

Violence against Women in India - Crime rates and societal ills

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Crimes against women in India:

One incident shook the entire nation subjected to brutal gang rape of a 23-year-old physiotherapy student who died due to severe injuries suffered during the attack on 13 September 2013, in New Delhi. The law respecting violence against women was amended by the Parliament. The utmost punishment for rape resulting in death of the victim was modified from life imprisonment to include death penalty. Other laws related to sexual crime were made severe, in the hope that this would dissuade people from committing such crimes. The source and subsequent impact of these immediate reactions and quick fixes have been extensively discussed in the print media. In this account, we aim to examine the ongoing scenario of violent crimes against women in India within a backdrop of the social position of women in Indian society in general and the media retaliation following this incident in particular.

The rate of violent crimes in India especially those against women including rape that are reported in official statistics are increasing year by year. According to National Crime records Bureau, the crimes against women increased by 53.9%, by the year 2015. Ranging from the so-called eve teasing and outright sexual harassment on the street or workplace, to harassment for dowry, molestation in public transport vehicles, and the often-reported rape, these crimes against women reflect the vulnerability and profounded problems related to the position of women in our society. Out of 28 states, only UP confirmed 76,000 crimes against women by 2018 probably evidence that education and economic growth alone do not affect the occurrence of these crimes. This can be further observed in the National Crime Records Bureau (NRCB) statistics which show that cruelty by a husband or his relatives (46.8%) and dowry-related crimes (7.1%) account for more than half of the crimes against women.

As on May 15, 780 cases of rape were reported - which boils down to an average of over 5 cases each day. Compared to the number of cases in 2017 upto May 15, data shows a **3.03%** increase in the number of rapes reported in the country's capital. The police reports for 2017 and 2018, from January 1 to May 15 in both years, show a drop in the total number of heinous crimes in Delhi by roughly **5.6%**. However, the reported cases of rape alone have increased from 757 to 780.

Violence against women in Indian Society:

The mess of gender-based violence runs very extreme in a democratic India. The rape crisis is just one strand of the multitude of problems that reflect the gender discrimination scenario. These prejudicial attitudes are seen right from womb to tomb. They start with the enactment of sex-selective abortion and infanticide, and continue through adolescent and adult life with high levels of female infant mortality, child marriage, teenage pregnancy, and lesser wages for women, unsafe workplaces, domestic violence, maternal mortality, sexual assault and neglect of elderly women. Overall 35% of women worldwide have experienced either physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence or non-partner sexual violence. Intimate partner violence is reported in most of this violence. Globally about one-third (30%) of all women who have been in a relationship have experienced physical and/or sexual violence by their intimate partner. WHO figures quote that 38% of all murders of women are committed by intimate partners. 44.5% of girls are married before the age of 18.

India has made great strides in terms of economic growth in the past decade. The increase in female literacy rates from 65% by the year 2017 and the Maternal Mortality Ratio (MMR) in India have declined from 167 in 2011-2013 to 130 in 2014-2016, according to a special bulletin issued by the Health Ministry today.

MMR is defined as the proportion of maternal deaths per 1, 00,000 live births. The Special Bulletin of Maternal Mortality in India stated that among the southern states, the decline has been from 93 to 77 and in "other" states from 115 to 93.

In other aspects of gender equality too, such as education or participation of women in the workforce, or representation of women in elected bodies, India falls short of international standards. It ranks 136 out of 186 among the nations of the world in the United Nations Development Programme's gender inequality index. Violence against women, either sexual or physical – wife beating is widely spoken of, but hardly reported – is an expression of power asymmetry between the two genders. The dismal reporting rate of domestic violence can also be attributed to the attitudes of the victims. According to National Family Health Survey 3 (NFHS-3) data, 41% of women believed their husbands were justified in slapping them and 35% of the women even believed that a brutal beating is also justified if they neglected doing the household duties or looking after their children.

Review of Literature:

Kishwar, Madhu (1986) in her study **dowry to ensure her happiness** or to disinherit her feels that oppression of wives for bringing inadequate dowry is only another excuse for using violence against them : in other words and in fact evidence from other country has indicted as much even without additional tradition of dowry, inter spousal violence is endemic. She has also pointed out that dowry payments in themselves do not trans from girls in to burdens but rather dowry makes daughter burdensome only because daughter are unwanted to being with”.

Elise Bonding (1988) in her paper on **women & social violence** clearly points out that social violence against women are mainly based on a (a) social or institutional structure of the patriarchal order perpetuating all kinds of discrimination and oppressions against women which result into (b) behavioural violence. In general, she reports that because women are 'easy' victims, they experience a great deal of direct behavioural violence in every society. Of the most common expressions of behavioural violence against themselves women as victims find involved in rape, wife-beating and prostitution all over the world

Sen (1998) examined **violence in intimate relationships**, namely women's experiences of male violence at the hands of husbands (or male partners) in the city of Calcutta. Information was collected from 52 relationships by interviewing women about their histories including educational experiences, migration patterns, paid employment and physical and sexual violence. It was found that in general, women suffered extreme physical abuse and for long durations. Employment of women was not found to be unassociated with violence, indicating that irrespective of whether a woman is an earning member or not, she faces hostility and violence.

Kumar and Shanta (2012) have conducted a study on **“child Marriage; causes and consequences.”** This article is concerned with the kind of theoretical support required for the present problem. Under this paper an attempt is made to review important works on child marriage in the light of which the bindings of the present article could find relevance and a meaningful understanding. The main objectives of this study were: (i) To know the socio-economic condition of the respondents and to prove a social profile of the victims of child marriage (ii) To assess the extent of knowledge of respondents regarding the on the minimum forage for marriage (iii) To identify the causes for child marriage (iv) To identify the ill-consequences of child marriage if any, such a problem related to pregnancy, child birth etc.. The data that provide the gathered through an interview schedule the interview method was preferred to 73 questioner method. This interview schedule represents the principle tool or instrument of data collection in the present article. The principle instrument is used to collection information from the field. A sample of 300 household representing the respondents was drawn.

T.C. Mahadevappa (2012) has conducted a study on **gender bias and social justice** this report mainly aims to find the facts and nature of the widespread description universally practiced on the basis of gender inequality. It is also accepted that unless the world female population is not in a position to practically enjoy the equal social opportunity no social change, economic gain or political authority can lead to peaceful development of human society. Women are considered as a decisive force of social change and social development. Gender bias is deeply rooted in Indian society and it has thwarted serious implementation of the program and policies designed to envisage empowerment of women. The author lays emphases on imparting education to 74 women with any discrimination and bias so that women can become catalyst in the process of development as equal partner

Ghoi and Deshpande and Shailesh (2013) conducted a study, **“Violence against women in India: A Case for Research in Tackling the Menace”**. They pointed out that violence against women has long been a problem, in times of peace and war. This violence ranges from very mild teasing to rape and murder and takes place at home, in the streets, at work places, jails, in short everywhere. Few crimes against women are reported, fewer still prosecuted and a negligent number of accused are actually punished. In the absence of detailed studies on incidence, it is difficult to come up with suggestions to reduce if not abolish such violence. There is an urgent need for more studies on this violence so that the psychology of the violators is better understood. Instances of violence need to be thoroughly investigated, and ways and means devised to reduce their incidence. There is need for quick and severe punishment for the accused, which would act as a deterrent too. Any society, in which half the population is not assured of safety, needs to reconsider its claim to being civilised.

Objective of the Study:

The primary objective of the study is to determine crime rates and violence against women and its impact on Indian society that reflects serious implications in existing and future scenario too. The study also examine the phases of women exploitation and societal ills in Indian system and prohibition of such activities through the enforcement of stringent laws.

Methodology:

This paper is conceptual based on secondary data with respect to all the theoretical aspects of title justification. It is mainly collected from various publications and previous thesis dissertation to support the study.

Women Violence and Societal ills - Indian Legislation:

Crimes against women are classified in the Indian Penal Code (IPC) and special and local laws. Some of the crimes under the IPC are mentioned below:

- Rape (Section 376 IPC): Over the years there has been a trend of increasing number of cases being reported. 9.2% increase was reported in the year 2011 over the year 2010 and 12% increase by the year 2016. Rape cases have been divided into two categories: Incest rape and other rapes. Delhi has often been addressed as the rape capital of India
- Kidnapping and abduction (Section 363-373 IPC): Delhi has shown the highest rate
- Dowry death (Section 302, 304B IPC) and Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961: Highest rate has been reported in Bihar

- Torture (Cruelty by Husband and Relatives of Husband) (Section 498-A IPC): The highest crime rate was reported in West Bengal
- Molestation (Section 354 IPC): Madhya Pradesh has reported the highest incident, and Kerala has reported the highest crime rate
- Sexual harassment (Section 509 IPC): Sexual harassment of women is a violation of the fundamental right of women to work in a safe environment
- Importation of girls (Section 366-B IPC).
Some of the enactments of laws are as follows:

Hindu Marriage Act (1955)

Deficiencies in certain legislations are noteworthy. According to two major legislations on marriage the Hindu Marriage Act (1955) and Special Marriage Act (1954) presence of mental illness at the time of marriage or in the past, if concealed, can become a ground of nullity of marriage.

Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act (2005)

This Act does not recognize mental illness as a cause of domestic violence. The perpetrator of domestic violence is not permitted to entreat any defence. He is to be counselled to cease violence.

Dowry Prohibition Act (1961)

In this case the husband rejects the woman because of mental illness, while the woman's family denies mental illness and alleges that the abnormal behaviour is because of cruelty meted out to her to fetch more dowry.

Prevention of Violence against Women:

Gender sensitization

Gender sensitization should pivot on the sensitivities and boundaries of man-woman relationships, code of conduct with respect opposite gender in different background, and strategies to prevent violence at unusual places and times. Awareness and education can be done by parents at home, teachers in school and colleges, employers at work place and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) in the community. A national workshop was organized by Maitri (NGO) on April 5, 2012 in Delhi on VAW.

Treatment of mental illness

Good mental health care facilities are needed for early identification, treatment and rehabilitation of those with severe mental disorder. Persons with mental illness with active symptoms must be kept in a protected environment till notable improvement takes place. Some patients with chronic illness such as mental retardation and schizophrenia may have to be kept life-long in protected environments under the care of their guardians.

Restriction on the use of addicting substances

Collaborative efforts must be made to restrict the use of alcohol, bhang, and ganja especially in young people especially in public places like trains and buses. The age for purchasing alcohol may be raised to 30 years.

Media

Media campaigns can help to reverse social perspectives that tolerate VAW. Collaboration with the media needs to pivot on creating new messages and new responses to prevent domestic violence.

Pornography

The role of computers and internet is worth mentioning. Pornographic sites should be blocked. CD-ROMS/websites containing such pornographic information quite should be strictly be prohibited.

Law enforcement machinery

24 × 7 helplines for women like Maitri (a New Delhi-based NGO), and Vandrewala in Mumbai are needed. Victims of violence can directly visit the hospitals, can seek referrals from the community centers, and access 24 × 7 helpline numbers. Maitri NGO has provided the helpline number for Domestic Violence +918010512345. Fast track courts are strongly recommended. Special cells in police stations with the help of women police officers should be delegated with manpower, latest gadgets like CCTV footage and phone help lines, etc.

Code of conduct

Traditional families have an unwritten code of conduct which prevents intimacy between prohibited relationships (father and daughter and mother and son etc.) in a family. Likewise, in hospitals there is a code of conduct not to examine a female without a female attendant

Improving the socioeconomic status of women

Empowerment of women through enhancing their education, job opportunities, representation in different sectors, and awareness about their rights and legal provisions would stride in the right direction.

Lifestyle

Promotion of healthy lifestyle including handling of stresses of daily living is recommended.

Religious leaders and scholars

Religious leaders and scholars need to re-examine interpretations of religious texts and doctrines from the perspective of assisting equality and dignity for women.

Social organizations

NGOs/social activists/communities/resident welfare organizations (urban)/village panchayats need to be actively intricately and sensitized to promptly act if the incidents come to their notice. These services can be utilized in minimizing violence by putting social pressures on the perpetrators of crime. Such organizations can also provide leadership in the local community to oppose VAW.

Conclusion:

The status of women in India has been subject to many great alterations over the past few millenniums. Crimes and Violence against women is a violation of human rights, the very nature of which deprives women of their ability to enjoy fundamental freedoms. It is a serious obstacle to equality between women and men. Manifestations of violence include physical aggression, such as blows of varying intensity, burns, attempted hanging, sexual abuse and rape, psychological violence through insults, humiliation, coercion, blackmail, economic or emotional threats, and control over speech and actions.

In India, where the culprits are largely known to the victim, the social and economic "costs" of reporting such crimes are high. It is high time now that women should get a respectable and dignified position in the Indian society. Awareness in the women as well as society should be created and their equal rights should be effectively implemented. It should be remembered that the socio economic empowerment must be ensured by the nation to minimize the exploitation which can help to improve the status of women. The fear should be in the mind of the offenders not the innocent people and hope our judiciary will understand the gravity of the situation and will ensure that the correct judgments without taking much time is made.

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