

Crime, Gender and Society in India

Preetinder Kaur^{1,*}

¹Project Assistant, Indian Institute of Technology Ropar, Ropar, Punjab, India

*Corresponding author.

Address: Flat # 2, Canal View, Giani Zail Singh Nagar, Ropar, Punjab, 140001, INDIA

Email: preetinderkaur0903@gmail.com

Received 15 August 2011; accepted 22 September 2011

Abstract

Violence against women and girls is one of the most widespread violations of human rights. It can include physical, sexual, psychological and economic abuse, and it cuts across boundaries of age, race, culture, wealth and geography. It takes place in the home, on the streets, in schools, the workplace, in farm fields, refugee camps, during conflicts and crises. It has many manifestations from the most universally prevalent forms of domestic and sexual violence, to harmful practices, abuse during pregnancy, so-called honour killings and other types of femicide. 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. In 1994, a World Bank study on ten selected risk factors facing girls and women in this age group, found rape and domestic violence more dangerous than cancer, motor vehicle accidents, war and malaria. Studies also reveal increasing links between violence against women and HIV and AIDS. A survey among 1,366 South African women showed that women who were beaten by their partners were 48 percent more likely to be infected with HIV than those who were not. Gender-based violence not only violates human rights, but also hampers productivity, reduces human capital and undermines economic growth. A 2003 report from the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates that the costs of intimate partner violence in the United States alone exceeds US\$5.8 billion per year: US\$4.1 billion are for direct medical and health

care services, while productivity losses account for nearly US\$1.8 billion due to absenteeism.

Key words: Violence; Gender; India; Consequences

Preetinder Kaur (2011). Crime, Gender and Society in India. *Higher Education of Social Science*, 1(1), 24-32. Available from: URL: <http://www.cscanada.net/index.php/hess/article/view/j.hess.1927024020110101.088>
DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.3968/j.hess.1927024020110101.088>.

INTRODUCTION

Violence against women is an act of gender-based violence that results in physical, sexual or mental harm of suffering to women, including threats of such acts, compulsion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life. Social and economic cost of violence against women is massive and has wrinkle effects on all over the society. Women can suffer isolation, powerlessness to work, loss of wages, lack of contribution in regular activities, and limited ability to care for themselves and their children (WHO 2008). According to WHO report gender-based violence, or violence against women, is a major public health and human rights problem throughout the world (WEF 2009).

In the United States, one-third of women murdered each year are killed by intimate partners. **In South Africa**, a woman is killed every 6 hours by an intimate partner. **In India**, 22 women were killed each day in dowry-related murders in 2007. **In Guatemala**, two women are murdered, on average, each day. Women and girls comprise 80 percent of the estimated 800,000 people trafficked annually, with the majority (79 percent) trafficked for sexual exploitation. Approximately 100 to 140 million girls and women in the world have experienced female genital mutilation/cutting, with more than 3 million girls in Africa annually at risk of

the practice. Over 60 million girls worldwide are child brides, married before the age of 18, primarily in South Asia (31.1 million) and Sub-Saharan Africa (14.1 million). An estimated 150 million girls under 18 suffered some form of sexual violence in 2002 alone. As many as 1 in 4 women experience physical and/or sexual violence during pregnancy which increases the likelihood of having a miscarriage, stillbirth and abortion. Up to 53 per cent of women physically abused by their intimate partners are being kicked or punched in the abdomen. In Sao Paulo, Brazil, a woman is assaulted every 15 seconds. In Ecuador, adolescent girls reporting sexual violence in school identified teachers as the perpetrator in 37 per cent of cases.

Approximately 250,000 to 500,000 women and girls were raped in the 1994 Rwandan genocide. In eastern Democratic Republic of Congo, at least 200,000 cases of sexual violence, mostly involving women and girls, have been documented since 1996, though the actual numbers are considered to be much higher. Domestic violence alone cost approximately US\$1.16 billion in Canada and US\$5.8 billion in the United States. In Australia, violence against women and children costs an estimated US\$11.38 billion per year.

Between 40 and 50 per cent of women in European Union countries experience unwanted sexual advancements, physical contact or other forms of sexual harassment at their workplace. In the United States, 83 per cent of girls aged 12 to 16 experienced some form of sexual harassment in public schools.

BRIEF ABOUT THE TOPIC

CRIMES against women are steadily increasing in the country. According to National Crime Records Bureau's (NCRB) Unique Crime Clock, 2005, the country reported one molestation every 15 minutes, one rape every 29 minutes, one murder every 16 minutes and one sexual harassment every 53 minutes.

Crimes against women registered under both IPC (Indian Penal Code) and SLL (Special and Local Laws) have increased sharply from 2002 to 2006. In 2006, a total of 1,64,765 crimes against women were registered all over India in comparison to 1,43,034 in 2002, over 15 per cent increase. The recent National Family Health Survey-III reveals that one-third of women in the 15-49 age group face physical violence and one-tenth sexual violence. About 30 per cent of married women were victims of domestic violence while 25 per cent suffered physical or sexual violence at the hands of the husband in 12 months preceding the survey.

From a comparison of the figures of crimes against women in India with advanced countries as well as neighbouring countries, it could be seen that crimes against women are showing an upward trend everywhere. Statistics from **National Violence Against Women**

survey suggest that in the US, annually 5.9 million incidents of physical assault take place against women of which 76 per cent of the assaults are perpetrated by current or former intimate partners or dates. The condition in other developed countries is no better. The World Health Organization estimates that globally, one woman in five will be the victim of rape or attempted rape in her lifetime. In South Africa, a frightening 40 per cent of girls aged 17 or under have been victims of rape or attempted rape.

In countries like Pakistan, Bangladesh, the percentage of reported crimes against women is far less than the actual incidence of crime. A large number of cases go unreported because the women victims and their family members are reluctant to report because of the fear of social stigma and shame. In India, most victims are from economically deprived and marginalised sections. They feel scared to complain against the powerful offenders.

Non-reporting of crimes, particularly in cases of rape, is common even in advanced countries. In a study of rape cases in the US, Smithyman concluded but for every 100 rape cases only 25 per cent were reported to the police, 13 per cent were arrested, 9 per cent prosecuted and 9 per cent are convicted. Similarly, the British Crime Survey 2002 estimates that the incidence of rape in 2000 were around 2,000 as against the reported figure of 7,000.

Women face maximum risks of violence from people like intimate partners, close family members, boyfriends or near relatives. According to a research study by the Institute of Social Sciences, sponsored by the Bureau of Police Research and Training, 75-80 per cent of the rape and other sexual assaults crime are committed by offenders known to the victims. In the US, according to the Bureau of Justice Statistics, about one-third of number of crimes against women victims were perpetrated by their intimate partners.

The ISS study further revealed that irrespective of the type and nature of crime, young women between 15 and 30 years who are illiterate or poorly educated and belong to economically weaker sections are highly vulnerable to gender-specific crimes. An analysis of the secondary data compiled by the National Family Health Survey-III and the NCRB also confirmed this conclusion.

In respect of cases of trafficking, the age of girls trafficked from and into India is coming down. In India, girls as young as 10 years of age are being trafficked. The same trend is being witnessed in other countries also due to misconception that sex with young and virgin girls will cure many sexually transmitted diseases and minimise the risks of contracting HIV/AIDS.

Official statistics in India club kidnapping and abduction together. Though both offences are closely related, kidnapping is a crime involving minor girls while abduction involves adult females. Most cases of kidnapping are elopement of girls with their lovers. It will be useful if both crimes are registered under separate

categories. A study conducted by New Delhi's Centre for Women's Studies aptly reveals that kidnapping and abduction represent two different forms of crime and a more accurate picture of actual abduction of women and girls would emerge if these two subcategories are separated and made into different categories of crime.

In most crimes against women, the accused are able to get away unpunished. For example, in 2006, of the 36,689 cases of domestic violence, which completed trial, only in 8,687 cases that the culprits were convicted. In others, they were either discharged or acquitted due to factors like poor investigation and prosecution, gender insensitivity among police and judicial officers and long delay in trials. All this is helping the accused to repeat similar crimes. Offenders in gender-specific crimes are repeaters.

Police probing crimes against women have to be trained and sensitised. In India, most investigating officers are not professionally competent and do the job in a casual and slipshod manner. Victims have often complained of apathy and insensitivity on the part of the police officers. This can be overcome through humane training and building an organisational culture of respect and concern for women.

In India, women police officers (48625) as on Dec 31, 2006, comprise only 4 per cent of the total police strength. In Haryana and West Bengal, according to the ISS study, women police officers constitute around 3 per cent of the force. Their shortage hampers effective investigation of crimes against women. Moreover, in states with adverse male-female ratio, most crimes against women occur.

To understand the nature and extent of crimes against women and take steps to combat them, victimisation surveys have to be undertaken. In the West, greater reliance is placed on data collected through victimization surveys than on police statistics which are considered unreliable. The British Crime Survey of 2002 reveals that according to their estimates around 60,000 women were reported to have been victims of rape during 2000 as against the figure of 7000 reported by the police in the same year. In India, victimisation surveys similar to those in the UK and the US have become imperative.

Denial of rights such as right to life, right to health and right to education to women and girls is the most crucial consequence of violence against women. Studies in many countries have shown high levels of violence during pregnancy resulting in risk to the life of both the mother and unborn foetus.

Crime and violence against women has a depressing effect on children. They develop various complex psychological and behavioral problems leading to the lack of concentration in studies, depression, difficulties in socialization etc. Studies suggest that the violent behaviour of males as grownups was a result of their being witnesses to domestic violence in their childhood.

Over 32000 murders, 19,000 rapes, 7500 dowry deaths and 36500 molestation cases are the violent

crimes reported in India in 2006 against women. There are many instances of crime especially against women go unreported in India. These are figures released by the National Crime Records Bureau recently. While Madhya Pradesh is worst off among the states, the national capital New Delhi continues to hold on to its reputation of being the most unsafe city in India. Delhi takes the top slot for crimes ranging from murders and rapes to dowry deaths and abductions.

It reflects country's law and order situation when its capital is a cauldron of crime. Instead of leading the way in tackling crime, Delhi only seems to do worse year after year. For instance while the national crime rate declined negligibly by .02 % in 2006; Delhi's rate grew to 357.2 more than double the national average of 167.7.

Rape is the fastest growing crime in the country today and as many as 18 women are assaulted in some form or the other every hour across India. Over the last few months cases of rapes and assault have made it to the headlines with alarming frequency. Mumbai watched with shame as an ugly mob attacked women on New Year's Eve. In Latur a 14 year old was raped and killed by four young men. In Konark four men were charged with dragging a woman out of a bus and gang raping her. It is an ordeal simply to file a police report and the investigations thereafter have been stories of apathy and downright humiliation meted out to the victims. Where convicted, punishments have ranged from capital punishments to a day in jail.

Equally horrific are news reports of foreign tourists being sexually assaulted. Recently an American was molested in Pushkar, a British journalist raped in Goa, Canadian girls attacked in Kumarakom to list the few instances. It looks like that India as a nation has ceased to know how to treat women as human beings who have a right to dignity and safety. The crime against tourists is against our culture of "atithi devo bhava" Government has decided to meet and discuss with the state government the safety of women tourists as a reaction from the fear that such incidents will impact India's image.

Despite the trauma women across all classes are reporting crimes such as rape and assault and do not feel helpless or abandoned by family or society as was the prevalent case before. Society is changing and government is forced to take action as it has run out of excuses such as society's mindset or class divide.

In India, the problem of violence against women is a result of a long standing power imbalance between men and women. Men have control over access to property and resources. There is also a sexual division of labor in India that results in female exploitation—physically, mentally, and commercially.

13% Increase in Violence Against Women in Punjab

DEMOCRATIC government has failed to control the

violence against women, as there is 13 percent increase in violence in 2009 compared to 2008.

Twenty one women are murdered and four are attempted to murder every month in Punjab. About 28 women are raped and two face attempt to rape every month. At an average 27 women are kidnapped every month and about 10 women commit suicide. About 22 cases of molestation of women are registered every month.

This is a glimpse of law and order situation in Punjab while the women in state continue to live under terror.

During last five years, at an average 2300 cases of crime against women were registered. Lowest crime rate was registered in 2005 when 2282 cases were registered. During 2006 till month of August only 1756 cases of crime against women have been registered.

If figures tell the tale of women's plight, it is shocking to know that during last five years

(2002-2006 till August) have seen an increase in rape cases with 1591 women raped and 143 faced an attempt to rape.

About 200 women have been murdered in the state in first eight months of current year. The figures were 271 murders of women in 2002, 239 in 2003, 240 in 2004, 256 in 2005 and 191 in 2006.

The dowry deaths shows the fate of women in Punjabi society. According to figures 165 women were killed for dowry in 2002, 104 in 2003, 105 in 2004, 96 in 2005 and 85 in first eight months of 2006.

The dowry harassment cases in Punjab have been going unabated. Till August this year, 534 dowry cases have been registered. In five years 3946 dowry harassment cases were registered which means 70 cases every month.

1231 of molestation of women were registered in Punjab in five years of Congress rule. 475 cases of eve teasing (nine every month) have been registered.

- Every 4th household in Punjab faces with dowry demand.

- Dowry harassment more prone in urban areas.

- While dowry demand was maximum in Doaba (every 3rd household) dowry harassment, dowry deaths were most in the developed areas of Malwa.

- The lower middle strata had the most cases of dowry harassment.

Different Forms of Domestic Violence in India and Their Causes

About Victims

- 44% of victims are under age 18
- 80% are under age 30

Sexual Assault Numbers

- Every 2 minutes, someone in the U.S. is sexually assaulted

- In 2007, there were 248,300 victims of sexual assault

Reporting to Police

- 60% of sexual assaults are not reported to the police
- 15 of 16 rapists will never spend a day in jail

About Rapists

- Approximately 2/3 of assaults are committed by someone known to the victim
- 38% of rapists are a friend or acquaintance

Domestic Violence Against Women

This form of domestic violence is most common of all. One of the reasons for it being so prevalent is the orthodox and idiotic mindset of the society that women are physically and emotionally weaker than the males. Though women today have proved themselves in almost every field of life affirming that they are no less than men, the reports of violence against them are much larger in number than against men. The possible reasons are many and are diversified over the length and breadth of the country. According to United Nation Population Fund Report, around two-third of married Indian women are victims of domestic violence and as many as 70 per cent of married women in India between the age of 15 and 49 are victims of beating, rape or forced sex. In India, more than 55 percent of the women suffer from domestic violence, especially in the states of Bihar, U.P., M.P. and other northern states.

The most common causes for women stalking and battering include dissatisfaction with the dowry and exploiting women for more of it, arguing with the partner, refusing to have sex with him, neglecting children, going out of home without telling the partner, not cooking properly or on time, indulging in extra marital affairs, not looking after in-laws etc. In some cases infertility in females also leads to their assault by the family members. The greed for dowry, desire for a male child and alcoholism of the spouse are major factors of domestic violence against women in rural areas. There have been gruesome reports of young bride being burnt alive or subjected to continuous harassment for not bringing home the amount of demanded dowry. Women in India also admit to hitting or beating because of their suspicion about the husband's sexual involvement with other women. **The Tandoor Murder Case** of Naina Sahni in New Delhi in the year 1995 is one such dreadful incident of a woman being killed and then burnt in a Tandoor by his husband. This incidence was an outcome of suspicion of extra marital affairs of Naina Sahni which led to marital discord and domestic violence against her.

In urban areas there are many more factors which lead to differences in the beginning and later take the shape of domestic violence. These include – more income of a working woman than her partner, her absence in the house till late night, abusing and neglecting in-laws, being more forward socially etc. Working women are quite often subjected to assaults and coercion sex by employees of the organization. At times, it could be voluntary for a better pay and designation in the office.

Violence against young widows has also been on a rise in India. Most often they are cursed for their husband's death and are deprived of proper food and clothing. They are not allowed or encouraged for remarriage in most of the homes, especially in rural areas. There have been cases of molestation and rape attempts of women by other family members in nuclear families or someone in the neighbourhood. At times, women are even sexually coerced by their partner themselves against their will. They are brutally beaten and tortured for not conceiving a male child. Incidents like, ripping off a woman's womb for killing the female foetus when she disagrees for abortion have also come to light especially in rural areas. Female foeticide and female infanticide continue to be a rising concern.

Also as expressed by Rebecca J. Burns in the following lines, "When I am asked why a woman doesn't leave abuser I say: Women stay because the fear of leaving is greater than the fear of staying. They will leave when the fear of staying is greater than the fear of leaving." A common Indian house wife has a tendency to bear the harassment she is subjected to by her husband and the family. One reason could be to prevent the children from undergoing the hardships if she separates from the spouse. Also the traditional and orthodox mindset makes them bear the sufferings without any protest.

Other forms of physical abuse against women include slapping, punching, grabbing, burdening them with drudgery, public humiliation and the neglect of their health problems. Some of the other forms of psychological torment against them could be curtailment of their rights to self-expression and curbing the freedom to associate with the natal family and friends.

Consequences of Domestic Violence

There are varied consequences of domestic violence depending on the victim, the age group, the intensity of the violence and frequency of the torment they are subjected to. Living under a constant fear, threat and humiliation are some of the feelings developed in the minds of the victims as a consequence of an atrocious violence. The consequences of the domestic violence in detail can be broadly categorised under – the Effect on the victim himself/herself and the family, Effect on the society and the Effect on nation's growth and productivity. The 'Effect on the victim' has been further subcategorized for women, men, children and olds.

Effect on the Victim and the Family

Consequences of Violence Against Women

Battered women have tendency to remain quiet, agonised and emotionally disturbed after the occurrence of the torment. A psychological set back and trauma because of domestic violence affects women's productivity in all forms of life. The suicide case of such victimised women is also a deadly consequence and the number of such cases

is increasing.

A working Indian woman may drop out from work place because of the ill-treatment at home or office, she may lose her efficiency in work. Her health may deteriorate if she is not well physically and mentally. Some women leave their home immediately after first few atrocious attacks and try to become self-dependent. Their survival becomes difficult and painful when they have to work hard for earning two meals a day. Many such women come under rescue of women welfare organizations like Women Welfare Association of India (WWAI), Affus Woman Welfare Association (AWWA) and Woman's Emancipation and Development Trust (WEDT). Some of them who leave their homes are forcefully involved in women trafficking and pornography. This results in acquiring a higher risk of becoming a drug addict and suffering from HIV/AIDS. Some of course do it by their choice.

One of the severe effects of domestic violence against women is its effect on her children. It is nature's phenomenon that a child generally has a greater attachment towards the mother for she is the one who gives birth. As long as the violence subjected to the mother is hidden from the child, he/she may behave normally at home. The day when mother's grief and suffering is revealed, a child may become upset about the happening deeply. Children may not even comprehend the severity of the problem. They may turn silent, reserved and express solace to the mother. When the violence against women is openly done in front of them since their childhood, it may have a deeper and gruesome impact in their mindset. They get used to such happenings at home, and have a tendency to reciprocate the same in their lives. It's common in especially in rural homes in India which are victimised by the evil of domestic violence.

In cases of Intimate Partner Violence (IPV), violence against women leads them to maintain a distance from their partner. Their sexual life is affected adversely. Many of them file for divorce and seek separation which again affects the life of children. Some continue to be exploited in lack of proper awareness of human rights and laws of the constitution.

Effect of Domestic Violence on the Society

All the different forms of violence discussed in this essay adversely affect the society. Violence against women may keep them locked in homes succumbing to the torture they face. If they come out in open and reveal the wrong done to them for help and rescue, it influences the society both positively and negatively. At one hand where it acts as an inspiration and ray of hope for other suffering women, on the other hand it also spoils the atmosphere of the society. When something of this kind happens in the society, few families may witness the evil of domestic violence knocking their door steps. Some families try to imitate what others indulge in irrespective of it being good or bad for the family.

Effect on the productivity

As mentioned earlier, domestic violence affects the productivity level of the victim negatively. Men and women lose interest in household activities. If they are employed they fail to work with full capabilities in workplace. Children are found to concentrate less on studies. They drop out of school and do not get the education which otherwise they might have got if they were not tormented and thus the country loses a productive asset. Therefore, the nation's productivity altogether gets affected because of domestic violence in homes. When old people are tortured and physically abused, they separate themselves from family members and their daily activities are restricted to themselves. The guardianship they can provide out of their experience, the moral values which they can instil in the grandchildren are all not done as they are unwanted in their own homes. People need to spend their part of income for medication when they are met with worse forms of domestic violence which again leads to loss in productive use of a family's income. The cumulative effect of the domestic violence at all levels and across all regions is the country's hindered development and slow economic growth.

Remedies for Domestic Violence

What exactly do we want?

A very important question in wake of domestic violence remedies is that what exactly we are looking for in the process of minimising their occurrences. Is it so that we want to gather more information about such cases for just expressing our concern over this issue with more accuracy, having facts and figures at hand? Or instead of just raising our voices, we want to clean up the mess with shear force and determination?

Fighting the 'Domestic Violence' Evil

A recent study has concluded that violence against women is the fastest-growing crime in India. According to a latest report prepared by India's National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), a crime has been recorded against women in every three minutes in India. Every 60 minutes, two women are raped in this country. Every six hours, a young married woman is found beaten to death, burnt or driven to suicide.

The response to the phenomenon of domestic violence is a typical combination of effort between law enforcement agencies, social service agencies, the courts and corrections/probation agencies. The role of all these has progressed over last few decades, and brought their activities in public view. Domestic violence is now being viewed as a public health problem of epidemic proportion all over the world – and many public, private and governmental agencies are seen making huge efforts to control it in India. There are several organizations all over the world – government and non government – actively working to fight the problems generated by domestic violence to the human community.

Need for Stringent Laws

In 1983, domestic violence was recognised as a specific criminal offence by the introduction of section 498-A into the Indian Penal Code. This section deals with cruelty by a husband or his family towards a married woman. The main legislative measures at the national level for the children who become a victim of child labor include The Child Labor Prohibition and Regulation Act -1986 and The Factories Act -1948. The first act was categorical in prohibiting the employment of children below fourteen years of age, and identified 57 processes and 13 occupations which were considered dangerous to the health and lives of children. The factories act again prohibits the employment of children less than fourteen years of age.

The Government of India passed a Domestic Violence Bill, 2001, "To protect the rights of women who are victims of violence of any kind occurring within the family and to provide for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto"*

An act called Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005 [DVA, 2005] also has been passed". This Act ensures the reporting of cases of domestic violence against women to a 'Protection Officer' who then prepares a Domestic Incident Report to the Magistrate "and forward copies thereof to the police officer in charge of the police station within the local limits of jurisdiction..."

Unfortunately, at present there is no single law in the Indian Constitution which can strictly deal with all the different forms of 'Domestic Violence' as discussed in this essay. There is an urgent need for such a law in the country. In fact, there has also been misuse of section 498-A and DVA, 2005 because of restricted definition of cruelty subjected to married women.

Role of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs)

The role of non-governmental organizations in controlling the domestic violence and curbing its worse consequences is crucial. Sakshi – a violence intervention agency for women and children in Delhi works on cases of sexual assault, sexual harassment, child sexual abuse and domestic abuse and focuses on equality education for judges and implementation of the 1997 Supreme Court's sexual harassment guidelines. Women's Rights Initiative – another organization in the same city runs a legal aid cell for cases of domestic abuse and works in collaboration with law enforcers in the area of domestic violence.

Your browser may not support display of this image. In Mumbai, bodies like Majlis and Swaadhar are doing meaningful works in this field. Sneha in Chennai and Vimochana in Bangalore are working on many women's issues arising from domestic abuse. They are also doing active work in issues related to labour. Services ranging from counselling, education and outreach, giving provisions, and mobilizing them for gaining self-confidence are provided to them. Anweshi is a women's

counselling centre in Kozhikode providing meditation, resource and counselling for battered women. All the above bodies have their own registered offices, contact numbers and websites for those who want to seek help. There are at present only few NGOs for welfare of men like Social Welfare Association for Men (SWAM) in Chennai. Few more such organizations need to be opened for the help of abused men.

These NGOs continue to spread awareness amongst people regarding the legal rights they have in hand for fighting against the atrocities they are subjected to. They are encouraging more and more people to report any case of domestic violence so that proper action may be taken against the culprits.

Police and Health Care

Police plays a major role in tackling the domestic violence cases. They need to be sensitized to treat domestic violence cases as seriously as any other crime. Special training to handle domestic violence cases should be imparted to police force. They should be provided with information regarding support network of judiciary, government agencies/departments. Gender training should be made mandatory in the trainings of the police officers. There should be a separate wing of police dealing with women's issues, attached to all police stations and should be excluded from any other duty.

Authorities should take steps to recognize Domestic Violence as a public health issue. A crisis support cell needs to be established in all major Government and Private Hospitals with a trained medical social worker for provide appropriate services. Training programmes must be organized for health professionals in order to develop their skills to provide basic support for abused people. Documentation on the prevalence and the health consequences of domestic violence should be undertaken by the concerned government departments, health care institutions, NGOs and counselling centres. A nodal agency should also be set up for the annual consolidation of the documented work and publish the same for wider publicity among the masses for increasing awareness.

Oppression in India

Women in India are subject to all forms of violence. Female infanticide is quite common in Haryana and Punjab because there is a preference for sons because male children carry on the family lineage. The education of sons is also considered much more important. In these two states, the sex ratio is lower than the national average.

Discrimination Within the Household

Within the household, there exists gender discrimination which determines intra-household distribution of food. Because women and girls are given less food than men, malnutrition among adolescent girls and women is quite prevalent in India.

Lack of Opportunity to Work

Due to lower educational levels, a woman has a much

lower capacity to earn. Women from upper castes are seldom allowed to work outside the home. However, work participation rate among low caste women is better compared to that of upper caste women.

Honor Killings

Honor killings are quite common in Haryana and Tamil Nadu when young girls marry somebody outside their caste and clan against her family's wishes.

Women as Property

Dowry is demanded from the husband's side (in-laws) when younger women get married. Newly married women become subject to verbal and physical abuse. In many cases, young brides are burnt to death by her in-laws if the parents fail to meet the requisite dowry demanded. Women are also viewed in terms of their virginity, as chastity is considered as a great virtue.

In terms of family planning, women have been used as the subjects of experiments. Governments promote contraceptives to lower fertility among women, at the behest of multinational corporations and the corporate sector, without thinking about their consequences. Population control and family planning is considered a way to control women's sexuality.

WHAT CAN BE DONE?

When women protest against their exploitation, many try to silence them. The experience of Bhanwari Devi, the 'sathin' from Rajasthan, is a case in point. She was gang-raped for working against child marriage practiced by the upper castes in her village.

According to the NCRB (National Crime Records Bureau) 2008, respect for women seem to be the worst in Andhra Pradesh, which accounted for 83.5 per cent of cases under Indecent Representation of Women (Prohibition) Act of total cases across the country. Out of a total 1,200 such cases, Andhra had registered 1,005 incidents in this regard. The NCRB data clearly points to the profile of the average rapist – over 75% were known to the victims. In fact, nearly 10% were relatives. Another disturbing aspect was that about a quarter of the rape victims were minors.

During the Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing in September 1995, the United Nations Secretary-General, Boutros Boutros-Ghali, said that violence against women is a universal problem that must be universally condemned. The United Nations has termed violence against women as a gross violation of human rights. In India, a survey showed that for each incidence of violence, women lost an average of 7 working days.

ROLE OF MEDIA

Media that includes television, radio and newspapers can play a positive role in creating awareness about the pitfalls

of violence against women. Mass media's power should not be undermined by our policy makers.

CONCLUSION

Having looked at a sensitive topic of "Domestic Violence in India", we can sense the importance of discussion of such a topic. The varying causes which can spark the violence within the four walls of homes need to be analysed carefully and a wise study of the factors causing the violence may prevent a family to suffer from the menace of domestic violence. The domestic violence may have a far wider and deeper impact in real life than what has been covered in this essay. What is required is to see closely the association of the factors provoking a particular form of domestic violence. If these factors can be controlled then more than one form of violence can be prevented from harming an individual or our society and India would be a much better place to live in.

REFERENCES

- Panda, P. and Agarwal, B. (2005). Marital Violence, Human Development and Women's Property Status in India. *World Development, 23(5)*, 823-850.
- Panda, P. (2004). Domestic Violence Against Women in Kerala. *Kerala Research Programme on Local Level Development Centre for Development Studies, 6*, 1-44.
- Koenig, A. M., et al. (2006). Individual and Contextual Determinants of Domestic Violence in North India. *American Journal of Public Health, 96(1)*, 132-138.
- Martin L. S. et al. (1999). Domestic Violence in Northern India. *American Journal of Epidemiology, 150(4)*, 417-426.
- UNICEF. 2000. Domestic Violence Against Women and Girls. *UNICEF Innocenti Digest, 6*, 1-29.
- Centre for Women's Studies & Development the Research Institute. (2005). *A Situational Analysis of Domestic Violence Against Women in Kerala*, pp.1-31.
- Kishwar, M. (2005). *Laws Against Domestic Violence*. Retrieved from <http://www.indiatogether.org/manushi/issue120/domestic.htm> on 25/08/2009. 11:15:13 pm, pp.1 -6.
- Joshi, M. M. (2001). *The Protection From Domestic Violence Bill*. Government Bill, Bill No. 133 of 2001
- Domestic Violence Statistics*. Retrieved from <http://www.domesticviolence.in/category/domestic-violence-statistics> on 22/08/2009. 10:00 am.
- García-Moreno, Claudia. et al. (2005). WHO Multi-Country Study on Women's Health and Domestic Violence against Women. WHO, Geneva: 46; Johnson, Holly, N. Ollus and S. Nevala. 2008. *Violence Against Women: An International Perspective (International Violence against Women Survey-IVAWS)*, Springer Science + Business Media, LL, New York: 39; Kishor, Sunita, and K. Johnson. 2004. *Profiling Domestic Violence – A Multi-Country Study. (Demographic and Health Surveys-DHS) ORC Macro*, Calverton, Maryland: 12; and other DHS Surveys Available from Various Countries.
- World Health Organization 1997.
- US Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Statistics, 2007. Homicide trends in the U.S-Intimate Homicides. [<http://ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/homicide/intimates.htm>] (Accessed 29 April 2009).
- Based on data from 1999. Mathews, Shanaaz, N. Abrahams, L. Martin, L. Vetten, L. van der Merwe, and R. Jewkes. 2004. "Every Six Hours a Woman is Killed by her Intimate Partner." A National Study of Female Homicide in South Africa. Gender and Health Research Group, Medical Research Council, Tygerberg: 2.
- National Crime Records Bureau. (2008). "Chapter 5: Crime against Women." *Crime in India 2007*". Ministry of Home Affairs, New Delhi: 2. For a discussion of dowry-related deaths, see Garcia-Moreno, Claudia. 2009. "Gender inequality and fire-related deaths in India." *The Lancet*, Vol. 373 (9671).

APPENDIX

Data on Violence Against Women

In a country like India, it is difficult to rely on statistics pertaining to rape cases. The data may show that such crimes being committed may be going up or down. But in reality, women are afraid of even lodging FIRs (First Information Report) in police stations despite being raped or sexually harassed. The judiciary and the legal system are biased in favor of men. Cases of violence against women are under-reported.

According to the latest National Crime Records Bureau 2007, a total of 1,85,312 incidents of crime against women (both under Indian Penal Code-IPC and Special and Local Laws-SLL) were reported in the country during 2007 as compared to 1,64,765 during 2006, thus recording an increase of 12.5% during 2007. These crimes have continuously increased during 2003-2007 with 1,40,601 cases in 2003, 1,54,333 cases in 2004, 1,55,553 in 2005, 1,64,765 cases in 2006 and 1,85,312 cases in 2007.

The total number of sexual harassment cases was 10,950 in 2007. The total number of cases pertaining to cruelty by husband and relatives was 75,930. There were 61 cases of importation of girls. Altogether there were 38,734 cases of molestation in 2007. (See the URL: http://ncrb.nic.in/cii2007/cii-2007/FIGURES_2007.pdf).

The number of rape cases has increased by nearly ten fold from 2487 in 1953 to 20737 in 2007. Young girls also become victims of child abuse at the hands of their closest male relatives, which they are unable to protest.

RAPE STATISTICS FACT SHEET FOR ADULTS

- 78 women are being raped each hour!
- One out of three women will be sexually assaulted in their lifetime.
- The risk of rape is four times higher for women aged 16-24 than for any other age group
- Nine out ten rapes are never reported.
- An accused rapist is more likely to be acquitted than

a person charged with any other violent crime.

- Statistically most rapists are repeat offenders.
- Over 50% of all rapes occur in a residence, often the victim's own.
- Women who are assaulted need help and counseling to talk about the experience. "Forgetting about it" can lead to even more problems for the victim.
- Most rapists are not murderers. Of the women who chose to resist an attacker fewer than 9% sustain injuries more than a cut or a bruise.
- All women may be rape victims - age, race, socioeconomic status, appearance, and lifestyle are not deciding factors.
- In one study, 25% of the women assaulted were responding to requests for help by the assailant. Friendly, helpful women are the most vulnerable to an attack.
- The vast majority of sexual assaults are date and / or acquaintance rape (80-90%) as oppose to stranger rape.
- Every 9 seconds a woman is physically abused by a male who is either a spouse or boyfriend.

RAPE FACT SHEET FOR ADOLESCENTS

- Annually 1 to 1.5 million adolescent girls are raped in the U.S..
- 33% of the girls raped reported more than one assault.
- Statistics suggest only 5% of adolescent rapes are reported.
- Adolescent sexual assault occurs primarily within the context of a date.
- **In a study for High School girls, they asked why girls gave in to the boy's request for sex. The number one reason was because the girls didn't know how to say "no" without hurting the boy's feelings.**
- Verbal pressure is the most common force used against adolescents.
- Most offenders were the same age as their victims.
- **In approximately 80% of attempted rape cases, girls with any self-defense training avoided sexual contact.**