

Crime Against Women

Crime against women has been on increase. It has existed in the past in almost all countries, regions, cultures and communities. The crime has much to do with the existing low status of women prevalent in our society. The violence is at various levels. It is at physical, mental, emotional, domestic and public. They are the most oppressed, subjugated section of society. Though various measures at education, economic independence have been taken but they are far from improving their status which directly or indirectly help at increasing crime against women.

If we look back historically, the status of women during Veda period was good. They were equal to men and had high esteem in society. But subsequently their position in society deteriorated. They began to be treated like animals, often beaten by husbands. Women were deprived from getting education. Their activities were limited to household chores and help in reproduction. A girl child born was considered to be curse in society. Husband was their *Parmeswar*. They had no independent existence. Their existence lay in association with men as wife, sister or mother. She was thought to be a burden as dowry was to be given. Dowry system is still rampant in our society. Widows were looked down upon. System of sati was prevalent which even snatched the right to live. They had to die with their husbands on the funeral pyre.

The range of crime against women is very wide including rape, wife beating, bride burning, child marriages, prostitution, sexual harassment, etc. Nowadays the girl child is killed even before the birth. This has become easy due to improvements in science and technology, e.g., amniocentesis, i.e., sex determination tests. The discrimination towards development of girl child is the greatest crime against women. They are deprived of basic educational opportunities essential for development of child. Neglect of proper nutritious food to them is quite evident. Even pregnant women do not get balanced diet which has vital effect on off springs which lead to rise in infant mortality rates.

The causes for increasing crime against women can be attributed to low status of women in our society. The attitudes towards women have not changed much. They are treated as burden and hence denied education. As per the 1991 Census, the literacy rate of women is 39% as against 63% of men. The situation is alarming among the lower castes women on literacy front. It is much lower than even 39% in some states. The sex ratio has declined from 933 in 1981 to 929 in 1991, i.e., the number of girl child born has declined which is a sad state of affairs. The women are considered as commodities. They are treated as

properties. They are taken for granted. The efforts have been made to make the women dependent. They are still not economically independent which has made the conditions worse for them.

Women are considered as weaker sex. That is why all sorts of violence are perpetrated on them. They become the easiest target and victim during conflicting situations between two groups or communities. They are unable to resist against the injustices due to weaker positions. It becomes their habit to suffer silently in homes and outside. Rape or sexual harassment takes the form of teaching a lesson to hostile groups. During communal riots or caste riots, women become the first and easiest targets. Sometimes teasing or harassing of women becomes the instigating point for two hostile groups to fight leading to violence.

Our society has become violent today. On slightest pretext violence takes place. This is due to increasing lawlessness and normlessness in our society. Our value system has gone under acute perversions. Here, again women are the worst sufferers. For increasing violence men are to be blamed. They have become corrupt. People want to become rich employing any means. Women are denied share in property. They cannot own property. On slightest resistance they are beaten badly. Property again plays greater role in dowry. Grooms expect much from brides in the form of dowry. If they do not bring adequate dowry, they are ill-treated by the family members, especially mother-in-law. The situation becomes pathetic when women do not help the other women in improving each other's condition. Instead they are treated badly. With the spreading educational consciousness among women, some advancement can be seen on their educational achievement and economic independence. Women are able to compete with men in every profession. But this has added some problems to the working women. They are expected to do the household chores once they return from office. Tension and ego clashes are frequently evident which is not healthy for man-woman relationship.

Attitude has to change drastically against women in order to ensure that no violence against them takes place. They have to be treated with equality and respect. The laws have to be implemented effectively and stringent action should be taken for violators or perpetrators of violence against women. Education of women is the foremost priority of today's parents. By educating women we help families and not only women. Two pronged strategy can be adopted. First, men have to change their attitudes so that women have enough space to develop themselves. Secondly, women themselves have to unite and spread consciousness which will help in real social development. Then only we will be in a position to eradicate the social ills prevalent in our society. We should provide

conditions to make them `better half' which can help effectively to solve the problem of violence against women.