

Gender-Based Violence in India: A bitter reality

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Abstract

Gender-based violence (GBV) is a pervasive and serious issue in India, with women and girls facing various forms of violence, harassment, and discrimination in both private and public spheres. Despite various laws and policies in place, the country still grapples with high rates of gender-based violence. India has one of the highest rates of violence against women in the world. According to the National Crime Records Bureau (NCEB), in 2021, a total of 4,05,861 cases of crimes against women were reported in India, of which 32,033 cases were of rape. However, experts suggest that these numbers only represent a fraction of the actual cases, as many cases of gender-based violence go unreported due to societal stigma, fear, and lack of trust in the legal system.

Keywords- Violence, Gender-Based Violence, violence against women, Indian prospective, A bitter reality.

Introduction

Gender based violence is quite common in almost all the developing countries. Though mostly identical, yet, some of the customs, which are reflected in the culture of each of the particular societies differently, create important distinctions. The opponents to these customs have failed time and again to evoke the desired response despite the customs being reiterated again and again in many written works. In the present paper, some of the customs, prevalent for years in India, have been identified to reveal the gender-based violence in addition to the day to day harassment being faced by the women. Some recommendations that are always in the discussion at policy level but with no fruitful result have also been reviewed and an attempt has been made to put forward some simple suggestions to check gender-based violence, particularly, in the developing world. It is a harsh reality that the woman in India has been ill-treated for ages in our male dominated society. She is deprived of her independent identity and is looked upon as a commodity.

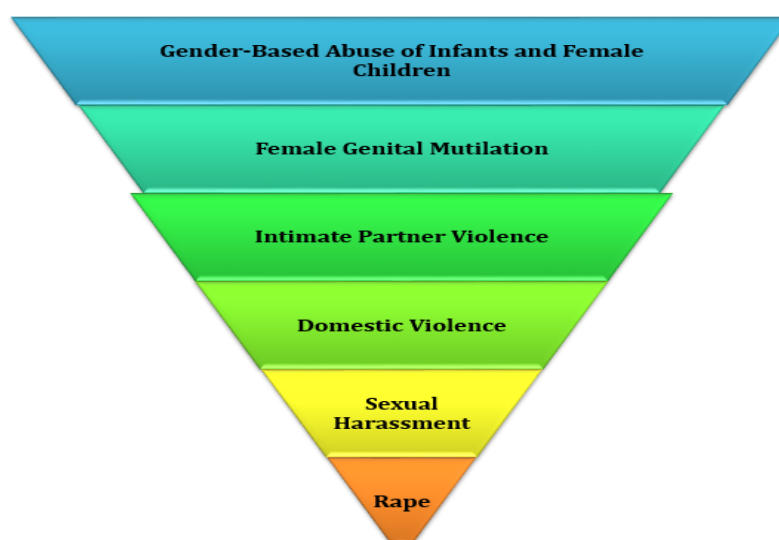
She is not only robbed of her dignity and pride by way of seduction by the men outside, but also, may become a victim of cruelty by her saviours, within the four walls of her own house. However, her trauma does not end here, it may even go up to the extent of forcing her to commit suicide or she may be burnt to death for various reasons including that of dowry. This type of violence transgresses the boundaries of caste, class, region or religion and is prevalent in almost all societies. Religion, customs, age-old prejudices, etc. have put Indian women in a subservient and exploitable position in many domains of life. Low rates of participation in education, lack of economic independence, value biases operating against them, etc, have resulted in the women being dependent on men folk and other institutions of authority like the family, neighbourhood and the society. They are usually ignorant of their rights and even if they are not, they do not have easy access to justice.

According to the National Crime Records Bureau of India, reported incidents of crime against women increased by 15.3% in 2021 compared to the year 2020. According to the National Crime Records Bureau, in 2011, there were more than 228,650 reported incidents of crime against women,

while in 2021, there were 4,28,278 reported incidents, an 87% increase. Of the women living in India, 7.5% live in West Bengal where 12.7% of the total reported crime against women occurs. Andhra Pradesh is home to 7.3% of India's female population and accounts for 11.5% of the total reported crimes against women. 65% of Indian men believe women should tolerate violence in order to keep the family together, and women sometimes deserve to be beaten. In January 2011, the International Men and Gender Equality Survey (IMAGES) Questionnaire reported that 24% of Indian men had committed sexual violence at some point during their lives. Exact statistics on the extent case occurrences are very difficult to obtain, as a large number of cases go unreported.

This is due in large part to the threat of ridicule or shame on the part of the potential reporter, as well as an immense pressure not to damage the family's honour. For similar reasons, law enforcement officers are more motivated to accept offers of bribery from the family of the accused, or perhaps in fear of more grave consequences, such as Honour killings.

Common gender based violence in india faced by women:



The atrocities committed on women can be divided into various groups: Physical violence may include assault, battery, serious injuries or burns etc. Sexual violence, which means robbing the dignity of woman not only by indecent behaviour or extreme form of rape. Social violence, which means indecency or use of abusive and filthy language against a woman or her near and dear ones. Social violence, which includes demeaning, disparaging and humiliating a woman or her parental relatives and friends. Emotional violence, leading to internal deprivation of love and affection, concern, sympathy and care, it also includes depriving her custody of children. Financial violence, which means depriving her of financial means and bare necessities of daily life, it also includes taking away the assets, which a woman possesses or earns. Intellectual violence, means denial of rights to take part in decision making and discussion for pressing issues. Other forms of violence, which may include denial of education, access to health facilities, reproductive rights, etc.

However, studies indicate that the statistics conceal rather than reveal the extent of the problem. The All India crime rate i.e. number of crimes per 100,000 population for crimes against women reported to the police worked out to be 13.8 during 1999. The Crime in India Report 1999, itself acknowledges that this rate of crime may be reviewed with caution, as a sizeable number of crimes against women go unreported due to the social stigma attached and the lengthy court procedures.

According to a report out of every 100 rape cases in India, only 10 are reported and out of every 100 reported cases only 5 offenders are convicted (Vasudev 2002). According to another report, in 1999, every day in India, 42 women were raped, 18 cases of dowry deaths occurred every hour, 5 women faced cruelty at home and 4 molestation cases were reported (Wiswanath 2002). According to yet another study, crimes against women increased from 123 to 127 cases per million persons, during the period 1998 to 1999, while total cognizable crime rate declined from 1837 to 1823 over the same period. (Philipose 2002).

The phenomenon of violence against women arises from patriarchal notions of ownership over women's bodies, sexuality, labor, reproductive rights, mobility and level of autonomy. Deep-rooted ideas about male superiority enable men to freely exercise unlimited power over women's lives and effectively legitimize it too. Violence is thus a tool that men use constantly to control women as a result of highly internalized patriarchal conditioning coupled with legitimacy for coercion to enforce compliance and increasing aspirations, frustrations and 'might is right' becoming a legitimate view and increasing need for assertion of individual egos and control. Within this context, several developments serve as a backdrop to the discussion and analysis of increased violence against women.

For awakening of social conscience and providing justice and opportunity to the women, the following recommendations are often made:

- Promoting education among the general public is necessary to annul many myths and superstitions, which lead to helplessness and frustrations in them. Educating the society about the equal status of a girl child is the utmost requirement.
- Popularizing vocational courses, as per the caliber of the individuals, will go a long way in decreasing the insecurity of the unemployed, thereby boosting their selfconfidence and will power.
- Marriage counseling, discouraging and banning costly and ostentatious marriage rituals, strict implementation of anti-dowry laws, may help in decreasing or preventing the tensions of day to day married life.
- Society should work towards protecting the rights of women. In this regard, effective cooperation between Non Government Organizations (NGOs), voluntary and law enforcing agencies, is a must to enable women to enjoy equal rights, instill confidence and self respect in them and to make them economically independent.
- Promotion of the concept of 'Family Planning' in rural India, so that its principles are followed in letter and in spirit, all over the country. Social health workers, NGOs, Govt. Organizations and the society as a whole should strive towards bringing down the family size and its related problems, both in the rural and in the urban community etc., etc. But these remain limited to policy level only on account of the lack of political will and sincere efforts towards their implementation, consequently, the all-important goal of women empowerment continues to be a distant dream for the women in many developing countries including India.

Conclusion: - The outcome of gender-based violence in India is long-lasting for its victims and rampant for the often inadequate responses. Hence, it is crucial to maintain the sense of urgency in gender based violence cases, even during crisis situations. It is maintained that there is a need for a holistic response model to deal with the issue of gender-based violence during current and possible future pandemics. Health professionals, media, and community efforts must be combined to effectively

deal with the issue of gender-based violence. Moreover, continuous and rigorous efforts are required to end the stigma associated with gender-based violence in India.

Gender-based violence in India includes eliminating the institutional hurdles facing women, which leads to secondary victimization. When women seek help, they are treated with hostility or negligent or discriminatory fashion by officials in charge of supporting them. The obvious progress made in the region in extending women's formal rights has yet to lead to a practical application of those rights on a day-to-day basis, either within or outside the justice administration sphere. Therefore, it is essential for society's response to the phenomenon to urge governments to deepen their reforms and pay attention to the different aspects of gender-based violence in India.

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