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Crime against Women: Causes and Consequences

Dr. Shrimant Chavan

Associate Professor of Criminology, Government First Grade College, Vijayapur (Karnataka)

ABSTRACT

This paper highlights the gender based violence- child marriage, female genital mutilation, honour killings, dowry violence etc., and increase the crime rate against women. National Crime Record Bureau report shows stark increase in violence against women in India in the forms of dowry deaths, acts of sexual harassment, torture, rapes and domestic violence. Marital rape refers to sexual intercourse with one's spouse without the spouse's consent. Marital rape is not a crime in Indian Jurisprudence. Crimes against women are one of India's most serious social issues. This paper refers to physical, emotional, psychological, or sexual abuse within a relationship. This paper explains the existing legal provisions regarding sexual violence against women. Suggest some innovative measures to tackle the menace. Child marriage remains common in rural areas, although it is illegal under current Indian law.

Keywords: sexual harassment, crime, torture, violence, degradation and humiliation

INTRODUCTION

It highlights issues like domestic violence, economic dependency, and workplace harassment. During the last five decades women have entered in increasing numbers into salaried and remunerative occupations as well as professions hitherto reserved exclusively for men. In every walk of life we find them making their presence felt and very often they excel and surpass their counterparts. With the advent of freedom Indian women have recaptured their individuality, dignity and respect. Woman‘s social, legal and political status in our developing nation is fast undergoing a change. The Hindu Code and Properties Bill enacted into law have given Indian women rights and liberties. Henceforth, they are to be men's companions and not men's better halves. They have won accolades from their superiors in whatever capacity they have worked. We have women as judges, police officers, district collectors and revenue officers. They have proved coolheaded, objective, impartial and dispassionate.

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Women are at par with men in almost all spheres of life but it is only half of the truth. In reality their life is fraught with harrowing insecurities and risks. “Violence is often seen as a mechanism for the subjugation of women, whether in society in general or in an interpersonal relationship” (Miles 1988:1-14) Their existence, despite all charming slogans of liberation symbolizes nothing but degradation and humiliation. Let us go deep into some realities: a woman by her constitution is vulnerable. At all times she is exposed to the prying eyes of hungry males of all ages and of all classes. She is still helpless victim of the male's chauvinism and highhandedness. She may rise to any heights she remains the focal point of hundreds of hungry eyes. Man's tyrannical hegemony is overwhelmingly strong and deep-rooted to allow any change. The facts against equality of status are too glaring and prominent. Even educated and modernized husbands lord over their wives. A girl may be educated, beautiful and well employed, she can‘t be married off without the dowry. It is not wrong to say-the better a girl, the more difficult it is to find a match for her. Our society is full of such males as resent employment right to women. They think they will be left with less chances of employment. Even economically independent women are treated as second class citizens. Daughter-in-law is still a servant and a child-producing machine.

Police record can leave one all baffled and confused. A crime is committed against a woman every 5minutes, every 45 minutes a woman is raped, every 15 minutes a molestation takes place, every 40 minutes a woman is kidnapped and every hundred minutes a dowry death occurs. These figures speak for themselves and one can well imagine the plight of women at present. Even international agencies say that India has the highest number of custodial rapes by men, powerful and influential. Recent Kashmir scandal very clearly highlights the plight of innocent girls who came under the clutches of unscrupulous people, who exploited them physically, tortured them mentally and then threatened them with dire consequences if they raised their voice. Seminars are held and recommendations are made to ameliorate the plight of the fair sex but nothing tangible comes out. Seminars remain meeting, greeting and eating grounds. Delegates flaunt their

power and pelf, establish their new contacts for their ulterior purposes and forget blissfully the cause for which they have organized the show.

Ancient Manu and others who resemble Manu have made woman subordinate to husband, son, grandson and other male relatives, one after another, ad infinitum. The males set a high value on female's chastity but not on their own. They are egotistical and plunderers of the first water. Tragedy is, males do not think women to be potentially as competent as they are. Secondly, they chuckle silently putting very disturbing questions to themselves-what is a woman when she is completely emancipated? Is she the same as a man, anatomy apart? Should her sex be a private differentiation only, disregarded in her public life? Strongly enough they answer these questions themselves to suit their mindset.

TV serials and feminist magazines have played an ugly part in degrading womanhood. Magazines, to increase their circulation depict nude semi-nude and vulgar pictures of women. TV serials highlight seamy sides of the fair sex. Invariably the women fighting for their rights are shown in trouble and they are displayed as ruthless, insensitive, self-centred and uncaring creatures. 'Sita' and 'Savitri' type women are eulogised and message is hammered that husband is God and he must not be confronted in any way. Moreover, fashion shows and ramp shows have reduced women to showpieces and symbols of sex and playthings. Men enjoy seeing them in their traditional roles. So if we go deep into the malady we would come to the conclusion that it is men who are to blame for all this mess and mire. Crimes and violence against women can be physical and mental. “Violence against women (VAW), also known as gender-based violence, violence against women and girls, or sexual and gender-based violence” (Russo, Nancy Felipe 2006:178)

The arrival of a female child even today heralds a spell of gloom and anxiety. Man has developed a new tool, Ultra-sound, to torment the fair sex. Unscrupulous man uses this device to detect the sex of the child in the womb so as to exterminate in case it is a female child. Murderers in white coats roam freely with their shining weapons aborting the female foetuses. So we see crime against the fair sex starts right from the beginning as desensitised man inflicts deathblow on the stillborn female child. This crime takes under its wings the mother also as she suffers minutely and mutely and many a time has to embrace death also. Is female foeticide not immoral and criminal? The myth of the continuation of lineage is irrational and is eroding fast’ says man but he himself perpetuates it. Isn't he a hypocrite? Kofi Annan, Secretary-General of the United Nations, declared in a 2006 report posted on the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) website: “Violence against women and girls is a problem of pandemic proportions. At least one out of every three women around the world has been beaten, coerced into sex, or otherwise abused in her lifetime with the abuser usually someone known to her” (Moradian, Azad 2010)

Second most hideous aspect of our society is the dowry system. It reduces a young girl into a saleable commodity and lowers her dignity. Inadequate dowry lets loose a reign of terror for the girl. She is maltreated, beaten and even burnt alive. Parents give maximum to their daughter, beyond their capacity, but hungry husband and in-laws demand more and more. This hanger is insatiable. Untold number at girls immolate themselves at the altar of the evil of dowry every year, some of them before marriage because their parents can‘t afford dowry and some after marriage because the dowry the brought is not sufficient and adequate to quench the rapacity of the in-laws. Anti-dowry measures do equip our society to take stringent steps to bring the culprits to book but this menace is on the increase.

Sex is the other motive behind the violence and crime against the fair sex. Young girls are lured with the promises of decent jobs and marriage. These innocent birds fall to see the net being spread by the hunters. They are caught, blackmailed and are forced into a life of vice. A survey and study of the dwellers of red-light quarters invariably prove and bear out the general adoption of this modus operandi. Once a sex worker, always a sex worker. This depicts the rottenness of our social milieu. Nowhere girls are safe. Vultures roaming the streets pounce on them whenever they get a chance. A potential molester is standing at each and every corner.

Child marriage is prevalent even today. Through much legislation the minimum age for consummation of marriage has been raised from time to time. Today it is 18 for the girl and 21 for the boy but child-marriages are still solemnised. The institution of child-marriage is the result of hypergamy, the notion of virginity and dowry. The female is sacrificed at the altar of this tradition. Nobody cares for the health of the child girl. Early deliveries push her into the pits of ill health and she ultimately gets pestilence stricken. Is it not a crime against the fair sex? Is it not physical violence against the female? It certainly is but society does nothing to stop it. The person responsible for the implementation of anti-child marriage laws remain mute spectators and even enjoy sumptuous and lumptuous feasts given by the parties.

The plight to the widow is beyond description. She becomes an object of scolding and ridicule. She is forced to live a secluded and depraved life. She is looked down upon by the family members as everybody holds her responsible for the death of her husband. She is not allowed to remarry because in that case the property and the booty which she has inherited

will go in the hands of the new husband. Thus renunciation becomes her fate. Many a time she is subject to forced sex in this way physical and mental tortures are inflicted on her. She craves for death but even the god of death does not shower his blessings on her. She goes on living a miserable and wretched life, many a time widow is forced to sit on the pyre of her husband and be a Sati. Despite the laws against Sati occurrences of Sati are reported from various parts of India. Sati is eulogised only for monetary gains by the relatives. Is it not shameful? Is it not a murder? Is it not a murder? It is not fiery medieval horror?

Physical outrage on women is quite rampant. They are considered weak and vulnerable. A woman alone in the house is not safe. She can be murdered any time. Even in broad daylight while passing through a busy street or bazaar she is physically attacked and her armaments are snatched. Many times the vultures leave their victims bleeding but nobody cares. Lynx eyed brutes remain ever ready to pounce on the fair sex with all immunity even under the eagle eyes of the police force. The term gender-based violence refers to "any acts or threats of acts intended to hurt or make women suffer physically, sexually, or psychologically, and which affect women because they are women or affect women disproportionately" (Richters, J.M. Annemiek 1994).

Now days a new contagious disease is infecting our society. Young boys sing filthy songs seeing girls. They try to rub their bodies against them and pinch them. In the overcrowded buses the girls feel suffocated not because there is paucity of fresh air but because gang of anti-social elements surround them. They stare at them and pass remarks which smack of brutality, depravity and characterlessness. Conscience of our society is dead so nobody objects to this open misbehavior. “These definitions of violence against women as gender-based are seen by some to be unsatisfactory. These definitions are understanding society as patriarchal, signifying unequal relations between men and women” (Ertürk, Yakin, 2009:61).

Rape of women, which is all humiliating and degrading, is on the increase. The police are often insensitive to issues concerning rape. Rape in defined as sexual intercourse with a woman against her will and without her consent. It is when there is penile penetration of vagina but this notion is misplaced as any woman who is to prove that she did not consent will face enormous difficulty. Onus should be on the offender to prove that he has not raped. Rape-victim should he treated sympathetically as her scars are life-long. A mechanism should be evolved to rely on the version or the victim. It is a matter of shame that rape-victim is invariably dubbed that as a pros and second as a willing partner. Mind-set of males must undergo a thorough change.

We have seen that laws have failed to curb atrocities, crimes and violence against women. A heavy responsibility falls on the shoulders of the social workers. Even a UNO's report telling that India has the highest number of custodial rapes has failed to shake our conscience. Crimes and violence against women are perpetuated under our very nose but we remain insensitive and aloof as if nothing has happened. For how long it will go? To end this sorry state of things women must organize themselves. They have borne the tyranny and brutality of man for too long. Time is ripe for a crusade to teach the vultures, wolves, predators and soulless male’s numbers of society a lesson once for all. Women of India unite!

If the women themselves fail to raise their voice against the atrocities let loose on them, there can be ray of hope for them. Confinement is the best way to torture a female. It is a violation of fundamental rights but it is hard to prove. Section 342mm 344 of the Indian Penal Code define it as an offence. The strongest evidence of the harmful effects of confinement has come from mental health. Confinement is all pervasive and is found in each segment of society. Women who have been confined four long often suffer from a low self-esteem, extreme fear, delusions, hallucinations and a total withdrawal from society. They have n tendency to resort to self-mutilation and thereby end tragic epic. In a majority of the cases they were found to be living for long periods in conditions worse than prisons, with no sense of personal hygiene. Society is coining new means and methods to torture women and even a latest law loses its teeth. So the need of the hour is to remain ever vigilant to frustrate any new move of the anti-social elements. We need to start blowing the whistle on confinement in our neighborhood. Sufferers should not dither from supporting their initial statements under social pressure. Thus the victims themselves can play a vital role saving the would-be victims from the clutches of the male-hegemony. If a patient is not willing to recover no doctor can help his recovery.

CONCLUSION

There has been profusion of women safety issues such as rape, eve-teasing, domestic violence, assaulting, child marriage, and dowry cases. Rape, domestic violence, sexual assault, and murder are the most prevalent types of violence against women. The Indian Penal Code though, provides provisions for women as a victim of many crimes such as murder, robbery, theft, etc. violence against women is a challenging task that requires balancing empathy, objectivity, and raising awareness. The most common type of spousal violence is physical violence (28%), followed by emotional violence and sexual violence.

Gender-based violence is a pervasive and serious issue in India, with women and girls facing various forms of violence, harassment and discrimination.

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