

Self Defence Training For Women: Mandatory For Schools, Colleges And Corporate World

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Introduction

Proneness to women atrocities is not a recent phenomenon in the society. Women have been traditionally considered as preys to male chauvinism and aggression from the time immemorial. But in the last two centuries as a result of extension of education among women and due to certain reform moments occurred in Bengal the women have become more strengthened to protest against the attitude and act of violence of their male counterparts. This has again opened the possibility of new threats to those women inside and outside home.

According to the Crime in India 2016 report by National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), around 39 crimes against women are reported every hour in the country. Sadly, we have no data about the ones that go unreported. The National Family Health Survey (NFHS-4) report highlights that every third woman in India, since the age of 15, has faced some form of domestic violence bringing forth the harsh truth. India was also named the most dangerous country in the world in the safety of women.

Women make up about 48% of the 1.2 billion population in India, yet they have faced the risk of sexual assault for decades. In 2016, over 58,000 rapes were reported across India, according to the National Crime Records Bureau, a dramatic increase from over 33,000 that were reported in 2012. In Delhi, almost 4,000 sexual harassment cases were reported that year, as well as more than 80,000 harassment cases nationwide.

Many activists say that things have become more problematic in recent years, as women are too often taught both culturally and socially to remain invisible. In many cities and most of rural India, girls are told not speak in front of men, they have to ask for permission before they leave their homes, and married women are not allowed to leave their homes without their husbands.

The changing dynamics, with women increasingly entering the work force, have them navigating a sphere where men have otherwise dominated for generations. For a majority of women, it's become important to learn how to keep themselves safe as they move from small towns and villages to cities. Now, they are learning to protect themselves.

With the rising number of crimes against women in the nation, the Government is taking a step forward for self-defence training for girls in schools to ensure their safety. The training should be given from the beginning to protect themselves in every parts of the world. Training is to be provided to persons from government schools, colleges, girl student staying in hostels, hostels recognised by Social Welfare Department, women belonging to BPL, slum dwellers, students of Orphanage, etc. This proposal has been recommended in principle by the Empowered Committee of the Nirbhaya Fund under the Ministry of Women and Child Development that self-defence training can be incorporated in the curriculum of girl school for classes between 4th to 9th standard.¹

INDIAN SCENARIO

SELF-DEFENCE TRAINING PROGRAMME OF GIRL STUDENTS IN THE STATE UNDER STATE YOUTH POLICY-2013²

The State Government has announced a progressive Youth Policy, 2013 for the benefits of college girl students of Odisha. The main objectives of the programme is to empower women, enable them to defend against any type of physical assault and to build self-confidence so that they can contribute meaningfully to their own development, shape their own destiny and capacity enhancement through Self-defence training. The Self-defence training programme IS continuing for years with spectacular success.

Till date they have trained 1200 Master Trainers. Around 2.5 lakhs girls have received training each year with budget allocation of Rs.6.00 crores in 2013-14 and Rs.5.60 crores subsequently. Funds are distributed to the Nodal Colleges and which in turn distribute the same to other controlling colleges. There is a four-tier monitoring system in place to monitor this policy. The

¹ Govt. to launch self-defence training to girls in schools, available at: http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/articleshow/57034298.cms?utm_source=contentofinterest&utm_medium=text&utm_campaign=cppst (accessed on 07.09.2018).

² SELF-DEFENCE TRAINING PROGRAMME OF GIRL STUDENTS IN THE STATE UNDER STATE YOUTH POLICY-2013, available at: <http://www.dheodisha.gov.in/DHE/PDF/SDT.pdf> (accessed on 06.09.2018).

committees meet from time to time to monitor the training programme in the field. There is also monthly review meeting at Government level to review the programme implementation.

BHOPAL COPS TO TRAIN CITY GIRLS IN SELF DEFENCE³

Cops in Bhopal have taken it upon themselves to ensure that the women in the state feel safe. For the same, they are visiting educational institutions and coaching classes and offering lessons to girls on self-defence. They are also sharing information regarding women helpline and other emergency numbers.

DELHI HC DIRECTS GOVT TO GIVE GIRLS SELF-DEFENCE TRAINING⁴

The Delhi High Court has directed the state government to implement self-defence training programmes for girls in government schools.

“As a preventive precautionary measure, start self-defence classes so as to arm and strengthen girls and ensure their self-protection. This should include all techniques, exclusively taught to them on a priority basis,” a Bench of Justices S Ravindra Bhat and Yogesh Khanna stated. The court asked the government to consider integrating self-defence classes into the curriculum for girl students. It said that there were several self-defence techniques which could be learned easily.

The Senior Standing counsel for the Delhi Government, Rahul Mehra, said that the Delhi Police was also providing similar training to women in various colonies in the city. Chairman of the Delhi Commission of Women said that there were only 50 trainers from the Delhi Police to train the students, and said that the court should ensure that there will be enough trainers to conduct the self-defence classes in schools. The court has suggested roping in civilian volunteers and trainers, and volunteers from the defence and military to teach girls techniques to defend themselves.

³ It was the Bhopal gang-rape case that shook the entire city and compelled the officials to take such a step. A 19-year-old UPSC aspirant was tied up and raped by four men for three hours. The horrible incident took place under a bridge in the heart of Bhopal. Bhopal Cops to Train City Girls in Self Defence, available at: <https://www.shethepeople.tv/news/bhopal-police-self-defence-classes-women> (accessed on 06.08.18).

⁴ Delhi HC Directs Govt to Give Girls Self-Defence Training, available at: <https://www.shethepeople.tv/news/delhi-hc-directs-govt-to-give-girls-self-defence-training> (accessed on 06.08.2018).

PROGRAMME OF SELF DEFENCE TRAINING FOR GIRLS UNDER RMSA⁵

The Govt. of West Bengal proposed in the current AWP&B of West Bengal RMSA an innovation programme on Girls education wherein an intensive training will be given to at least 1,00,000 girls reading in class IX, X, XI & XII so that they can build up in themselves certain self-defence skills including life skill for self-protection and self-development. The programme has two prolonged targets, to develop certain life skill and learn certain self defence mechanism.

MAKE SELF-DEFENCE A MANDATORY PART OF SCHOOL AND COLLEGE CURRICULA FOR FEMALE STUDENTS⁶

With every incident, it is becoming more and more imperative for women to know how to protect and defend themselves, if ever the need arises. For a safer world, there's a crucial requirement to teach self-defence to girls from an early age, so that they grow up to become self-reliant, strong and confident individuals. Self-defence would prepare them for any unforeseen circumstance and can also empower them to help others in time of need.

Self-defence classes have many benefits apart from just safety. They sharpen your reflexes, keep you fit, reduce stress, raise self-awareness, and also teach you discipline – skills that can help every woman lead a happy and safe life.

There is an appeal to the Government of India; Hon'ble Prime Minister of India, Shri Narendra Modi; Hon'ble Minister of HRD, Shri Prakash Javedkar; Hon'ble Union Minister of Women & Child Development, Smt. Maneka Gandhi, and MP of Rajya Sabha for Uttar Pradesh, Smt. Jaya Bachchan to make self-defence classes a mandatory part of school and college curricula for female students.

⁵ Programme of Self Defence Training for Girls under RMSA, available at: <https://wbxpress.com/self-defence-training-for-girls-rmsa/> (accessed on 07.09.2018).

⁶ <https://www.change.org/p/government-of-india-make-self-defence-a-mandatory-part-of-school-and-college-curricula-for-female-students>

UGC MAKES SELF-DEFENCE MANDATORY IN COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

The University Grants Commission (UGC) has written to colleges and universities asking them whether they have introduced self-defence programmes for women and if they have taken initiatives for inculcating inclusive values among students, both measures aimed at addressing contemporary concerns related to women's safety and social strife.

All the universities have been asked to inform the UGC what steps they have taken to encourage and strengthen National Cadet Corps training at the college and university level. The commission decided to fund self-defence courses for women a few years back. The Commission in 2016 had issued a notification stating that all universities could offer NCC as an optional subject to students.⁷

UGC GUIDELINES ON SAFETY OF STUDENTS ON AND OFF CAMPUSES OF HIGHER EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS⁸

Self-defense training for women studying and working on campus through tie-ups with training institutions / NGOs should be made a mandatory component of extra-curricular activities undertaken in HEIs. Physical defense training can follow instructions on rape aggression defense model that focuses on strategies like awareness, risk reduction and risk avoidance and hands-on self-defense techniques.

In the face of the increasing cases of sexual harassment and violence against women, it is incumbent upon HEIs to institute a thoroughgoing support and education mechanism. HEIs can organized preventions programs in collaboration with student groups to:

- Educate the campus community about sexual violence in the context of a university setting and engage people in a commitment to get involved when they observe risky situations.
- Confront the oppressive stereotypes that are the basis for the disrespect that leads to interpersonal violence.
- Talk about healthy relationships and healthy sexuality, emphasizing the importance of communication and respecting personal boundaries

⁷ Reply on self-defence courses for women, UGC asks colleges, available at:

<https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/reply-on-self-defence-courses-for-women-ugc-asks-colleges/story-NRRj8WOv4iDeXqkKkXuLcL.html> (accessed on 08.09.18)

⁸ UGC GUIDELINES ON SAFETY OF STUDENTS ON AND OFF CAMPUSES OF HIGHER EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS UNIVERSITY GRANTS COMMISSION BAHADURSHAH ZAFAR MARG NEW DELHI, https://www.ugc.ac.in/pdfnews/4006064_Safety-of-Students-Guidelines.pdf

- Coordinate campus-wide awareness efforts, such as town hall meetings, lectures, and other open spaces for dialogue on sexual violence

SELF DEFENSE PROGRAMS IN CORPORATE WORLD

With workplace violence on the rise, business leaders have become more aware of protecting themselves and their staff. Pure self defense can address these concerns by providing corporate seminars and workshops tailored to the needs of most businesses and service industries including, but not limited to health care, real estate, sales, reception, night crews, and customer service employees.

Effective self-protection is not only a practical and common sense necessity but it is also an important component in helping to ensure the long term profitability of your business as well as making your employees feel more confident, secure, and valued.

Most companies know that they can't afford to have any of their employees become the victim of violence; whether it happens to be on or off the job is irrelevant. Each living cell in the organism that is your company is valuable and significant to the well-being of the organism as a whole.

Here are a few of the famous sexual harassment cases:

- In 2002, Phaneesh Murthy, a director with Infosys was accused of sexual harassment by his secretary Reka Maximovitch. They reached an out-of-court settlement at US\$3 million. Murthy was again accused of the same crime in his next stint as CEO and president of iGate. He was removed by the company from his position.
- In 2012, an employee working at a restaurant at the Indira Gandhi International Airport, New Delhi, filed a case against a senior Air India official, accusing him of sexually harassing her by showing her porn clips and making physical advances. The woman alleged that the Assistant General Manager at Air India ignored her complaint.
- Wipro was dragged to court by Shreya Ukil in 2015, when she alleged that she was being discriminated against when it came to increment of salary and that her manager forced her to have an affair with him. In the GBP1.2-million lawsuit filed in London, Wipro won the case when UK Employment Tribunal upheld the dismissal of the complainant from the services of the organisation as appropriate and rejected claims of adverse cultural attitude towards women in the organisation.

- In the most recent case of sexual harassment, a former employee alleged rampant sexual harassment by the CEO Arunabh Kumar of the the Viral Fever (TVF). The complaint was made anonymously on social media and several other TVF employees came out in support, recounting their own incidents of molestation. The CEO, blatantly wielding his position of power in his unapologetic comment to the Mumbai Mirror, said, “The kind of insinuations the FB post makes are untrue. I am a heterosexual, single man and when I find a woman sexy, I tell her she’s sexy. I compliment women. Is that wrong? Having said that, I am very particular about my behaviour – I will approach a woman, but never force myself.”

Unfortunately for the working women, while the laws against sexual harassment are very much in place, the wheels of justice take their own time in churning out the right judgement.

However, all such acts that compromise the position of a working woman are illegal under the Prevention of Sexual Harassment at Workplace Act, 2013. The Act clearly states the following:

- It is mandatory for any company, or organisation having more than ten employees to have a sexual harassment committee called the Vishakha Committee.
- The committee should comprise two, or three people from the said organisation and two people from outside, so that it’s balanced and independent.
- The sole job of the committee is to investigate cases of sexual harassment in the workplace and list appropriate actions for the employer.
- Workplace is not just the four walls of a physical office space, but any ‘place of work’. An out-of-office meeting, online conversations as a freelancer, ‘casual’ meeting in a cafe, or even an interview in a company where you are not employed yet, you’re entitled for protection against sexual harassment under the Act.
- It’s the employer’s duty to make available the names of the chairperson and committee members.

For the first time in the history of the Indian Courts in 1997 the Supreme Court of India recognized sexual harassment at workplace as a violation of human rights but also as a personal injury to the affected woman.

The landmark case of *Vishaka and others v. State of Rajasthan*⁹ laid down guidelines for the preventing and redressal of the complaints by women who were sexually harassed at workplace. The Guidelines entrusted the Employer with the obligation to provide a safe and woman friendly environment.

In India till the Vishakha judgment came there was no law to govern this matter and the guidelines which came as an outcome of this case were derived from the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). Even the Constitution of India had grounded provisions in the form of fundamental rights of life and liberty, the right against discrimination and the freedom to practice any trade or profession or to carry on any occupation.

Self-defense training improves creative problem solving skills. Self defense training can help employees learn to creatively overcome obstacles to success. This type of training can develop and/or improve problem-solving abilities, creativity, and “outside the box” thinking. Employees learn to think “strategically”, providing their company with the ability to identify symptoms and root causes of problems and determine both corrective and preventive actions, leading to less wasted time, money, and other resources in having to repeatedly “replace band-aids.”

Employees may experience a greater sense of happiness and peace of mind. Happier employees provide many benefits for their company. Individuals who have a confident, positive outlook on life are less likely to be threatened by change, become defensive with others, or lash out at others verbally, physically, or emotionally when things don’t go smoothly. Martial arts-based self defense training is known to be a source of personal empowerment and confidence, providing a person with the ability to be in control of him or herself. It is this type of person that tends to attract and affect others in a positive way, making them a valuable asset to any company.

INTERNATIONAL SCENARIO

The goal of feminist self-defense classes is to teach women the skills they need to prevent and respond to violence. These classes are distinguished by their attention to two related dimensions of women’s experience. First, the specific focus of these classes is sexual violence against women, including rape and sexual assault, although the lessons learned may also be

⁹ AIR 1997 SC 3011.

applicable to other types of violence, from sexual harassment to nonsexual assault to relationship violence. Classes are generally limited to female students, because women are far more likely than men to experience sexual violence, and the physical skills taught are well-suited for women's bodies (i.e., they tend to rely on lower rather than upper body strength), for rapid learning, and for sexual assault situations.

These classes contrast with traditional martial arts training (generally a long-term course of study where defensive skills may take years to develop) and much traditional self-defense training (which, like martial arts training, is not generally focused on sexual assault situations or physical techniques adapted to women's bodies). Second, feminist self-defense classes address the gender socialization and inequalities that make physical and verbal self-defense challenging for many women.¹⁰

Self-defense classes are only one of many possible strategies for preventing violence against women; others include rape education programs instituted in many high schools and colleges, escort services on college campuses, security devices such as personal alarms, chemical sprays, safety precautions (e.g., locking doors or using the "buddy system" when out alone at night), legal reform, and increased police presence. However, unlike most other safety measures, self-defense classes begin with the assumption that women have the ability to protect themselves, rather than relying on others for protection.¹¹

¹⁰ As Searles and Follansbee (1984) wrote, Traditionally, women have been socialized to believe that they are the "weaker sex." Females socialized into the conventional feminine role have been taught to be passive, dependent, emotional, helpless, inadequate, ladylike, inactive, and incapable of protecting themselves. In order to avoid being victimized, they have been encouraged to limit their mobility and to rely for protection on men—fathers, boyfriends, husbands, police officers—or other external agents such as large barking dogs or burglar alarms. The emphasis on being soft, gentle, and ladylike has further hampered women as it has discouraged them from developing their physical potential and from expressing anger or aggression in any active or physical way. Taught not to rely on themselves and discouraged from developing the capabilities to be able to do so, females have thus been trained to be good victims. (p. 66)

¹¹ It is important to emphasize that acknowledging women's ability to defend themselves from men's violence does not mean that women are responsible for preventing such violence. Rape, sexual assault, and other forms of violence against women are always the responsibility of the perpetrator, and men should also be involved in preventing violence against women. Similarly, acknowledging that women can and do effectively resist men's violence does not mean that all women should resist all kinds of violence in all situations or that women should be blamed for their own victimization if they choose not to resist or are unsuccessful in doing so. Again, women are never responsible for men's violence against them. It is a central tenet of feminist self-defense classes that the only person who can judge the appropriate reaction to an assault is the potential victim herself, and that in some situations submitting to an assault may be the safest course of action—in other words, a legitimate self-defense strategy.

Conventional safety advice and many traditional self-defense classes teach women to present a “profaned self” characterized by ineptness, fear, and incompetence.¹² In contrast, feminist self-defense classes facilitate the development of a self-presentation that is strong and competent.

SELF-DEFENCE WITHIN EUROPEAN UNION AND COUNCIL OF EUROPE POLICIES

A search was undertaken for any references to WSD within EU and Council of Europe policy documents and funded projects. The first reference can be found in the 1986 European Parliament Resolution on Violence against Women.¹³

Article 24 (c) within the section on ‘violence in the private sphere’ calls for the creation of national budgetary lines designed to finance the work of women’s self-defence and self-help groups where women may be enabled to become more confident and self-reliant.

Later in *Article 66* within ‘*recommendations for action in the educational field*’ the text reads:

“Introduction of courses to prepare children and young peoples for adult life and continuous monitoring of the implementation of these programmes (including) special defence courses for girls at schools.”

There is then a big gap until 2011 and with the European Parliament Resolution of 5 April on priorities and the outline of a new EU policy framework to fight violence against women.¹⁴ The explanatory statement of this Resolution states under 4.7 (measures on behalf of young people):

It is important to educate school children and young people to understand the seriousness of sexualised violence. It is important that young people learn at an early stage to respect each other's integrity and to be aware of destructive and degrading behaviours, particularly such behaviour which is directed at young girls. Targeted measures aimed at young girls may therefore consist, for example, in offering courses in self-defence designed to teach various techniques to defend oneself against violence.

¹² Gardner, 1990.

¹³ Doc. A2-44/86 OJ. C. 176, 14 July 86, p. 73-83

http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=OJ:JOC_1986_176_R_0046_01&from=EN

¹⁴ 6 <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+REPORT+A7-2011-0065+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN>

KENYA'S SELF-DEFENCE CLASSES ARE HALTING THE RAPE PANDEMIC IN ITS TRACKS

Teaching self-defence to girls in Nairobi has cut rates of sexual assault among participants in half. IM power, a dual-gender program, teaches girls to defend themselves and boys to intervene in assaults by adapting feminist models of empowerment self-defence to a Kenyan context.

The course has slashed rates of sexual assault and related ills: the rate of pregnancy, related school dropout plummeted by 46% among participants. No Means No has conducted quasi-experimental and randomized control trials in Kenya and Malawi.

Findings include an average 51% decrease in the incidence of rape among trainees in the year after the program, no mean feat in a country where one in four women has experienced sexual or intimate partner violence in the last 12 months. Some 50% of girls stopped a rape in the year after training, while 73% of boys who intervened in an assault successfully prevented its completion. Overall, interventions when witnessing assault jumped from 26% to 74%. To date, the program has reached some 180,000 boys and girls.

The IM power self-defence course designed by No Means No is a 12-hour course, administered in two-hour lessons once a week by trained instructors. Classes take place in school and cover a comprehensive curriculum from lessons on consent, confidence and bodily autonomy through to self-defence classes to disable attackers. Boys' classes focus on respect for women, disrupting harmful stereotypes, and how to intervene in assaults.¹⁵

The program has been rolled out in Malawi to great success: randomised control trials for the Kenyan and Malawian programs have demonstrated significant reductions in the incidence of rape and the success of interventions. The Malawi program was primarily a research initiative, while a forthcoming rollout to Uganda is set to become a regional hub for NMNW.

¹⁵ How Kenya's self-defence classes are halting the rape pandemic in its tracks, Available at: https://apolitical.co/solution_article/kenyas-self-defence-classes-halting-rape-pandemic-tracks/ (accessed on 09.09.2018)

SELF DEFENSE CLASSES FOR WOMEN IS MANDATORY IN USA

Fear of being raped is so pervasive among women in the United States that it interferes significantly with activities, including recreational athletics and physical fitness regimens.¹⁶ Community organizations and colleges often respond to violence against women by offering self-defense courses for women, assuming that teaching women self-defense is a solution to the problem of violence. Yet, teaching self-defense raises pedagogical issues regarding effective components of programs. The recommendation to the government that women's self-defense courses should be taught in such a way to include information about defending oneself against a sexual assault reduces the chances of completed rape and does not involve risk of greater injury than acquiescence.

A properly taught course recognizes that self-defense courses can be emotionally difficult for many students, not just sexual assault survivors, and must incorporate techniques to deal with these emotional ramifications. However, there is little comparative data to identify which techniques might be most effective. Courses should deal with individuals' strengths while recognizing common socialization factors that might have greater impact on women than on men.

SELF-DEFENSE PROGRAM: FREE CLASSES FOR THE AMERICAN UNIVERSITY COMMUNITY

American University's Police Department (AUPD) is now offering Krav Maga self-defense classes in the fall semester. The classes are free and taught by certified Krav Maga Instructors. The classes will provide information, tactics, and considerations which may be useful for various types of dangerous encounters. Any member of the American University community, both current and alumni, are eligible for the class and no prerequisites, past experience or physical fitness level are required.

¹⁶ Gardner; Gordon et al.; Henderson and Bialeschki; Riger and Gordon; Warr, Teaching Women Self-Defense: Pedagogical Issues Author(s): Margaret E. Madden and Thomas J. Sokol Source: Feminist Teacher, Vol. 11, No. 2 (Fall/Winter 1997), pp. 133-151.

CONCLUSION & SUGGESTIONS

Many women and girls take up offers of self-defence, especially when they are made easily accessible at schools, universities, workplaces. At least a third of those who take up the opportunity are survivors.

Promote increased knowledge and recognition of the contribution of women's self-defence training to the goal of preventing violence against women by policy makers and civil society.

There should be an inclusion of women's self-defence training, using a feminist/empowerment pedagogy and minimum quality standards – as a key element of comprehensive measures for the prevention of violence against women in relevant policies and national action plans (for example on violence against women, child sexual abuse/exploitation, gender equality, education, health, crime prevention) and national/Member State levels and allocate appropriate budgets for implementation.

Acknowledge in policy-making that single-sex provision is a necessary approach to create safe spaces that enable critical thinking, explorations of embodiment and disclosure of experiences of abuse, and that this constitutes a necessary positive action strategy. Such single sex spaces should be supported and funded by public authorities in close cooperation and consultation with feminist self-defence organisations.

Ensure appropriate allocation of resources to women's self-defence. This should include funding to ensure provision of initial and further training for women including courses crafted for girls, women with disabilities, migrant and minority women, older women and women in prostitution.

This should also include support training/professional development measures for self-defence teachers to ensure the effectiveness, including in currently underserved regions and communities.

Empowering self-defence training women's and girls' imagined possibilities to include a range of responses to violence and helps them to develop an analysis of violence, a deep connection

to their bodies, and a comprehensive toolbox for becoming powerful agents of social change.¹⁷ The ability to fight back allows women to develop the sense that attacks are abnormal and undeserved apart from the warnings of others and to act on those feelings.

The point is not simply to give women technical advantages, but to change the relations of power in the way they imagine personal and public space.¹⁸

¹⁷ Thompson, 2014: 357.

¹⁸ Hengehold, 2011:61.