



Women Safety in India

"There is no chance of the welfare of the world unless the condition of women is improved. It is not possible for a bird to fly on one wing."

- Swami Vivekananda

"The barometer to the progress of a nation is its treatment of its women"

- Swami Vivekananda

Introduction

Thousands of years ago, Indian women had enjoyed high status. **Gargi, Maitreyi, and other women of Vedic lore** illustrate the high status Indian women enjoyed in ancient times. The tradition of "**Brahmavadinis**", women celibates pursuing intellectual studies for life, existed in ancient India. Indian women, who have played a big role in moulding our culture, civilization, arts, religion, have also handled statecraft from the time of **Draupadi to Chola Royal women, from Rani Padmini, Rani Jhansi and many others, to Indira Gandhi** — something which no other society in the world can possibly boast.

Indian freedom movement was driven by the symbol of "**Mother India**" and devotion to her in the song "**Vande Mataram**". In India, from ancient times, Female Divinity has equated women with power. And, God as confluence of man and woman (**Ardhanareeswara**) symbolized gender harmony. But unfortunately, contemporary Indian women continue to face discrimination and other social challenges and are often victims of abuse and violent crimes. Manifestations of violence include physical aggression, such as blows of varying intensity, burns, attempted hanging, sexual abuse and rape, psychological violence through insults, humiliation, coercion, blackmail, economic or emotional threats, and control over speech and actions. In extreme, but not unknown cases, death is the result.

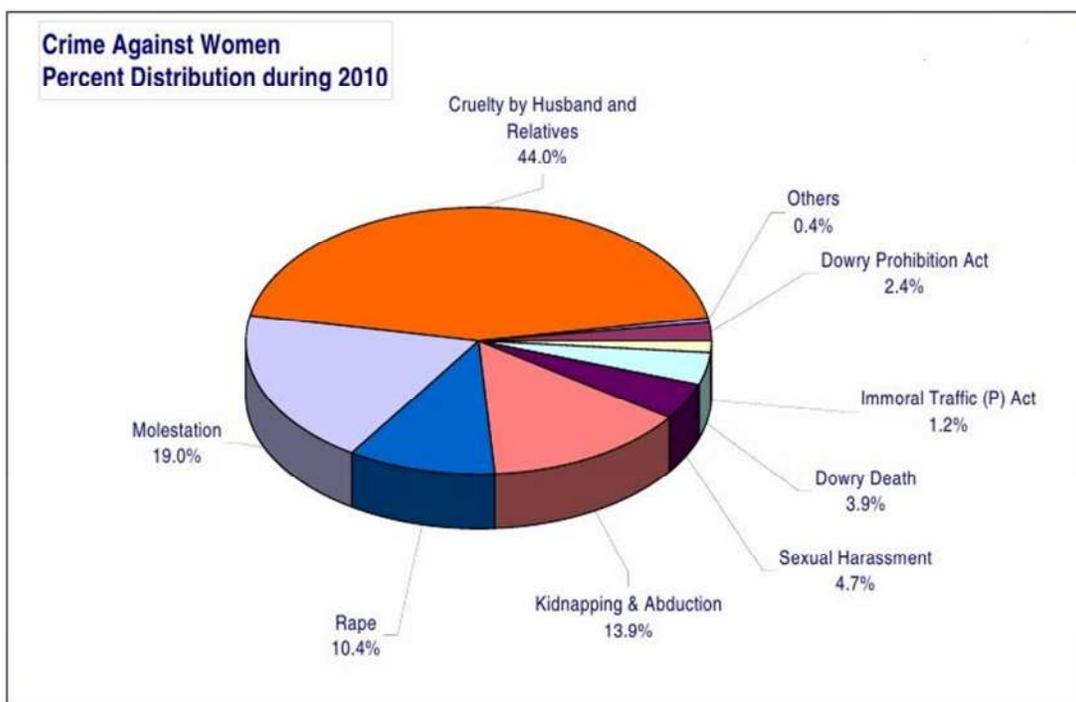


Woman Safety Scenario in India

Woman is the one, who brings us to life who can sacrifice her life for her family but the question is, what are we doing to that woman? Is Women Safe in India? Certainly not.

Women are now becoming the target of a section of men who leer, jeer and do not hesitate to make them feel vulnerable, and, worse, attack their dignity. According to a global poll conducted, India is the **"fourth most dangerous country" in the world for women, and the worst country for women among the G20 countries.** The report suggests that Indian women are not free from violence. Another report by NCRB, that has been tabulated below, shows that the crime against women is a very frequent and poses a serious concern. Further these statistics exclude many cases that were not registered with the police due to the social stigma attached to rape and molestation cases. Thus, the actual cases are much higher.

Frequency of Crimes	
TIME PERIOD	OFFENSE
Every 3 Minutes	Crime against women
Every 9 Minutes	Cruelty by husband or relative
Every 29 Minutes	Woman gets raped
Every 77 Minutes	Dowry death



Factors Affecting and Aggravating Woman Safety

Socio-cultural-economic Factors

1. Activist Arundhati Ghosh says, "There are many Indias at present. It's difficult for a **socio-economically and sexually repressed India to live with the modern independent India**. Backward ideas about gender and sexuality overpower the India in which women want to live on their own."
2. Psychologists say that **patriarchy** allows men to commit violence against women. "It occurs when a man sees a woman as inferior. It is **male chauvinism**, with the man forcing the woman into submission." With **different processes of socialization** that men and women undergo, men take up stereotyped gender roles of domination and control, whereas women take up that of submission, dependence and respect for authority. This reason relates to society's construction of female sexuality and its role in social hierarchy. A female child grows up with a constant sense of being weak and in need of protection, whether physical, social or economic. This helplessness has led to her exploitation at every stage of life.
3. Many activists blame the rising incidents of sexual harassment against women on the influence of "**Western culture**".
4. With the ushering in of **economic liberalization** Indian cities have witnessed a continual recasting of spaces to keep pace with the **burgeoning urbanization**. The present scenario is such that while on the one hand the cities provide ample opportunities for both women and men, on the other the nature of urban development has resulted in increased exclusion of women, particularly from the marginalized sections; it has reinforced the existing structure of gender-based violence.
5. **Economic dependence** of women over men has led to male domination over female.

Institutional Failures

1. Less conviction rate in crimes against women and **delay in delivery of justice**.
2. **Poor enforcement of laws** related to women safety.
3. **Poor gender sensitization** of law enforcing agencies like police, judiciary etc.

Provisions Related to Women Safety and the Government Initiatives

The issue of women's safety is indeed a global one, transcending borders and impacting people at all levels, including governments, policymakers, non-governmental organizations and citizens. In 2006, the United Nations Secretary General emphasized that **violence against women in the world constitutes a human rights violation, and continues to be an obstacle to reaching gender equality.**

Lack of safety and fear of crime have particular impacts on women and on their ability to take advantage of their right to be able to participate in and move around freely in society. Women's activities are often limited as a consequence of insecurity and risk of violence, inhibiting daily activities such as going to work, their ability to use certain public spaces, or to go out at night. It also affects their freedom to be financially independent, and all of this has implications for their children and families.

In these background, let us see the provisions for women safety in our country.

Constitutional Provisions

The Constitution guarantees to all Indian women equality under **Article 14**, no discrimination by the State through **Article 15(1)**, and equal pay for equal work under **Article 39(d)**. In addition, it renounces practices derogatory to the dignity of women under **Article 51(A) (e)**, and also allows for provisions to be made by State for securing just and humane conditions of work under **Article 42**.

Statutory Provisions

- **Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act** was passed in 1956. However many cases of trafficking of young girls and women have been reported. These women are either forced into prostitution, domestic work or child labour.
- In 1961, the Gol passed **Dowry Prohibition Act**, making the dowry demands in wedding arrangements illegal. However, many cases of dowry-related domestic violence, suicides and murders have been reported.
- **Indecent Representation of Women (Prohibition) Act, 1987** was passed to prohibit indecent representation of women through advertisements or in publications, writings, paintings, figures or in any other manner.
- **Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005** came in 2006.
- In 1997, in a landmark Vishakha judgement, the Supreme Court took a strong stand against sexual harassment of women in the workplace. Recently, government passed **Sexual Harassment At Workplace Act 2013**.

CEDAW: Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women

It was adopted in 1979 by UNGA, and described as International Bill of Rights of Women. By accepting convention, State commits themselves to:

- Principle of gender equality in legal system.
- Establishment of tribunals and other public institutions for protection of women.

India ratified it in 1993.

Different Dimensions of Woman Safety

The UN has defined violence against women very broadly to include such issues as **interpersonal violence in the home, violence against women in public space, trafficking, violence in post-conflict situations and harmful gender-based practices** (UN 2006). Further, Globalization has facilitated transnational organized crime, resulting in a considerable increase in transnational crimes affecting women, such as trafficking, forced labour, sexual exploitation, and violence against migrant and immigrant women. Broadly the issue of women safety in India can be covered under the sub-topics:

- A. Public Space/Place

- B. Workplace
- C. Domestic Violence
- D. Dowry

A. Safety in Public Place

- In India even in the 21st century, women cannot step out of their house at any given time, assured of her physical and sexual safety. Everyday women in this society face more problems than men. The fear of violence and teasing restricts a woman's anatomy, curtails her mobility and her ability to work and participate in social activities. Even today in India, women can't move at night in secluded places and even at daytime at crowded places like public transport etc.
- Rape is the fastest growing crime in the country today and as many as 18 women are assaulted in some form or the other every hour across India. The gangrape of 23 year old paramedical student inside a moving bus near a posh Delhi locality has undoubtedly shocked the nation to its core. Mumbai watched with shame as an ugly mob attacked women on New Year's Eve. In Latur a 14 year old was raped and killed by four young men. In Konark four men were charged with dragging a woman out of a bus and gang raping her. It is an ordeal simply to file a police report and the investigations thereafter have been stories of apathy and down right humiliation meted out to the victims.
- Equally horrific are news reports of foreign tourists being sexually assaulted. An American was molested in Pushkar, a British journalist raped in Goa, Canadian girls attacked in Kumarakom to list the few instances. It looks like that India as a nation has ceased to know how to treat women as human beings who have a right to dignity and safety. The crime against tourists is against our culture of 'atithi devo bhava' .
- After the horrific event of Nirbhaya death, govt appointed **Justice Verma Committee** which came with the recommendation as depicted below in the picture.

COMMITTEE APPOINTED TO SUGGEST LEGAL REFORMS TO CURB SEXUAL OFFENCES AGAINST WOMEN				
<p>JUSTICE HAS SPOKEN</p> <p>FAILURE OF GOVERNANCE IS THE ROOT CAUSE OF CRIMES AGAINST WOMEN</p>  <p>Justice J.S. VERMA Former Chief Justice of India</p>	<p>1 Rules out death sentence for rape convicts, even in the rarest of the rare cases</p>	<p>2 Life imprisonment must always mean imprisonment for 'the entire natural life of the convict'</p>	<p>3 No to chemical castration. Mutilation of body not permitted by Constitution</p>	
	<p>4 Recommends more punishment for trafficking. Stalking should be viewed as a serious offence</p>	<p>5 Against reducing the age of a juvenile from 18 to 16. Says Indian jails do not have reformatory and rehabilitation policies</p>	<p>6 Lambasts police for gender insensitivity. Not registering cases of sexual assault by police officers is an offence</p>	
	<p>7  Calls for immediate review of the Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA) and similar protocols for application in areas of internal conflict. Serious allegations of sexual assault by armed forces is causing alienation in regions such as the North East</p>		<p>INDIAN ARMY RA Womenfolk protesting nude in Manipur demanding removal of AFSPA</p>	

Criminal Law (Amendment) Act 2013

Following much hue and cry, acting on the recommendations of late Justice Verma committee, govt. brought Criminal Law (Amendment) Act 2013. By this act, the following legislation have been amended:

- Indian Penal Code 1861 (Four new sub-sections in Section 354 have been added. It has been tabulated below).
- Indian Evidence Act, 1872.
- Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973: Amended to provide for a woman officer to record evidence from a woman against whom certain offences have been committed.
- Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, 2012.

Section	Offence	Punishment	Notes
326A	Acid attack	Imprisonment not less than 10 years but which may extend to imprisonment for life and with fine which shall be just Gender neutral and reasonable to meet the medical expenses of the victim.	
326B	Attempt to Acid attack	Imprisonment not less than 5 years but which may extend to 7 years, and shall Gender neutral also be liable to fine.	
354A	Sexual harassment	Rigorous imprisonment up to 5 years, or with fine, or with both in case of offence described in clauses (i) & (ii). Imprisonment up to one year, or with fine, or with both in other cases.	Only protects women. Provisions are: i. physical contact and advances involving unwelcome sexual overtures; or ii. a demand for sexual favours; or iii. making sexually coloured remarks; or iv. forcibly showing pornography; or v. any other unwelcome physical, verbal or non-verbal conduct of sexual nature.
354B	Act with intent to disrobe a woman	Imprisonment not less than 3 years but which may extend to 7 years and with fine.	Only protects women against anyone who "Assaults or uses criminal force to any woman or abets such act with the intention of disrobing or compelling her to be naked."
354C	Voyeurism	For first conviction, imprisonment not less than one year, extendable upto 3 years with fine; and on a second/subsequent conviction, with imprisonment for not less than 3 years, a but which may extend to 7 year with fine.	Only protects women. By implication, women may prey voyeuristically upon men with impunity. The prohibited action is defines thus: "Watching or capturing a woman in "private act"; or the victim is using a lavatory; or the person is doing sexual act that is not of a kind ordinarily done in public."
354D	Stalking	Imprisonment not less than one year but which may extend to three years, and shall also be liable to fine.	Only protects women from being stalked by men. By implication, women may stalk men with impunity. The prohibited action is defined thus: "To follow and woman and contact. or attempt to contact such woman to foster personal interaction repeatedly despite a clear indication of disinterest by such woman; or monitor the use by a woman of the internet, email or any other form of electronic communication.

Is Harsh Law Effective In Acting As Deterrence? If Not, What Is The Way forward?

The December 16 gang rape led to widespread outrage that forced the Central government to enact tougher anti- rape laws. *But, the next question is whether such strict law can reduce the crimes against women.* Criminology research has established that *it is the certainty of punishment, and not its severity, that deters people from committing crimes.* The effectiveness of laws does not lie in how harsh they are but in how successfully they are enforced. ***Thus a harsher anti-rape law is no answer, certainty of punishment is.*** While crime rates are

increasing, the conviction rate is declining. In 1971, the conviction rate of IPC crimes was 62%, but by 2010, it had declined to 40.7%. In the case of rape, it was as low as 26%. Add to this the number of cases pending in court and the fact that it takes years to settle them. This scenario has to change if the law is to be made effective.

Another reason why such crimes continue to occur is our mindset. *The cultural norms and traditions that flourish in our patriarchal society undermine the dignity of women.* What really needs to be done is the **moral overhauling of the minds** of the masses by means of education and awareness. The actual need of the hour is a revolutionary change in the mindsets and conscience of Indian men so that they stop seeing women as objects of sexual pleasure.

Since societal attitudes will take time to change, the police as well as parents and teachers need to draw on the “**broken windows**” theory of criminology. According to this theory, small acts of deviance, if ignored, can escalate into more serious and major crimes. Do not ignore incidents of eve-teasing or stalking on the grounds that youngsters are entitled to some indulgence or of domestic violence because it is a family matter.

Ways to Check Crimes at Public Place:

1. Strict enforcement of laws and quick disposal of cases through fast track courts. Family Courts have been set up in some states to adjudicate cases relating to maintenance, custody and divorce. The Parivarik Mahila Lok Adalat (PMLA) evolved by the NCW is an alternative justice delivery system which is part of the Lok Adalats (People’s Courts) for providing speedy justice to women.
2. Strict patrolling and vigilance, particularly during night.
3. Gender sensitisation of the law enforcement agencies, especially the police and the judiciary through periodic training.
4. Community policing initiatives such as Mahila Suraksha Samiti and Women State Committee could help in checking crimes.
5. All-women police stations should be set up in as many states to facilitate the reporting of crime against women. In Tamil Nadu, to encourage women to approach police stations without fear the appointment of one woman sub-inspector and two women police constables in each of the existing police stations is being made mandatory.
6. Development of a community-based strategy of neighbourhood committees to create zero violence zones. This new approach to control violence concentrates on activating Mohalla Committees (neighbourhood groups) to tackle domestic violence.
7. Training women for self-defence.
8. Setting up of helplines for women in distress. Mobile apps that can raise alarm just by pressing a button in mobile in hour of need could be developed and used.
9. Regulation of public transport vehicles through strict licensing, GPS tracking, route advisory etc.
10. Moral overhauling of the mindset of masses through awareness and education.

B. Safety at Workplace

Women’s workforce participation has decreased from 37% in 1993-94 to 26% in 2009-10 in rural areas. For urban areas it decreased from 17% to 14%. The victimization of women at workplace together with patriarchal mindset has affected percentage of women participation in workforce. As many as 17% of working women in India have experienced sexual harassment at their workplace, according to a survey conducted by Oxfam India.



Initiatives Taken So far

Certain initiatives with regard to safety at workplace have been taken such as:

- The **National Commission for Women** prepared a Code of Conduct for the work place and circulated the same to all ministries, educational institutions, public and private sector undertakings and various NGOs for information and implementation. The guidelines highlight that it shall be the duty of the employer to prevent or deter the commission of any act of sexual harassment at workplace would include unwelcome sexually determined behaviour by any person either individually or in association with other persons such as eve teasing, unsavoury remarks, jokes causing embarrassment, innuendo and taunts, gender based insults or sexist remarks and unwelcome sexual overtones in any manner, touching or brushing against any part of the body, molestation or displaying pornographic or other derogatory pictures or sayings.
- The **University Grants Commission** has formulated a code of conduct for students and staff of Universities.
- The **Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE)** has taken action to ensure that all affiliated schools and educational institutions abide by these guidelines.
- **All Ministries** have set up Complaints Committees to look into such matters.
- The GoI recently passed **Sexual Harassment At Workplace Act 2013** in parliament on September 2012. It is a welcome move, even though it comes 15 years after the landmark VishakaJudgement in which the Supreme Court categorically said that harassment at workplace is a violation of right of gender equality and right to life and liberty, thus violating Article 14, 15, 21.

Issues Concerning Harassment at Workplace

- In many cases, it has been found that the committees within the organizations were set up only when there were serious allegations of sexual harassment. Many working women point out that, even if there is an enquiry committee, does anyone really bother to find out what happens to the victim when the enquiry is going on? She is an **object of curiosity, sympathy, disdainful glances or simply isolated by her colleagues**. The work environment where sexual harassment occurs has hierarchy, norms, and constraints that profoundly affect the way people behave in that setting.
- The **situation at home is worse**. Instead of sympathizing with her plight or standing by her, the attitude is one of distrust and suspicion or often humiliation and shame.
- Certain individuals use their **positions of relative power** to engage in sexual interactions. This type of behaviour clearly constitutes sex discrimination.
- **Male ego problems, sexual perversion, sexual obsession, widow-hood** etc is said to be some of the reasons for their harassment.

Sexual Harassment at Workplace Act 2013

Features of the Act	Limitations
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. It defines sexual harassment as laid down by SC in Vishaka case. (Incorporated in Section 354A of IPC tabulated earlier). 2. It puts the legal responsibility on the employer, whether government, public sector or private, to provide a safe and conducive environment for the woman worker. The onus is on the employer, and if this is not complied with, the employer is liable for punishment. 3. The provision of concrete mechanism to enable an inquiry into individual complaints of sexual harassment and <u>time-bound justice</u> through the formation of Internal Complaints Committee in the institution she works or, in the case of unorganised sector (i.e., which employ less than 10 members), through the formation of 5 member local committees at various levels under the supervision of District Collector. 4. The Act include domestic worker and defines it as a woman employed to do household work in any household for remuneration whether in cash or kind. 5. Those who do not comply with the Act's provisions will be fined up to Rs 50,000. Repeated violation would be punished with higher penalties. 6. At least 50% of nominated members in Internal or Local Committee must be women. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The majority of the female workforce is in the unorganized agricultural sector. This is where there are problems in the Act. The Act's definition of the unorganized sector, taken from the National Commission of Enterprises in the Unorganized Sector Report, is "an enterprise owned by individuals or self-employed workers and engaged in the production or sale of goods or providing service of any kind whatsoever and where the enterprise employs workers, the numbers of such workers is less than ten." The number of workers was mentioned in NCEUS definition because enterprises employing over 10 were covered under the provisions of Factory Act. Thus, this definition of the unorganized sector is more applicable to small or tiny enterprises in manufacturing, trade or service sectors. Along with this, the NCEUS had very specifically included agricultural sector "enterprises" and its workers within the unorganized sector. The specification of workers "to be less than ten" would effectively remove landlords and rich peasants owning large tracts of land and employing over 10 agricultural workers from the ambit of the law. It is essential to end any ambiguity in the definition by specifically including farms and agriculture and related work in the Act. 2. The Act lacks clarity on the inclusion of the armed forces and all paramilitary forces within its purview. With the increasing number of women being employed in the defence services, there is no reason why they should be excluded. 3. If a complaint is found to be "malicious" or a woman has produced a "misleading document," she is liable for punishment. This will discourage victims from filing complaint as she risks losing her job. 4. The Bill has a specific clause that prohibits publication of the identity of the accused even if he is found to be guilty of sexual harassment. One can understand if the concern is limited to protecting the identity of the victim or witnesses or even the respondent during the pendency of the inquiry. Men like Gopal Kanda, or those in high office guilty of such actions, will no doubt be relieved at such legal protection afforded to their public persona and image by the proposed Bill. 5. Based upon complaint of the victim, the committee is to conduct an enquiry and submit its recommendation to the employer (or DM) who is required to take action. The punishment for misconduct is as per the service rules of the employer (if it exists), else as per the rules of the act. The Act is, however, silent on the situation where employers' service rule contains less stringent punishment provisions.

C. Dowry: An Evil

It is the money, goods or estate that a woman brings to a marriage. It is a gift demanded or given as per a pre-condition for a marriage. Generally, an important part of the power relationship between spouses and their families relates to dowry and its ramifications.

In 1961, the GoI passed **Dowry Prohibition Act**, making the dowry demands in wedding arrangements illegal. There are also sections in IPC that deal with dowry like:

- **Section 304 B:**
 - Related to dowry deaths.
 - Stipulates that death of a woman within 7 years of her marriage by burns or bodily injury with evidence of cruelty or harassment by her husband or his relatives in connection with a demand for dowry is 'dowry death' and punishable with imprisonment for not less than 7 years.
- **Section 406:**
 - Related to recovery of Streedhan (it is what a woman can claim as her own property within a marital household. It may include jewellery, gifts, and dowry articles) .
 - Non bailable and cognizable offence.
- **Section 498A**
 - For any act of cruelty, imprisonment of Husband or his relative for upto 3 years plus fine.
 - Non-bailable and Non Compoundable (once a case is lodged, there can't be a compromise).

Dowry Prohibition Act 1961

- Request, payment or acceptance of dowry is prohibited.
- Imprisonment upto 5 years plus fine of upto Rs 15000 or the value of the dowry given, whichever is more.

Despite these provisions, we witness a dowry death every 77 minutes. Women commodification is rampant in society, and more severe in the high class educated people as is evident from dowry hierarchy shown below.

DOWRY HIERARCHY

Rs 1 crore to Rs 5 crore
for central civil servants

Rs 50 lakh to Rs 1 crore
for doctors

Rs 5 lakh to Rs 50 lakh
for others in the coveted list

No dowry for the meltdown-hit techie. Figures based on trends in Andhra Pradesh.



Issues Concerning Dowry related Crimes

- Section 406 of IPC hardly demarcates boundary between dowry and Streedhan. This has been misused in demanding dowry.
- Law commission in 2012 as well as Justice Malimath Committee 2003 has suggested to amend Sec 498A since its non-compoundable nature kills chance of reformatory justice.
- In India we have no provision for protection of a complainant, not even under the Prevention of Dowry Act. A woman who has complained of harassment goes back to the very people against whom she has

complained. What security can she possibly feel in such a situation, and how can she continue to act on her complaint? She obviously continues to be victimised often paying the ultimate price. Many complainants are faced with eviction from the family home, are cut off without maintenance, and are unable to follow the complaint precisely because they have no means to do so.

- There are rarely any eye witness who are prepared to give evidence against the murderers as the crime is committed within the four walls of a home and those who are present inside are those who are committing the crime.
- Due to an increasing trend towards consumerism, people see dowry as an avenue to fulfil their otherwise impossible dreams.
- For some people, paying dowry at their daughter's marriage is an investment for fetching high dowry through their son's marriage.
- Some others, including women discuss on 'marriage with high dowry' with pride. Generally, marriages with pomp and show are preferred.
- The girls too think that it is their right to take dowry with them when they go to the husband's house.
- Another feeling among the mothers-in-law is that when she herself brought dowry from her house at the time of her marriage, why shouldn't she take dowry for her son.

Way Forward To Counter The Menace of Dowry

- Amend Section 406 and 498A of IPC as suggested by Malimath Committee.
- Strict enforcement of laws and sensitization of enforcement agencies.
- Attitudinal Change in society that treats women as a commodity.
- Each one of us can set examples through "AdarshMarriage", i.e., noble marriage by denying dowry grant in any form- cash or kind.
- Development of a community-based strategy of neighbourhoodcommittees to create pressure on those in society who demand dowry.



D. Domestic Violence

Physical violence as well as explicit forms of aggression are used by the more powerful in the household as methods to ensure obedience of the less powerful and therefore is related to **power dynamics in a household**. At every stage in the life cycle, the female body is both the objects of desire and of control. Domestic violence includes not only inter-spousal violence, but also violence perpetrated by other family members. Domestic violence includes, harassment, maltreatment, brutality or cruelty and even the threat of assault - intimidation.

Domestic Violence is a grave concern for Indian Society. Till 2005, remedies available to a victim of domestic violence in the civil courts on the ground of divorce and in criminal courts (vide sec498A) were limited. Remedies were linked to matrimonial proceedings, and the relationship outside marriage was not recognized.

Due to such limitations, Govt enacted **Domestic Violence Act** in 2005 that extends to whole of India. Some of the features of this act includes:

- Beneficiaries
 - Women in domestic relationship with the respondent
 - Children also covered. Other can also file complaint on their behalf.
- Violence recognized can be physical, sexual, emotional, verbal, psychological, and economic abuse.
- Cognisable and Non-bailable offence

Issues Concerning Domestic Violence

- According to a survey, illiterate women face more violence than literate women. Relationship between abusive behaviour and level of education has been found to be statistically significant.
- According to survey findings of Visaria (1999) joint family tends to offer women some protection or acts as a deterrent to husbands using physical force to subdue them.
- Some of the reasons given by the women were financial matters, behaviour with in-laws, back-biting, talking to any male without the liking of the husband, asking for money, preventing him from drinking and husbands personality traits.
- One of the main cause why domestic violence prevails and continues is the lack of alternatives among the victims. Women and children may be economically dependent on abusers. Elderly people and children may feel too powerless to escape. Language or cultural barriers may isolate victims from seeking help.
- Victims generally feel, it is better to suffer in silence than to be separated from loved ones. They keep hoping for improvement, but it is normally observed that, without help, violence gets worse
- Family members may be unaware of the help that is available from the local agencies. They may also be unaware of their legal rights.

Way Forward To Counter The Menace of Domestic Violence

- Strict enforcement of laws and quick disposal of cases.
- Strengthening of Alternate Dispute Disolution mechanism like Lok Adalat etc.
- Gender sensitization of enforcement agencies.
- Development of a community-based strategy of neighbourhood committees (Mohalla Committees) to tackle domestic violence.
- Economic empowerment of women.

Conclusion

Every single day single women, young girls, mothers and women from all walks of life are being assaulted, molested, and violated. The streets, public transport, public spaces in particular have become the **territory of the hunters**. While the ones already hunted down weep in silence or in disdain, the rest fight their way to a basic life with dignity. There is an **unspoken war on the streets**. Young school and college going girls use books to shield themselves, other women wear full-covered attire to protect their bodies, and others avoid the mere glance of the roving gaze.

We don't need to look at statistics to confront the horrid truth. News stories of women from all over India being raped, beaten, killed are flashed across us day after day – and we all are aware of it. The fatal Nirbhaya gang-

rape saw an outpouring on the streets of Delhi – protests decrying the fragile status of women in India. Candle light marches, editorials examining the patriarchal and sexist traditions of our country, an awakening on social media – even conversations on streets revolve around the night they cannot forget: the night that took Nirbhaya.

This is the time we own up to ourselves. We stand by each other. Tall and proud. Brave and unfazed. This is the time we own up to India. No more Harassment. We want what we deserve - for us and for our daughters – a safer India for women.

VISION IAS

Copyright © by Vision IAS

All rights are reserved. No part of this document may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without prior permission of Vision IAS.