

Is self help the best help?

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There have been numerous reactions to the gang rape that shook the nation. For sure, she was the conscience of the nation who initiated an awakening without politicians having to lead the discussion. And more importantly women are gearing up to protect themselves rather than wait for a cop or man to 'rescue' them.

City women are now even applying for arms licenses. It is observed that, after the Delhi incident, Licensing Department of Delhi Police has received 247 applications from women and they seemed to have been bombarded with enquiries on the procedure to acquire arms.

There has also been 20% rise in women participating in self-defence classes in Chennai too according to research.

Leena Manimekalai, poet, filmmaker observes that it is a state of war against women and rape is used as a culturally sanctioned weapon and naturally, women would want to be armed.

“I don’t mind a gun myself. But question is, will it really resolve the crisis and secure women? How many can afford a gun? How will one address child rapes or custodial rapes?”

Need of the hour is change in mindset. Instead of feeling fearful, one should feel angry. We should ask questions and demand justice. Demand equality, dignity and safety. Not just for girls in the cities. But beyond,” says Leena.

Roshni Hemdev, an entrepreneur points out that possessing guns is not the answer, but providing more police giving protection for the citizens. “Since women feel insecure, they are taking this step of even acquiring weapons. If armed cops are around, then it solves the problem,” says Roshni.

Pepper spray and electric sticks come to the rescue too, says Saravanan, MD, Guardian Integrated Security Service India Pvt.

Ltd. Saravanan notes that most of the factories and other companies in Chennai prefer to employ women guards, since the management believes that they are kind and exhibit appropriate behaviour to women and children.

Foreigners who tour Chennai demand uniformed lady guards who accompany them throughout their trip. “Our lady guards carry pepper spray and an electric stick since we don’t acquire arms. They all know the emergency contact numbers.

The guards are also trained in basic self-defense,” says Saravanan.

Survival Instincts, a nongovernmental organization, delivers training and workshops for corporates and individuals on urban survival skills such as self defense, first aid, and disaster response.

They have planned for a day’s training on Self-defense for women, which is scheduled for January 12.

Ashwini Viswanathan, Marketing Manager, Survival Instincts, says, “The awareness is catching up.

Those days, people didn't appreciate the importance of self-defence training much.

But these days, we see a lot of people taking it up seriously and enrolling for the classes.”

The self-defence instructor, Kravmaga Sreeram agrees that arms could be acquired by people who have enough resources, since they cost a lot and a lot of procedures are involved in acquiring licensed arms.“Self-defence courses that we run are seeing huge interest. Lots of women are enrolling for these workshops that combine martial arts and combat kinetics.“He continues,“I've been receiving quite a few enquiries on the courses that we offer and there is an escalation in number of enquiries. Even parents would want to admit their wards for the courses.“

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