

Women Wrestlers Struggle for Justice

Women wrestlers have been on a dharna at Jantar Mantar in Delhi for the past few days. They are demanding that 66-year-old Brijbhushan, president of the Wrestling Federation of India (WFI) and senior BJP MP, is sexually harassing them, and take strict action against her and dissolve the federation itself. Famous female wrestler Vinesh Phogat informed that 20 people have told him that they were sexually abused by Brijbhushan. 28-year-old Vinesh is the first woman wrestler to win gold medal in Commonwealth Games and Asian Games. Several male and female wrestlers, sportspersons participated in the Jantar Mantar dharna, claiming that many female athletes and wrestlers were sexually cheated by coaches and Brijbhushan.

Brij Bhushan is an accused in the Babri Masjid demolition case in Ayodhya. He is an MP from Kaiserganj constituency in Uttar Pradesh. He was elected to the Lok Sabha five times on behalf of the BJP and once on behalf of the Samajwadi Party.

It is common for coaches to misbehave with girls who aspire to make it to the top of the game. If we go back in history, we will find many instances of BJP leaders committing such crimes. In 2017, a BJP leader from Madhya Pradesh named Bhojpal Singh along with two of his supporters were accused of gang-raping a Dalit woman. The case was filed because they faced the atrocity by showing the hope of giving the ration card to those below the poverty line. It is known that the CBI has started an investigation into the rape case of a BJP MLA in Unnao, UP. A BJP leader led a procession to demand the release of a police officer accused in the gang-rape case of an 8-year-old girl at the Kathua temple in Jammu. A case has been registered against a BJP leader in Gujarat for allegedly raping a 22-year-old nursing student. Four of the ten people who gang-raped a 24-year-old woman in Gujarat were local BJP leaders from Kutch district.

BJP claims to build a spiritual and moral society. It is a stark reality that neither Prime Minister Modi, Home Minister Amit Shah, nor RSS leaders strongly condemn these inhumanities and do not see that women of the country are given adequate security and punished severely. Naturally, Brijbhushan has been vociferously denying the allegations against him. The unfortunates, who have been wronged at his hands, being from the poorer classes, fear the dishonor and bear the tragedy inwardly. Vinesh Phogat had the courage to expose these atrocities and gather everyone for a dharna at Jantar Mantar.

In the month of January, the Sports Authority of Andhra Pradesh (SAP) expressed their grievances saying that 'women employees are being subjected to severe sexual harassment at the hands of higher officials'. Last year in April, a basketball player

committed suicide in Bihar because the coach was harassing her emotionally and sexually. In 2010, some people complained to Hockey India that the coach of the Indian women's hockey team, Maharaja Kishan Kaushik, was sexually harassing them. In 2009, Boxer Tulsi filed a police complaint against Tamil Nadu Boxing Association Secretary AK Karunakaran for harassing her. Also, the following month, in the heart of the national capital, the Chairperson of the Womens Commission, Swati Maliwal, was harassed and dragged into a car, which is still in front of our eyes. If the situation of famous sportspersons is so bad, then what is the situation of common women in the country?

We should stand in solidarity with the sportswomen who are fearlessly fighting for self-respect and justice.