

VIOLENCE AGAINST DOWNTRODDEN WOMEN

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ABSTRACT

The concept of crime has been changing through the ages with the changing dynamic social policies. In India crimes committed by women are rapidly increasing, and the types of crimes are probably similar to those committed by women abroad. However, the factors which are found to determine criminal tendencies in Indian women are poverty, social deprivation and emotional disturbances, besides family and marital problems. Destitution may also significantly affect the criminality of women. Violence against women is often embedded in social customs that allow it to be perpetrated with impunity. In many cases, without being considered as violence, let alone a crime. In most parts of the world, women have no social or legal recourse against violence by their husbands or partners.

There is widespread acceptance today that development needs to be evaluated not just in terms of economic growth but also in terms of the advancement of human capabilities, and that human well-being is not just a means but also an end in itself. The problem of crime is analyzed through various disciplines such as psychology, sociology, criminology, anthropology and Economics. The thinking process on crime from economic angles began with Gary Becker's work in 1968. The concept of crime has been changing through the ages with the changing dynamic social policies. What is crime and how it affects the very existence, up keeping and welfare of the society is a matter of great concern for the society. Very few studies have been conducted on Indian women criminals to highlight their offences and the criminal tendencies present in them. The increase in the criminal rate among women becomes conspicuously alarming in the light of the fact that a large number of such incidents go unreported.

Role of women

Women are principal providers of care and support to families. Yet every social indicator shows a fundamental social bias and inequality. In India crimes committed by women are rapidly increasing, and the types of the offences are probably similar to those committed by women abroad. However, the predominant factors which are found to determine criminal tendencies in Indian women are economic insecurity, social deprivation and emotional disturbances, besides family and domestic quarrels; destitution may also significantly affect the criminality of women. Most of the problems of society are the problems of women. By and large men have a tendency to escape, whereas women are subjected to the problems. Due to illiteracy, dowry, crime, poverty etc. and they are more problematic to women than to men. If a crime is committed by an individual, the wife, the mother and the daughter of the offender are affected psychologically more than the criminal himself. Violence against women and gender inequality result from a complex array of interwoven factors. These include harmful gender norms and traditions, and social acceptance of violence as an accepted means of conflict resolution. Violence against women is often embedded in social customs that allow it to be perpetrated with impunity—even, in many cases, without being considered as violence, let alone a crime. In many parts of the world, women have no social or legal recourse against violence by their husband or partner.

Even among women the worst affected groups are those belonging to the scheduled caste and scheduled Tribes or generally speaking the Dalits- not only do they face physical violence, they also have limited access to livelihood, food, water, sanitation and other welfare programmes. Against this background an attempt is made in this paper to examine the extent of violence against women in various forms.

Even as we are in the 21st millennium, caste discrimination, an age-old practice that dehumanizes and perpetuates a cruel form of discrimination continues to be practiced. India where the practice is rampant despite the existence of a legislation to stop this, 160 million Dalits of which 49.96% are women continue to suffer discrimination. Dalit women are thrice discriminated, treated as untouchables and as outcastes, due to their caste, face gender discrimination being women, and finally economic impoverishment due to unequal wage disparity, with low or underpaid labour. The caste discrimination inherited by birth results in dalit women facing multiple oppression that violates their economic, political, social and cultural rights.

A study conducted come up with some shocking facts about the work of dalit women. What is horrifying is that Dalit women work more than bullocks and men. Bullocks and men work in a hectare in a year for 1064 hours and 1202, respectively, while women work for more than 3485

hours. The caste and patriarchal norms legitimize the poor economic conditions of Dalit women. She has to work to survive. She is powerless and has neither access nor control over resources. Manual scavenging continues as occupations in India and most of the manual scavengers are Dalit women. The women are subjected to do this humiliating and degrading work, which further results in discrimination and social exclusion.

The deteriorating economic and health conditions are aggravated when they are subjected to physical violence. The NCRB (National Crime Record Bureau) recorded 24,738 cases of crimes against women, including 1,070 cases of rape, 1,564 cases of kidnapping and abduction, 613 cases of dowry death, and 11,335 cases of domestic violence in Andhra Pradesh. The NCRB, which functions under the Ministry of Home Affairs, has highlighted how in many of the rape cases, including the rape of minor girls, the accused have been police personnel. The most poignant case of police rape involved 25-year-old Sarita, a resident of Saini Anandpura, Rohtak district, who committed suicide outside the office of Additional Director General of Police V B Singh after consuming poison on June 9, 2008.

NCRB statistics also show that crimes against dalits in Uttar Pradesh are increasing despite the state having a dalit chief minister. The figures reveal that such crimes rose by 5% in 2008. A total of 6,942 cases of murder, rape and other crimes were reported in 2008, in Uttar Pradesh, as against 6,628 cases in 2007. The situation in neighbouring Bihar is no better. Despite Chief Minister Nitish Kumar's best efforts, the crime graph against dalits is showing an upward trend. In 2008, 2,780 cases were registered as against 1,572 in 2005. The following table illustrates the different types of crimes committed against women during the period 2001-2005.

Table-I Incidence of crime against SCs & STs

S.No	Crime head	2001		2002		2003		2004		2005	
		STs	SCs	STs	SCs	STs	SCs	STs	SCs	STs	SCs
1.	Rape	573	1316	597	1331	551	1089	566	1157	640	1172
2.	Kidnapping & Abduction	67	400	69	319	69	232	79	253	72	258
3.	Hurt	756	4547	788	4491	790	3969	767	3824	767	3847

Source: National Crime Record Bureau, Ministry of Home Affairs, 2005

Table I indicates the incidence of violence against SC and ST women. In 2001, 573 ST women and 1316 SC women were raped and this has increased to 640 in the case of ST women and however in the case of SC women the number has reduced to 1172 in 2005. Around 756 ST women were hurt in 2001 and this has increased to 767 in 2005. In the case of SCs it was 4547 in 2001, but it has dwindled to 3847. The tribal do not avail such facilities and do not come to the knowledge of the offences made and its consequences. Further, since they reside in remote areas many cases are not brought to light.

Suggestions and Conclusion

It is absolutely necessary that there should be change in social attitudes. Very few victims are able to take a stand against women. It is paramount importance that the responsiveness of the concerned authorities must increase and this should be coupled with consistent documentation which is essential for maintaining certain degree of transparency.

Government should ensure that statistics are regularly collected and disseminated and that interventions to address violence are properly evaluated. Domestic violence cases require immediate redressal despite the present backlog of cases. Domestic violence cases should be handled by courts expeditiously to provide immediate redressal.

Intervention Strategies create economic opportunities for women, empower women with the knowledge of their rights, provide them with information on various government welfare programmes and help them to access them. Media can play a leading role by giving wide publicity to the issue of domestic violence. This will help in sensitizing the community and the bureaucracy to the issue of domestic violence and its illegality.

We conclude by quoting what swami Vivekananda almost more than a century ago had observed "the country or nation which do not respect women have never become great nor will ever be in future."

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