Violence against women in India

Analysing ground realities

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“Violence against women and girls continues unabated in every continent, country and culture. It takes a devastating toll on women’s lives, on their families, and on society as a whole. Most societies prohibit such violence — yet the reality is that too often, it is covered up or tacitly condoned”.
United Nation’s definition of Violence against Women

“Any act of gender-based violence that results in or is likely to result in physical, sexual, or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life."
What do the statistics show?

Child sex ratio

- Census of India 2011: sex ratio of 940 female:1000 boys
- Child sex ratio (0-6 years) – from 927: 1000 in 2001 to 919:1000 in 2011
- National Family Health Survey (NFHS-4) of India child sex ratio (0-6 years) same for urban areas as Census data, but 921:1000 (versus 934:1000 in 2001) for rural areas
Situation of violence against women in India

- Gender discrimination, including physical, sexual, emotional and economic violence, son preference, unequal resource distribution and unequal decision-making power (in both private and public spaces)
- Caste discrimination, especially (but not restricted to) women from specific castes
- Communal violence against women
- Neo-economic policies impacting women’s lives in diverse ways (specific kinds of jobs for women, market impacting men leading to increasing violence against women)
Violence may occur as:

- Gender Biased Sex Selective Elimination
- Female Infanticide
- Domestic violence
- Sexual slavery, prostitution and trafficking of women/Girls
- Rape
- Sexual harassment
- Abuse of women with physical and mental disabilities
Violence may occur as:

- Marital rape
- Pornography and abuse of women in media
- Abuse of women in internal refugee or relocation camps
- Custodial abuse
- Dowry related violence and murder
- Women under armed conflict situation
- Women of the ‘Dalit’ group, unsociability problem
Factors Contributing to Violence

- Cultural mindset about women
- “Superiority” of men versus “inferiority” of women
- “Public” domestic violence ("honour" killings, community courts)
- Myth of male marginalisation used to support withdrawal of progressive legislation (like reservations)
• Strictly enforced Gender roles- Association of masculinity with toughness and dominance
• Violence accepted as a standard way to resolve conflicts
• Stress associated with poverty
• Alcoholism
• Extra marital affairs
• Mental illness - Uncontrolled anger
• Ego problems
• Interference by other family members
• Other marital problems
Consequences of Violence Against Women

• Reproductive
  • Miscarriage
  • Unwanted pregnancy
  • Unsafe abortion
  • Sexually transmitted infections (STIs), including HIV/AIDS
  • Pregnancy complications
  • Infertility
  • Gynecological disorders

• Chronic Physical
  • Disability
  • Infections
  • Pain
  • Gastrointestinal problems
  • Eating disorders
  • Sleep disorders
  • Alcohol/drug abuse

• Psychological/Emotional Consequences
  • Post traumatic stress
  • Depression
  • Anxiety
  • Fear
  • Anger
  • Shame
Infant and child mortality
LBW, Poor mental and physical health, Injuries, pain, stress, depression, anxiety, substance abuse, suicide, unintended pregnancy, Sexual risks, unsafe abortion, STIs, HIV Aids,

Pre-Birth
Sex Selective Abortion

Infancy
Female Infanticide and neglect

Childhood
Child Abuse Malnutrition

Adolescence
Forced early Marriage Forced prostitution

Reproductive Age
Honour killing Dowry partner violence Sexual abuse, trafficking, sexual harassment

Elderly
Elder/Widow Abuse

Life cycle of violence against women
Violence against Women

- NFHS 3: 1 in 5 women (20%) face domestic violence from their husbands (global statistics between 20-50%)
- The National Crimes Record Bureau: total crime against women has increased by 12.5% from 2006
- From 2014-2017, there was a 6.2% increase in rates of cases filed under dowry “deaths” (NCRB 2017)
Laws under the Indian Penal Code (IPC)

- **Dowry Prohibition Act**: any property or valuable (direct or indirect) given before, at or after the marriage
- **Section 304B**: Death of a woman within 7 years of her marriage
- **Section 498A**: When husband or his family subjects woman to cruelty (“intentional” behaviour that causes serious injury or harassment for dowry)
- **Section 376**: Rape law
- **Section 294**: Obscene acts and songs
- **Section 354**: Intent to outrage a woman’s modesty
VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN THE MEDIA

- I am not arguing that viewing violent media makes a person violent – there is not a direct causal relationship.
- However, humans are affected by their surroundings, and media is one of the ways that society expresses its norms and expectations, and thus, it is one of the ways that we are acculturated.
- If violence against women is indicated to be normal, or even having positive outcomes as a social norm, it then perpetuates that violence – whether this is presented as factual or not.

Some extent.....

- Serials
- Crime stories
- Social media etc
Protection of Women against Domestic Violence Act (PWDVA) 2005: highlights

- Rights-based (civil) law
- Advocates the right to live with dignity
- First law in India to define DV in a comprehensive way
- Legal right to live a life free of violence
- Government accountable to stop DV
- Emergency orders to stop DV (right to residence, protection orders)
DV Act 2017 Analysis
The overall goal of the 2008-2012 MDGs Country Programme is to advance the fulfillment of the rights of all women and children in India to survive and thrive, develop, participate and be protected by reducing social inequalities based on gender, caste, ethnicity or region.
Status of MDGs in India

According to the Parliamentarian Group on MDGs in India:

- 1/3rd of total population lives below the poverty line; 1/4th of the world’s poor
- 1 in every 10 children will not reach the age of 5
- Largest number of maternal deaths in the world
- Lowest public health budgets (by GDP percentage) in the world
- Sex ratio of 927 girls:1000 boys
- Bottom 10 on international list of women’s economic participation
- Lowest number of women parliamentarians
Successes under the MDGs in India

- Largest number of women in local government in the world
- Progress in school enrolment and access to water
- National Rural Employment Guarantee Act implemented to alleviate extreme poverty
Women’s Movement in India

- Growth in autonomous women’s organisations over the past three decades
- Increased awareness of women’s rights
- Demand for special cells of women police officers for investigation
- Change in women’s status: stronger “political” voice; visibility in the economy (including in non-traditional professions); more number of girls in education
- Campaigns about violence against women (from the individual to the community level)
- JAGORI as an example
Men’s role in stopping discrimination against women

- At a personal level, increased involvement of men in parenting
- Increasing number of organisations of men against violence
- Community-level initiatives to prevent violence: the JAGORI example
- Gender sensitisation workshops with men and joint campaigns against violence against women
State initiatives in India

- Police initiatives to introduce a more rights-based approach to women’s issues (gender training of their personnel and spl training programme of the AP Police)
- Government schemes for the girl child
- Institutionalizing safety of women and girls:
- Changing policy into law – initial stages: sexual harassment at the workplace guidelines and child sexual abuse (pocso) act
- Nirbhaya Act
Challenges

- Cultural mindset about women
- “Superiority” of men versus “inferiority” of women (both within private spaces like the family, and public spaces like the workplace)
- “Public” domestic violence (“honour” killings, community courts)
- Myth of male marginalisation used to support withdrawal of progressive legislation (like reservations)
Way ahead

- Increase in women’s participation at all levels: social, economic and political
- Awareness of women’s rights – by the State, civil society organisations, as well as the public at large
- Gender budgeting and gender mainstreaming within State agencies and civil society organisations
Children are the silent victims!
THANK YOU