

# WHEN RAPE BECOMES JUST ANOTHER HEADLINE: THE DANGEROUS NORMALISATION OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE

*"A few years ago, hearing about a rape case would shock the entire country."*

Today, many of us simply scroll past the headline and move on.

That, perhaps, is the most frightening part of the crisis.

Rape has not become normal. But news about rape has.

Every day, social media feeds, newspapers, and television channels report another incident. A child assaulted. A woman attacked. A minor abused. The headlines change, but the story remains the same.

Recently, **a news report claimed that a 12-year-old boy had allegedly sexually assaulted a 9-month-old infant.** Whether the allegations are ultimately proven in court is a matter for the justice system. However, the incident raises a disturbing question: what kind of environment are children growing up in today?

How does a child even learn such behaviour?

This is where the discussion becomes uncomfortable.

Many people immediately blame laws, police, or courts. While these institutions certainly have responsibilities, the problem often begins much earlier. Children today are being exposed to smartphones, social media, and sensitive online content at an age when they are barely capable of understanding its consequences.

Parents often hand over a phone simply to keep a child occupied. But very few stop to ask an important question: ***What exactly is the child watching?***

The internet can educate. It can also influence young minds in harmful ways when used without supervision.

And when supervision disappears, the consequences can be dangerous.



THE REAL  
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The debate regarding the nature and extent of punishment may continue, but one fact remains clear: punishment loses much of its value when justice is delayed for years.

The responsibility for addressing sexual violence cannot be placed solely upon courts and law enforcement agencies. Families, schools, communities, policymakers, and digital platforms all have a role to play. Parents must become more aware of what their children consume online. Schools must focus not only on academic education but also on moral and social responsibility. Society must stop treating every new incident as just another headline.

The most dangerous sign is not that these crimes continue to occur.

The most dangerous sign is that we are slowly getting used to hearing about them.

A society that becomes desensitised to such crimes risks losing its sense of urgency, empathy, and accountability.

India does not suffer from a shortage of laws. It suffers from weak implementation, delayed justice, declining deterrence, and an increasingly unhealthy digital environment for young minds.

Unless meaningful action is taken to restore confidence in the justice system, strengthen accountability, and ensure that the fear of legal consequences is real rather than theoretical, the crisis may continue to worsen. The question is no longer whether India has enough laws.

The question is whether people still fear breaking them.



At the same time, India cannot claim that it lacks laws against rape. The country already has strict legal provisions and severe punishments for sexual offences. Legislative reforms, amendments, and stricter punishments have been introduced over the years. The real problem is not the absence of law—it is the absence of fear.

When people believe that a criminal case will take years to conclude, that influential offenders may escape accountability, or that justice will be delayed indefinitely, the deterrent effect of punishment weakens.

*Fear of law is not created by writing stricter punishments in a statute book.*

*Fear is created when society sees that the law is actually enforced.*

Perhaps that is why public frustration continues to grow after every major case. Citizens see laws becoming stronger, yet headlines remain unchanged.

This frustration has led many people to question whether the current criminal justice system is creating enough deterrence. A growing section of society believes that punishments must not only be severe but also swift and certain. Their argument is simple: when offenders know that punishment is unavoidable, the chances of committing such crimes may reduce significantly.

**"The question is no longer whether India has enough laws. The question is whether people still fear breaking them."**