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## 'That shrew called NCW'

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The reputation of National Commission for Women (NCW) is deteriorating rapidly especially after the enactment of domestic violence laws. The society was already demanding justice in the misuse of 498A, but NCW never wanted to help the innocent. Renuka Chaudhury, minister for women and child development, said, "It is okay if

innocent men suffer after Domestic Violence Act" on national television. The chairperson of NCW, Girija Vyas, was the prime suspect in petrol pump scam in 2005. If more facts are dug out from the closet of NCW, the government will be forced to shut down the organisation after people's demonstrations.

NCW regularly proved to the Indian society that their only mission is to support unscrupulous daughters-in-law. In the misuse of 498A, old mothers and unmarried, married and pregnant sisters too are arrested on a false complaint of a daughter-in-law. Yes, NCW claims to protect women, but apparently, mothers and sisters of the husband do not qualify to be women of the country. NCW has a massive network of other women organisations and groups, which are always on standby to give guidance to married women approaching them. The most common suggestion given to married women is to file a false dowry harassment case against the husband and in-laws. Even the cops are fearful of these women groups because their scream would be heard in the parliament.

There seems to be a major difference between the way society and NCW perceives equality. Society believes that there should be no differentiation of punishment of crime committed. However, NCW believes punishment should be given only to men only because they are men. Do they hate men? You decide.

The times have changed. Today people don't get shocked or surprised when they find out that a person (husband or wife) is involved in an extramarital affair. Modern thinking or what? People live a modern life but apparently, NCW wants people to treat women the way they were treated in the Vedic times. No, in Vedic times, women were never involved in any extramarital affairs.

According to Indian Penal Code 497, a woman cannot be tried of committing **adultery**. In other words, a woman committing adultery - being unfaithful to her husband and sleeping around with another man or men - will not amount to a punishable offense. But the husband can be punished of committing adultery. No, NCW does not believe this is inequality.

The government proposed to amend the existing biased laws of IPC 497, but NCW turned it down. Nobody expected NCW to justify their decision to reject the proposal but they did. Girija Vyas of NCW said, "Why punish the woman? She is a victim, not an offender. Considering the position of women in Indian society, the NCW took a line against making Section 497 a gender-neutral provision." Yes, according to NCW, an adulterous woman is a victim. So predictable a reaction!

But the question that arises is that an adulterous woman is a victim of what? Victim of a man who agreed to have an affair with her or victim of her own sexual needs. They are saying that considering the position of women, gender-neutral provision in adultery laws will not be good. For the

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first time NCW is right. If adultery laws are made gender-neutral, then it is difficult to imagine the numbers of adulterous women who will be punished. The conviction rate will be staggering.

A lot many men having an affair with a married woman are unaware that in the eyes of the law, they are actually victimising the woman. It could be difficult to convince these men of the way the judiciary sees women, but now they will know because people are beginning to oppose any biased laws and media too is pressurised to give voice to these people. Nevertheless, NCW rejecting the proposal is a big relief for adulterous women.

Now that their unfaithfulness toward their husband is not an offence, they will find it even more tempting to experiment sexual encounters with different men. It will boost their sexual appetite because their adultery is not an offence. Maybe this is what women empowerment is all about. It was the society who couldn't realise this when it all started.

NCW is taking very good care of the desires of unscrupulous wives/ daughters-in-laws. Wives can now falsely accuse their husband and in-laws and blackmail them for money. Wives can extort money by threatening their husband of filing a false case. Wives can kick their husbands and in-laws from the house under domestic violence laws. Wives can have extramarital affairs proudly with anybody even when the husband and in-laws are aware of it.

In short, it is simply great to be born as a woman in India. Whatever she does, she will always be considered a victim.

*The writer has written this article under the pseudonym "Common Man" and can be reached at [bureaucritic@gmail.com](mailto:bureaucritic@gmail.com).*

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