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'Let's admit it: women are unsafe across the country'

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The anger and concern that has followed the gruesome incident in Delhi also reminds us that while the national capital might lead the way, there is no reason for other cities and their residents to feel complacent or comparatively better off. Let us admit it: women are unsafe across India. A recent study highlighted that in India, a woman is raped every 40 minutes and that there is a molestation every 25 minutes. The reality could be far worse.

As someone who has lived for decades in Pune, I find the city far safer than many other places. Women and young students can move around freely and there is a sense of safety that one can immediately feel here. However, let us not brush harsh realities under the carpet. I am told police officers in our states are advised not to register too many FIRs so that the crime graph does not look troublesome. It would be a mistake if we promote this kind of false security.

An employee of our company had problems at home from her violent and abusive husband. I advised her to register a complaint with the police. The policeman refused to lodge her complaint, saying "After all, he is your husband."

Such a comment represents the general mindset, be it in Pune or Patiala. Women are considered the property of men and everywhere in India they have to put up with all kinds of indignities. It is true our police, who are meant to protect us, need to be far more caring and need to be sensitised about the humiliations that women experience every day.

But before we do that, what about our families where violence against women is condoned and often parents ad-



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vise their daughters to accept rough treatment from their husbands? We have to ask ourselves if we blame women for immodest dressing that, strangely, is cited as a reason for getting assaulted. There have been judicial verdicts too that have commented on the improper attire of women inviting assaults.

Prompt police action, severe punishments, rewriting of antiquated laws on violence against women, quick implementations and an end to public apathy are all required to make our cities safe. Pune is part of India, and this city too can really feel safe, only when we reflect on our own insensitive attitude towards women, and decide to change.

(As told to Dilip Athavale)