

Violence against Women in New India: An Understanding



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Abstract

'Violence against Women' is a common issue of discussion in almost all societies; India is also not free from this social problem. Violence against women is one of the major issues of concern in present India. Though the history shows that women in India enjoyed superior position in the society in particular times. Ranis in different periods fought against foreign invaders to protect people. But, with the passing of time and capturing of powers by foreign invaders changed the situation. The patriarchal society forbids women from education and economic independence. These ultimately led to increase of crime against women. Beside rape, kidnapping, sexual harassment, now a days, stalking and misuse of social media also included in cases of crime against women. Women of India are more prone to violence by intimate partners and their relatives also. To prevent and protect women from violence, Government of India has adopted number of schemes and policies. The paper also highlights the government policies and schemes meant for women education, and their social and economic empowerment. Further, it also aims to understand the nature of violence against women in India and also the policies and schemes adopted by the government to prevent and protect women from violence. It has been prepared and analysed primarily on the basis of secondary data.

Keywords: Violence against Women, Gender based Violence, Intimate Partner Violence

Introduction

Probably, one of the most talked about issue in the present century is violence against women. Violence can be in any form and against any person; but in all kinds of violence, women and children are mostly the primary victims. Neither they participate nor do they want, but they remain the soft targets of any kind of violence. It is undeniable that, violence against women (VAW) is not something new or unique in this century. It existed since long but the nature of violence is more rampant in present-day with the advancement of technologies. Till now, no specific period about the inception of this violence has been identified, but more or less,

it prevailed in society since long. Violence against women can be of any form like physical, mental, sexual¹. It exists almost in all societies irrespective of caste, class, religion, race, age etc. India is also not an exception to this. The present paper aims to highlight the nature of violence against women in India and role of government to stop the violence has also been discussed.

Objectives

The following are the objectives of the paper:

- To understand the nature of violence against women in India.
- To understand the policies and schemes adopted by Government of India to protect women in case of violence against them.

Methodology

The paper has been prepared taking into account the analysis of secondary data and information available on various official websites.

Theoretical Framework

Violence Against Women (VAW): No one is born with violent nature; it develops in existence with societies. There is a debate regarding the concept of violence. For Coady “normal or ordinary understanding of the term ‘violence’ is in terms of interpersonal acts of force usually involving the infliction of physical injury” (Bufacchi, 2005). Thus, violence is dependent upon force. On the other hand, according to Jamil Salmi violence is “any avoidable action that constitutes a violation of a human right, in its widest meaning, or which prevents the fulfillment of a basic human need.” One argument is that violence means use of force on the other hand another argument is that violence means violation of rights².

Violence against women is deeply rooted to the unequal power, work and economic distribution between men and women. From childhood, the unequal treatment or more specifically male preferences makes women vulnerable to violence.

According to UNO “any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual, or mental harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life” can be referred as violence against women³.

Thus, VAW means, any harm inflicted upon women in their life. It is important to note here, that, there is a difference between Gender Based Violence (GBV) and Violence Against Women (VAW); though in many cases, GBV and VAW are used interchangeable but as a concept, they are completely different. GBV can be against any person whether male or female or transgender by the people of other gender whereas, VAW means violence against only women by male or female or transgender. Thus, all types of VAW are GBV, but all GBV are not VAW.

VAW can be of physical, psychological and sexual. It is important to mention here that, Intimate

Partner Violence (IPV) is one of the most common types of violence against women. The UNO conducted one survey in between 2000-2018 in 161 Countries, which shows that 1 of 3 women are subjected to sexual/physical violence by their intimate partners.

Discussion

In India, women enjoyed superior position from the historic time. Gargi and Maitreyi are the examples of demonstrating intellectual equality through their philosophical debates. Rani Abbakka of 16th century fought against Portuguese invaders to protect her people. Rani Durgavati fought against Mughals to protect her kingdom. Simultaneously, the condition of women in India is also not different from the international scenario. In India, inequality between men and women exists from infancy to old age and manifests different types of violence against women. The patriarchal social structure forbids women from education, economic independence, political empowerment etc. As per Census Report 2011 per 1000 Male there are 943 Females. The count of Females is 57 less than that of Males. The reason is, these 57 women are not allowed to born or survive. VAW is not new in India. For centuries, women are not treated equal with men. Existence of *Sati*, denial of property rights are examples of violence against women in earlier centuries. This crime against women still exists in India and which in turn leads to VAW.

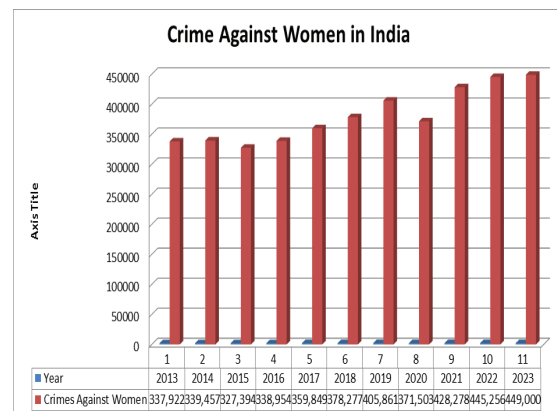


Fig. 1: Crime against Women in India

Source: Official Website of NCRB

As per the report of the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) of India there is a gradual increase of crime against women. In the year 2013 it was 3,37,922 and in the year 2023 it was 4,49,000. The crime against women in India includes rape, dowry deaths, kidnapping and abduction, assault, sexual harassment, stalking etc. If we look at the data of crime against women 33707, 36735, 34651, 38947, 32559, 33356, 32033, 28046, 31677, 31516, 32000 cases of rape registered in the year 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022 and 203 respectively. 51881, 57311, 59277, 66544, 65255, 66544, 70543, 65499, 76263, 77345, 78000 numbers of Kidnapping and abduction cases have been registered in the year 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022 and 203 respectively. The NCRB data also shows that 12589, 9735, 9546, 7509, 6226, 8764, 8685, 7165, 8145, 9062, 9500 numbers of Sexual Harassment cases registered in the year 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022 and 203 respectively. Since the year 2015 another segment of crime against women has been included in the NCRB record and that is Stalking. 6266, 7938, 8145, 9666 13303, 10553, 13793, 14202, 15000 numbers of cases of stalking have been registered in the year 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022, 2023 respectively. In many cases social media is used for stalking. Technological advancements are misused for harassing women. Most surprisingly, the condition of India is also not better off from the international average of cruelty by IPV. The NCRB data from 2013 to 2023 shows that near about 1/3 of the total crimes against women are the IPV. These include cruelty by husband/relatives and dowry deaths.

Government policies and schemes to deal with violence against women

At present the Government of India has adopted different policies and schemes to empower women, to protect them from violence and ensure their rights.

Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM): Hygiene and sanitation are most important for human health. But even after 67 years of independence, the cov-

erage of sanitation was 39% in 2014. It shows that health and dignity of individuals more specifically women were compromised. Looking into this, the GoI launched SBM in the 2014. Women felt helpless and shame for sanitation outside. They controlled themselves many times not to go outside for their sanitation need. Sometimes, they faced harassment by males outside. SBM is to ensure proper construction of toilet to save respect and health of women. According to a report titled, "Access to toilets and the safety, convenience and self-respect of women in rural India" after implementation of SBM "93% of women reported that they were no longer afraid of being hurt by someone or harmed by animals while defecating; 93% of women reported they are no longer afraid of contracting health infections; 92% of women said they were no longer afraid of going to the toilet in the dark of night, which is a huge jump from the pre-toilet construction stage (12%); and 93% of the women reported no longer having to stop having food or water to control the urge to defecate or urinate."⁴.

Prime Minister's Overarching Scheme for Holistic Nutrition (POSHAN) Abhiyan: Malnutrition was one of the most common problem of women in rural India. Looking into the problem, the GoI launched POSHAN Abhiyaan to address the problem of malnutrition of children, adolescent girls, pregnant women and lactating mothers, to reduce anemia among young girls and women and decrease the low birth weight⁵.

Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP): On 22nd January 2015, the Prime Minister of India launched the BBBP scheme. It was launched to improve the declining child sex ratio and also to increase women empowerment. It emphasizes on training, awareness campaigns, sensitization programmes and community mobilization. The scheme emphasizes on gender equality, women empowerment, survival and protection of women, education for girl child. Until the financial year 2023, the GoI allocated Rs. 830 crores for the scheme. The Gross Enrolment Ratio of girl child has also increased. In the year 2015, it was 75.51% and in the year 2024, it was 78%. Institutional deliveries

increased from 61% of 2015 to 97.3% in the year 2024. It ensured low mortality rate of mothers and new born child. In the year 2025, the 10th anniversary of BBBP focused from women development to women led development⁶.

One Stop Centres (OSC): The GoI introduced OSC from 1st April 2015. It is a service providing scheme, which aims to give support to women in case they face any violence in any place. Girls under 18 years of age can also approach to OSC for support. The primary objective of the scheme is to provide integrated support to any aggrieved women. The aggrieved women get all support which includes medical, psychological, emergency, legal, counseling etc. under one roof.

Until March 2025, 802 OSCs were established across the country. Till December 2024, 1012359 women got support from OSC through the country⁷.

Pradhan Mantri Ujjawala Yojana (PMUJ): Traditional cooking fuels has detrimental effects on the health of the women. Looking into this, the GoI in the 2016 launched PMUJ. Under the scheme, clean cooking fuel like LPG has been made available for rural women. The scheme is meant for poor adult women who do not have any LPG connection. Under the scheme, beneficiary women get connection of LPG without any registration fee, two burner stoves completely free of cost etc. Till December 2024, the GoI gave 103346386 connections under the scheme⁸.

Abolition of Triple Talaq: Tripal Talaq is a form of divorce practiced in Islam. Under the system, a Muslim man can divorce his wife by uttering 'talaq' three times. This was derogatory to the dignity and independence of the women. It was against the spirit of Article 14 of the Constitution. The GoI implemented 'Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Marriage) Act, 2019' through which instant divorce by uttering 'Talaq' three times has been declared as illegal. Provision for imprisonment has also been made in the act.

The act provides the Muslim women protection from violence and ensures their dignity. It has also provided legal protection to the victims of this instant practice of triple 'talaq'⁹.

Sukanya Samridhi Yojana (SSY): The GoI implemented the scheme of SSY to ensure empowerment of women in the year 2015. Under the scheme, an account can be opened in post office or bank in the name of new born girl child. In that account per year, minimum is Rs.250/- And maximum of Rs. 1,50,000/- can be deposited. The interest rate under this scheme is high and income tax rebate is also applicable. Till, March 2024, more than 3.20 crores of bank accounts have been opened. The scheme not only provided financial independence and secured future for girl child, but also helped them in education¹⁰.

Mahila Kisan Sashaktikaran Pariyojana (MKSP): Agriculture is a most important sector, which employs 80% of economically active women. Women have to perform different duties in home as well as in the farms, as a result, they lack proper opportunity for their development. To improve the status of women in agricultural field and to ensure opportunity for them, the GoI launched MKSP. The primary objective of this scheme is to improve skills, capabilities and ensure productive participation of women in agriculture. The scheme also focuses on to ensure food and nutrition for women in the house and community level.

Thus, the scheme focuses on the increase of income of women on sustainable basis and ensure women empowerment. The scheme in actual increases the income level of women in the agriculture sector¹¹.

Janani Suraksha Yojana (JSY): JSY is a centrally sponsored scheme under NRHM. The objective of the scheme is to increase the institutional delivery and to reduce the mortality rate of maternal and neo-natal. Under the scheme, the mother is given care before the delivery to 3-6 months as well as after delivery. Even, the new born is also given care. Under the scheme, mothers of rural areas and urban areas get upto Rs. 1400/- and Rs.1000/- for each institutional delivery¹².

After the implementation of the scheme in the year 2005 it had been found that there was an increase in institutional delivery from 47% (2007-2008) to 73.1% (2012). Naturally, the maternal

mortality rate gone down from 254 (per 100000 live births in 2004-2006) to 178 (per 100000 live births in 2010-2012). Mortality rate of ne-natal decreased from 37 (per 100 live births in 2006) to 29 (per 1000 live births in 2012)¹³.

Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PM-MVY): PMMVY is a maternity benefit scheme launched in the year 2017. The scheme aims to improve the health of mother and new born child and also to provide wages. The primary objective of the scheme is to provide financial help to the mother to partially compensate of her wage loss so that she can get proper rest pre- and post delivery period. Pregnant women and lactating mothers require sufficient rest and nutritious food. Under the scheme, mothers are given Rs.5000/- for first child and Rs.6000/- for second child if the child is a girl.¹⁴

The financial benefit under the scheme is provided directly to the account of the mother. With this financial help and institutional deliveries, the maternal mortality rate has been decreased significantly. Even there is a decrease of 10% of underweight mothers.¹⁵

Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005 (PWDVA): The GoI has implemented PWDVA in the year 2006 to protect women from domestic violence done by husband or live-in partner or his relatives. The most important feature of this Act is that it helps to protect women from domestic violence done by other women like sisters or mother of husband or live-in partners. Domestic violence under this act means actual abuse or threat of abuse, which can be physical, emotional, economic or sexual, dowry demands etc. The act provides for appointment of Protection Officer. The PO is entrusted with the task to provide assistance to the aggrieved women in all situations.

This act transformed domestic violence to a legal issue from its domestic sphere. It includes not only the married women but, also violence against those women who are in live in relationship. The female relatives of the husband or live in partner also comes under the purview of this act if they do domestic violence. The act also

provides immediate relief to aggrieved women within few hours of registering the complaint.¹⁶

Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace Act, 2013 (POSH): The main objective for enactment of POSH Act was to protect women from violence in workplace and to provide a safe environment, to prevent sexual harassment of women in the workplace and to redress the complaints of sexual harassment by women. The act also provides for constitution of Internal Complaint Committee at every workplace headed by women. There is also a provision for completion of inquiry within 90 days of registering the complaint. The act also provides for detailed guideline about the steps to be taken by the employer to protect, prevent and redress sexual harassment in their establishment.¹⁷

Mahila Coir Yojana (MCY): The main objective of MCY is to develop internal and export markets, empowerment of women, training and skill development of women. This scheme aims "at women empowerment through the provision of spinning equipment at subsidized rates after appropriate skill development training." In the coir industry, it is the first women-oriented employment programme.

The introduction of the scheme increased the income level of the people engaged with this industry. With less number of people more yarn are produced through motors and the quality of yarn also developed.¹⁸

Nari Shakti Vandan Adhinyam: The GoI passed NSVA. It provides for reservation of one-third of all seats in the Lok Sabha and State Assemblies. It ensures more participation of women in politics, and in the decision-making process. This Act is regarded as the milestone for women empowerment.

Besides these, there are other number of schemes and legislations to protect women from violence. Thus, from the above discussion it has been found that GoI has adopted numbers of schemes, policies and legislations to protect women from violence, empower women to ensure dignity and to provide equal opportunity in socio-economic and political life.

Major Findings

The present study shows that –

- i. India is not free from VAW. It is one of the major issues of concern in present India.
- ii. There is a gradual increase of crime against women since 2013 to 2023. Nature of crime against women includes rape, kidnapping and abduction, sexual harassment, intimate partner violence etc.
- iii. The social media has also been often misused for violence against women.
- iv. GoI has adopted numbers of policies and schemes for education, empowerment of women, eradication of social stigma against women. Specific acts have also been enacted to protect women from violence in their home and workplace.

Recommendations

Socio-economic empowerment of women is most important to stop VAW. Only government initiatives cannot solve the issue, rather implementation of the policies at the grass root level is more important. Further, more important is the social awareness of both male and female about equality of gender and rights of women; active participation of women in the activities of the society and sensitization of both sexes.

Conclusion

As discussed above we find that women in India have been availing the benefits of a large number of schemes and policies relating social-economic and political areas, which are leading women towards a new height of empowerment in each mentioned area. Women seem to be more self-reliant and confident than before because of the liberty and freedom that they can exercise in true sense of the term through the implementation of various present day policies. This in turn would help women to keep themselves out of the cycle of violence in society and equally be the part of state's development. Women in *Viksit Bharat* are expected to be strong, independent, empowered who would bring a shift from 'women development to women led development' and in making this a reality the efforts of GoI is really incredible.

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