
Rape Culture And Feminism

In a recent poll that was conducted by the Thomas Reuters Foundation, India was ranked as the least safe country for women in the world because of issues like having the worst record for rapes, violence against women and sexual harassment. Although this fact might be hard for most Indians to accept, the prevalent truth is still that Indians live in such a culture where the culture normalizes issues like rape, sexual harassment, and violence against women.

One such issue that has been the highlight of many news headlines recently, is Rape Culture. Rape Culture is an environment in which rape is prevalent and in which sexual violence against women is normalized and excused in the media and popular culture. (Marshall University, 2018). Rape culture is perpetuated using misogynistic language, the objectification of women's bodies, and the glamorization of sexual violence, thereby creating a society that disregards women's rights and safety. (Marshall University, 2018). On a day to day basis, one can see women being degraded in India through various means such as eve-teasing, groping, stalking among many other such behaviours. All these areas result of certain beliefs and certain actions that normalize rape and rape culture. Violence against women is a part of systematic rape culture and it usually does not take place in isolation. Attitudes and actions that we term as "harmless" are what is a part of this structure and are reinforced as an excuse for more sexually violent acts.

Feminism is a broad sociology conflict theory that shifts focus and views from the male viewpoint and male experience to that of women. A typical feminist theory typically highlights social problems, issues, and trends that are otherwise misunderstood or overlooked by the dominant male perspective of this theory. In other words, a feminist theory observes gender in its relation to power. There is a belief that the feminist theory tends to exclusively focus on girls/women and portray that women are superior to men. However, this is an incorrect belief. The feminist theory has always been about viewing the social world in a way that illuminates the forces that create and support inequality, oppression, and injustice, and in doing so, promotes the pursuit of equality and justice. (Crossman, Ashley. "Feminist Theory in Sociology." ThoughtCo, Oct. 5, 2018). To understand the concept of Rape Culture better, a few examples of how prevalent this is in a day to day life are explained. First, is the example of Rape Jokes. Such jokes are neither funny nor are they harmless. In today's time, it has become so easy for people to use rape as a joke, for example, when a student finishes writing an examination that was tough and when he/she says, "The exam raped me". They don't keep in mind the effect such a word called "rape" could have on the minds of every single person around them hearing it. It might seem like an "innocent" joke, but it represents oppressive ideologies that sustain rape culture. From a feminist viewpoint, such jokes can be very sensitive to women especially if they have been victims of trauma.

One way to curb this is to avoid the usage of language that may objectify or degrade women and to be respectful of other people's physical space even if it is just in casual situations. Another example is that of Victim Blaming. Victim blaming tends to marginalize the victim and makes it difficult for the victim to speak out or report an abuse or a sexual assault. A woman should be given the freedom to wear the kind of clothes that she is comfortable in; a woman should be allowed to identify and choose her own sexuality, be it a transgender, lesbian or a bisexual. In an

instance where a woman gets raped and, in the event, that she was wearing short clothes, leads to victim blaming and leads to the notion that such a thing called rape is normal and is prevalent in the society and it is the woman's responsibility to protect herself. From a feminist point of view, one should try to separate themselves from the victim. If a woman says she has been raped, one should be able to listen to her and be supportive of her instead of blaming the victim for being raped. Yet another example is that of Toxic Masculinity. Toxic masculinity basically highlights the beliefs and expectations of how a "real man" should or must behave. No matter how a man behaves, it is 'supposed' to be okay since it is toxic masculinity. Toxic masculinity is what leads to the notion that a man must prove his manliness and the fact that commits certain sins with women is simply because he has certain "needs" and has to "score" with other women. Such an attitude makes women inferior and a subordinate to men. In response to feminism or female empowerment, men tend to choose abuse women either physically or sexually.

Although toxic masculinity cannot be eliminated overnight, a step that can be taken to slowly curb this is to always communicate with a sexual partner and not just "assume" consent. Another thing to keep in mind is that one should be able to define his/her own manhood or womanhood and not let stereotypes shape his/her actions. All of these are some of the examples of everyday sexism that contributes to the normalization of rape. The battle against rape culture is far from over. It is time that women start speaking out for their rights because only then will it lead to a difference not only in their lives but also in the lives of a million other women whose voices are yet to be heard. One such feminist movement called the "#MeToo" movement that was recently started in India to launch a battle cry for women and their deserving rights and freedoms; the only way now is forward.