

Gender based violence: A threatening signal

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ABSTRACT

Gender-based violence occurs in all societies of the world, within the home or in the wider community and it affects women and girls disproportionately. Substantive as well as anecdotal evidence confirms that Gender-based violence has been, and remains; a serious issue in India. It is still socially and culturally sanctioned, both at the community and Government levels. The cultural and State sector challenges limiting the reduction of Gender-based violence are complex in nature, ranging from bride price to women's lack of political representation and an ineffective formal judicial system. This issue mainly can be controlled by Change in the perception of society towards the dignity of women treating them at par with their male counterparts and Setting up Family Counselling Centres and ensuring their proper functioning with the objective to strengthen the families and not breaking them apart. They need to propagate the concept - "family is the prime unit of society" and provide a platform where men, women, old and young can share their problems and receive good counselling. The international community needs to continue to make a stand and compel the Government to promote the necessary changes.

Key Words : Gender-based violence, Disproportionately, Sanctioned, Bride price, Judicial, Perception, Family counselling, Society

INTRODUCTION

The world we live in is characterized with violence against women. Gender-based violence is the fate of millions of women all over the world and these are affecting their productivity both in the homes, communities and places of work.

Gender-Based Violence (GBV) generally refers to "violence that occurs as a result of the normative role expectations associated with each gender, along with the unequal power relationships between the two genders, within the context of a specific society". As Bloom underlines, men and boys can experience violence and suffer from discrimination if "they are deviating from expectations around masculinity".

The atrocities committed on women can be divided into various groups: Physical violence may include assault, battery, serious injuries or burns etc. Sexual violence, which means robbing the dignity of woman not only by indecent behaviour but it, may take the extreme form of rape. Female genital mutilation (FGM) removal of clitoris and other parts of a woman or girl child is often practiced in African countries. Verbal violence, which means indecency or use of abusive and filthy language against a woman or her near and dear ones. Social violence, which includes demeaning, disparaging and humiliating a woman or her parental relatives and friends. Emotional violence, leading to internal deprivation of love and affection, concern, sympathy and care, it also includes depriving her custody

of children. Financial violence, which means depriving her of financial means and bare necessities of daily life, it also includes taking away the assets, which a woman possesses or earns. Intellectual violence means denial of rights to take part in decision making and discussion for pressing issues. Other forms of violence, which may include denial of education, access to health facilities, reproductive rights, etc. (Nigam, 2002).

The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that at least one in every five of the world's female population has been physically or sexually abused at some time (Population Reference Bureau, 2001). Gender-based violence arises from the patriarchal system which since time immemorial has exerted control over women's lives (World March of Women, 2000).

Gender based violence in Indian perspective :

Studies from India suggest a relatively high prevalence of GBV and estimates vary widely, from 18 per cent to 70 per cent of women, reflecting in part a wide variety of methodologies to document such violence. Although the issue has been highlighted in India with the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act in 2005, GBV remains under-reported.

In 1994, a World Bank study on ten selected risk factors facing girls and women in this age group, found rape and domestic violence more dangerous than cancer, motor vehicle accidents, war and malaria.

Data from the International Crime Victimization survey, cited in the World Report on Violence and Health, reports that 1.9 per cent of women aged 16 and above in Mumbai report having been sexually assaulted in the last five years.

In one six-state study, 40 per cent of women reported physical assault by a male partner. Recent estimates of lifetime partner violence among ever-married women are 39.7 per cent for all types of violence (emotional, physical or sexual). A study of 2,000 pregnant Indian women found that 30.7 per cent of women who had not wished to have sex had been forced to do so, while a separate survey of 397 women in rural South India reported that 34 per cent of women had been hit, forced to have sex by their husband, or both.

The analysis is based on quantitative data collected in 2007 from five districts in India: Kanpur, Kishanganj, Bellary, Guntur, and Aizawl and it is reported that More than one quarter (26.7 %) of currently married women report forced sex in their current marriage.

Effects of gender based violence :

The effects of GBV on girls are costly, intense and long lasting. These can be physical, psychological, social or economic in nature. Evidence from India reflects global patterns, and shows implications for murder, attempted suicide, mental ill-health, and poorer health outcomes for women and children, and HIV risk.

Physical effects:

According to the UNHCR, physical effects of sexual violence include pain, contracting of STIs and HIV in cases where the assailant is infected, mutilated genitalia, unintended pregnancy, abortion or infanticide, unwanted children, and even death.

Regional Centre of Excellence (RCoE) established by a women conducted a study in India and concluded that Gender-based violence leads to devastating and long-term mental and physical consequences, sometimes leading to death and disability among women and girls. It is a violation of the basic human right to safety, security and life without discrimination.

Community-based data are used drawn from women surveyed in two culturally distinct sites of rural India: Uttar Pradesh in the north, in which gender relations are highly stratified, and Tamil Nadu in the south, in which they are more egalitarian. Results suggest that wife-beating is deeply entrenched,

that attitudes uniformly justify wife-beating, and that few women can escape an abusive marriage. They also suggest that the health consequences of domestic violence—in terms of pregnancy loss and infant mortality—are considerable and that Indian women's experience of infant and fetal mortality is powerfully conditioned by the strength of the patriarchal social system.

Psychological effects :

Psychological trauma is also known to result from GBV and this ranges from paralysis and terror to emotional pain; sense of denial, depression, mental disorder, and

Sometimes suicide. The victim can also experience nightmares and be haunted by fear and feelings of shame or guilt.

Social effects:

Social costs to survivors of GBV include rejection, stigmatization, further sexual exploitation and severe punishment. Analyses of National Family Health Survey data (2005) in rural South India show that 96 per cent of women believe that intimate partner violence (IPV) is acceptable in at least one circumstance. Given the social dimension of GBV and IPV, it is interesting to note that increased socio-economic status is associated with the lower likelihood of IPV in India, while lower dowry levels are associated with significantly higher subsequent risks of violence.

Economic effects:

Victims bear enormous financial costs in accessing justice and health services. States also bear costs when they commit resources to provision of legal and health services to survivors.

Insight of preventive measures for gender based violence :

- Change in the perception of society towards the dignity of women treating them at par with their male counterparts, because threat to male authority is the main cause of domestic violence not only in the developing world but also the developed.
- Awareness about gender biases because violence against women is primarily a gender issue. Non Government Organizations and government agencies such as National Commission for women may play an important role in sensitizing the society about gender rights.
- Educating the women about their rights as well as the agency to be approached in case of a particular problem, keeping in mind the present educational status of the majority of Indian women.
- Motivation of women from poor and backward families to utilize the schemes started by the government for their welfare in general and the economic empowerment in particular.
- Strict implementation of the legal provisions of the legislation, which are meant for the protection of women and Developing programs to make the women morally strong or empowered because, bestowing judicial rights or making women literate alone can never end the violence against them.
- Setting up Family Counselling Centres and ensuring their proper functioning with the objective to strengthen the families and not breaking them apart. They need to propagate the concept - “family is the prime unit of society” and provide a platform where men, women, old and young can share their problems and receive good counselling. At present 500 voluntary organizations are running Family Counselling Centres all over the country with aid from the Central Social Welfare Board (Sinha, 2002).
- The electronic and the print media have already made a dent by bringing out the atrocities towards women in the open but they need to stress more.

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