



An Insight into Alarming Rise in Incidence of Violence against Women in India

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Abstract:

Rising violence against women in India has always been an issue of concern. The society at large considers women as second class citizens. Attitude is quite hypocritical, where at one place women are admired and preached in the name of Durga, at the same time are, also abused in the form of Child-marriage, Female infanticide, Sati, Sexual harassment, Dowry and so on. The status of women in India has been subject to many great alterations over the past few millenniums. From a largely unknown status in ancient times through the low points of the medieval period, to the promotion of equal rights by many reformers, the history of women in India has been lively. The status of women has varied in different time periods. Violence against women is partly a result of gender relations that assumes men to be superior to women. Given the subordinate status of women, much of gender violence is considered normal and enjoys social sanction. 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. The current paper aims to bring forth the rising incidence of violence against women in India and has suggested measure to control the same.

Key words: Child Marriage, Dowry, Female Infanticide, Incidence, Sexual Harassment, Violence.

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Rising violence against women in India has always been an issue of concern. The society at large considers women as second class citizens. Attitude is quite hypocritical, where at one place women are admired and preached in the name of Durga, at the same time are, also abused in the form of Child-marriage, Female infanticide, Sati, Sexual harassment, Dowry and so on. The status of women in India has been subject to many great alterations over the past few millenniums. From a largely unknown status in ancient times through the low points of the medieval period, to the promotion of equal rights by many reformers, the history of women in India has been lively. The status of women has varied in different time periods. Violence against women is partly a result of gender relations that assumes men to be superior to women. Given the subordinate status of women, much of gender violence is considered normal and enjoys social sanction. 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

Review of Literature:

Devi and Prema (2006) assert that violence against women should be viewed as a human right violation and a crime, detrimental to the development of women and the society. Capacity building, awareness generation and developing leadership skills among women can help them gain confidence to raise a voice against violence and assert their rights.

John Simister and Judith Makowiec (2008) in their study, "Domestic violence in Indian: Effects of education" laid stress on domestic violence between husband and wife in India and attitudes to domestic violence. They use the term 'gender based violence' because some men use violence to control their wives. Data from the demographic and health survey 1998 to 2000 has been analysed. This survey includes women in the age 15 to 49, in 26 Indian states and focus only on violence (such as a wife being hit by her husband's family, or a men being hit by his wife). Evidence in this paper is consistent with previous research indicating that gender-based violence is rising as such violence is seen acceptable in the perpetrator's family and in the local community. Authors suggest that there are similarities between the behavior of some Indian men and the 'machismo' values reported in other cultures. They confirm previous claims that violence is less common if women and men are well educated. Moreover, acceptance of domestic violence appears to be related to the respondents education level. Thus, government of India must give priorities to education for both boys and girls.

Sethi (2008) explores the various kinds of systemic violence that women face even in developed countries. In United States, for instance, wife battering is the prime cause of injury to women. Over 4,000 women yearly get beaten to death. Every nine minutes a woman gets raped in Mexico. Every 10 days one woman is beaten to death in Sweden.

Objectives of current study:

The current study aims at:

- a) Indicating alarming rise in incidence of violence against women in India
- b) Measures to control crime against women

Violence against women has become a prominent topic of discussion in India in recent years. Politicians and media have placed great focus on the issue due to continuously increasing trends during 2008–2012.

According to the National Crime Records Bureau of India, reported incidents of crime against women increased 6.4% during 2012, and a crime against a woman is committed every three minutes. In 2012, there were 244,270 reported incidents of crime against women, while in 2011,

there were 228,650 reported incidents. 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.

Year	Reported violence
2008	195,856
2009	203,804
2010	213,585
2011	228,650
2012	244,270

Source: National Crime Records Bureau of India, 2012-13

65% of Indian men believe women should tolerate violence in order to keep the family together, and women sometimes deserve to be beaten.

Murders:

Dowry deaths

A dowry death is a murder or suicide of a married woman caused by a dispute over her dowry. In some cases, husbands and in-laws will attempt to extort a greater dowry through continuous harassment and torture which sometimes results in the wife committing suicide.

The majority of these suicides are done through hanging, poisoning or self-immolation. When a dowry death is done by setting the woman on fire, it is called bride burning. Bride burning murder is often set up to appear to be a suicide or accident. Dowry is illegal in India, but it is still common practice to give expensive gifts to the groom and his relatives at weddings which are hosted by the family of the bride.

Women are not always the only primary victims of dowry deaths. In some cases children are also killed alongside their mothers. Incidents of dowry deaths have decreased 4.5% from 2011 to 2012.

Year	Reported dowry deaths
2008	8,172
2009	8,383
2010	8,391
2011	8,618
2012	8,233

Source: National Crime Records Bureau of India, 2012-13

In Uttar Pradesh, 2,244 cases were reported, accounting for 27.3% of the dowry deaths nationwide. In Bihar, 1,275 cases were reported, accounting for 15.5% of cases nationwide.

Honour killings

An honour killing is a murder of a family member who has been considered to have brought dishonour and shame upon the family. Examples of reasons for honour killings include the refusal to enter an arranged marriage, committing adultery, choosing a partner that the family disapproves of, and becoming a victim of rape.

The most prominent areas where honour killings occur in India are northern regions. Honour killings are especially seen in Haryana, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Jharkhand, Himachal Pradesh, and Madhya Pradesh. Honour killings have notably increased in some Indian states which has led to the Supreme Court of India, in June 2010, issuing notices to both the Indian central government and six states to take preventative measures against honour killings.

Female infanticide

Female infanticide is the elected killing of a newborn female child or the termination of a female fetus through sex-selective abortion. In India, there is incentive to have a son, because they offer security to the family in old age and are able to conduct rituals for deceased parents and ancestors. In contrast, daughters are considered to be a social and economic burden.

Female foeticide

Female foeticide is the elected abortion of a fetus, because it is female. Female foeticide occurs when a family has a strong preference for sons over daughters, which is a common cultural theme in India. Modern medical technology has allowed for the gender of a child to be determined while the child is still a fetus. Once these modern prenatal diagnostic techniques determine the gender of the fetus, families then are able to decide if they would like to abort based on gender. If they decide to abort the fetus after discovering it is female, they are committing female foeticide. The foetal sex determination and sex-selective abortion by medical professionals is now a Rs 1,000 crore (US\$244 million) industry.

The Preconception and Prenatal Diagnostic Techniques Act of 1994 (PCPNDT Act 1994) was modified in 2003 in order to target medical professionals. The Act has proven ineffective due to the lack of implementation. Sex-selective abortions have totaled approximately 4.2-12.1 million from 1980-2010. There was a greater increase in the number of sex-selective abortions in the 1990s than the 2000s. Poorer families are responsible for a higher proportion of abortions than wealthier families. Significantly more abortions occur in rural areas versus urban areas when the first child is female.

Sexual crimes

Rape

The comparative rate of violence against women in Indian states and union territories in 2012, has increased, as reported to the police. It includes rape, sexual assault, insult to modesty, kidnapping, abduction, cruelty by intimate partner or relatives, trafficking, persecution for dowry, dowry deaths, indecency, and all other crimes listed in Indian Penal Code.

Rape is one of the most common crimes against women. In India, a woman is raped every 29 minutes. Incidents of reported rape increased 3% from 2011 to 2012. Incidents of reported incest rape increased 46.8% from 268 cases in 2011 to 392 cases in 2012.

Year	Reported rapes
2008	21,467
2009	21,397
2010	22,172
2011	24,206
2012	24,923

Source: National Crime Records Bureau of India, 2012-13

Victims of rape are increasingly reporting their rapes and confronting the perpetrators. Women are becoming more independent and educated, which is increasing their likelihood to report their rape.

Although rapes are becoming more frequently reported, many go unreported or have the complaint files withdrawn due to the perception of family honour being compromised. Women frequently do not receive justice for their rapes, because police often do not give a fair hearing, and/or medical evidence is often unrecorded which makes it easy for offenders to get away with their crimes under the current laws.

Marital rape

In India, marital rape is not a criminal offense. 20% of Indian men admit to forcing their wives or partners to have sex.

Marital rape can be classified into one of three types:

- Battering rape: This includes both physical and sexual violence. The majority of marital rape victims experience battering rape.
- Force-only rape: Husbands use the minimum amount of force necessary to coerce his wife.
- Compulsive or obsessive rape: Torture and/or "perverse" sexual acts occur and are often physically violent.

Gang rape

Gang rape is defined as the rape of an individual by two or more perpetrators. The 2012 Delhi gang rape brought a lot of international attention to India.

Insult to modesty

Modesty-related violence against women includes assaults on women with intent to outrage her modesty and insults to the modesty of women. From 2011 to 2012, there was a 5.5% increase in reported assaults on women with intent to outrage her modesty. Madhya Pradesh had 6,655 cases, accounting for 14.7% of the national incidents. From 2011 to 2012, there was a 7.0% increase in reported insults to the modesty of women. Andhra Pradesh had 3,714 cases, accounting for 40.5% of the national accounts, and Maharashtra had 3,714 cases, accounting for 14.1% of the national accounts.

Year	Assaults with intent to outrage modesty	Insults to the modesty of women ^[1]
2008	40,413	12,214
2009	38,711	11,009
2010	40,613	9,961
2011	42,968	8,570
2012	45,351	9,173

Source: National Crime Records Bureau of India, 2012-13

Domestic violence

Domestic violence is abuse by one partner against another in an intimate relationship such as dating, marriage, cohabitation or a familial relationship. Domestic violence is also known as domestic abuse, spousal abuse, battering, family violence, dating abuse and intimate partner violence (IPV). Domestic violence can be physical, emotional, verbal, economic and sexual abuse. Domestic violence can be subtle, coercive or violent. In India, 70% of women are victims of domestic violence. The Indian government has taken measures to try to reduce domestic violence through legislation such as the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act 2005.

Year	Reported cruelty by a husband or relative
2008	81,344
2009	89,546
2010	94,041
2011	99,135
2012	106,527

Source: National Crime Records Bureau of India, 2012-13

Every 9 minutes, a case of cruelty is committed by either of husband or a relative of the husband. Cruelty by a husband or his relatives is the greatest occurring crime against women. From 2011 to 2012, there was a 7.5% increase in cruelty by husbands and relatives. In West Bengal, there were 19,865 cases, accounting for 18.7% of the national total, and in Andhra Pradesh, there were 13,389 cases, accounting for 12.6% of the national total. However the point to be noted here is that the Section 498a, which is called the anty dowry law is the most misused law in India.

Forced and child marriage

Girls are vulnerable to being forced into marriage at young ages, suffering from a double vulnerability: both for being a child and for being female. Child brides often do not understand the meaning and responsibilities of marriage. Causes of such marriages include the view that girls are a burden for their parents, and the fear of girls losing their chastity before marriage.

Acid throwing

Acid throwing, also called an *acid attack*, a *vitriol attack* is a form of violent assault used against women in India. Acid throwing is the act of throwing acid or an alternative corrosive substance onto a person's body "with the intention to disfigure, maim, torture, or kill." Acid attacks are usually directed at a victim's face which burns the skin causing damage and often exposing or dissolving bone. Acid attacks can lead to permanent scarring, blindness, as well as social, psychological and economic difficulties.

The Indian legislature has regulated the sale of acid. Compared to women throughout the world, women in India are at a higher risk of being victims of acid attacks. At least 72% of reported acid attacks in India have involved women. India has been experiencing an increasing trend of acid attacks over the past decade.

In 2010, there was a high of 27 reported cases of chemical assaults. Scholars believe that acid attacks in India are being under-reported. 34% of acid attacks in India have been determined to be related to rejection of marriage or refusal by a women of sexual advances. 20% of acid attacks have been determined to be related to land, property, and/or business disputes. Acid attacks related to marriage are often spurred by dowry disagreements.

Measures to control crime against women:

It is clear from above data that crime against women is rising at a alarming pace in India. Following measures must be taken to combat this situation.

- Create laws and enforce existing laws that protect women from discrimination and violence, including rape, beatings, verbal abuse, mutilation, torture, "honor" killings and trafficking.
- Educate community members on their responsibilities under international and national human rights laws.
- Promote the peaceful resolution of disputes by including the perspectives of women and girls.
- Strengthen women's ability to earn money and support their households by providing skills training for women.
- Sensitize the public to the disadvantages of early and forced child marriages.
- Highlight the value of girls' education and of women's participation in economic development.
- Encourage women to participate in the political process and educate the public about the value of women's votes.
- Raise public awareness of the poor conditions some women face, particularly in rural areas.
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Conclusion:

That, sadly, is the theme around which women in a free country, in the 21st century, live. It also defines the current and past government's failure against providing a secure environment for women. To give the devil its due, the Indian government must try hard to show its support towards women. Social, moral and financial assistance should be provided to the victims. Strict judicial actions must be taken against criminals, without any delay. These are necessary and laudable steps. As a matter of fact, no matter how economically independent the educated, urban woman becomes or how hard rural outreach programs work at improving female education, the narrative always meanders back to safety or the lack of it. If these factors can be controlled, then more than one form of violence can be prevented from harming a female and our society, India would be a much better place to live in.

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