

GENDER JUSTICE

Poor women are even more disadvantaged as supplicants before powerful men

Nearly seven years after the Nirbhaya tragedy shocked India and the world at large, a 19-year-old, who was allegedly raped in 2017 by a local MLA in Uttar Pradesh's Unnao district, is battling for her life. Hooked to a ventilator, the girl's latest trauma began on Sunday. She was travelling by car with two aunts and a lawyer from Unnao to Rae Bareilly when a truck with a "blackened number plate" rammed into the vehicle. Whether it is an accident or not is now a subject matter of official investigation, but India has had a history of rogue trucks silencing those questioning the system. Since 2017, it's been a long, difficult road to justice for the family. Two years ago, the girl had gone to Kuldeep Singh Sengar, a four-time BJP legislator from Bangermau, for a job. The teenager accused him of sexually assaulting her, but the family's cry for help went unheard till April 2018, when Sengar was arrested, days after the girl threatened to immolate herself outside Uttar Pradesh (U.P.) Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath's residence in Lucknow. In the meantime, her father was arrested in an arms case and died in police custody. Helpless in the face of such brazen show of power, the family wrote to the Chief Justice of India on July 12, alleging grave danger from the accused. Ranjan Gogoi got to know of the letter only on July 30 and expressed displeasure about the delay.

The family did not get any relief from State government agencies, which appear to have been complicit in the cover-up, with the MLA belonging to the ruling party. The BJP has come under pressure from the Opposition to expel Sengar. In the Unnao case, muscle, money power and the right political alignment weighed heavily against the girl. As for crimes against women, U.P. has a high rate, not least because many are reported, unlike in some other States. According to National Crime Records Bureau figures, released in 2016 – the last time data were uploaded – of the 38,947 cases of rape reported, the second highest was from U.P. (4,816). As for all crimes against women, Uttar Pradesh reported 14.5% (49,262 out of 3,38,954 cases) of the total. The Supreme Court has ruled that five cases relating to the issue will be transferred from U.P. to Delhi, and ordered the State government to pay a Rs. 25 lakh compensation to the family. This may bring some relief, even though justice has been inordinately delayed. Despite the increased focus on women's rights, nothing changes on the ground. Till such crimes continue with impunity and patriarchal mindsets don't change, as a diverse and plural society, India would have failed the girl, and every woman.

<u>Words</u>	<u>Kind</u>	<u>Meaning</u>
Disadvantaged		Deprived, under privileged, depressed
Supplicant		Fervently, religious person
Hook		Peg, attack, fix, fasten, clasp
Trauma		Injury, damage, hurt, wound, sore, bruise
Ram		Force, collide, plunge, push, hammer, bang
Rogue		Scoundrel, villain, reprobate, wretch
Assault		Hit, strike, attack, smack, beat, thrash
Immolate		Sacrifice, offer up, offer as, sacrifice
Brazen		Bold, shameless, brazen faced, presumptuous
Allege		Claim, assert, contend, argue, affirm, aver
Grave (adj)		Tomb, sepulchre, vault, mausoleum, crypt
Complicit		Involved in unlawful activities
Expel		Throw out, bar, ban, debar, drum out, oust
Alignment		Arrangement, agreement, alliance
Danger		Peril, jeopardy, menace, threat
Inordinate		Excessive, undue, unreasonable, unjustifiable
Impurity		Immunity, indemnity, exemption, licence
Patriarchal		Relating a system of society controlled by men
Diverse		Various, sundry, manifold, multiple
Change metamorphose		Mutate, transmute, revamp,

FED'S INSURANCE POLICY

The rate cut is aimed at insuring against global risks to favourable U.S. economic outlook

The U.S. Federal Reserve on Wednesday announced its first reduction in the funds rate since 2008, a move that was widely expected. Elaborating on the Federal Open Market Committee's rationale in deciding policy action, Chairman Jerome Powell was emphatic that the aim was to provide a measure of insurance, especially given that the outlook for the U.S. economy remains favourable. The quarter percentage point interest rate cut, he said, was

designed to support economic growth by ensuring that confidence was kept intact and “intended to insure against downside risks from weak global growth and trade policy uncertainty.” In the space of less than three quarters, the Fed has pivoted from talking of further rate increases, to being on hold, to finally cutting interest rates as a global economic slowdown is exacerbated by trade tensions unleashed by U.S. President Donald Trump’s aggressively insular approach to trade ties. The U.S. economy, which expanded by 2.9% in 2018 and posted a 3.1% expansion in the first quarter, slowed to a 2.1% pace in the second quarter, with the ongoing trade war with China blamed for a manufacturing slowdown as well as a decline in business investment. Just last week, the IMF pared its forecast for global growth in 2019 by 0.1 percentage point to 3.2%, warning that “risks to the forecast are mainly to the downside”. The IMF cautioned that further trade tensions could dent sentiment and slow investment, a theme that Mr. Powell too referred to, when he said the rate cut was intended “to help offset the effects these factors are currently having on the economy.”

The Fed Chairman, however, finds himself in an unenviable situation with the rate reduction satisfying neither the sharply critical President who appointed him in 2018, nor the markets where investors fretted that Mr. Powell had failed to signal the start of a protracted easing cycle. A fair part of the problem appears to be of his own making as the central bank chief muddled his messaging, speaking at one point during the post policy press conference of a “somewhat more accommodative stance”, and at another emphasising that the move was not the start of a long series of rate cuts. Central bankers at the best of times have a delicate balancing act to perform to ensure that policies to support growth do not lead to a dilution of focus on price stability. In the Fed’s case, Chairman Powell is clearly concerned that with inflation in the U.S. stubbornly refusing to move toward the central bank’s 2% objective, there is a risk that persistent global disinflationary pressures could at some point feed into the domestic economy, undermining its efforts to spur wage and price gains. For the RBI, the Fed’s move signals that, for now at least, it can stay on its accommodative path in the confidence that U.S. investors seeking rate arbitrage may hit the pause button on plans to head home.

<u>Words</u>	<u>Kind</u>	<u>Meaning</u>
Elaborate		Complicated, detailed, intricate, complex
Emphatic		Vehement, firm, whole hearted, forceful

Downside	Snag, drawback, disadvantage, stumbling block
Pivot	Kingpin, trunnion, spindle, hinge
Exacerbate	Aggravate, make worse, worsen, inflame
Aggressive	Hostile, bellicose, belligerent, antagonistic
Insular	Narrow minded, limited, blinkered, restricted
Ongoing	In progress, underway, extant, current
Offset	Counterbalance, cancel, counteract, counterpoise
Unenviable	Disagreeable, unpleasant, undesirable
Fret	Worry, be anxious, feel uneasy, be distressed
Muddle	Confuse, mix up, jumble, disarrange
Stance	Posture, pose, attitude, bearing
Delicate	Fragile, breakable, frail, frangible
Stubborn	Obstinate, mulish, wilful, pig headed
Persistent	Tenacious, preserving, determined, resolute
Spur	Stimulus, incentive, stimulant, encouragement
Arbitrage	Buy security in one market and selling it in another market
Pause	Stop, cease, cessation, standstill