



Crime Against Minors

In the recent past, the country has witnessed some heinous crimes against minor girls. There was uproar in Kashmir after a 3-year-old was raped by her neighbor in Bandipora district. Days after this gruesome crime, just 50 kilometers away in Ganderbal district, another minor was allegedly raped. **Number of crimes by the minors on the minors have increased in the country.**

Reasons Behind Minors Committing Crime

- **Lack of Parental Guidance:**
 - Earlier, there used to be a joint family system where if parents of a child are away, grandparents used to be there to guide the children. Now-a-days, **nuclear families are there with both the parents going out for work, thus a child is not able to get the first schooling** that s/he should get from the family.
 - It is seen that when parents do not have time for their children, they provide their children with gadgets like computers, smartphones etc., but generally **parents forget to teach their children about how and what to watch on these gadgets.**
- **Change in the status of Women:**
 - The status of women in the society from being dependent has changed to that of being independent.
 - When a child does not get the much needed love and care from the family especially the mother, **s/he feels isolated and her/his mind turns towards criminal activities.**
- **Changing Economy:**
 - Earlier, most women used to be at home taking care of the children, but rising cost of living has pushed women out of the houses for earning money. The close emotional bond that a child used to share with his/her family is missing now.
 - **The world has shifted towards materialism**, i.e. people need more and more cars but not more and more social connections. This has resulted in the separation of children from their immediate neighbourhood.
- Now-a-days, too many things are demanded from children i.e. to be competitive, to take care of themselves etc. All such things lead to **frustration in the minds of children.**

Reasons Behind Crime Against Minors

- People taking children for granted, thus taking advantage of them.
- **Degradation of family values:** It has been seen that some of the biggest sexual crimes take place within the family only. In various cases, it has been seen that a child gets sexually abused by his/her own father, aunt or any other close relative.
- **Lack of education and lack of awareness about the present laws in the country.** It is so that people are even not aware that committing a sexual act against a minor amounts to a crime.

Legal Provisions in India

- **In 2013, the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) law was enacted to**

protect the minors. This is one of the first laws of the land which is **gender neutral** i.e. protecting not only minor girls but also minor boys who could be subject to sexual crimes.

- The Indian Penal Code has many stringent provisions in itself. After the Nirbhaya case, **amendments were made in the code in 2013 on the recommendations of Justice Verma committee.** The amendments have made the code further stringent.
- **The Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition, and Redressal) Act (POSH Act) was enacted in 2013** as a comprehensive legislation to provide a safe, secure and enabling environment, free from sexual harassment, to every woman.

Way Forward

▪ Expected role from the Parents:

- Family is the first unit of socialization for the child. Parents need to ensure that the child is getting the much needed love and care.
- Besides a friendly relationship, there should be a **strong relationship of authority and respect between a child and his/her parents.** This sort of relationship helps in preventing the child from indulging in any sort of wrong activity.
- Children should be persuaded to go out and play rather than allowing them to sit home and watch T.V.
- **Within the family,** it needs to be ensured that **the girl child as well as the boy child is being treated equally.**

▪ Expected Role from the state:

- The state has to work towards making people aware of the laws prevalent in the country.
- **Indian Police needs to handle cases related to sexual crimes more sensitively.**
- There need to be **more fast track courts** for handling cases related to the sexual crimes.
- Information on number of sexual crimes reported in every police station, their status, rate of conviction, rate of acquittal etc. need to be there in the public domain.

▪ Expected Role from the Society:

- **'Gender Sensitization' programmes need to be started in the schools.**
- Within a society, **more and more get-togethers** should be organised so that children get to know about their neighbours.
- Children need to be engaged more and more in **community activities** to make them sensitive towards the society.

Socialization, education, counselling and constructive use of technology can play a prominent role in reducing crime against minors.

Note: The International Day of Families is observed on the 15th of May every year.