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## PUBLIC OPINION IN THE WAKE OF THE NIRBHAYA GANG RAPE - OMINOUS SIGNS FOR INDIA

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**Abstract:** *The paper examines the reaction of the public in the wake of the horrid tale of Nirbhaya. The nation experienced a strong public resentment towards the Government and Criminal Justice System, in particular. Such outburst, though an emotional and spontaneous one, indeed carried messages for the nation to sit up and take note of. It indicated the failure of the Criminal Justice Machinery in preventing the atrocity, the lack of sensitivity on the part of the officials in responding to the situation, the inadequacy of law to respond to rising crimes and most important, a societal frame with utmost apathy and disregard for women, in general. A democratic state is required to respond to public opinion since it derives its legitimacy from the people. The confidence of the public and its regard for the law is based on acceptance of the same and where the system fails to meet the expectation, they are ominous signs for the country.*

**Key Words:** *Rape, Justice, Public Opinion, Criminal Law, Governance*

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## **INTRODUCTION**

The brutal gang rape and murder of a young girl in Delhi in the cold winter night of December 2012<sup>1</sup> opened up a Pandora's Box of challenges for the State and Criminal Justice System, in particular. What followed the horrific incident was a series of protests in the heart of the country and other places seeking 'justice' for the victim and apt punishment for the rapists. The country witnessed thousands of young men and women holding placards deriding the role of the Police and the ineffectiveness of the entire machinery of the State to protect women and safeguard their safety and security. The cries resonated in the chambers of the highest political authorities and thus, were born few Commissions<sup>2</sup> to inquire into the matters and recommend appropriate steps to deal with the situation.

Justice Verma, in a span of a month, went on to prepare the Committee report, which suggested overhauling the entire laws on rape and other forms of violence against women in the Criminal Code<sup>3</sup>. The comprehensive five hundred pages report also dealt with the responsibility of the State, the Constitutional goals, police reforms, electoral reforms, medico-legal examination of victims etc. The Government, in a quick reaction to the public sentiment, issued an Act<sup>4</sup>, partly partaking of the suggestions of the Committee, and made a new set of provisions addressing the violence against women and girls.

The scope of the present writing is not to assess the report of the Committee or the Amendments in Law, but to understand the role of the public opinion in law making and justice delivery mechanism, if any, and the lessons that may be taken therefrom. Critics have predicted as dangerous the trend of public sloganeering and the effects that it may have on the larger ideals of democracy and democratic functioning. It has been assailed as a means of blackmailing and holding the State at ransom for individual or group's satisfaction. Is it really so or does it really have a significance, given the fact that the changes in law were long due and should not have required an unfortunate loss of life for the State to have taken up the cause.

The paper has been divided into four parts. The first gives an overview of the criminal justice system in the country, while the second focuses on the public uprising in the wake of the

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<sup>1</sup>TimesofIndia. indiatimes .com (2013).

<sup>2</sup> The Justice Verma Committee, The Justice Usha Mehra Commission.

<sup>3</sup> Report of the Committee on Amendments to Criminal Law, 23<sup>rd</sup> January, 2013.

<sup>4</sup>The Criminal Law (Amendment Act), 2013.



Delhi rape case and similar cases and therefore, whether public opinion has a role to play in the entire process of law making and implementation. The third part of the article delves into the reasons for a strong public reaction as was witnessed in recent times- is it the effect of retributive mindset or is it the amalgam of fears and insecurities culminating in the ultimate feeling of injustice. The last part intends to indicate what may be the lessons for the criminal justice mechanism to improve the whole scenario.

### **CRIMINAL JUSTICE IN SHAMBLES**

Let us begin by saying that all is not well in Indian polity. I hope most of us engaged in the study of law, society or allied fields have to agree on this point. The state of the laws, their implementation, execution and enforcement are extremely archaic and colonial based. As against the noble goals enshrined in the Constitution, the State has been able to progress very little. The society is riddled with problems of poverty, illiteracy, unemployment, homelessness and several others. While the protection of these have been ensured through various provisions, both in the Constitution and other laws and schemes, very little seems to be really achieved. As many say, even after 65 years of Independence, we are toiling against the worst ills. Added to these, is the woe of insecurity and safety of the common man. Both traditionally as well as in modern times, the State has been hailed as the guardian of the rights and securities of the citizens. The fundamental rights and freedoms guaranteed under the Constitution are consequent responsibilities on the part of the State to protect in the event of any threat or danger. The State has the requisite means and authority at its disposal to require the best implementation of the citizen's charter of rights. But the real picture is far from reality and the best indicator to that fact is the state of criminal justice.

Criminal Justice Administration comes in as the most integral aspect of the state. The police, prosecution, courts and correctional homes constitute the core of such administrative arrangement and it is expected that they will function to address the problems posed by the emerging times.

The role of the Modern State is not restricted to maintenance of law and order and protection of the citizens from external aggression and internal disturbance. Now the role of the state has drastically changed and the ultimate goal before the state machinery is the welfare of people at large. The role of Police in the Criminal Justice set up is both preventive and punitive; that is to say that, while on the one hand, the police is expected to curb crimes



in the society, on the other, in the event of its occurrence, it is expected to investigate and collect evidences and produce the accused before the courts of law for decision making. In addition, the police is expected to carry out several other activities to ensure the safety, security and well being of the common man. With the responsibility being on the State to prosecute offenders, the prosecution, as another machinery, advances the cause and establishes the culpability of the accused before the courts. The latter are ultimately the justice dispensation bodies, which decide the culpability or otherwise of the accused based on the law and evidences produced before it. The Prison Administration or correctional institution is part of Criminal Justice System to implement the punishment and reform the criminals.

But the state of criminal justice, as earlier emphasized, leaves much to be desired. Toiling under archaic laws and legislative apathy, the machinery is in ruins. Crime statistics have depicted a steady increase in the rates of crimes in society, especially those against women; the overburdening of the police system and the political control over its functioning have led to shoddy investigations, biased chargesheets and acrimonious delays; the lack of coordination between the police and prosecution has resulted in failed prosecutions and the consequent result has been acquittals; added to these, is the huge delay involved in the process of justice dispensation.

The attitude of the common person, thus, is one of indignation and intolerance. A person who becomes the victim of a crime first deliberates upon the fact whether to bring it to the notice of the authorities. In case the answer is in the positive, the person faces the first hurdle in getting the crime registered at the police station. The practice ordinarily followed in police stations is to shoo away the victim stating non-seriousness of the matter or the fact that it will lead to undue harassment so far as the victim is concerned. Once that hurdle is overcome, the person remains unsure whether the investigation is making any progress, and if so, in what direction. However, if the victim is fortunate, the matter may come up to the courts after a span of two to three years and the trial continues. Expenditure, time and mental agony stifle the victim in the long battle for justice and finally, the decision may betray all the hardships undergone. Then there's appeal and maybe, after a span of two decades, the victim may achieve something favorable provided that long battle has not already dispossessed him of his basic pleasures in life.



## DEMONSTRATIONS, OUTRAGE AND PUBLIC OPINION

Coming back to the Delhi case, is it the first time that India experienced such an upheaval? Looking in a similar context, the answer is in the negative. For those who know or may recollect, the Mathura rape case<sup>5</sup> had generated similar stirs across the nation. Mathura, a 16-year-old tribal girl, was raped in the police station. Instead of addressing the plight of the girl in her call for justice, the police, prosecution and ultimately, the courts joined in to label her as a girl of 'loose morals' who had consented to a sexual relationship in the dead of the night with two police constables in an inebriated state<sup>6</sup>. The acquittal, which caught the attention of the nation, raised serious questions about the state of justice. Following a letter, historic so to say, to the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, the case was reviewed but with no success. What followed however, was a series of Amendments in criminal law<sup>7</sup>, in the wake of protests throughout the nation. Significant milestones were achieved in the process, though as some said, much was left undone.

Few other instances have also caught attention and called for judicial re-appreciation of the decisions. One, in this regard, has been the Jessica murder<sup>8</sup>, where the son of a prominent politician of a ruling party, open fired at a model in a party. With witnesses turning hostile and power and money playing havoc, the court lamented that inspite of evidences, it was unable to convict the accused as these were not sufficient. The national frenzy rose, once again, this time to protest the injustices of the court. In appeal, based on the same evidence, the higher courts found sufficient reasons to convict the accused. The same is the story of *PriyadarshiniMattoo*<sup>9</sup>, another girl of Delhi, who was subjected to rape and murder by a person well connected and placed in society.

Interestingly enough, just five months after the Delhi gang rape, the Capital witnessed similar protests and uprisings in the rape of a four-year old child by a neighbor<sup>10</sup>. What made the matter serious and condemnable was the fact that the child was missing from her house and the police had been given information of the same. The latter failed to employ adequate measures to rescue the child and after few days, the cries of the child were heard

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<sup>5</sup>*Tukaram and Anr. v. State of Maharashtra* AIR 1979 SC 185.

<sup>6</sup>*id.*

<sup>7</sup>Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, 1983.

<sup>8</sup>*SiddharthVashist @Manu Sharma v. State* AIR 2010 SC 2352.

<sup>9</sup>*Santosh Kr. Singh v. State* JT 2010 (11) SC 1.

<sup>10</sup>Thehindu.com (2013).



by the parents and neighbors from the same building. On breaking open the door of one of the flats, the people recovered the brutalized and mutilated body of the child, surprisingly still breathing. On information being given by the father of the horrific turnout of events, the police allegedly offered him a bribe of two thousand rupees to keep quiet and forget the entire incident. Public acrimony against the working of the police and their political masters broke all barriers of civilized society and students, activists, housewives, office goers, rather people from all walks of life rounded the streets demanding prompt action against the erring policemen and immediate steps to improve the safety of the vulnerable class, including stern punishments for the rapists.

The manifestation of public outrage in the form of protests, demonstrations is merely the extension of public opinion. Infact, Dicey in his Lectures on Law and Public Opinion has opined<sup>11</sup>-

“True, indeed it is that the existence and alteration of human institutions must, in a sense, always and everywhere depend upon the beliefs, feelings or, in other words, upon the opinion of the society in which such institution flourish. ‘As force’, writes Hume, ‘is always on the side of the governed, the governors have nothing to support them but opinion. It is, therefore, on opinion only that government is founded; and this maxim extends to the most despotic and most military governments, as well as to the most free and popular”

He further adds that the legislation of a particular time may be counteracted or modified whether by the existence of strong counter—currents or cross currents of opinion or by the difference between the Parliamentary and judicial legislation<sup>12</sup>. Bentham maintains that public opinion is an important supportive structure both for the legitimacy of law (as well as a legal system) and for its effective implementation. In his inimitable style, Bentham emphasizes<sup>13</sup>, “The legislator, by despising public sentiment, imperceptibly turns it against himself. He loses the voluntary assistance which individuals lend to the execution of the law when they are content with it.” Hans Zeisel in his article also maintains the importance of public opinion.

<sup>11</sup> A.V. Dicey (1998), pp. 1-2.

<sup>12</sup> *ibid.*, at p. 311.

<sup>13</sup> Jeremy Bentham (1995), p.xvi-xvii.



“The people's sense of what is good and right is both the ultimate source and the ultimate strength of the rules that govern a democratic society. If there is a major discrepancy between that sense and the rules, the rules and those who cling to them will eventually disappear.”<sup>14</sup>

Not only in the realm of making of laws, the impact of public opinion is significant even in the implementation of laws, or should we say, execution of laws in administration of justice. Roscoe Pound of the Harvard Law School maintained that "dissatisfaction with the administration of justice is as old as law."<sup>15</sup> The law makers have no theory of their own. Our public leaders, reformers and others are not agreed on any procedure of law making nor the enforcement of the laws. This unrest infects both legislation and administration with uncertainty, inconsistency and inefficiency. The sober views of a community should be represented and reflected in our administration of criminal justice<sup>16</sup>.

Charles Evans Hughes, in an address before the American Bar Association, speaking of the dangers of current attitudes toward the administration of criminal justice opined<sup>17</sup>:

"The most ominous sign of our times, as it seems to me, is the indication of the growth of an intolerant spirit. It is more dangerous when aroused. In a democratic society, the enforcement of law finds its justification not in the interest of authority as such but in the maintenance of respect for law as proceeding from a free people and as being essential to liberty which vanishes if violence and disorder usurp the place of law."

At any rate, the people are beginning to realize that something is wrong somewhere. They are insisting, and rightly, that something be done to control crime and to secure the detection and conviction of those who commit crime<sup>18</sup>. The number of serious crimes continues to increase. The press has been full of the accounts of the depredation of criminals, and leaders of public opinion have widely discussed methods of relief. The ramification of crime has reached far beyond the boundaries of the cities<sup>19</sup>. James L. Ford, in an article said<sup>20</sup>,

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<sup>14</sup>Hans Zeisel(1980), p.133.

<sup>15</sup>Roscoe Pound (1906).

<sup>16</sup> T. Earl Sullenger(1929-30), p. 502.

<sup>17</sup>*id.* at p.503.

<sup>18</sup>*ibid.*

<sup>19</sup>*Supra* n.16, p.504.

<sup>20</sup>*ibid.*



"So long as we slobber over thieves, murderers, and swindlers instead of punishing them, the periodic crime waves will continue to roll on, robbing us of our savings and disturbing our peace of mind. And of one thing we might be sure, the present deplorable condition will continue as long as sentimentality is permitted to usurp the offices that rightly belong to justice and reason."

The average citizen sees the poor man arrested and locked up, kept in jail-not set free on bail as the man with money-allowed to languish in jail for weeks and months, then ultimately tried, convicted and sent to prison. At the same time he sees the man with money arrested, immediately released on bail, set free, and if he is a professional criminal, he proceeds immediately to resume his life of crime. He sees the trial delayed for months, while the offender is at liberty, free to go and come as he will, without restraint of any kind. Then he sees the trial drag out, every advantage taken of the technicalities of the law and ultimately the prisoner is either set free or given so light a sentence that he becomes a very travesty of justice. Chief Justice Taft laments, "The trial of a criminal seems a game of chance, with all chances in favor of the criminal, and if he escapes he seems to have the sympathy of a sporting public."<sup>21</sup>

There are many issues circling the concept of public opinion, law and justice. While the making of law and administration of justice cannot be left entirely to popular sentiments and momentary will, it is imperative that the winds of change catch the attention of the legislators, policy makers and judges whereby adherence and respect for the law may be fostered in the long run. Law must respond to the public opinion, their sense of right and wrong. The implementation of law as well as its observance has much to do with the confidence of the public in the laws and the system of which it is a part. Where public opinion is opposed to a particular law, it seldom finds allegiance to the same and the extent of violation is rampant; where the public opinion resonate dissatisfaction with the execution of laws, it indicates a serious need to improve the laws or systems in place to accommodate the larger sentiments.

The Delhi rape case, as is the past, are pointers to the fact that public opinion is largely against the archaic provisions in the Codes, ensuring little or no protection to women and

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<sup>21</sup>*Supra* n. 16, p.504.



children in society, as well as the procedural loopholes in the system. The rising crime graphs, the long delays in disposal, the inadequate punishments, the large acquittals, the unsympathetic treatments in the hands of administrators and many others have stifled the public tolerance and forced it to break out in the open for a meaningful change.

## **THE CORE CONCERN**

When a shocking crime occurs, a community reaction of outrage and public protest often follows<sup>22</sup>. The more horrific, brutal and condemning the act, the stronger is the people's reaction to the same. Outrages, demonstrations and protests are a part of normal democratic process which stems, not from society's retaliatory mind frame, but from the larger issues of unfairness, inequity or injustice pervading in the society.

### **A. Failure of Governance**

Governance is the keyword of the contemporary times with every democratic State attempting to ensure the best Governance principles in practice. The latter, simply put, refers to the process of decision-making and the process by which decisions are implemented. Good governance has eight major characteristics: it is participatory, consensus oriented, accountable, transparent, responsive, effective and efficient, equitable and inclusive and follows the rule of law. It assures that corruption is minimized, the views of minorities are taken into account and that the voices of the most vulnerable in society are heard. It is also responsive to the present and future needs of society<sup>23</sup>.

A State riddled with rising problems of crime commissions, human rights violations, aggressions against the vulnerable coupled with exponentially high corruption graphs is bound to set the bells ringing. It is a situation of alarm for the society and the democratic polity believes that the best process the matter may be arrested is to have the voices heard.

### **B. Administrative Arrogance**

Administrative or executive arrogance is the biggest challenge before the elected polity of the state. While the administration is expected to execute the laws and policies of the state and function for the larger welfare of its citizens, the picture is far from reality. The administrative wing has adorned the seat of the impregnable ruler who can get away with any breach of law. The 'rule of law' in a democratic frame has taken a backseat and the rule

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<sup>22</sup>See, H. Weihofen(1958), p. 30-1.

<sup>23</sup>Unescap.org (2013).



of administrators reign supreme, without any identifiable options. The citizens are left in the lurch in the event of administrative fallout and more often than not, are forced to concede to the injustice that pervades in the scenario.

#### C. Insecurity

Every society looks forward to a safe and secured living for all fellow beings. The society perceives that the State and its administration will ensure the safety of all its citizens and in the event of any act violating the serenity of the same, the State will take immediate action to undo the wrong that has been perpetrated. But, the occurrences of events which disturb the tranquility of the society and hit at the core concern of citizen safety, greatly catalyzes the feeling of insecurity amongst the people. Such fears are inadvertently roused in the wake of a horrific crime. The society identifies with the victim and realizes that it is not far from a similar treatment in near future.

#### D. Feeling of 'Unjust' or 'Inequity'

A common citizen simply wants to know whether the wrong perpetrated by the wrongdoer, maybe the state, corporation or individuals, is undone and what redress, if any, has been offered and whether the same is adequate. The complexities of disciplinary actions, punitive principles, reformative and restorative theories, investigative and trial processes etc. sound too baffling and confusing. The common man is merely interested to see that the injustice, if any, which has been perpetrated is redressed in the best possible manner- that provides a sort of assurance to him that in the event of any future eventuality concerning him, he may expect a fair judgment or treatment from the State.

But the hope is shattered when the common man discovers that the process of justice is too long and lonely. While in most cases, he may not get any succor from the State or its administration, if he reaches the farthest to the doors of justice, his pleas may take countless years, only to end in failure, because the supportive machinery has failed him. "Justice should not only be done but manifestly and undoubtedly, seen to be done".

#### E. Plea for Justice

Justice is not a mere rhetoric. It is, in a sense, real and encompassing a person's rights and freedoms. Justice lies at the core of all actions, whether of individual or society or State. Justice calls for fair play; it is in sense righteousness in act and deed. An act based on the principle of justice enshrines the highest level of righteousness-fairness, virtuosity, goodness



and propriety. At an individual level, it necessitates each one to carry out their duties sincerely, while at the State level, it demands upholding of the Constitutional values, in letter and spirit. The latter consequently, calls for a responsible State apparatus which vindicates the rights and freedoms of the citizens, while reducing the threats and insecurities. The failure to live up to the standards generates unrest, which in turn, is a move to restore the equilibrium in favour of justice.

In other words, the common man's show of protest is an indication of the failed state of things where justice is nothing but an impossible agenda and requires serious consideration. A State, which undermines such a call, underplays the very notion and values for which it stands.

As stated in the case of *Md. Shahabuddin v. State of Bihar*<sup>24</sup> - "[J]ustice serve an important prophylactic purpose, providing an outlet for community concern, hostility, and emotion. Without awareness that society's responses to criminal conduct are underway, natural human reactions of outrage and protest are frustrated, and may manifest themselves in some form of vengeful 'self-help'... 'The accusation and conviction or acquittal, as much perhaps as execution of punishment, operate to restore the imbalance which was created by the offense or public charge, to reaffirm the temporarily lost feeling of security and, perhaps, to satisfy that latent 'urge to punish.'"<sup>25</sup>

The Delhi rape case created the appropriate waves whereby a nation might sit up and address the wrongs perpetrated. From the police who failed to detect the bus or send the victim to the hospital to the State which failed to provide the necessary security, this was an apt case which had the worst levels of (in) justice perpetrated, thereby signaling the growth and display of public sentiments in the streets of Delhi and the country. And the State has to respond over the same whether by constituting committees or passing Amendments, whatever it may be.

## THE LESSONS LEARNT

The Delhi rape case came out with certain lessons for the State and society. First, it indicated that the existing laws are not capable to counter the problem of rising crimes against women. The reasons are primarily three: one, many acts which constitute crimes do

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<sup>24</sup>2010 (2) Crimes 95 (SC).

<sup>25</sup>Mueller (1961) p.6.



not find mention in the Criminal Code: second, the punishments are inadequate to restore the harm perpetrated; and thirdly, the implementation of the law suffers from serious infirmities.

As regards the first aspect, it is everybody's knowledge that the contemporary technology driven society is witnessing innovative and intrusive acts of violations of personal liberty and freedom. Thus, eve teasing, stalking, social networking scandals, mms scandals, acid throwing, honour killings and many more are on a gradual increase. It is as if the entire society is preying on female vulnerability. Unfortunately, the laws are too inadequate to take care of the entire scenario. The archaic provisions of rape and outraging of modesty in the Penal Code<sup>26</sup> is expected to address all the rising forms of violence which definitely, falls short of the requisite criteria.

Secondly, the punitive element of the law suffers from inadequacy. Though the Amendment Act of 1984<sup>27</sup> sought to introduce life imprisonment in aggravated forms of rape, yet a study of case laws reveal that punishments generally remain limited to 7 years and in some cases, even reduced, given the "peculiar facts and circumstances of the case". A good illustration in hand is the *ArunaShanbaug* case<sup>28</sup> which recently shot into limelight in the backdrop of mercy petition for euthanasia. In the case, the victim has been lying lifeless in a permanent vegetative state in the hospital for the last 37 years, after a violent rape by a man who was sentenced to 7 years. If media reports are to be believed the accused served his sentence, came back to society to take up another job, start a family and live happily ever after. The punishment vis-à-vis the harm perpetrated lacks proportionality and thereby, is bound to make crime a beneficial enterprise.

Third is the issue of the implementation of law. There are serious lacunas in the letters of law and its process of implementation. Today, every citizen of the country is well aware of the fact that justice is fleeting so to say. There are more chances of getting away with a crime than it being detected and brought to justice. Therefore, the chances of gaining heavily outweigh the losses arising from crime commission. That itself is a big booster for the criminal mind. The Police who have been entrusted with the task of maintaining the law and order and ensure the security of its citizens have shamelessly failed in its task of

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<sup>26</sup> See, Section 376 and 354 Indian Penal Code, 1860.

<sup>27</sup> The Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, 1984.

<sup>28</sup> *ArunaRamchandraShanbaug v. Union of India* AIR 2011 SC 1290.



detecting crimes. The inept attitude of the police and its capabilities of handling the problems confronting the society in contemporary times have posed a big question. Added to that is the fact, that the courts take years to settle a case. Any accused is well assured that the final judgement, if at all, will come after a span of two decades, which is time enough to go on with the usual chores of life. Finally, the judgement, when it comes will have major considerations for the old age, family dependency or such other factors in the life of the accused thereby bringing it down to the least possible sentence. A peculiar and obnoxious system of justice acts as a facilitator to the rising crime scenario.

The public outrage indicated that public confidence in the laws and its administration is at an all-time low and the State must take immediate steps to restore the lost confidence. Public Confidence in the system of justice is of immense necessity. First, most crimes come to the attention of the police as a result of a report from the victim or a witness – members of the public. In other words, if members of the public have little confidence in the police response, they are unlikely to report crimes. Public participation is also critical in the event that a charge is laid against a suspect. Successful prosecution is generally only possible if the victim (now a complainant) co-operates and agrees to offer evidence (in the event that the matter proceeds to trial). Victim participation may directly influence developments in the case; many defendants plead guilty once they know that the victim is going to testify. In addition, the participation of other witnesses is often vital in order for the state to secure a conviction. Prosecutions sometimes fail because witnesses are unwilling to co-operate. Victims and witnesses will only co-operate with the police and prosecutors if they have confidence in the justice system as a whole, and if they trust the specific criminal justice professionals with whom they have contact<sup>29</sup>.

On a more abstract level, the justice system must inspire the confidence of the public in order to ensure its legitimacy. Power can be assigned, but legitimacy and authority have to be earned. The imposition of (at times severe) legal punishment requires the community's confidence in the legitimacy of the institution that inflicts punishment. What is meant by the term 'legitimacy'? It can mean a number of things, but the notions of fairness and integrity are central to the concept.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Julian V. Roberts (2004), p.1.

<sup>30</sup> *id.*



## CONCLUSION

The Delhi Gang Rape has hit hard at Indian polity. It has shamelessly bared the gaps in the laws and justice delivery mechanism which has, till now, been covered. It has exposed the years of injustice and apathy leading to public outrage and outbursts. These are not momentary aberrations of the ignited minds, nor are they efforts to blackmail the State and hold it to ransom. They are indicators of the failed state of things. They are pointers to the fact that immediate steps are required to overhaul the entire system and restore the confidence in the system, before the public can be called upon to discipline themselves and restrain from such public display of outrageous actions. As noted by the Verma Committee, the protests are clearly a call to modern India to renounce old ways of looking, thinking and acting towards women. A democratic nation, governed by the rule of law, must lend an ear to the growing opinion and make effective changes in that regard. The coming times shall best demonstrate how far the lessons have been learnt.

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