

GENDER VIOLENCE: A DEBATE ON DEVELOPMENT WITH SPECIAL REFERENCES TO ASSAM

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Abstract: The attitude of a community towards the woman has got a great social significance in all societies. Guwahati being the gateway of North East India is a region where many people from different parts of North East confluences here for employment and educational purposes. During the last five decades women have entered in increasing numbers into salaried and remunerative occupations as well as professions hitherto reserved exclusively for men. The status of women has undergone tremendous change from the Vedic period to the Post Modern era, sometimes attaining equal position to that of men, while sometimes experiencing lower position compared to men. The fact against equality of status is caused in India, as man's tyrannical hegemony is overwhelmingly strong and deep rooted to allow any static change. Now women are at par with men in almost all spheres of life but it is only half of the truth as in reality their life is fraught with harrowing insecurities and risks. Whatever portion a woman attains, her husband try to lord over it.

Mainstream conceptualization of violence against women has directed specific and problematic responses to the issue and continues to do so. One of the uncontested objectives of a liberal regime is the protection of its citizens from violence. But yet the liberal state has failed in its basic task with respect to women. The violence against women cannot be prevented until the relation between men and women are transformed.

Role of media in TV serials and feminist magazines have played an ugly part in degrading womanhood. Magazines, to increase their circulation depict nude, semi-nude and vulgar pictures of women. Fashion shows and ramp shows have reduced women to showpieces and symbols of sex and playthings. Along with it, the vulgarity of the item numbers of Bollywood has contributed to the crime like eve teasing, molestation etc to a greater extent.

Police records can leave one all baffled and confused. A crime is committed against a woman every 5 minutes, every 45 minutes a woman is raped, every 15 minutes molestation takes place, every 40 minutes a woman is kidnapped and every hundred minutes a dowry death occurs. In the past few months, New Delhi in India has been dubbed as the "rape capital" of South Asia. The number of women coming forward to fight against these is increasing for sure, but it's still a very tiny amount. Experts say Indian girls and women face a barrage of threats ranging from human trafficking and sexual violence to child marriage and acid attacks.

Laws have failed to curb atrocities, crime and violence. Even social workers, seminars, talks, workshops have failed to tackle this problem. Thus, if women themselves fail to raise voice against these issues there can be no ray of hope for them.

This paper focuses on the idea to equally acknowledge the perfect societal behaviour to both sexes to stop violence.

Keywords- Media, Patriarchy, Status, Rape Capital State, Tyrannical Hegemony.

Introduction: This research work is undertaken on "Gender Violence: A Debate on Development with Special References to Assam" is to present the deplorable condition of the women folk in general, and the women of Assam (Guwahati in particular) who are the victims of heinous and intolerable crime committed against a human being. They fall under the category of human but just being born as a female they have to pay the price with suffering, disgrace or humiliation. Throughout the world women folk are being suppressed and oppressed. Even in 21st century women are considered as burden and are married off in early ages in countries like India, Bangladesh, Pakistan, etc. Women and oppression have become synonyms to each other. Even in the most powerful countries of

the World women face assaults in offices, public places, home and they are not considered as par to their male counterparts.

The age of Rigveda gave women a very good position that included education and late marriage. They can move freely in all social gatherings and had an important say in the society. Then the age of Brahmanas and Upanishads brought a gradual change in the position of the women section that stopped moving out in public and the age of marriage for girls decreased. Education also curbed and it became restricted only to home education for girls. The age of Sutras, Epics and Early Smritis deteriorated women's position totally. Child marriage and Sati came into being. And the age of Later Smritis, Digest Writers brought an end to any

status occupied by women who altogether brought down to the status of women among the untouchable section of the Hindu society. After Independence of India there was no position left for women. However, the framers of the Constitution are aware of the unequal treatment meted out to the fairer sex; as such they have incorporated several general and specific provisions for the upliftment and empowerment of women. At the same time, the Indian Parliament has passed several Acts to empower the fairer sex.

Background of the study:

Guwahati being the commercial and educational hub of North East India, many people from other matrilineal states of north-east migrate to this city. Few examples of the challenges on women:

Phase	Types of violence
Pre birth	Sex selective abortion, effects of battering during pregnancy on birth out comes.
Infancy	Female infanticide, physical, sexual and psychological abuse.
Girlhood	Child marriage, female genital mutilation, physical, sexual and psychological abuse, incest, child prostitution and pornography.
Adolescence and adulthood	Dating and courtship violence, acid throwing, date rape, economically coerced sex, incest, sexual abuse in the workplace, rape, sexual harassment, forced prostitution, pornography, trafficking in women, marital rape, dowry abuse and murders, forced pregnancy .
Elderly	Forced suicide or homicide of widows for economic reasons, sexual, physical and psychological abuse.

Being born as woman I feel proud and blessed in the country like India where the number of Goddesses is greater than that of Gods. Guwahati, which is also known as city of temples where the mother Goddess Kamakhya is honoured, prayed by the disciples visiting from the very far places also celebrating menstruation course of goddess every monsoon as Ambubachi Mela in such a way that it seems the region might have the respect for the fairer sex. But statistical reports show it otherwise. State of Assam has reported the highest rate of crime at 89.5% during the year 2012 as compare to 41.7 crime rate at the national level. Guwahati has also recorded increasing rate of crime against women in the past decade rising sharply from 2008 onwards,

Purpose of the study: We all know women constitute half of the world population and probably the better half as she has the greatest power of procreation along with nurturing, tolerance and super sensitivity. It is for humanity to take advantage of these strengths of women for its betterment as a whole. It is believed and probably rightly so, that a woman is her own biggest enemy because she fails to realize her inner strengths and weaknesses when her super sensitivity overpowers her.

for better prospects of job and education. The north-eastern matrilineal society is considered to be more 'liberal' and 'progressive' as women have fewer restrictions on the way they should dress, eat and drink etc. When women from these regions come to patriarchal origin like Guwahati or any other place where male hegemony is mostly a pattern, I have observed that they face violence like eve teasing, molestation, abuse, etc.

Statement of the problem:

Here in this work I have briefly tried to project out different forms of violence imparted on women at present times. Women from their pre natal period till their old age suffer various forms of violence.

We find that a woman may live without a choice regardless of whether she is a girl, a young lady or a mature woman. A young girl is always under the command and choice of her father. A married woman is under the control of her husband. A widow is under the choice of her male children. A widow may never remarry after the death of her husband but rather she must neglect all that she likes in terms of food, clothes, and makeup until she dies. A woman may not possess anything, as whatever she may gain or acquire shall go straight and immediately to the ownership of her husband. The low value that society places on women and girls means they are less likely than men to receive timely medical treatment or adequate nutrition. Unequal access to food, heavy work demands and special nutritional needs such as for iron, make women and girls more vulnerable to illness, particularly anaemia, malnourished. Women in this country are mostly unaware of their rights because of illiteracy, ignorance, patriarchal system and the oppressive tradition.

A small percentage of women representing women worldwide Marilyn Monroe, Margret Thatcher, Elizabeth Taylor, Sunita William are some of them but still it's not enough. Every year women day is celebrated with fanfare but round the year cases of women suffering and crimes against women

registered. Molestation and eve teasing are considered as something for which the victims are responsible. T.V ads and media represent women as nothing more than just a fancy item. Women issues are gaining momentum but that not all. Women have to believe that they have the power to rule over the World. It is they who gave birth to a life, the power which pertain only to women and unlike to radical feminist considering it as oppression, rather a divine power bestowed on the women. The oppression doesn't end here it moves to the level that a dark skin toned girl or women consider doubly oppressed even if she is not because the media world portray the fair girl gets an NRI guy or win a singing contest and became the next sensational superstar. Or the overweight doesn't find a match unless she joined a weight loss training centre. Am I still in a society where women are judged by their appearance and clothing and not solely as individuals? When shall I be living in a society where women will be consider as par men and will not be judged by appearance and where a women's sexuality or body will be respected and not considered as an object of sex and would be respected as a mother as a wife as a daughter as a sister as a friend as a beloved 365 days and not just mere a day as International women day? Hope a day comes when women feel safe and respected in the world where she is not judged by others and where a girl feel safe not only in the home but in the streets as well where her thoughts are well accepted, her freedom is not guarded.

A girl child is not consider as a burden and save girl child is not required at all where even in a slightest thought a women or girl doesn't regret off born as a female but feel privileged and honoured. The world is a place where she (women) can stretch her wings and fly high. The quotes of Marilyn Monroe fits ill out here "I'm very definitely a woman and I enjoy it. I don't mind living in a man's world as long as I can be a woman in it".

Movements, seminars, talks, articles on newspapers, journals, magazines- Does it have changed structurally the male hegemony?

These can work as pressure groups only to give an inspiration but cannot bring a complete change in the system of women domination.

Objective: The objective of my paper is to motivate at least a section of people to give respect to democracy and dignity to women. Women are not sex objects as they are portrayed in the media but individuals who have likes, dislikes, choices in life.

I would like to say that girls wear western outfit not to motivate any male person to cause any form of violence. If I compare the fact that when a girl wears short dress, a boy gets tempted but when any male wears shorts a girl never wants to rape him.

Does it mean men are mentally and psychologically the weaker section?

It is said that night time is obviously dangerous for any female to go outside. Why so? Who causes the harm? It is the men. So won't it be logical and justified if men are kept back at home at the late hours of the day so that it be safe for women?

Methodology: Reetu Sharma in an article in ONE INDIA News Channel told that if we go by figures, then as far as crime against Women is concerned soon Delhi will be replaced by Assam. India's capital has always been infamous registering high number of cases of crime against women but the latest facts and figures have shifted the spotlight on Assam.

The methodology used here is both qualitative as well as quantitative. And the data collected is based on secondary.

I have done few case studies in Assam, Guwahati. I have collected records from the local police stations, HRLN (Human Rights Law Network) and Women's Rights Cell as well as content analysis.

Case 1: Molestation case

G S road molestation case which grabbed national media attention happened on the busy Guwahati-Shillong road in the heart of Guwahati on July 9th 2012, where a girl was chased, beaten, molested and traumatised by a group of 20 odd men in full public view with television news channels recording the brutal act on camera. The prime accused of this sensational case was Amarjyoti Kalita, a govt. employee, who ran outstation after the incident of crime and the camera man who recorded this shameful event to increase the channels TRP, forgetting that, all media person are guided by ethical principles of journalism. Police could catch the prime accused after a couple of days and the case is pending before the court of law.

Case 3: Sexual Assault by Superintendent

In Dibrugarh Town of Assam, two officials named Rubul Borgohain 40, Superintendent and Gitanjali Konwar Dutta 30, Mother of an orphanage named SMILE CHILDREN HOME were arrested on December 7, 2015. Altogether 25 minor girls were living in the orphanage out of which 21 girls were medically found to be raped and some were on pills. The police even found inappropriate recordings of these minor girls saved in his laptop when it was seized. A case is registered against them under Section 6/17 of the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act of 2013.

I had conducted an interview viewing the different perspective or pre conceived notion that men has built up for women. I had asked few similar questions to men and women from different sections of the society. The questions I asked to college boy, flight stewards, and bus conductors.

The questions are as follows:

What are your views on the dress of a girl?

Does wearing western outfit motivate guys or acts as an invitation for rape or any form of molestation?

Did you ever tease or join with those who indulge in eve teasing?

Common signature word?

What is your view on makeup?

To these questions, the general reply was:

College boys- I like it when girls wear as shorts and western outfit. However it depends on her physique also.

Girls wear western outfits just to show boys. Although it is not an invitation for getting molested but one has more chances of inviting dangers by any revealing dress.

I just enquired "Revealing Dress". What it meant? The reply was those dresses which show legs. Boys feel legs of girls to be a symbol of sex and not merely as a physical part of the body.

Eve teasing has become like a youth culture and tradition going on and passing from generations. I think girls like it and so they dress up like that to can draw attention.

Common signature words use are "MAAL", "SEXY", "ITEM", "MAJONI", and others in dialogues.

Make up should be modest but if they go out in a party with us they should be stylish.

Female Flight stewards- I like our uniform because it makes us look smart and beautiful.

Wearing shorts make others look at us in a very odd way. But I don't care since if I started caring this, I won't be able to go for jobs.

Eve teasing takes place when I travel in public vehicles. But now I have our private bus of the institute.

I have to do make up as a part of our duty. And also love doing it.

Bus conductor- It is their (females) wish whatever they wear. But I like watching if girls have a good physique.

Yes those wearing short dresses must be taught lessons since we do not live in a foreign country.

I do eve teasing because I like it. It is a kind of time pass for a fraction of time. I even like it when the girl scolds us back. I feel success at teasing her. And its fun.

Make up has got nothing to do with us. Its funny when I see girls wearing lot of lipstick and showing off.

These are the views given out by different sections of people.

It is pathetic to know that although women may be victims of any general crimes such as murder, robbery cheating etc, only crimes which are directed specifically against women are characterised as "Crimes against women". But now

various new legislations have been brought and amendments have been made which fall under:

The crimes under the Indian Penal Code (IPC) and SLL

1. Rape (Sec. 376 IPC)
2. Kidnapping & abduction for specified purposes (Sec. 363 - 373 IPC)
3. Homicide for dowry, dowry deaths or their attempts (Sec. 302/304-B IPC)
4. Torture - both mental and physical (Sec. 498-A IPC)
5. Assault on women with intent to outrage her modesty (Sec. 354 IPC)
6. Insult to the modesty of women (Sec. 509 IPC)
7. Importation of girl from foreign country (upto 21 years of age) (Sec. 366-B IPC)

Data analysis: A total of 3,37,922 incidents of crime against women (both under IPC and SLL) are reported in the country during the year 2014 as compared to 3,09,546 in 2013 and 442,700 in the year 2012 recording an increase of 9.2% during the year 2014.

The rate of crime committed against women in India was 56.3% in 2014 as compared to 52.2% in 2013.

Delhi UT reported the highest crime rate at 169.1 during the year 2014 as compared to the national average rate of 56.3 followed by Assam being the second highest state in crime against women which is 123.4.

Assam has reported the highest rate of crime against women at 89.5 during the year 2013 as compared to 41.7 crime rate at the national level.

Study on a few kinds of violence against women are: RAPE- The environment in police stations is hardly women friendly. A total of 36,735 cases were registered in India in 2014. Madhya Pradesh has reported highest number of rape cases (5017) in the country as in 2014. There were 33,764 victims of rape in the country during the year 2013. This includes incest rape cases also. In Assam altogether 1716 cases were registered in 2012 and 1960 cases in 2013.

DOWRY- In 1961, the Government of India passed the Dowry Prohibition Act, making the dowry demands in wedding arrangement illegal. It has increased by 4.6% during the year 2014 over the previous year in India. 2,469 cases alone is found in Uttar Pradesh followed by 1,373 cases in Bihar in 2014.

Under SLL, cases registered have decreased by 6.2% in 2014 as compared to the previous year. However the highest crime rate under this act was reported from Jharkhand as of 9.6 as compared to 1.7 at the National level.

Immoral Trafficking - This Act was passed in the year 1956. But these have not decreased and are

found in forms of forced prostitution, domestic work or child labour. The highest incidences of 471 cases of such are reported Tamil Nadu followed by Karnataka 388 cases in the year 2014. Daman and Diu UT has reported the highest crime rate of 7.8 as compared to the National average of 0.3 in 2014.

Female Infanticide and sex selective abortion- India is highly masculine sex ratio, the chief reason being that many women die before reaching adulthood. Also get rid of unwanted female children before birth. This procedure of foeticide and infanticide is still prevalent in many parts of the country.

Witch hunting- Many ethnic communities in Assam practice witch hunting. The cruelty and barbarism associated with witch hunts forces one to look more critically at such non-empirical ethno-scientific practices which are granted sanction as customs. In the process of 'integration' and 'assimilation' with institutionalized religions, many ethnic communities have a deep-seated fear and suspicion of woman. 'Traditional' patriarchal prejudices which exist in spite of the matrilineal systems in some societies combine with an internalized sense of male authority to produce dangerous concoction against women. Patriarchal religious values, indigenous and acquired, strengthen the image of women as jealous, vindictive, secretive and more inclined towards witchcraft. In nearly all witch hunting cases reported in Assam's media, single women or old couples with land are at a bigger risk of being labelled witches. People carry out witch hunts not merely for the greed of land but also because of jealousy and lust. Tradition becomes a shield and justification for violence against women. A section of the community is convinced that witch hunting is justified. Another section uses this for its own benefits, sometimes as a revenge tool when women turn down sexual favours.

Domestic Violence- According to a study conducted by WHO, domestic violence in India comprises 36.9% physical abuse and 35.5% psychological abuse while in Kerala the corresponding rates are 62.3% and 61.6%. According to studies by National Crime Record Bureau, a total of 426 cases were reported in the year 2014. In Kerala, 140 cases followed by Bihar 112 cases were reported in 2014. While Andhra reported higher number of physical abuse cases, Karnataka was evenly placed in cases of economic and physical abuse. Among the criminal cases registered with the state women's commission over the last three years, the highest number of cases is of Domestic violence.

Child marriage- Not even a single case has been registered against child marriage in Assam since last three years. But it is very much common among the tea tribes and Muslims of Char area. The social outlook of the Assamese society and the poor

economic condition of parents, mostly among the tea tribes and Muslims living in the sand bars of the Brahmaputra, are the main factors behind child marriages in the state. Assam Mahila Samata Society informed that they have been able to stop as many as 300 such acts of marriage in the state in the last few years.

Conclusion: As I conclude the paper, I would like to put up certain minute points which have failed to come to notice but are not less important.

"Violence against women is a manifestation of historically unequal power relations between men and women, which have led to domination over and discrimination against women by men and the prevention of the full advancement of women..." The United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women, General Assembly Resolution, December 1993.

I have seen that TV Shows like Savdhan India, Crime Patrol, Gumrah, F.I.R etc mostly shows the kind of women violence going around in the country but are these shows really helping in tackling crime? These shows help us to let know what kind of crime women face but when parents go through it they restrict their girl child to move out of home for security reasons which stands as a barrier in the path of women.

After the sensational case of molestation in GS road in Guwahati, girls are suggested to carry chilly powder, knife, safety pin, spray etc to protect herself. But the question arises, why only women are suggested protective measures for her security? Why males are not made guilty of their deed?? Its high time now to let learn the male population to actually behave around women otherwise the crime is likely to continue as it is aggravating.

I also would like to mention that the public toilets that are made in the roads are generally for men. Do they actually need it? It is the women who need public toilets in highways or in cities but then it is neglected for which women has to suffer from different kinds of illness.

A woman in India is considered to be a perfect marriage material when she can do all kinds of household works and wear a Sari, has long hair and is shy. The qualification degrees do not count in her being any good to the family. Men wear trousers and put a belt on top of that but who needs so much security of a trousers and belt? It is the women who need more security in this patriarchal society. With no hard feelings against Saree, I want to say that it makes a woman weaker since the whole dress lies upon a mere knot of the skirt worn inside the saree. Its just a one fold knot risk. And above that the portrayal of a good woman having long hair, with a handbag and high heels restrict

her movements totally. It prevents a woman from making a fast movement.

It would altogether take another 100 years to bring a total change in the society and give women the status she deserves.

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