

March 8, 1984 will go down in the history of the Indian women's movement as a day when it was once again proved by the judicial system that there is no gender justice.

In what has come to be known as the Rameeza Bee case, the Karnataka High Court has once again upheld the acquittal of the police personnel responsible for the rape of Rameeza Bee and the murder of her husband Ahmed Hussain. The court holds that Rameeza Bee had been raped beyond reasonable doubt but there was no sufficient evidence to indicate who had committed the rape. This judgement came in response to the revision petition filed by the women's organisations i.e. Indian Federation of Women Lawyers, Vimochana and Stree Shakti Sanghatana (Hyderabad), challenging the acquittal of the eight accused police by the Sessions Judge, Raichur. In a separate

move, the state of Andhra Pradesh too filed an appeal against the verdict of the Sessions Court.

It will be recalled that on the night of March 29, 1978, Rameeza Bee had gone to Hyderabad with her husband, Ahmed Hussain, to see a Telugu film 'Yama Gola'. On their return from the late show the beat police finding her sitting alone in the rickshaw, when her

husband had gone awhile to answer the call of nature, whisked her away to the police station of Nallikunta where she was raped by four police personnel, including the sub-inspector, wrongfully confined and harassed until the next day. Ahmed Hussain, who came to the police station to protest against the rape and illegal

detention of Rameeza Bee, was severely tortured. As a result of this he died in police custody. As the news of the rape of Rameeza Bee and the murder of Ahmed Hussain spread, the public outraged by these brutalities of the police, attacked the police stations - this outburst took a violent turn, which resulted in the loss of twenty human lives due to the police firings. In a bid to contain people's anger against the misuse

of power by the police, the Government of Andhra Pradesh instituted a one man enquiry commission under Justice K.A. Mukhtadar.

Justice Mukhtadar in his findings convicted the sub-inspector and seven constables for the offence of rape and wrongful confinement

of Rameeza Bee and the murder of Ahmed Hussain and recommended their prosecution. On the basis of the Commission's report, the State Crime Branch Police suspended, arrested and charge-sheeted the accused police. But before they could be tried, the accused filed a petition in the Supreme Court praying for the transfer of the case to a Court outside Andhra Pradesh. The Petition was granted and the case was transferred to the District Court, Raichur, where the trial began on October 22, 1980.

The Sessions Judge, in a weighty judgement held that the rape story was a 'myth', because the evidence of Rameeza Bee was 'polluted and therefore, did not commend any indulgence'. Throughout the legal proceedings the police and the public prosecution attempted to show that Rameeza Bee was a woman of loose cha-

racter and a prostitute. In fact police were sent to her village to enquire of her antecedents. The prosecution even held that she was a woman of ill-repute because she had married twice.

From the entire legal proceedings it was evident that the prosecution almost acted in defence of the accused despite the fact that Rameeza Bee had in almost 21 identification parades, identified the police who committed the crime of rape on her. Justice Mukhtadar too, in his enquiry report had

pointedly noted: "There was not an iota of evidence to incriminate Rameeza Bee as a prostitute and Ahmed Hussain as a pimp".

The acquittal of the police in the Mathura case, of the husband and the in-laws in the Sudha Goel dowry murder case and now, the acquittal of the police in the Rameeza Bee case are all expressions of the male bias and prejudice that is inherent in the judicial system.

Donna
Vimochana

Sangharsh is not 'regular' in the strict sense of the term. Its periodicity depends a great deal on the emerging relevance of, and responses to, any area of debate related to feminism. To this end, we invite responses from other individuals and groups, not only to the articles published here and the earlier publication, but also original contributions on 'women and the media' - our theme for the next issue.

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