



VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN INDIA: AN ANALYSIS

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Abstract

Status of women reflects the thought and feeling of the community. In spite of legislative measures, spread of education and economic independence, women still continue to be victims of violence. The incidences of violence are much more than those actually reported or registered. The figures regarding violence against women show that the number is going up constantly. The National Crime Record Bureau says that in the year 2011, 2, 28,650 cases of crime were reported which rose to 3, 27,394 in 2015. Incidents of crime have risen over the last five years with 43 per cent. The data show how unsafe women are in a variety of settings and roles in India? Considering that they constitute almost half a population of 1.2 billion, why does the survival and well-being of more than 500 million citizens at risk?.

The paper is an attempt to highlight the incidents of violence against women in India. It also stressed upon the strategies to check the violence against women in the society.

Introduction

The United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women, in 1993 resolved-

“Violence against women is a manifestation of historically unequal power relations between men and women, which have led to domination over and discrimination against women by men and to the prevention of the full advancement of women...”

In the olden days, violence against women was a result of the prevalent atmosphere of ignorance and feudalism. Today violence against women is an uncontrollable phenomenon, which is a direct result of the rapid urbanization, industrialization and structural adjustment programmes which are changing the socio-economic scenario of our country. In this land where non-violence has been preached as a way of life for thousands of years and where women have been worshipped in the image of Durga, Sarswati and Lakshmi, it is shocking to observe the brutal reality of women existence (Sharma, 2000).

Status of women reflects the thought and feeling of the community. In spite of legislative measures, spread of education and economic independence, women still continue to be victims of violence. The incidences of violence are much more than those actually reported or registered. The figures regarding violence against women show that the number is going up constantly. The National Crime Record Bureau reports that in the year 2011, 2,28,650 cases of violence were reported which rose to 3,27,394 in 2015. Incidents of violence have risen over the last five years with 43 per cent.

Violence against women and girls has far-reaching consequences, harming families and communities. For women and girls 16–44 years old, violence is a major cause of death and disability.

The incidence of total crime in the country is increasing over the years. The list of crimes that are committed against women seems to be endless from simple harassment to even denying them the right to exist. Crimes are committed not only within the four walls and outside the home but also in lonely places and even in public places just in front of others.

Different criminal incidences against women in India for the last five years (2011-15) have been presented in the following table-

Table Trend in violence against women in India

S. No	Crime Head	INDIA					% Increase of crime during 5 years
		2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	
1	Rape	24,206	24,923	33,707	36,735	34,651	43.15
2	Kidnapping and abduction	35,565	38,262	51,881	57,311	59,277	66.67
3	Dowry death	8,618	8,233	8,083	8,455	7,634	-11.41
4	Cruelty by husband and relatives	99,135	1,06,527	1,18,866	1,22,877	1,13,403	14.39
5	Assault on women with intent to outrage her modesty	42,968	45,351	70,739	82,235	82,422	91.82
6	Insult to the modesty of women	8,570	9,173	12,589	9,735	8,685	01.34

Source – Crime in India, 2015



The table reveals that among the different major criminal incidences committed against women, assault on women with intent to outrage her modesty constitutes the most prevalent form of crime followed by Kidnapping and abduction. Though some of the crime heads have shown a decreasing trend during the five years from 2011 to 2015, but it is true from the analysis that the incidences of crime against women are on increase and posing a serious menace to the social order in the society. A drastic increase has been shown in the crimes related to assault on women with intent to outrage her modesty which is almost twice during five years.

Facets of Violence against Women

There are some of the important issues which we include under the ‘violence against women’. Women experience physical insecurity both by virtue of their position within a given socio-economic structure of the society and by virtue of where they find themselves physically.

Debates over the woman’s right to choose versus the foetus’s right to be born are entering Indian discourse, obscuring the continuum between a prenatal death sentence by virtue of sex and the woman’s lack of reproductive autonomy. The study published in the British medical journal ‘The Lancet’, is the evidence of India’s worsening imbalance in the ratio of boys to girls. The 2011 Indian census found 914 girls for every 1,000 boys among children of age six or younger, the lowest ratio of girls since the country gained independence in 1947. The new study estimated that 4 million to 12 million selective abortions of girls have occurred in India in the past three decades. Both the right of the girl-child to be born and the long-term consequences for women and society are the issue under reference. Prabhat Jha, a lead author of the study, noted that the use of sex-selective abortions expanded throughout the country as the use of ultrasound equipment became more widespread. Typically, women from wealthier, better-educated families are more likely to undergo an ultrasound, Mr. Jha said, and researchers found that these families are far more likely to abort a girl if the firstborn is a daughter.

A research by economists Anderson and Ray (2012) estimates that in India, more than 2million women are missing in a given year. The economists found that roughly 12% of the missing women disappear at birth, 25% die in childhood, 18% at the reproductive ages, and 45% at older ages.

Discrimination in matters related to nutrition, healthcare and schooling apart, girls in poor situations and poverty are at risk of trafficking, early marriage and still a considerable number of Indian girls marry before 18, and experience much greater risk of pregnancy-related complications as well as domestic violence. Adding to this the threat of child sexual abuse, mostly at the hands of known people, Indian girls do not seem to lead very secure lives.

Despite of efforts to remove serious impediment for improvements in a girl’s life there are still the threat of street sexual harassment, followed teasing on the way to school, cat-calls at the bus-stop, being groped or pinched on a bus or being stalked foreshadow sexual violence. The threat of being harassed intimidates girls persuades parents to stop their schooling at puberty and even at early stage. Lacking education, confidence and self-esteem, the girl has no inner defences against exploitation and society does not provide external protection. Marriage is seen as a solution to the problem of protecting a girl from the dangers of the public arena.

Shamefully a large percentage of Indian women experience domestic violence. According to the National Family Health Survey-IV (2014-15) nearly 29% of married women experience violence at some point and, perhaps more alarming, 54% of Indian women believe husbands have the right to beat their wives. Social and economic compulsions keep women in abusive marriages and, given the magnitude of the problem, there are still too few help lines and shelters.

The above description illustrates how unsafe women are in a variety of settings and roles. Considering that they constitute almost half a population of 1.2 billion, why does the survival and well-being of more than 500 million citizens at risk? The struggle of a woman is started from conception and ends at death. First she struggles for the birth, then for nutrition and schooling, after that she has to struggle to stop her marriage at early age and for reproduction and so on.

Impediments in Enhancing the Status of Women

There are many precipitating factors responsible for violence against women like arguments over money, suspicion, instigation by others, jealousy, non acceptance of proposal of love or marriage, women’s education being higher than of the husband, or her earnings are more causing ego issues, disputes over children, addiction of the husband, extra marital affairs, need of male child, need of money etc. Reasons can be many but the vulnerable target is only one that is the woman.

There are eyes which cry blood with the violence and torture they face, there are broken limbs by whom they love, there are battered souls who work for them and there are these shattered women crying silently as they don’t have any recourse to. They are exploited everywhere in family in the name of love or adjustments and outside for money or the fulfilment of basic needs of oneself and family members. It is our family, society, our culture and our very own people who taught us to remain silent and bear it up and they are also our own who have often have inflicted this pain on us either to show their masculinity



or satisfy their ego or otherwise. The question which ponders throughout is as to where do they go for justice, peace, love, happiness and dignity?

Various sections such as 304B, 313-316, 305 319, 321, 326, 327, 349 498A etc speak volumes for the protection of women. Similarly the Dowry Prohibition (Amendment Act) 1986, The PC Pre- Natal Diagnostic Techniques (Regulation and Prevention of Misuse)Act, 1994, The Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005 are various Acts for the Protection of Women but there is a huge gap yet to be filled in between theory and practice. However it is to be noted that in spite of such laws, the condition as well as the status of women has always been secondary in all aspects and at all places- the reasons could be many ranging from lack of legislative controls to effective implementation of laws, lack of gender sensitivity to the very core in the upbringing of the woman that she is taught to be lower in status of men whether it be economic, social, sexual, educational or at workplace. Violence has been a part of a woman's life from time immemorial. No society can ever claim in totality that it has been violence free especially in cases of women.

Can we enter into kitchens to prevent women from cruelty of Husbands and relatives? Can't we present in bedroom when a wife is repeatedly raped by her husband? Should we uphold the mother's right to choose to have a child or allow her to decide not to have a girl-child? The Tribune on 9th July, 2015 claimed that due to the state vigilance on sex determination tests, people are moving to nearby districts of Uttar Pradesh to serve the purpose. These instances show that there is no integration of action in order to combat violence against women.

Strategies to Combat Violence against Women

“Violence against women and girls continues unabated in every continent, country and culture. It takes a devastating toll on women's lives, on their families, and on society as a whole. Most societies prohibit such violence — yet the reality is that too often; it is covered up or tacitly condoned” — UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon (2007).

Violence is a problem that concerns human rights violations and therefore the authorities should take very seriously by protecting the victims and taking steps to combat violence. New programmes need not to be introduced. The Government has already introduced lot of programmes like Apni Beti, Apna Dhan; women helpline 1091, Scholarships and other financial assistance programmes. Legal provisions are also enough to enhance the status of women. At present there is a need for the better implementation of these programmes and legal provisions. The foremost need is to change the attitude of the people particularly women towards herself and other women.

- Respect for women should be inculcated right from childhood, schools and colleges need to include it in their syllabi of moral science and gender sensitization programmes should be included in the syllabus of schools. Teachers should first be made sensitive towards women and girls. It is often found that female teachers themselves are very partial towards boys and male teachers exploit female students even sexually.
- The education system must be premeditated to promote positive relationship between girls and boys in schools and sexual modesty is to be followed.
- Creation of public awareness regarding the evil effects of eve teasing or stalking and molestation is a must. For this creation of social awareness programmes need to be initiated by the media. Proper propaganda of the laws and effective implementation of the same is vital for any law to be effective.
- Most of the women are not aware of the Sexual Harassment at Workplace Act, 2013 as the implementation as well as promotion of publicity and propaganda of the same is lacking. For this task the Government, Media and the NGOs can come together to bring about a Social Change.
- It has been observed that most of the women are aware of Domestic Violence Act, 2005 and Penal Laws either due to literacy or otherwise but despite their awareness they fail to take recourse of the police for getting a solution for the same. This shows the lack of confidence in the State machineries which needs urgent correction and necessary rectifications through necessary social change programs initiated by the State and Media.
- There is a need to sensitize the media regarding the repeated relay of incidents related to sex or indecent representation relating to women which has lasting repercussions on the society. Women in and around are considered to be cheap and easily available. This notion is especially carried towards women working or the ones who are more vulnerable.
- Women in the media themselves should realize the problems created off screen due to such obscene or indecent scenes in the movie or album etc.
- Competition in terms of gender appreciation should be avoided in either cases or a healthy environment of learning and respect should be inculcated in the young minds. Parental role too is significant here.
- As good habits start at home so do values, respect and friendly relations. Children emulate what they see at home. Hence any type of gender discriminated should be avoided.



- Social Awareness Programmes through media or Street plays, advertisements etc can help. The consciousness of the woman themselves need to undergo a drastic change. They should be taught not to ignore any cases of violence even if it is eve teasing as it promotes that the girl or woman is an interested party. They should collectively or even singly protest against such acts be the person known or unknown. But this is only possible when the society, state and police collectively help the women.
- The root cause of many evils Alcohol needs to be looked into with lot of care and hence the Government should ban all centers or shops of alcohol. The Alcoholics should be counselled as well as the shop owners should be provided with alternate employment or subsidiaries. Even though closing down of such shops will cause a great toll the revenue generation of the Government and sound impractical it is the only resort.
- There are many families itself where female feticide is promoted— by women themselves either to satisfy their ego or for want of a boy who will take them to heaven. Public Awareness should be created against such women in society as it is the highest of all times that women too realize the agony and pain of other women.
- It is in no way trying to break the very fabric of a society from the institution of marriage and promoting divorces but just another way to tell a woman that she is not alone and that she need not just bear up with all troubles, violence, crimes, manipulations, exploitation just for the sake of maintaining the marriage at the cost of her own safety and dignity.
- Pressure groups of women and Mahila Mandals etc. should be formed to create public pressure, pressure tactics and to organize direct mass action. These local groups of women in the communities can create awareness and assist women for her future life to implement her decisions. It can be in the form of putting pressure on the parental family or in-law family to give importance to the decisions of women in the family.

Conclusion

The important step towards combating violence consists in making it visible and to help the victims of violence to liberate themselves from the violent men's control. Individual efforts in order to check violence against women and emerging self help groups need recognition and support from all corners at various levels. They should be awarded and rewarded to inspire others.

The message to all must be that violence against women is damaging to everyone, who is exposed to it, and that it can be stopped. Customs that validate violence against women must be checked. Social workers, professionals, policy makers and NGOs can prove to be a milestone in this field.

Concluding, we may say, even a State with tremendous reach, awesome enforcement capability and reasonable political will cannot stop individuals from perpetrating violent acts sanguinely. Neighbours, extended family and alert local civil society, organizations can go much further than a battery of laws and a police force.

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