

Nature of various types of crimes against women**Akhlaq Hussain Bhat****PG Sociology, UGC Net,****Presently working on women's issues in Women's Studies Centre****University of Kashmir**

There has been an estimated 50 million 'missing girls' in India during the past century owing mainly to female infanticide and foeticide .1

Female infanticide is an old evil practice which was prevalent in different parts of India .It is practiced in those societies where women are considered inferior and a burden for the family. It was practiced in Arabia before the advent of Islam and was abolished by the prophet of Islam .In India this crime is still committed in many communities with impunity .The kallars of Tamil Nadu continue to practice female infanticide as a custom .A news item published in Nov. 2003, Times of India gave details of how some communities in Gujarat kill a new born baby girl by drowning her in a dish full of milk .This is known as "Doodh peeti" custom.

It is really ironic that with all the progress we have made, crime against women has taken a worseturn, so that today a girl is killed even before she is born through amniocentesis! This is the glaring instance of misuse of science and technology. The provisional census of (2011) reveals that sex ratio of the population of 1-6 years has declined from 927 in 2001 to 914 (in 2011) per thousand which in turn has highlighted the wide spread practice of female foeticide. The main reasons for such a crime are dowry, considering girls as liabilities ,son preference as sons are considered assets and carry on the family name (pitra-rina) as per Hindu philosophy , increasing crime towards women ,treating daughters as 'Praya Dhan' and male dominant Indian society .

Domestic violence is most under reported among the crimes against women .Harri- Swarup in his book 'women and crisis'2. writes that in this world of unequal gender values , women suffer more crises than men .When the stress in relationship becomes unbearable the husband gets frustrated and resorts to violence. He gets sadistic satisfaction by humiliating his wife.

The dowry system originated in the olden days mainly because a daughter did not have a share in her father's property according to Hindu Law .It has become a real evil practice in modern times . Consumerism has added fuel to fire. Today it is customary to demand a large amount of money , besides a car , a television, a refrigerator , jewellery and gifts for the entire family as dowry .If the demands of in-laws of girl are not met with , the girl is beaten and tortured and sometimes even a dowry death occurs .

Sexual harassment may take on many forms such as eve teasing, molestation, use of vulgar language or gestures and miss behaviour. The extreme forms include prostitution and rape. Sexual harassment at work place is a common problem which working women have to face. Modern technology has given new options to eve teasers and they use e-mail, mobile phones and other methods to insult women.

Rape is a serious crime against women. The National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) reported 10,068 rape cases in 1990 which rose to 24,206 cases in 2011. Rape cases marked a stunning rise by 873% during 1971-2011. New Delhi itself accounted for 25% of total cases. We have some shameful instances of rape in the history of Indian society. Maya Tyagi and Rameeza Bee, married women were raped by police men. A Swiss diplomat was raped in her own car outside the Siri Fort Auditorium, New Delhi. Gang rape of a Para medical student on Dec. 16, 2012 in New Delhi is yet another chapter in this shameful Saga.

Prostitution is prevalent all over the world and in India it is largely prevalent in some villages of Rajasthan. In a village named Mandi, the Berias practice prostitution. They force their daughters to enter this profession but not their daughter in-laws.

Honour killings and forced marriages are also seen in Asian families. The age old custom of women and honour being synonymous is a norm among Asian families and to uphold that honor is the duty of faithful daughters, sisters and wives. Any non-conformity to these norms relates to honor based violence which results in a situation where the woman goes through a hell. The most surprising aspect of this phenomena is that in all cases the honor based crimes are committed by the kith and kin of the victim supported by organization's like Khap panchayats in India. Other aspect is the forced marriages of which both men and women are victims. According to one survey 15% of men are too victims of this evil.

Causes

The main question that arises is why in our society violence against women has become so common? I must quote here Mao Zedong who has remarked "We must understand that (they) have committed a crime but the source of this crime lies in the society. It is true that (they) themselves carried out this crime but a great part of the culpability was transmitted to them by society".⁵

The most of the crimes against women is related to and grows out of their position in society. If a female foetus is destroyed it is because a girl child is unwanted as she is seen as a burden – to be treated. If a wife is beaten at least partly it is because women is seen as property – to be treated as the husband, her owner desires. On a broader level it is also because a woman is perceived as the

weaker sex dependent on man , so he can bully her .It is apt to quote Kautilya who says ‘when young she is dependent on her father , when married on her husband and if widowed on her son’. Further it is human tendency to take out one’s frustrations on anyone willing to put up with it or too weak or helpless because of circumstances.

The violence continues unabated because no social action has been forth coming. Legislation exists but is seldom implemented with care or readiness .Indeed those very persons in charge of protecting a women assault her and humiliate her, crime against women is further complicated by other factors in society . Caste, religious, communal and class factors also play a role in crime against women . Communal riots result in rape or molestation of women. For instance the mass rapes of Muslim women in Gujarat . Rape is also used as a weapon of war by armed forces of the state in the frontier nationalities of India for example the alleged mass rape of at least 53 women by Rajputana Rifles at Kunan Poshpora in Kupwara District of Kashmir on February 23 , 1991 and in the Maoist insurgency mainland of India .

Increasing violence against women is also seen as an aspect of the increasing violence in society as a whole. In that context, the causes of crime are rooted in the psyche of human beings – their temperament and the desires they nourish. There are three basic factors – accumulation of wealth , egocentricity and basic animal instincts -which have caused crime against women . As the race for owning and accumulating wealth increases , crime also increases . Today the competition for wealth is excessive and so is the crime. Egocentricity has tempted men to dominate others including women on strength of economic, political and social powers . One of major components of animal instincts is the use of force – without bothering its advantages and disadvantages for immediate benefits . Imbibition of western culture has added fuel to fire . Indian society is adopting western cultural values blindly . Modernization is not a bad thing but we forget that people in developed countries are now turning towards spiritualism which they find missing in their societies . Divorce rate , rapes illicit sexual relations etc are on rise in such countries.To understand the character of imperialist patriarchy we just need to look at the vital statistic of rape in the United States (UAS) .As per the estimates of the Colorado Coalition Against sexual Assault , one out of six US women and one out of 33 US men have experienced an attempted or completed rape.

The society commodifies women as sex objects , as objects of enjoyment .It objectifies women’s body , beauty and labour as saleable commodities in the market .Are not women viewed merely as sex objects , not only in the proliferation of an underground ‘blue film’ industry but also in the unrestricted access to pornographic material on the internet to the teenagers and in the main stream visual media channels like MTV,VTV and ‘infotainment’ (Information + entertainment as they claim). The so called ‘item numbers’ in the commercial films clearly portraying women as sex

objects is a phenomenon which is of recent origin . There have been clearly anti-women popular numbers on the internet , passed off under the name of pop singer Honey Singh .Why there are no curbs on all these in public interest . Portrayal of women merely as sex objects or objects of enjoyment undermines the dignity of the women as human persons and makes them vulnerable to sexual assaults. Towards curbing sexual violence against women it is said an 'attitudinal change' has to take place in society towards viewing women as persons with human dignity . But how can it come about in such a context.

In the present society the concept of women empowerment has been not used in the true sense of the term. Exploitation continues in the name of women empowerment which actually was to strengthen the hands of the women folk. No doubt women have every right to dress the way they like and yet be free from violence. Yet one cannot overlook the fact that a notion of liberation – where in women are portrayed and portray themselves as sex objects- is a false one.

Conflict between tradition and modernity is also a contributing factor to crimes against women .We have not been able to eliminate illogical social customs which have become a hindrance in the development of society. On the other hand the vices of modernization have not been prevented from making in holes in our society. Presently in society 'collective conscience' which according to famous sociologist Emile Durkheim is shared values and norms of society, is weak . The society has become corrupt, witnessing manipulation of institutions, anomie (normlessness) and moral waywardness.

Remedy(Exploring solutions)

Therefore instead of conflict a culmination of good modern values and traditional values is the need of the hour. We should not blindly opt the western values. On the other hand traditional values should also be not adopted blindly. Religion and cultural values although cannot be ignored but religion should be used as a source spirituality instead as a vehicle of communal disharmony and riots in our society. It should create a sense of conscience i.e. What is right and wrong among the people rather than dividing people.

A strict law is vital to curb the violence against women in our society . Certainly it is very important to make the provisions against rape in the upcoming Criminal Law Amendment more effective especially to enhance the conviction rate . Teeth should be lent to the Indecent Representation of the Women (prohibition) Act , 1986 . Some of the urgent measures towards promoting respect for women could be banning paedophile and pornographic material and making it inaccessible especially to teenagers , taking stringent measures against the production and distribution of 'blue films', curbing all depictions of women as sex objects. As against the decadent

culture of imperialist patriarchy wherein liberation implies subjugation to the market and commodification of the body and beauty of the women social conditions have to be created that men view women as human persons quite like themselves rather than viewing them as objects of enjoyment. Coercive prostitution through trafficking should be tackled. No women should be required to provide sexual services for a living. 6

Besides an awareness regarding Domestic Violence Act 2005, Sexual Harassment Act, Preconception Prenatal, Diagnostic Techniques (PCPNDT) Act 2003, Dowry Prohibition Act etc. should be created among the women folk living in urban and rural areas of the country especially among the illiterate women. Gender sensitisation, value education, proper socialization etc. could also help to provide a foundation to curb such violence against the women.

Social evils have eroded the very fabric of our society. Dowry system, Female Foeticide, Child marriages on certain religious occasions (Akshaya Tritiya among the Hindus), son preference (Pitara among the Hindus), Honour killings, Restrictions on intercaste marriages and so on have to be rooted out from our society. Besides organizations like Khap Panchayats functioning in various parts of the countries need a restraint from the government.

Finally the remedy for violence against the women lies within our selves. What we have to do is to leave the animal kingdom, be human and to give human treatment to others. This fight will be the greatest fight ever fought. But this fight is not between men and women or between men and men, this is a fight between the good and evil, a fight between human and inhuman. It would be apt to quote:

“A trend is a trend.

But the question is will it bend?

Will it alter its course?

Through some unforeseen force. And come to a premature end”.

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