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Crime against women in Punjab: An analysis

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Abstract

This paper deals with the issues of crime against women in Indian society. Punjab has contributed heavily to the Green Revolution and has been the biggest contributor of food wealth and agricultural consumptions in India. Punjab is a progressing state economically but on the social front it is still backward and patriarchal. According to Census 2011 it has the worst sex ratio (895) and lowest child sex ratio (846). Which is a serious cause of concern. In the state of Punjab since status of women is low, crimes against women are likely to be higher. The Reflection of patriarchy and its effect on society at large are very evident in our statistics. Moreover, the reported cases are much smaller than the actual number, because bringing certain crimes into the notice of authorities will tarnish the image of women who are themselves victims. Thus theme of the present research paper is based on different types of gender crime/violence perpetrated against women in Punjab.

Keywords: Crime against women, Gender, Sexual Harassment, Exploitation, Patriarchy.

1. Introduction

Socio-economic development and integration of women in to the mainstream of national life has been pursued as a national policy objective since independence. The constitution of India has granted equal rights to both men and women but still women face extreme discrimination and violence and thus occupies low status in Society. Discriminatory mind-set towards women has existed since many centuries and has affected the lives of women. Condition of women is worst in Punjab as Preference for son is very strong compelling parents to go for unwanted sex determination test and aborting their foetus. Punjab's declining sex ratio, child sex ratio and sex ratio at birth portrays the discrimination towards women at the stage of birth or before birth. After this stage she is victims of crime directed specifically at them, rape, kidnapping and abduction, dowry-related crimes, molestation, sexual harassment, eve-teasing, honour killings etc. Women are being trafficked for sex, harassment at workplaces and tortured in family and society. The statistics presented in the National Crime Records Bureau report 2014, re-affirm the rising trend of crimes against women. Women have been the victims of exploitations since long time in different fields in their life both physically, socially, mentally and economically.

2. Objectives of the Present Study:

The main objectives of present research paper is

1. To examine the stages of women exploitation.
2. To understand the different forms of women exploitation in present society.
3. To analyse the crime against women data in Punjab.
4. To provide some suggestion to overcome of these issues.

2.1 Meaning Exploitation: An act that exploits or victimizes someone (treats them unfairly) "capitalistic exploitation of the working class" "paying Blacks less and charging them more is a form of victimization".

2.2 Meaning of Sexual Harassment: Sexual harassment is a form of sex discrimination. Sexual harassment is "unwelcome verbal, visual, or physical conduct of a sexual nature that is severe or pervasive and affects working conditions or creates a hostile work environment."

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3. Research Methodology

The present paper is mainly based on secondary data, which has been taken from District Census Handbook, Census of Punjab, Statistical Abstract of Punjab and National Crime Record Bureau (NCRB). For the present paper census and crime data have been analysed. The systematic approach has been adopted for analysis. Both qualitative and quantitative methods have been applied for the data analysis. Perception of local community members including both men and women of different age group from Punjab has been taken on these crime head.

4. Analysis of Crime against women

4.1 Women and Violence during Life Cycle

Women continue to be subjected to crimes/violence over the entire life cycle. Before birth they are condemned to sex selection and female foeticide; during infant and childhood stage they are subject to infanticide or undernourishment; if they do manage to pass the age of five, they are neglected in medical care and education as well as subjected to sexual or physical violence; in adolescence and adulthood, they are faced with situations of early marriage, early pregnancy, sexual violence, domestic violence, harassment for dowry, desertion, dying during deliveries and as older women and widows condemned to a life of desertion and neglect etc. Table 1 shows that gender violence in different stages of women's life.

Table 1: Gender Violence across Life Cycle

Pre-birth Stage	Female Foeticide
Infancy Stage	Female Infanticide and Gender Discrimination (health care, nutrition).
Childhood Stage	Gender Discrimination (Health, Nutrition, Food, Education and other social benefits)
The adolescent Stage	At the stage of adolescence (early marriage, rape, discrimination in health care, dress code, use of information technology like mobile phones, their movements are restricted, prostitution, trafficking, eve-teasing etc).
Reproductive stage of women	At reproductive age (Domestic Violence in the form of sexual (marital rape), psychological, emotionally and physically tortured by intimate partner and his family members).
Old Age	In old age women generally faces elderly abuse. (Abused in terms of physical, emotional, psychological and financial abuse).

It can be analysed that although women's life cycle she has to face different form of gender violence and exploitation. Thus the research paper is also based on the different forms of crimes which a women face during her entire life cycle. It was observed during the fieldwork in the state Punjab that preference for son and low child sex ratio results to these crimes. Significantly, a study in the prominent British medical journal, *The Lancet*, found that the number of ultrasound machines in a region within India could be correlated with the magnitude of female foeticide. Another study published in *The Lancet* found that educated mothers

are more likely to abort female fetuses than illiterate ones, likely because they have better access to ultrasound technology and early gender determination. The concept of masculinity is also very important. Men since centuries wanted to control women and considered women as repository to a man (Chowdhry 2007) [2]. The concept of honour is always attached to a girl's child or women of family. A girl talking to a boy on a phone is thought to have brought shame to the family. Sometimes she is even killed for bringing shame to the family.

Table 2: Incidence of Crimes Committed Against Women in India and Punjab (NCRB, 2014, 2013)

Crime Head	Rape (Sec. 376 IPC)		Dowry Death			Cruelty by Husband and Relatives			Assault on women with intent to outrage her modesty			
	I	P	R	I	P	R	I	P	R	I	P	R
India	36735	1.3	6.1	8455	.3	1.4	122877	3.4	20.5	82235		13.7
Punjab	888	2.4	6.8	126	1.4	1.0	1741	1.4	13.3	1045	1.2	8.0

1. R= Rate of Crime
2. P= Percentage Share
3. I= Incidents of Crime

Rape, the most common form of violence against women has been a part of human culture. It is gender violent behaviour and is a form of torture and majority perpetrators are men and victims were women. Rape remains highly unreported crime due to fear of retribution from the abusers and societal stigmatization (Smith 2004) [9]. It also believed that sexual violence and rape men try to exercise their patriarchal power over women to show their domination (Ray 2005: 85) [8]. Table 2 elaborates that State of Punjab

contributes more in crime against women as per NCRB data. Society at large is deeply patriarchal with strong preference for son which contributes to increase gender violence i.e. Female Foeticide. Increase in incident of rapes, Dowry death, Cruelty by Husband and Relatives, assault on women with intent to outrage her modesty including Sexual Harassment at workplace as per NCRB Data. The rate percentage of IPC crime rate in state Punjab is (129.6) and national average i.e.11.4. The state has observed increase in incidents of rape (2010-2014). Highest numbers of rape cases were reported from the city Ludhiana i.e.109 and lowest numbers of rape cases were found in the city Khanna i.e.14 in 2014 as per NCRB data 2014).

Table 3: Crime head wise incidents of Crime against Women in Punjab (2010-2013)

Sr. No.	Crime Head	2010	2011	2012	2013	Total
1	Rape	546	479	680	888	2593
2	Dowry Death	184	143	118	126	571
3	Assault on Women with intent to outrage her modesty	354	282	340	1045	2021
4	Cruelty by Husbands and relatives	1163	1136	1293	1741	5333
5	Insult to the modesty of women	38	31	31	67	167
	Total incidents of Crime against Women in Punjab	2285	2071	2462	3867	10685

Source: Additional Director General Police, Crime Branch, Punjab

In the state of Punjab since status of women is low crimes against women are likely to be higher. The reflection of patriarchy and its effect on society at large are very evident in our statistics. Women have to undergo tremendous forms of violence in various stages of their lives for instance rape, bride burning, domestic violence, harassment, violence due to demand for dowry, etc. Table 3 represents the trends of crime against women in Punjab since 2010-2013 as per NCRB Data. Total number of registered cases of Cruelty by Husbands and relatives in Punjab is high among all the types of crime against women. It is analysed that from (2010-2013) there is an increased variation of 207.4% in the assault on women with intent to outrage her modesty as in 2012. It reflects the orthodox and patriarchal mindset of people of Punjab. The economic dependence of the women on her family to fulfil their needs is also one of the main reasons behind such kind of crimes. The social and economic status of women can be both a cause and consequence of violence against women. A recent study found that over 70% of crimes against women went unreported due to fear of stigma or repercussions.

In Punjab, the increase of violence against women has coincided with the economic decline over the past several decades. Females are considered to be an economic burden, and documented cases of female infanticide have surged to alarming levels. This mentality is represented by the popularized Punjabi phrase: "Raising a daughter is like watering your neighbor's garden." Finally, rising levels of drug and alcohol abuse have contributed significantly to violence against women.

5. Approach towards safety of women

5.1 To increase reporting of rape and assault cases: To increase the reporting of such cases at first we need to empower the women and children. They must be educate on their rights and encourage them to come forward to register the cases. There are many violent cases but due to stigma in the society very few are reported.

5.2 Law enforcement agencies: Law enforces should be well trained to react swiftly and with sensitivity towards the women and children cases.

5.3 Exemplary punishment: Punishment of every culprit need to be exemplary. Campaigning of "Zero- tolerance" of sex offenders. More and more fast track court should be established.

5.4 Proper planning of the city: Every city should be planned in a very specific manner. According to Ranjana Kumari, director of Delhi's Centre for Social Research, only 37% of the city was Ever planned. "The rest is... slums, villages, with no proper lighting or development,"

5.5 Indian Police system: Neither the Centre nor States have been proactive in improving the quality of Policing. Official records shows that only 14 states have either enacted the New Police Act or amended their existing laws to incorporate SC's suggestion.

6. Conclusion

The role of women in Punjabi society has changed dramatically over the past century. Prior to the Green Revolution, women were an invaluable source of

productivity within the home and the public sphere. In post-Green Revolution Punjabi agricultural societies, women's roles on farms have largely been replaced by technology, and they rarely hold profitable jobs outside of the home. This major shift has resulted in the decreased earning potential of women. Though Sikh principles call for gender equality and have unequivocally rejected practices of dowry exchange, the existing Indian cultural norms have overridden these beliefs. The vast financial difference between raising a female and a male child is not lost among rural Punjabis, particularly not among farmers that are already drowning in their own debt. Punjabi villagers have begun demonstrating preferences for males in a number of ways, including sex-selective abortion. The Government of Punjab indicates that women themselves have been indoctrinated with gender inequality. As report says that "*A woman's status in society, among her own peers is measured not by what she is and what she does but if she has at least one male child. So strong is this need to 'belong' to the society and community that women themselves perpetuate the custom of son preference*" Abuse of drugs and alcohol by Punjabis compounds the violence against women. The use of substances such as cocaine, heroin and alcohol has been shown in multiple studies to increase violent behavior. In Punjab this violence is often directed at women. The data by National Crime Record Bureau and National Commission for women justifies the low status of women. Woman suffers violence of all forms and at all stages in their lives. Government had taken many positive incentives to improve the conditions of women. Initiatives like Beti Padhao Beti Bachao, SABLA, Nani Chhan schemes were introduced in the state. Mere formulation of the policies to raise the status of women will not work until mindset of the people will not change. We need to give more powers to women so that they can become empowered and can be become more independent in term of taking decisions on their own. Govt. should impose strict punishment to the culprits who harasses women at any point of time and at any place.

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