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**TRANSFORMING SOCIAL NORMS TO PREVENT  
VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN**

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**ABSTRACT**

Our Indian constitution has granted equal rights to both men and women but somehow we are still lacking the equality of genders. Unfortunately, India is one of the countries where women suffer from discrimination, thus become victims of violence and occupy a low status in society. Discriminatory mind set towards women affects their everyday life. Women have been victims of discrimination for many years in almost all the societies, regions, cultures and religious communities. In India women have to bear with a variety of violence which includes domestic, mental, emotional, public, and social violence. Most of this is Intimate Partner Violence. Women who have been in the relationship also reported that they have experienced some of physical and sexual violence by their partner.

Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) refers to the behavior by intimate partner or husband and any male partner that cause physical, sexual or psychological harm, including aggression, abuse and controlling behaviors. When a relationship is full of communication gap, educational inequality and disrespect of one's life, then the violence occurs. Violence in any way affects the mental and physical health, and social life of women. The increasing level of violence decreases the participation of women in educational, social, political, and cultural areas.

The research paper explains the violence faced by the women and it also describes the effects on women's life. The research paper also tries to furnish some statistical data on violence against women and suggestions for the mitigating the same.

**Key words:** Violence, Intimate partner, Discrimination

## **Introduction**

Society considered home as a secure place where individual think and care about one another and contribute to the development of one another. In male dominating society, a women faces violence everywhere around the world. In all over the world women have been exploited from many years in almost all the societies, religions, cultures and religious communities. Unfortunately, women are discriminated against in society due to inequality, it is getting reflecting in our small units of society. Women are victims of this gender bias as wives, as sister, and as a daughter. As a result, women went through a state of insecurity in her entire life due to this gender biasing in society.

The constitution of India guarantees equal rights to women and equality before the law with them being considered to be at par with men in all fields. A common saying in Indian society is that the daughters are somebody else's treasure. Because of indoctrination of such kind of mentality, a girl child grows up with insecurity in a way that when she becomes a youth, she will be married and sent off far away in an alien place. Further, she is assured that her 'other home' will be equally comfortable and secure. But this is not always the case. But, the cruel truth is that even in her own home or in her in-laws' house- a girl is often given lesser importance. To begin with, her birth is not always an occasion to celebrate, as she grows her desires are suppressed because she is a girl. At her in laws, she is made to live in fear of reprimand in case she does not live up to the expected role of "Ideal wife" or "Bahu". If she could not fulfill all the requirements of her in laws' she has to face violence and discrimination. As a result of which, women normally remains silent because she does not want to destroy the peace of her in laws' house. There is a glorification of her 'silence' which adds to her suffering and she is told to 'adjust'. A woman does not normally exercise her right to register a complaint. Fear, shame, and concerns related to negative family outcome make women experience Domestic Violence and remain silent.

It is important to understand the violence in the context of social inequalities. '**Violence**' comprises abuse which is physical, sexual, emotional, and psychological. This includes any behavior that frightens intermediates, terrorizes, manipulates, hurts, humiliates, blames, injuries, and wounds. In India women have to bear with a variety of violence which includes domestic, mental, emotional, public, and social violence. Women who have been in relationship also reported that they have experienced violence by their intimate partner. **Intimate partner violence** is the behavior by the husband and any male partner that cause physical, sexual or psychological harm, including aggression, abuse and controlling behaviors. The man does not consider act of violence as being a crime rather he takes it as a normal occurrence and projection of his 'Manhood'. On the other hand, women considered this behavior as a fate and took it habitual. When the women assumes a passive role, the man's aggressive tendencies get further aggravated and he starts believing that he can indulge in violence and get away with it. Unfortunately, women have been helpless, in vulnerable and victimized of violence.

## **Cases Reported & Rate of Crime Committed Against Women During 2015**

As per the report of National Crime Report Bureau of India, in the reported Crime Against Women consist of crime heads namely Rape, Attempt to Commit Rape, Kidnapping & Abduction of Women, Dowry Deaths, Assault on Women with intent to Outrage her Modesty, Insult to Modesty of Women, Cruelty by Husband or his Relatives, Importation of Girls from Foreign Country.

**Table 1: National Crime Report Bureau of India, 2015**

S. No.	State/UT	Cases Reported	Percentage Contribution To All India Total	Mid-Year Projected Female Population + (in Lakhs)	Rate of Total Cognizable Crimes
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
1	Andhra Pradesh	15931	4.9	255.6 *	62.3
2	Arunachal Pradesh	384	0.1	6.2	62.1
3	Assam	23258	7.1	157.0	148.2
4	Bihar	13891	4.2	498.4	27.9
5	Chhattisgarh	5720	1.7	127.8	44.8
6	Goa	365	0.1	9.2	39.9
7	Gujarat	7762	2.4	294.7	26.3
8	Haryana	9446	2.9	124.7	75.7
9	Himachal Pradesh	1289	0.4	34.4	37.4
10	Jammu & Kashmir	3363	1.0	59.0	57.0
11	Jharkhand	6518	2.0	162.0	40.2
12	Karnataka	12705	3.9	305.7	41.6
13	Kerala	9708	3.0	181.7	53.4
14	Madhya Pradesh	24135	7.4	368.6	65.5
15	Maharashtra	31126	9.5	568.0	54.8
16	Manipur	266	0.1	12.8	20.8
17	Meghalaya	334	0.1	13.6	24.5
18	Mizoram	158	0.0	5.1	30.9
19	Nagaland	90	0.0	11.2	8.0
20	Odisha	17144	5.2	209.2	81.9
21	Punjab	5291	1.6	133.2	39.7
22	Rajasthan	28165	8.6	345.6	81.5
23	Sikkim	53	0.0	3.0	17.6
24	Tamil Nadu	5847	1.8	344.8	17.0
25	Telangana	15135	4.6	182.1 *	83.1
26	Tripura	1267	0.4	18.6	68.2

27	Uttar Pradesh	35527	10.9	1021.2	34.8
28	Uttarakhand	1453	0.4	51.6	28.2
29	West Bengal	33218	10.1	452.5	73.4
<b>TOTAL STATE(S)</b>		<b>309549</b>	<b>94.5</b>	<b>5957.4</b>	<b>52.0</b>

- Five top states where maximum crime Case reported are: Madhya Pradesh (24135), Maharashtra (31126), Rajasthan (28155), Uttar Pradesh (35527), West Bengal (33218).
- In Madhya Pradesh with overall contribution of 7.4, in women related crime/ violence rate of cognizable crime is found to be 65.5 in a population of female (in lakhs) equal to 368.6 which is the alarming figure itself.
- In Maharashtra with overall contribution of 9.5, in women related crime/ violence rate of cognizable crime is found to be 54.8 in a population of female (in lakhs) equal to 568 which is the alarming figure itself.
- In Rajasthan with overall contribution of 8.6, in women related crime/ violence rate of cognizable crime is found to be 81.5 in a population of female (in lakhs) equal to 345.6 which is the alarming figure itself.
- In Uttar Pradesh with overall contribution of 10.9, in women related crime/ violence rate of cognizable crime is found to be 34.8 in a population of female (in lakhs) equal to 1021.2 which is the alarming figure itself.
- In West Bengal with overall contribution of 10.1, in women related crime/ violence rate of cognizable crime is found to be 73.4 in a population of female (in lakhs) equal to 452.5 which is the alarming figure itself.
- In Haryana with overall contribution of 2.9, in women related crime/ violence rate of cognizable crime is found to be 75.7 in a population of female (in lakhs) equal to 124.7 which is the alarming figure itself.

In states namely Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim have inspiring figure almost equal to zero in terms of women related violence and are a good example which other states can learn from them.

The above table clearly indicates that's there are huge number of cases which have been reported in most of the states of India which is very poor and it shows the picture of lives of women suffering due to domestic violence/crime in India. Further, based on the figure these require corrective actions to be taken at state level to minimize the violence against women and empowerment of women at social and economic level.

### **Violence across Women Life-Cycle**

Women continue to be subjective to gender violence over the entire life cycle. During her life she has to face violence at every stage prior to her birth till the end of her life. From many centuries, women have been facing extreme discrimination and violence. Even, discriminatory mind-set towards her has affected the lives of women and thus occupies low status in society.

**Table 2: Gender violence across life cycle of women**

Lifecycle Stage	Type of violence
Pre-birth stage	<b>Female foeticide</b> In this stage of violence, woman is condemned to sex selection and female foeticide.
Infancy stage	<b>Gender discrimination (health care, nutrition)</b> During infant stage, they are subject to infanticide or under nourishment.
Childhood stage	<b>Gender discrimination (health care, Food, education and other social benefits)</b> In childhood stage also, they are subjected to under nourishment; if they do manage to pass their age of five, they are neglected in medical care and education as well as subjected to sexual or physical violence.
The adolescent stage	<b>Early marriage, rape, discrimination in health care, dress code, use or information technology, prostitution, trafficking, eve-teasing etc.</b> In this stage, they are faced with situation of early marriage and other violence prevailing in the society.
Reproductive stage of women	<b>At reproductive age (domestic violence in form of sexual (marital rape), psychological, emotional and physical torture by intimate partner and his family members).</b> In adulthood stage, women are faced with situation like early pregnancy, sexual violence, domestic violence, harassment for dowry, desertion, dying during delivery etc. which are the prominent in society.
Old age	<b>In old age women generally faces elderly abuse (abused in term of physical, emotional, financial abuse).</b> In this stage, they are condemned to a life of desertion and neglect. As a result of domestic violence also old women are bound to live in old age homes after they have been deprived of their own home.

It can be analyzed from the above described stages and types of violence that although women's life cycle shares to face different type of gender violence and exploitation but also apart from that she has to face different forms of crime which went unreported. And these reported instances of violence are merely a tip of ice burg which needs to be identified and attention is required in those cases also.

### **Causes of Increase in Violence against Women**

In our society, violence is bursting. It is present almost everywhere and nowhere is this eruption more intense than right behind the doors of homes. Behind closed doors of homes all across our country, women are being tortured, beaten and killed. It is happening in rural areas, towns, cities

and metropolitans as well as, it is crossing all social classes, gender, racial lines and age groups. It is becoming a legacy being passed on from one generation to another. In India, women faces different type of violence and there are different causes for the violence.

- **Social and cultural orthodox**

In male dominating society, a women is exploiting in everywhere in the world. In India women have been exploited from many years in almost all the societies/caste/religion. 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. Women in India were enjoying quite a comfortable position all through the Vedic period however; the condition of women got declined gradually because of the various kind of social and cultural orthodox like Parada Pratha, Baal Vivah, Sati Pratha etc. all these social and cultural orthodox declined the status of women.

- **Low sex ratio**

There are multiple reasons of increase in crime against women. The foremost is the declining sex ratio, child sex and sex ratio at birth (0-1) as per the census of 2011. The status of women is low and preference for son is very strong in rural area which in turn leads to low sex ration resulting in raise crimes/violence against women.

- **Early marriage of girls**

In India, the practice of early marriage still holds its place in various states and especially rural areas. The girls are seen as an object and still girl birth is made to marry at very initial stage; she has to bear various forms of violence. Girls with poor families are more likely to experience violence by an intimate partner. They forced to make marital relations against her wish and thus suffered signs of depression and stress.

- **Illiteracy**

It is very heartening to see that in spite of becoming a prosperous developing economy and attaining results and success in every sphere and field, but we still are not able to provide good education and every stage. One of main reason behind the violence related women is lack of education. People are still uneducated and believe in superstitions and old traditions. Due to less education women faced the violence from both the family and society. Men don't want to change their thinking for women.

### **Violence And its Consequences:**

A family is meant to be providing security, but when the environment at home turns violent, it is the woman who suffers. Violence refers to the abuse which is physical, sexual, emotional and psychological.

Some examples of violence:-

• Domestic violence	• Insult in front of other and criticizing women.
• Don't allow women to work or be economically independent.	• Taunts and humiliates women.
• Demands dowry.	• Taunts women for not producing male child.
• Denies a female child the opportunity to study.	• Physical attacks like pushing, slapping, hitting etc.

- **Effects of violence on women**

Women who are victims of violence live in the fear throughout the life. According to the National Crime Record Bureau, women in India are very much unsafe in their marital home. It is found that

violence against women begins at home. Abused women develop post-traumatic stress which includes a range of symptoms:-

• Health regarding issues	• Sleeplessness, numbness, nightmares
• Panic attacks, feeling helpless	• Loneliness, loss of mental balance
• Anxiety and depression	• Loss of trust in others
• Loss of physical and mental health	• Self-esteem is worn down
• Unable to build meaningful relations with her children and others	• Socially and mentally decline

• **Effects of violence on children**

Children are the biggest and most vulnerable of victims of domestic violence. In such environment, the children do not feel secure. They sometimes try to find security in their mothers; sometimes with their father and other members of the family. Childhood is a time of joy but these child victims becomes scarred and insecure. However hard a woman may try to shield children from the domestic violence but they witness it in a variety of ways. The child often becomes a direct victim of violence also; sometimes bearing the brunt of his father's anger. As a result, such violence has a lifelong impact on children at every stage of development and individual personality.

**Effect on the male child** – Boys who grow up in an environment exposed to domestic violence are more likely to internalize the myth that it is their right to ill-treat the woman and she deserves to be abused.

**Effect on the female child** – Girls who grow up in an environment exposed to domestic violence are more likely to internalize the myth that there is nothing wrong in her husband beats her, it is the right of man to ill-treat her and she deserves to be abused. Hence as a result she does not resist the violence and accepts her low status.

Children may suffer other problems like:-

- Having a lowered sense of self-worth
- Become aggressive.
- Have drop in their academic performance.
- Become anxious and depressed and even develop suicidal tendencies.
- Begin to self-harm
- Have temper tantrums and may start to use alcohol or drugs.

**Suggestive Measures to Mitigate Violence Against Women**

Modern women have come out of their protective shell- four-walls of the house. They are trying their best to restore lost prestige and secure due place in modern world. They have marched ahead, though slowly but steadily with tremendous self-confidence and their inner strength. They are actively participating in nation-building activities and have paved way even into the precincts, which have been considered an as exclusive male preserve. They work very hard to prove their worth and make their presence felt.

• **'At government' level:**

Amongst immediate steps, the most important task of government is to arrest continuously deteriorating law and order situation. There should be vigilant policing round the clock both in cities and suburban areas and more women police officers in all police stations. Speedy and time-

bound justice is needed urgently. Delayed justice emboldens the spirits of criminal-minded elements in society, who take advantage of loopholes in law, and which enables them to escape. Reforming the structure and systems of governmental institutions engaged in the law-making and enforcement tasks are highly desirable, but it may take a longer time.

- **'At Society' level:**

At this level, the attitude of conservative patriarchal society, which looks upon women as second-grade citizens – inferior to men, should be changed. The focus of the society should be on finding out root causes of the problems related to various women-issues in different places. Change in the mind-set like gender sensitization and understanding that women are not a commodity or an object of enjoyment; instead give women their rightful place in society without any gender-discrimination is the need of the time. There is dire need to focus the attention of society on social, educational, economic, health and legal needs of women.

- **Role of Non-Governmental Institutions/Organizations**

Non-governmental organizations and institutions should conduct series of seminars, workshops meetings at different places on various aspects of violence/oppression against women. They should discuss in depth alarming rise in violence acts against women, which makes it very unsafe for women to move freely outside their homes and try to find out remedy for it.

- **Role of Media**

Media should bring women issues to public domain in a forceful and impactful manner. They can play an important role in spreading awareness and educating the society about the issues faced by women. They can provide a platform to speakers and panelists from different fields, eminent personalities responsible for decision-making to share their views and conduct an in-depth study on various gender issues.

- **At family level**

Family is the best place to inculcate positive values – like honesty, simplicity, modesty, sense of responsibility and respect for elders – amongst children and youth of both the sexes. Inculcation of positive values would go a long way in creating an atmosphere, wherein women can move around freely in society without any fear whatsoever. Training for gender sensitization should be imparted within the family. Right from the beginning, all the children should be treated equally, without any gender-bias. Real strength of manhood lies in treating women with gentleness, respect and in protecting women's dignity and honor. Treating women inhumanly is not Indian culture. It shows inherent weakness of men.

- **Role of women**

Women can contribute a lot in creating a cultured prosperous society and bringing about much desired social re-awakening. Instead of silently bearing all the atrocities perpetrated against them, women should raise their voice against injustice like dowry, bride-burning, female infanticide, etc.; create awareness amongst women about their rights and channelize their efforts by writing articles, organizing seminars, workshops etc. Women should exercise utmost vigilance both at the mental and physical level to ensure their safety and security, so that no one could exploit them when placed under adverse circumstances in life. They must always be prepared for self- defense by getting training in Karate etc.

- **Core Committees**

For dealing the causes and the solutions to women's problems effectively – Core Committees should be formed at local level involving experts, contentious citizens, young boys and girls with a purpose to spread awareness, inculcate positive values amongst people of all ages; help victimized women, give new suggestions to curb crimes. There is a need to make proper and enough arrangements for safe and secure place of stay (hostels) for girl-students and working women, who have go away

from their homes and live alone in different new unknown places to pursue their studies or work in offices. Rehabilitation of victimized – Proper arrangements like short-stay/shelter-homes, family counseling centers should be made for protection and rehabilitation of victimized women or women in distress.

### **Conclusion**

Indian society need to inculcate human values which are reached an abysmally low level nowadays. There is a dire need to tell people right from their childhood about dignity of labor and self-discipline, inculcate in them self-confidence and a feeling of safety and security, and not to treat women as mere objects.

Constantly deteriorating condition of law and order situation has added fuel into the fire making life of women miserable. Common-men demand effective Government action and sincere implementation of the laws along with swift justice to curb the increasing violence against women/girl-child. India needs to change people's perception/mindset about women's fundamental rights for justice, safety, security, equality and freedom. Women, source of immense power – It should never ever be forgotten that woman is a source of immense power. Without women, men-world stands no-where. Every woman, 'Durga', 'Lakshmi' 'Annapurna' and Saraswati – It is time to remember India's age-old rich cultural heritage and values wherein women were treated with great respect in society.

Efforts done so far on gender issue defy basic and simple solutions. Elimination of all kinds of violence against women requires channelizing simultaneously the attention and efforts of all the concerned people and work together at all level mentioned above. This sensitive issue needs intervention and action at multiple levels – state, society and individuals in public and private capacities.

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