

Crimes against adolescents - An Overview

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The birth of a baby girl is rarely a welcome event in an average Indian family and a daughter is looked upon as a burden on the family. Selective female foeticide and female infanticide are not uncommon in our country.

A girl who survives to grow to the age of adolescence, may become the victim of discrimination, child labour, child marriage, mock marriage, bigamous marriage, eve teasing, kidnapping, sale, illicit trafficking, sexual violence, forced prostitution, criminal abortion, acid throwing, forcible offering as Devdasi, cruelty, wrongful restraint, homicide, etc.

Of all these, sexual violation is the most heinous act against an adolescent girl. In a high percentage of cases of rape, the offender is a person whom the girl has known before as a relative, family friend, neighbour or an acquaintance. Behaviour amounting to outraging the modesty is experienced by a girl in the household, neighbourhood in secluded places as well as crowded public places. At times the modesty of an adolescent girl is outraged by males around her even without the girl herself or her parents realising it. Cases of indecent assault against adolescent females are also common. Sexual intercourse by a man with his own wife legally amounts to rape if the wife is below the age of 15 years. Since child marriages are still prevalent in some parts of our country such type of rape is also a common offence against girls married early.

Alluring or enticing adolescent girls with a promise of marriage and a subsequent breach of promise leaves the girl in a lurch. Some of the girls become pregnant and subsequently resort to criminal abortion. Sometimes the girls become victims of mock marriage or a bigamous marriage but being unaware of the facts believe that the

marriage has been lawful and allow sexual relations by the "Husband". Such sexual intercourse also amounts to rape. Sexual intercourse with any girl even with her consent amounts to rape if she is below the age of 16 years. Sometimes an adolescent girl is subjected to unnatural sexual offences like sodomy or lesbianism.

Kidnapping of an adolescent girl and subsequent sale to a brothel forcing her to sex trade, is not uncommon. Forcible offering of a girl as a Devdasi to Goddess Yellama is a practice prevalent in the districts of Maharashtra near Karnataka border. Ultimately some of these girls are used by men to appease their sexual desire. There are places in our country where girls are auctioned in open market like cattle.

Incidences of acid throwing on the faces of girls are heard of from time to time. This happens as a result of sexual jealousy, refusal by the girl to concede to permit sexual relation or refusal to marry a particular man. This leads to permanent disfiguration of face and a grievous hurt.

In spite of laws prohibiting child marriage in many states girls are married by their parents even before attaining menarche. Marriage of a girl who has not completed 18 years is unlawful.

Bonded labour and exploitation of adolescent girls are still the fate of some of the girls. Discrimination against an adolescent girl deprives her of an opportunity to education, recreation and even adequate food, clothing and shelter.

In view of the foregoing it is no wonder that it is remarked that 'For Girls Adolescence is a Nightmare'.