never be able to understand the seriousness of the crime of rape or the ill effects of the crime on hapless victims.

What I also came across was the concept of an 'Internet Rape Victim'. Here, a girl who met a boy through the chat rooms on the Net was asked by the guy to meet her. She did so and was sexually assaulted by him and his friend. The victim spent hours in the hospital and took a long time to recover, both mentally and physically. Issues like these have been of concern to parents around the world (especially the West) and now there are 'Internet safety tips for Parents' available.\(^59\)

An international meet to fight child pornography was held in Paris on January 18 and 19, 1999. The event was organised by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) and the aim was to enable them to see how the menace could be fought. It was revealed that that there was a growing stance of pornography and paedophilia on the Internet. There was concern for the adverse effects this could have on the minds of people, especially children. The sexual abuse of children, child pornography and paedophilia on the Internet is an international problem and a serious one.

\(^{59}\) Several companies have created so called filtering software, programs that come with pre-set site blocks related mainly to sex, sexuality and chemical use along with other items deemed offensive- such as hate and cruel speech. In short, once the plug-in happens, the kid cannot visit
VII. CONCLUSION:

Social institutions are seen as mechanisms for coping. However, in reality, the social institutions do not provide the proper coping strategies for victims of sexual violence. In turn, they are responsible for silencing the victims. This silencing along with the cultural system (through belief patterns, myths, attitudes) only help in perpetuating violence against women. In a sense, the 'throwing out' of the victim becomes certain when all institutions and members of the institutions act negatively towards the victim.

Compared to other forms of violence, rape is the ultimate and grossest form of violent expression of patriarchal and class oppression. It is meant to be a violation of a woman's body, her integrity and her dignity. Patriarchy reproduces itself in numerous ways through different relationships and institutions to maintain a systemic inequality between the sexes. This is achieved through rules of legitimacy of offspring, through controlling women's sexuality and in general through the establishment of possessional rights over women which men have as husbands, fathers or older male relations. This is further strengthened and maintained over time by the socialisation process that embeds women strongly within the familial structures and hierarchic gender relations such that they have little or no independent status outside the family and male authority exposes them to swift retribution and confirm their vulnerability. We can view rape in this context. In no other representations does masculinity subjectivity gain more dominance than in representations of rape. It is therefore not unexpected that rape is not regarded as a crime against a woman, but becomes part of ideological issues significant to patriarchy at particular historic moments.

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these sites. These mechanisms go by the names of Surfwatch, Cybersitter and Net Nanny. Also, what is highlighted is also the fact that the software isn't perfect.
60 The emphasis on rape and issues related to rape are being frequently discussed here because the thesis deals with the study of rape in particular.
Women are regarded as men's property, and it is in so far as a man's property is damaged that rape is taken with any seriousness.⁶¹ In a sense, the law is designed to safeguard those rights for the dominant subjects in any patriarchal society.

Rape provokes the most intense anger, frustration, despair and disillusionment. At the centre of emotions and strategical confusions is the dilemma and trauma of the rape victim, who is further traumatised by society at large. Most rape victims do not want any publicity because they fear humiliation and rejection by the family.⁶² Even if a woman is ready to bear the publicity, the legal process is another sad, frustrating story by itself. Rapes are many times committed by acquaintances, not strangers as is commonly believed. Men as a group may decide to demoralise another set of men of another caste or religion or shame family honour through the act of rape. Rapes that take place by family members are almost never reported. The 'myths' of rape further perpetuate an ideology which favours men, who view the justification for their crime. The social values surrounding rape are so skewed that if a woman is raped there is much hue and cry in which the woman finally becomes the sufferer. The emphasis placed on virginity and chastity in Indian society makes rape a more serious crime than even wife-beating. In most cases it is not only the rape victim but also her family who fear the loss of respectability. The entire family stands disgraced, and socially boycotted so that the victim might be easily driven to suicide. These views highlight the role of patriarchal values and the society at large in perpetuating this form of violence. The extreme vulnerability of women, the sexual nature of the crime, societal attitudes regarding chastity, the indifference of the police and judicial procedures interact each other to curiously reverse the role of the victim and violator. All forms work against the victim, she

⁶¹ Probably this is one of the reasons why rape of sex workers aren't considered serious at all. They are considered in a sense not to 'belong' to anyone and therefore lacking honour.

⁶² It is interesting to note that usually rape cases get highlighted by the victim's name and not the rapists' name. For instance, the Mathura case, the Suman Rani case or the Rameez Bee case, to name only a few. It is the rapist who is the offender and not the victim!
finally turns from an accuser to the accused. It is not human nature but human society, its laws and institutions, which have created hierarchies between men and women, class and caste; rape is not a random unpremeditated act but a form of violence by the powerful on those who are powerless, poor and disadvantaged.

It is important to keep in mind that human rights begin at home. The rationale given most often for denial of human rights to half the world’s population—women—is preservation of family and culture. But preservation of family and culture need not, and should not, be pursued at the expense of human rights.

In the next chapter we will look more carefully at the myths of rape, their widespread prevalence, attitudes and belief patterns among members of society and how all of these may encourage and perpetuate the crime of rape over time.