

SAFETY OF WOMEN - INDIAN SCENARIO

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ABSTRACT

21st century too, though the world so advanced in science and technology and in all other arenas, we still talk about whether women are safe or not either inside or outside the house. Several are the cases heard day in and day out. Many cases have been reported and many unreported for the persecute a woman is confronted with. Women have been advancing, progressing and proving that they can surpass men in any sector, whether it is in sports, arts, science, politics, and service or anywhere, she is at par with man. Yet, she still ponders for safety. Public protest after the brutal rape and murder of the 23-year-old student, "Nirbhaya," in Delhi on 16 December 2012 has focused entire nation's attention on the necessity for holistic measures for security and safety of women. Despite strong legislation, there has been no reduction in incidents of assault and physical abuse of women underlining larger socio-political ills and environmental changes in Indian society today.

INTROCUCTION

Woman security in India - An issue to be of great concern even after a great outrage from nirbhaya case. Women and girls in India are at high risk of gender-based violence. In Delhi, the country's capital, a scan of daily newspapers reveals shocking number of cases of violence against women. Ironically as more women are entering the work space, their vulnerability seems to have increased. Despite financial and material security women continue to be victims in and outside home to male chauvinism which manifests in some cases in mental and physical violence sexual assault and rape being its most venal form. Street violence in urban centers is a growing concern for young women and girls, who are increasingly moving away from rural areas for economic opportunities and higher education. Particularly women and girls from the north east region of India living in urban centers such as Delhi have reported experiencing social discrimination and marginalization, and many times physical violence. In 2005, according to the North East Support Centre, among the 100,000 people from the northeast living in Delhi 86% had reported racial discrimination and 41% of cases were sexual abuse cases. Studies and surveys reveal that basic aggression in male behavior patterns has created a sense of insecurity in women. From the womb to the tomb, a woman is always a subject to threat. When in womb, if it is suspected as girl child the chances of foeticide is higher in number. After birth she faces cruel brutalities like rape, abusing, physical and mental tortures, heavy workloads and during old age just abandoned till death. Though women are the better halves, yet they are subjected to maximum tortures in many ways. Though time has changed, attitude towards women still remains to be changed. Change may not happen overnight but a serious effort to be made to bring the desired change.

VIOLENCE EXPERIENCED

The multiple forms of violence experienced in the household and at the community level threaten women's security in India. **Some recent statistics on women include:**

- India ranks the worst G-20 country in which to be a woman. (Trust Law, Thomson Reuters)
- One bride was murdered every hour over dowry demands in 2010. (National Crimes Records Bureau)
- Almost 45 percent of Indian girls are married before they turn 18. (International Center for Research on Women)
- One in five Indian women, many child mothers, dies during pregnancy or child birth. (The United Nations)
- Up to 50 million girls are “missing” over the past century due to female infanticide and foeticide
- 66% of women who have experienced physical violence in their lifetimes are divorced, widowed, or deserted
- 85.3% of women reporting violence claimed that their current husbands were the perpetrators

A total of 2, 28, 650 incidents of crime against women (both under IPC and SLL) were reported in the country during the year 2011 as compared to 2,13,585 incidences in the year 2010 recording an increase of 7.1% during the year 2011. Protest after the brutal rape and murder of the 23 year old student, “Nirbhaya,” in Delhi on 16 December 2012 has focused greater attention on necessity for holistic measures for security and safety of women. Sadly despite a strong legislation there has been no reduction in incidents of assault and physical abuse of women underlining larger socio-political ills and environmental changes in Indian society today. The underlying trends may seem aberrations in male behavior but these have become so pronounced in recent times and their ill effects so damaging to society at large that these need blunt assertion.

- **Cases of acid attacks** on women could be seen as another vector of violence that exclusively targets females by rejected males who attack the face, symbol of feminine persona
- **Sexual harassment at the workplace** is common with a 2010 survey indicating that 88 percent of women who work in large numbers in the IT/ITES sector have faced some form of persecution. Though as the current public debate indicates all professions seem equally vulnerable. To those working in less privileged jobs exploitative maltreatment may be even more brutal.
- **Trafficking Of Women And Girls:** India is both a source and destination for trafficked women and girls into prostitution and bonded labor. While exact numbers of trafficked women and girls are difficult to ascertain, there have been figures projected by various national and international organizations. The NHRC report on “missing children”, which finds a mention, says on • an average 44,000 children go missing in the country every year. Of these, 11,000 remain untraced.

- **Incest Rape:** Incest rape cases have decreased by 7.3% from 288 cases in 2010 to 267 cases in 2011 as compared to 9.2% increase in overall Rape cases. Maharashtra (44 cases) has accounted for the highest (15.3%) of the total such cases reported in the country.
- **Rape Victims:** There were 24,270 victims of Rape out of 24,206 reported Rape cases in the country. 10.6% (2,582) of the total victims of Rape were girls under 14 years of age, while 19.0% (4,646 victims) were teen-aged girls (14-18 years). 54.7% (13,264 victims) were women in the age-group 18-30 years. However, 15.0% (3,637 victims) victims were in the age-group of 30-50 years while 0.6% (141 victims) was over 50 years of age. Offenders were known to the victims in as many as in 22,549 (94.2%) cases. Parents / close family members were involved in 1.2% (267 out of 22,549 cases) of these cases, neighbors were involved in 34.7% cases (7,835 out of 22,549 cases) and relatives were involved in 6.9% (1,560 out of 22,549 cases) cases.
- **Sexual Harassment:** The number of such cases has decreased (8,570 cases) by 14.0% during the year over the previous year (9,961 cases). Andhra Pradesh has reported 42.7% (3,658 cases) followed by Maharashtra 12.5% (1,071 cases) of total incidences during the year 2011. Andhra Pradesh has reported the highest crime rate (4.3) as compared to the National average of 0.7.
- **Molestation:** Incidents of Molestation (42,968 cases) in the country have increased by 5.8% over the previous year (40,613 cases). Madhya Pradesh has reported the highest incidence (6,665) amounting to 15.5% of total such incidences. Kerala has reported the highest crime rate (11.2) as compared to the National average of 3.6. Kidnapping & Abduction.
- **Domestic Violence and Dowry Deaths:** Newspaper pages in south Asia are full of tales of domestic violence. In 2002, 15,000 young brides are burnt to death every year in India. Forty per cent of all sexual abuse cases in India are about incest. In a survey on violence against women in India, 94 per cent of the cases involved an offender who was a member of the family. It is estimated the 50 million women are missing in India either through sex selective abortions, female infanticide or female neglect. A survey of 1,842 women in Uttar Pradesh and Tamil Nadu in India presented a rate of 40 per cent of women interviewed stating they were victims of wife beating. Death from fire-related incidents is a major cause—each year more than 100,000 women are killed by fires in India. In many cases, violence against women has a level of social acceptability. A government survey found 51 percent of Indian men and 54 percent of women justified wife beating. The cases under this Act have increased (6,619) by 27.7% during the year 2011 as compared to the previous year (5,182 cases). 28.7% of cases were reported from Andhra Pradesh (1,899) followed by Karnataka (1210 cases) accounting for 18.3% of total cases at the National level. The highest crime rate of 2.5 was reported from Odisha as compared to 0.5 at the National level.

- **Torture (Cruelty By Husband & Relatives):** 'Torture' cases in the country have increased (99,135 cases) by 5.4% over the previous year (94,041 cases). 19.9% of these were reported from West Bengal (19,772 cases). The highest crime rate of 21.6 was also reported from West Bengal as compared to the National rate at 8.2.
- **Importation Of Girls:** An increase of 122.2% has been observed in Crime Head as 80 cases were reported during the year 2011 as compared to 36 cases in the previous year (2010). Madhya Pradesh (45 cases), Bihar (10 cases) and Karnataka (12 cases) have together contributed more than two-third of total such cases at the National level.

POSSIBLE APPROACHES

Many more incidences of rapes/gang rapes have been reported even after the Delhi bus gang rape on December 16, 2012. We have to change, and the society has to change by and large. The status of a woman in our society is low, and in the past, it was extremely low. Child marriage used to be prevalent in many states, & also the 'Sati Pratha'. During those days, one couple used to have a minimum of six to eight children. A woman between the age of 35-40 would be a grandmother and by 60, a great grandmother. This is one of the reasons that our population is too much and is increasing at an alarming rate. It is difficult to provide law & order, quality living, education, medical help to so many people. An early marriage is not a solution for satisfying the physical need & to prevent rape. Most of the women & girls in India have experienced some kind of violence during their life. It may be comparatively less in women of good socioeconomic status, but for a commoner it is a very common experience. We all have to join hands together to get rid of the violence against women and zero tolerance for rape. Following are some of the causes, which could be directly or indirectly the reasons for the violence.

- Galloping population of the country. Population control measures to be exercised for many reasons, especially law & order.
- Downfall of female to male ratio is another reason. Female foeticide and infanticide has alarmingly reduced the ratio of female to male ratio that resulted in the disturbances of need of women in the society. This increased the frequency of violence against women and children.

MEASURES TO REDUCE VIOLENCE

- Strict legislation against all types of crimes, especially physical violence against women to be exercised.
- Sex & value education should be included in the main stream of education and job opportunities to be created for the same.
- Diversified job opportunities to be created and offered to motivate, channelize and make use of the energy of youth to built a better Nation.

- Too much of parental influence in selecting the education pattern, deciding the partner at the time of marriage to be minimized. Let the youth be given the preference to design their life.
- Adjustments and understandings in family matters to be taught and practiced at early ages in the families to have a peaceful and meaningful life later.
- The youth to be given special training to accept and own the partner from the day of their marriage, forgetting the past and focusing on the future trusting and respecting each other.
- One should understand the definition of character as a relative term. We need to be a good law abiding citizens.
- If we find a girl/ woman in a problem, it is our moral duty as a human being to assist her. Unfortunately we couldn't because of legal hurdles and fear of police harassment.
- The services of judiciary and police departments to be made more effective.
- Live in relationship shouldn't be a taboo in today's world. A couple has got a full right to know about each other. Like-minded people should marry, but keeping in mind that marriage survives, basically on mutual trust, which demands some sacrifices and adjustments.
- A woman should be a support to another woman. She may be a mother-in-law, or daughter-in-law, mother or a daughter, an employer or an employee.
- Our legal system/judiciary should give the same status to the child born to a single mother/parent, and it should no longer be considered as a social stigma, or the child be considered as illegitimate. Going in for abortion or abandoning a child just because the boy friend has refused to get married is also a big problem for women.
- In such cases if the mother is financially independent and feel the child is precious for her life she should be allowed to bring up her child in the society.
- Public transport should have female attendants. At night, more police force should be made available to control the traffic.
- To address the issues of violence against woman, more police cells should be opened with lady police officers to handle such cases.
- Some of the precautions to be taken are avoid traveling at night if possible.
- Dress code and code of conduct to be given top priority by girls and women to keep self away from attracting the problems.
- Avoid going alone at lonely places.
- It is time for women to raise to the situation, have confidence in her, get educated, and well placed in the job market thereby having meaning and self satisfaction in her life.

SUMMARY

The seed has to be sown from the very young school age in the minds of youngsters, that boys and girls, men and women are equal in every aspect except in the biological constitution. Equality in everything – expenditure towards food, clothing, education, housing facilities, treatment for health issues, games and sports etc. There is nothing that a woman to be kept behind and treated as less privileged. Respect towards the opposite sex has to be taught from school levels. This could be best practiced when parents and teachers join hands and are united while educating the kids either at home or in schools. If this small step is taken it will be a giant stride for vast changes in the near future. Proper implementation of judicial measures without corruption at all levels to be practiced. The theory of Sati Savitri is obsolete and will not be enough to handle the present scenario. The concept of dowry system should be abolished. Importance to money in marriage has to be nullified. Understanding the partner, respecting the views of one another, feelings of oneness, respecting the family members as their own in all circumstances may keep the partners happy forever. India – and the rest of the world – would do well if learn and practice about the science of cultural change.

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BE STRONG TO MAKE OTHERS STRONG – JOIN HANDS TO SAVE WOMEN AND CHILDREN

BE THE LEADER TO LEAD THE WOMEN TOWARDS A NEW INDIA