

**ATROCITIES ON WOMEN IN INDIA**

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**ABSTRACT**

Women is said to be the better half of man. She is addressed as fair sex sometimes, weaker sex, ardhagini etc. Whatever we call her it is an undisputable fact that woman is the centre of existence of this universe. In ancient India she was considered a goddess. Even in modern India women don't lag behind men. Take any sphere of activities whether it is social, political or economic, women are shouldering men. P.T. Usha, Mrs Indira Gandhi, Kalapan Chawla, Sania Mirza, Sania Nehwal are the examples of powerful women who have done extra-ordinary work in their respective fields. But this is half truth about today's woman. The other sides of coin is quite dark, dismal and disappointing. Today woman is being victimatised everywhere in India whether it is family or outside. Unequality injustice, humiliation violence, sexual harassment, molestation. Rape, bride burning, immoral trafficking are some of the atrocities which are committed daily in our so called civilized society. The evil customs of Sati, Devadasi, Dowry and Female Infanticides, etc. continued in large scale. These evil customs aggravated crimes against women which eventually affected the position of women and they were criminally exploited in all walks of their lives. Family is supposed to be the safest unit of society for women. But the irony is that the atrocities start from the family. As a daughter as a wife as a daughter-in-law, as a mother as a sister she is suffering throughout her life. She suffers at the hands of her own relations. When she goes out side her house, she is not safe. She is sexually harassed at work place, in buses, trains everywhere. Molestation and eve-teasing are also daily happening. Rape is the most heinous crime against women. But this is also occurring daily in our society. Newspapers and magazines are full of these news. There is a long list of atrocities against women- immoral trafficking, fraudulent marriages, adultery, female foeticide to name a few. Various laws have been enacted by the govt. of India time to time but they have not been implemented successfully. Infact the public has failed them in a way. There are various reasons for that failure. Various measures can be suggested for that like:- trained police personnel-women cadre, awakening programmes in rural and remote areas , separate courts for women cases, light of education, declining sex ratio, self-defence training for girls.

## **INTRODUCTION :**

Women is said to be the better half of man. She is addressed as fair sex sometimes, weaker sex, ardhagini etc. Whatever we call her it is an undisputable fact that woman is the centre of existence of this universe. Creation is unimaginable without her. In India society from ancient times she used to secure a very respectable status in the society. She used to be goddess. No religious ceremony was complete without her presence. Indian philosophy can be understood by a 'shloka' in Sankrit "YASTASTU PUJYATE NARI, RAMYANTE TATRA DEVTA".

Even in modern India women don't lag behind men. Take any sphere of activities whether it is social, political or economic, women are shouldering men. P.T. Usha, Mrs Indira Gandhi, Kalpana Chawla, Sania Mirza, Sania Nehwal are the examples of powerful women who have done extra-ordinary work in their respective fields. Mao, a great revolutionary of 20<sup>th</sup> century went to the extent of saying that women holds half the sky. Nothing could be more visionary about the woman role in modern society.

But this is half truth about today's woman. The other sides of coin is quite dark, dismal and disappointing. Today woman is being victimised everywhere in India whether it is family or outside. Unequality injustice, humiliation violence, sexual harassment, molestation. Rape, bride burning, immoral trafficking are some of the atrocities which are committed daily in our so called civilized society.

## **HISTORICAL AND MYTHOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE**

Since the ancient age womanhood has been respected as incarnation of mother power. In Vedic and Upanishadic period, woman occupied a position of honour and respect and were equalized at par with men in society. But in Smriti period, a few new concepts gradually entered into and got established affecting the position of women adversely. In this age, women were equalised with lower caste of Shudra. The Puranic literature preached the ascetic ideal and painted women in black colours to fulfil their purpose and to discourage men from marriage. Their world renouncing theories got support from ideas of great philosophers who also depicted women as mother of all evils.

If we look back we see that even in Buddhism nuns were considered inferior even to the novice monks in their religious institutions. Socrates described woman as the source of all evils and philosopher Tertullian went to the extent of saying that woman is the gate of hell and mother of all evils.

If we look at 'Mahabharata' or for that matter 'Ramayana' the condition of the women was no better. Draupadi was a shared wife of five husbands. This was only beginning of her woes. She was lost in the game of gambling like many other valuable 'things' and who can forget the darkest chapter 'Draupadi's cheer haran' in the presence of her five husbands, and still we call 'Yudhishtir' the most righteous man. This was the first atrocity committed on her by the male dominated society. She was princess and privileged one, even then she was victimised. Or take example of 'Ramayana', It was Sita who went through the ordeal not Rama. Take the case of 'Meera Bai', she had to drink poison for defying tradition.

The evil customs of Sati, Devadasi, Dowry and Female Infanticides, etc. continued in large scale. These evil customs aggravated crimes against women which eventually affected the position of women and they were criminally exploited in all walks of their lives. During the 20<sup>th</sup> century the freedom struggle provided opportunity to women community for unification and since then combinedly they started a struggle for their emancipation. The constitution of free India was framed with an aim to eradicate criminal exploitation of women. Accordingly, many laws were passed and policies and programmes were launched for ending the criminal victimisation of the weaker sex. Due to women-oriented programmes and policies, the literacy rate among women has increased. Women have entered in large numbers into blue and white collar jobs of India.

With the advent of Muslims the condition of women deteriorated. She had to go behind 'Purdah' and face by bigamy and polygamy. As we became more civilized the justice and violence on women went on increasing rather than the other way round.

Since independence many new laws have been enacted and the Indian Penal Code, the Cr. P.C. and Indian Evidence Act have been amended to protect women, but these have shown poor result. At present women finds no security at home and she is ill treated by her husband and in laws, on the streets, she is mishandled by bad elements. At workplace, they are also vulnerable and fall prey to the anti-social, men colleagues and bosses. In every walk of her life she is threatened by crimes. She is teased and kidnapped as girl, abducted and at times raped as a young women, beaten and harassed as a house wife and distasted and discarded in her old age as a burden.

#### **VARIOUS ATROCITIES COMMITTED ON WOMEN...**

Atrocities on women in domestic as well as working sphere is a universal phenomenon. According to Ashok Rudra, women have known hardship in all civilizations but surely nowhere also the inequality in the treatment of women could have surpassed that in India. She is

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oppressed by father and brothers in her parental home then by husband and sons after marriage. It is so because in India illiteracy, lack of awareness, poverty added with traditional oppressions and customs work as fuel to the fire.

Family is supposed to be the safest unit of society for women. But the irony is that the atrocities start from the family. As a daughter as a wife as a daughter-in-law, as a mother as a sister she is suffering throughout her life. She suffers at the hands of her own relations. When she is subjected to violence and injustice even in her own home, where will she go then? 'Home' becomes a prison for her where she dies every moment. In such circumstances, the outer world becomes even more hostile for her. Where will she get justice? Her cries go unheeded.

When she goes out side her house, she is not safe. She is sexually harassed at work place, in buses, trains everywhere. Molestation and eve-teasing are also daily happening. Rape is the most heinous crime against women. But this is also occurring daily in our society. Newspapers and magazines are full of these news. We have become so insensitive as a society that these are no more news of us. These are daily occurrences. Then, take up dowry cases and bride burning. Many such cases go unreported. There are numerous silent martyres. They daily suffer and tolerate humiliation, criticism, ridicule and violence.

There is a long list of atrocities against women- immoral trafficking, fraudulent marriages, adultery, female foeticide to name a few Indian Govt. has enacted several laws intended equal rights to women to counter social discrimination and various forms of violence and atrocities and to provide support service especially to working women. Crimes against women can be broadly classified into two categories.

#### **1. THE CRIMES IDENTIFIED UNDER THE INDIAN PENAL CODE (IPC)**

- (i) Rape (Sec.-376, IPC)
- (ii) Kidnapping and abduction for different purposes (Sec. 363-373, IPC)
- (iii) Homicides for dowry, dowry death or their attempts (Sec. 302 304-B, IPC)
- (iv) Torture, both mental and physical (Sec. 498-A, IPC)
- (v) Molestation (Sec. 354, IPC)
- (vi) Sexual Harassment, referred to in the past as "eve-teasing" (Sec.-509, IPC)
- (vii) Importation of girls (upto 21 years of age (Sec. 366-B, IPC)

#### **2. THE CRIMES IDENTIFIED UNDER THE SPECIAL LAWS (SLL)**

Although all laws are not gender specific, the provisions of law affecting women significantly have been reviewed periodically and amendments carried put to keep in pace with

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emerging demands of the modern day society. Special enactments to safeguard women and their interests have been introduced in our country over the years to deal with the situation. The special laws enacted specifically are as follows :

- (i) The Employees's State Insurances Act, 1948.
- (ii) The Plantation Labour Act, 1951.
- (iii) The Family Courts Act, 1954.
- (iv) The Special Marriage Act, 1954.
- (v) The Hindu Marriage Act, 1955.
- (vi) The Hindu Succession Act, 1956.
- (vii) Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act, 1956.
- (viii) The Maternity Benefit Act, 1961 (Amended in 1995).
- (ix) Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961.
- (x) The Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act, 1971.
- (xi) The Contract Labour (Regulation and Abolition) Act, 1979.
- (xii) The Equal Remuneration Act, 1976.
- (xiii) The Child Marriage Restraint (Amendment) Act, 1979.
- (xiv) The Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, 1986.
- (xv) Indecent Representation of Women (Prohibition) Act, 1986.
- (xvi) Commission of Sati (Prevention) Act, 1987.

Many amendments have been done in these laws according to the need of society, after the horrible rape incident in New Delhi in Dec., 2012, the whole nation was shaken. People protested on a large scale. Many candle marches and processions were carried out by the people in different parts of the country. It seemed that the soul of the whole country was badly bruised by this heinous act. After that Justice Verma Commission sat up and gave its recommendations. It suggested various strict and hard punishment for crimes against women.

Govt. enacted a law in which several clauses were added like chasing, staring, passing lewd remarks and lewd gesture etc. against women became punished. The punishment for these crimes was also prescribed.

Now the question arises as why so many crimes are taking place inspite of the existence of laws, machinery to implement laws and enforcement-agencies.

#### **WHERE WE FAIL...**

1. Our judicial system is full of flaws. The criminals take advantage of the loopholes and get scot free. Secondly, powerful and influential criminals manipulate the cases in their favour because corruption is rampant in the society. Thirdly it is so expensive that a poor man can not afford to go to court. Fourthly, justice takes so much time can not afford to go to court. Fourthly, justice takes so much time that the relevance of the justice is lost. So people have lost faith in this system and they try to avoid registering their cases.

2. Our Chief law enforcement agency is police force and less said is better about Indian police. There are numerous cases when victims are victimised by police personnel. There are black sheep in this department who have tarnished the image of the police force. When 'Rakshak' becomes 'Bhakshak' Where will a woman get justice? Then many 'Saritas' and 'Ruchikas' have to commit suicide in order to be heard and get justice.

3. Our traditional society still thinks it as a taboo to go to court. People take it as a stigma and the family honour is considered at stake.

#### **SUGGESTED MEASURES...**

##### **1. TRAINED POLICE PERSONNEL-WOMEN CADRE :**

Trained police women not police men should deal with all the cases relating to atrocities as women.

##### **2. AWAKENING PROGRAMMES IN RURAL AND REMOTE AREAS :**

Awakening programmes in rural and remote areas should be organized by the legal cells. Poor and illiterate women can be made aware of their rights by this way.

##### **3. SEPARATE COURTS FOR WOMEN CASES :**

Special and separate courts should be established at district level and cases must be heard and daily basis so that justice can be meted out expeditiously.

##### **4. LIGHT OF EDUCATION :**

Light of education must reach every dark corner of the country. Many problems will die their own death if women are empowered with education.

##### **5. DECLINING SEX RATIO :**

This is also a main reason behind these crimes. If this situation continues, women will become an endangered species. We must protect the girls and stop girl foeticide.

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**6. SELF-DEFENCE TRAINING FOR GIRLS :**

The girl should be given training in self-defence. They should be skilled in Martial Arts. By knowing Judo-Karate, Kung-fu etc., they will be able to defend themselves in odd situations. They can keep chilly powder in their purse so that it can be used to throw in the eyes of the offender. Mobile phone is a boon for the girls. Smart phone tell the location of the person easily. The police has issued a helpline number in every state for women only. The lines are open for 24 × 7. So the help can be sought at any time.

**CONCLUSION :**

Besides political and economic revolutions, today we need a revolution which can affect the status and living conditions of whole women community of India and abroad. It is rightly said that the best way to judge the position of a nation is to find out the status of its women.

PM has launched a scheme called 'Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao'. It was started from Panipat, Haryana and Madhuri Dixit film actress was appointed as brand ambassador of this programme. This is a good move by the government to increase the sex ratio. But the condition in many other states also need special attention in this regard. But sloganeering is not going to help much. There is much to be done in this regard. First and foremost thing is that men will have to change their mindset towards women. They are also free, equal and independent individuals.

**MISUSE :**

A word of caution, I want to give to all women that all these laws are for them and their safety. But they should not misuse them which is unfortunately, being done on a large scale. The latest being the case of two sisters from Rohtak which was much in the news in last few months. The males should not be targetted simply because there are few laws for them.

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