

## VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN INDIA

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### **Abstract**

*The problem of violence against women is not new. Women in the Indian society have been victims of humiliation, torture and exploitation for as long as we have written records of social organization and family life. Today, women are being gradually recognized as important, powerful and meaningful contributors to the life of men; but till a few decades back, their condition was pitiable. Ideologies, institutional practices and the existing norms in society have contributed much to their harassment. Some of these behavioural practices thrive even today. Women and children are often the soft targets. In Indian society the situation is really gruesome. A significant number of deaths are taking place on daily basis, as a result of domestic violence only. Illiteracy, economical dependency on men folk and the otherwise male dominated society is some of the attributing factors to the problem. Dowry is one of the leading causes that results in violence against the newlywed brides. Physically assaulting women, making horrendous remarks and depriving them of basic humanly rights are often showcased in many parts of the country. Violence against women in India is an issue rooted in societal norms and economic dependence. Discriminatory practices are underlined by laws favoring men. Inadequate policing and judicial practices deny female victims proper protection and justice. Although female participation in public life is increasing and laws have been amended, India still has a long way to go to make Indian women equal citizens in their own country. In the analysis of the problem of 'violence against women', we may focus on important issues like nature and extent of female violence in India, on identifying women who are generally victims of crime and violence, on those who are the perpetrators of crime and violence, on what motivates criminals to commit crimes or victimisers to use violence, and on measures which could contain the depersonalisation trauma of the victims. Hence, the present paper focuses on violence against women in India and study based on secondary sources of data collection.*

**Keywords:** *Dominated Society, Illiteracy, Economical Dependency, Contributors to Men and Victims.*

### **Introduction**

Physical, sexual and psychological violence strikes women in epidemic proportions worldwide. It crosses every social and economic class, every religion, race and ethnicity. From domestic abuse to rape as a weapon of war, violence against women is a gross violation of their human rights. Not only does it threaten women's health and their social and economic well-being, violence also thwarts global efforts to reduce poverty. Violence is, however, preventable. Although no silver bullet will eliminate it, a combination of efforts that address income, education, health, laws and infrastructure can significantly reduce violence and its tragic consequences. First and foremost, abusive behavior towards women must be viewed as unacceptable. Communities need to have an important role in defining solutions to violence and providing support to victims. And men must be engaged in the process too, as agents of change standing alongside women to end violence. If the world does not address the issue, it stands to suppress the enormous potential of women

and girls. When they feel safe, when they are empowered, women and girls can be game-changers.

### **Objectives of the Study**

*The present study has been conducted with a view:*

1. To know about the status of women in India
2. To know the violence against women in India
3. To have a statistical knowledge about violence against women in India

### **Status of Women in India**

The status of women in India has been subject to many great changes over the past few millennia. In modern India, women have adorned high offices in India including that of the President, Prime minister, Speaker of the Lok Sabha and Leader of the Opposition. As of 2011, the President of India, the Speaker of the Lok Sabha and the Leader of the Opposition in Lok Sabha (Lower House of the parliament) are all women. However, women in India generally are still exposed to numerous social issues. When our country got its independence, the participation of women nationalists was widely acknowledged. When the Indian Constitution was formulated, it granted equal rights to women, considering them legal citizens of the country and as an equal to men in terms of freedom and opportunity. The sex ratio of women at this time was slightly better than what it is today, standing at 945 females per 1000 males. Yet the conditions of women screamed a different reality.

Today's India offers a lot of opportunities to women, with women having a voice in everyday life, the business world as well as in political life. Nevertheless India is still a male dominated society, where women are often seen as subordinate and inferior to men. This gender bias is the cause that SAARTHAK is fighting for; therefore, in the following we will focus on the wrongs rather than on the rights. This doesn't mean that there aren't a lot of positives to report on, and we will cover some of those in the "Indian women on the rise" section. However, even though India is moving away from the male dominated culture, discrimination is still highly visible in rural as well as in urban areas, throughout all strata of society. While women are guaranteed equality under the constitution, legal protection has a limited effect, where patriarchal traditions prevail.

### **Violence Against in Women India**

*“Violence against women and girls is a problem of pandemic proportions. At least one out of every three women around the world has been beaten, coerced into sex, or otherwise abused in her lifetime with the abuser usually someone known to her”*

Table 1: Violence against women in a comparative perspective

Country	Proportion of women (%) who have experienced, within their lifetime		
	Sexual violence by intimate partner	Physical violence by intimate partner	Sexual and/or physical violence by anyone
Australia	8.0	25.0	57.0
Bangladesh	17.8	48.7	NA
China	NA	15.4	NA
Denmark	6.0	20.0	50.0
Egypt	21.7	33.2	NA
Finland	4.3	17.6	43.5
Germany	7.0	23.0	40.0
India	10.0	35.1	35.4
Kenya	17.2	37.0	17.0
Poland	5.0	15.0	17.0
South Africa	4.4	12.5	NA
United Kingdom	3.8	18.9	NA
United States	7.7	22.1	55.0
Vietnam	9.9	32.0	38.5

*Source:* UN Women 2011

In India, one in every ten women reported facing sexual violence by their husbands during their lifetime. 35.1% of the sample women reported to surveyors of the third round of the NFHS in 2005-06 (on which the UN Women 2011 figures for India are based) that they have experienced physical violence by their intimate partners in their lifetime. 35.4% of the women had experienced sexual or physical violence, or both, during their lifetime by anyone.

Violence against women has become a prominent topic of discussion in India in recent years. Politicians and media have placed great focus on the issue due to continuously increasing trends during 2008-2012. According to the National Crime Records Bureau of India, reported incidents of crime against women increased 6.4% during 2012, and a crime against a woman is committed every three minutes. In 2012, there were a total of 244,270 reported incidents of crime against women, while in 2011, there were 228,650 reported incidents. Of the women living in India, 7.5% live in West Bengal where 12.7% of the total reported crime against women occurs. Andhra Pradesh is home to 7.3% of India's female population and accounts for 11.5% of the total reported crimes against women. 65%

of Indian men believe women should tolerate violence in order to keep the family together, and women sometimes deserve to be beaten. In January 2011, the International Men and Gender Equality Survey (IMAGES) Questionnaire reported that 24% of Indian men had committed sexual violence at some point during their lives.

*"Violence against women is a manifestation of historically unequal power relations between men and women" and that "violence against women is one of the crucial social mechanisms by which women are forced into a subordinate position compared with men"*

### Dowry Deaths

The custom of dowry, which is common in South Asia, especially in India, is the trigger of many forms of violence against women. Bride burning is a form of violence against women in which a bride is killed at home by her husband or husband's family due to his dissatisfaction over the dowry provided by her family. Dowry death refers to the phenomenon of women and girls being killed or committing suicide due to disputes regarding dowry. Dowry violence is common in India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Nepal. In India, in 2011 alone, the National Crime Records Bureau reported 8,618 dowry deaths, while unofficial figures suggest the numbers to be at least three times higher.

**Table 2: Year wise reported dowry deaths in India**

Year	Reported dowry deaths
2008	8,172
2009	8,383
2010	8,391
2011	8,618
2012	8,233

**Source:** "Crimes against Women." National Crime Records Bureau, 2013

Women are not always the only primary victims of dowry deaths. In some cases children are also killed alongside their mothers. In eastern India, on January 30, 2014, for example, a woman and her one-year-old child were burned alive for dowry. 77 minutes. Incidents of dowry deaths have decreased 4.5% from 2011 to 2012. In Uttar Pradesh, 2,244 cases were reported, accounting for 27.3% of the dowry deaths nationwide. In Bihar, 1,275 cases were reported, accounting for 15.5% of cases nationwide.

### RAPE

Rape is one of the most common crimes against women in India. Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, 2013 defines rape as penile and non-penile penetration in bodily orifices of a woman by a man, without the consent of the woman. In India, a woman is raped every 29 minutes. Incidents of reported rape have increased 3% from 2011 to 2012. Incidents of reported incest rape have increased 46.8% from 268 cases in 2011 to 392 cases in 2012.

Victims of rape are increasingly reporting their rapes and confronting the perpetrators. Although women are increasing their exposure to sexual harassment by leaving the home more often, they are becoming more independent. Women are becoming more independent and educated, which is increasing their likelihood to report their rape. Although rapes are becoming more frequently reported, many go unreported or have the complaint files withdrawn due to the perception of family honour being compromised. Women frequently do not receive justice for their rapes, because police often do not give a fair hearing, and/or medical evidence is often unrecorded which makes it easy for offenders to get away with their crimes under the current laws. Increased attention in the media and awareness among both Indians and the outside world is both bringing attention to the issue of rape in India and helping empower women to report the crime. After international news reported the gang rape of a 23 year old student on a moving bus that occurred in Delhi, in December 2012, Delhi experienced a significant increase in reported rapes. The number of reported rapes nearly doubled from 143 reported in January-March 2012 to 359 during the three months after the rape. After the Delhi rape case, Indian media has committed to report each and every rape case.

**Table 3: Year wise reported rapes in India**

Year	Reported rapes
2008	21,467
2009	21,397
2010	22,172
2011	24,206
2012	24,923

*Source:* "Crimes against Women." National Crime Records Bureau, 2013

### **Insult to Modesty**

Modesty related violence against women include assaults on women with intent to outrage her modesty and insults to the modesty of women. From 2011 to 2012, there was a 5.5% increase in reported assaults on women with intent to outrage her modesty. Madhya Pradesh had 6,655 cases, accounting for 14.7% of the national incidents. From 2011 to 2012, there was a 7.0% increase in reported insults to the modesty of women. Andhra Pradesh had 3,714 cases, accounting for 40.5% of the national accounts, and Maharashtra had 3,714 cases, accounting for 14.1% of the national accounts.

**Table 4: Year wise assaults with intent to outrage modesty and insults to the modesty of women in India**

Year	Assaults with intent to outrage modesty	Insults to the modesty of women
2008	40,413	12,214
2009	38,711	11,009
2010	40,613	9,961
2011	42,968	8,570
2012	45,351	9,173

**Source:** "Crimes against Women." National Crime Records Bureau, 2013

#### Human Trafficking and Forced Prostitution

From 2011 to 2012, there was a 26.3% decrease in girls imported to India from another country. Karnataka had 32 cases, and West Bengal had 12 cases, together accounting for 93.2% of the total cases nationwide. From 2011 to 2012, there was a 5.3% increase in violations of the Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act of 1956. Tamil Nadu had 500 incidents, accounting for 19.5% of the total nationwide, and Andhra Pradesh had 472 incidents, accounting for 18.4% of the total nationwide.

**Table 5: Year wise Human Trafficking and Forced Prostitution**

Year	Imported girls from foreign countries	Violations of the Immoral Traffic Act
2008	67	2,659
2009	48	2,474
2010	36	2,499
2011	80	2,435
2012	59	2,563

**Source:** "Crimes against Women." National Crime Records Bureau, 2013

**Table 6: Reporting and Incidence of Violence in India**

Type of Violence	Incidence of violence (per 100,000 women)	Reported violence (per 100,000) women	Proportion (%) of cases which are reported
<b>Sexual Violence by</b>			
Others	157	9.1	5.8
Husbands	6590	37.2	0.6
<b>Physical Violence by</b>			
Others	3380	31.4	0.9
Husbands	1520	33.3	2.2

**Source:** International Institute of Population Sciences (2006: 524) Report

**Table 7: Crime head-wise incidents of crime against women during 2008 - 2012 and percentage variation in 2012 over 2011**

S. No.	Crime Head	Year					Percentage variation in 2012 over 2011
		2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	
1	Rape (Sec. 376 IPC)	21,467	21,397	22,172	24,206	24,923	3.0
2	Kidnapping & abduction (Sec. 363-373 IPC)	22,939	25,741	29,795	35,565	38,262	7.6
3	Dowry death (Sec. 302/304 IPC)	8,172	8,383	8,391	8,618	8,233	-4.5
4	Cruelty by husband and relatives (Sec. 498-A IPC)	81,344	89,546	94,041	99,135	106,527	7.5
5	Assault on women with intent to outrage her modesty (Sec. 354 IPC)	40,143	38,711	40,613	42,968	45,351	5.5
6	Insult to the modesty of women (Sec. 509 IPC)	12,214	11,009	9,961	8,570	9,173	7.0
7	Importation of girl from foreign country (Sec. 366-B IPC)	67	48	36	80	59	-26.3
<b>A</b>	<b>Total IPC Crime Against Women</b>	<b>186,616</b>	<b>194,835</b>	<b>205,009</b>	<b>219,142</b>	<b>232,528</b>	<b>6.1</b>
8	Commission of Sati Prevention Act, 1989	1	0	0	1	-	-100.0
9	Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act, 1956	2,659	2,474	2,499	2,435	2,563	5.3
10	Indecent Representation of Women (Prohibition) Act, 1986	1,025	845	895	453	141	-68.9
11	Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961	5,555	5,650	5,182	6,619	9,038	36.5
<b>B</b>	<b>Total SLL Crime Against Women</b>	<b>9,240</b>	<b>8,969</b>	<b>8,576</b>	<b>8,908</b>	<b>11,742</b>	<b>23.5</b>
	<b>Total (A+B)</b>	<b>195,856</b>	<b>203,804</b>	<b>213,585</b>	<b>228,650</b>	<b>244,270</b>	<b>6.8</b>

Source: "Crimes against Women." National Crime Records Bureau, 2013

**Table 8: Proportion of Crime against Women (IPC) towards total IPC Crimes**

Sl. No.	Year	Total IPC Crimes	Crime Against Women (IPC Cases)	Percentage to total IPC Crimes
1	2008	20,93,379	1,86,617	8.9
2	2009	21,21,345	2,03,804	9.2
3	2010	22,24,831	2,13,585	9.6
4	2011	23,25,575	2,19,142	9.4
5	2012	23,87,188	2,44,270	10.2

Source: "Crimes against Women." National Crime Records Bureau, 2012

### Domestic Violence

Domestic violence is abuse by one partner against another in an intimate relationship such as dating, marriage, cohabitation or a familial relationship. Domestic violence is also known as domestic abuse, spousal abuse, battering, family violence, dating abuse and intimate partner violence (IPV). Domestic violence can be physical, emotional, verbal, economic and sexual abuse. Domestic violence can be subtle, coercive or violent. In India, 70% of women are victims of domestic violence. 38% of Indian men admit they have physically abused their partners. The Indian government has taken measures to try to reduce domestic violence through legislation such as the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act 2005.

**Table 9: Year-wise reported cruelty by husband or relative**

Year	Reported cruelty by a husband or relative
2008	81,344
2009	89,546
2010	94,041
2011	99,135
2012	106,527

*Source:* "Crimes against Women." National Crime Records Bureau, 2013

Every 9 minutes, a case of cruelty is committed by either of husbands or a relative of the husband. Cruelty by a husband or his relatives is the greatest occurring crime against women. From 2011 to 2012, there was a 7.5% increase in cruelty by husbands and relatives. In West Bengal, there were 19,865 cases, accounting for 18.7% of the national total, and in Andhra Pradesh, there were 13,389 cases, accounting for 12.6% of the national total. However the point to be noted here is that the Section 498a, which is called the anti-dowry law is the most misused law in India. Many of these cases filed against men using 498a are false and no actions are usually taken against women even if they are proven wrong. This is one of the major factors for married women's suicide in India which comes to 1 in every 9 minutes.

### Forced and Child Marriage

Girls are vulnerable to being forced into marriage at young ages, suffering from a double vulnerability: both for being a child and for being female. Child brides often do not understand the meaning and responsibilities of marriage. Causes of such marriages include the view that girls are a burden for their parents, and the fear of girls losing their chastity before marriage.



### ACID Throwing

Acid throwing, also called an acid attack, a vitriol attack or vitriolage, is a form of violent assault used against women in India. Acid throwing is the act of throwing acid or an alternative corrosive substance onto a person's body "with the intention to disfigure, maim, torture, or kill." Acid attacks are usually directed at a victim's face which burns the skin causing damage and often exposing or dissolving bone. Sulfuric acid and nitric acid are most commonly used for acid attacks. Hydrochloric acid is also used, but is less damaging. Acid attacks can lead to permanent scarring, blindness, as well as social, psychological and economic difficulties. The Indian legislature has now regulated the sale of acid. Compared to women throughout the world, women in India are at a higher risk of being victims of acid attacks. At least 72% of reported acid attacks in India have involved women. India has been experiencing an increasing trend of acid attacks over the past decade. In 2010, there was a high of 27 reported cases of chemical assaults. Scholars believe that acid attacks in India are being under-reported. 34% of acid attacks in India have been determined to be related to rejection of marriage or refusal by women of sexual advances. 20% of acid attacks have been determined to be related to land, property, and/or business disputes. Acid attacks related to marriage are often spurred by dowry disagreements.

### ABDUCTION

Incidents of reported kidnappings and abductions of women increased 7.6% from 2011 to 2012. Uttar Pradesh had 7,910 cases, accounting for 22.2% of the total of cases nationwide.

**Table 10: Year-wise report of abductions**

Year	Reported abductions
2008	22,939
2009	25,741
2010	29,795
2011	35,565
2012	38,262

*Source:* "Crimes against Women." National Crime Records Bureau, 2013

### Conclusion

In our society, violence is bursting. It is present almost everywhere and nowhere is this eruption more intense than right behind the doors of our homes. Behind closed doors of homes all across our country, people are being tortured, beaten and killed. It is happening in rural areas, towns, cities and in metropolitans as well. It is crossing all social classes, genders, racial lines and age groups. It is becoming a legacy being passed on from one generation to another. To some extent media is also responsible for contributing to all the above forms of violence. The exaggerated news coverage of reports of domestic violence,

the daily soaps screening the torture of a daughter-in-law at the hands of family members, the films portraying an element of violence against people of all age groups etc. are some of the menaces which media is causing. It is influencing the mindset of the viewers strongly. The problem arises when instead of taking a lesson from those news clippings, films, and television shows, people start enacting the same in their homes. Comparatively, the visual media is far more influencing than the print and electronic media in these cases. Illiteracy and mob mentality of majority of Indians misguides them in all these cases. The domestic violence may have a far wider and deeper impact in real life. What is required is to see closely the association of the factors provoking a particular form of domestic violence. If these harassments can be controlled then more than one form of violence can be prevented from harming an individual or our society and India would be a much better place to live in.

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