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## DIMENSIONS OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN PERSPECTIVE OF INDIA

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Violence against women is perhaps the most shameful humanrights violation, and it is perhaps the most pervasive. It knows noboundaries of geography, culture or wealth. As long as it continueswe cannot claim to be making real progress towards equality,development and peace.

Kofi Annan, Former Un Secretary-General

**Abstract:**Women in India born into Social, Cultural and Orthodox system which is deeply rooted inequityand discrimination. Women receive an unfair share of attention, love, affection, opportunities and equality in the society. They are often not safe in the society and even in their families. Violence against women is not restricted to a particular region or country and culture. The violence against women is deeply persisted in the gender discrimination society and phallogocentric society. Women are suffered by the violence both inside and outside of their home. They are worst sufferers in the global context. The violence is societal mindset about women which has not changed either in the house or out of the house. It is discouraging to see women who praised as goddesses in the epic are really ill treated in the country. The male dominant tendency has always confine women and their issues in their private and personal domain. She faces the violence right from birth to tomb. Sometimes violence diminishes women's ability to become a part of the public life. Women are subjected to violence in the hands of men. The violence against women in India is totally gender-biased. The fundamental reason of violence is the unequal power relations between men and women. Itleads the gender discrimination. This gender discrimination is clearly defined by the Scottish government against the violence:

We define violence against women as actions which harm or cause suffering or dignity to women and children, where those carrying out the actions are mainly men and where women and children are predominantly the victims. The different forms of violence against women-including emotional, psychological, sexual and physical abuse, coercion and constraints-are interlinked. They have their roots in gender inequality and are therefore understood as gender-biased violence.(June 2009)

Today Violence Against Women (VAW) is recognized as a burning issue at national and international level. Most of the violence is meted on girls and women irrespective of age either by their husbands, fathers or other male relatives. The alarming fact about violence women and girls has been treated as a "private" affair and leads to the serious gap in the society. This paper is an attempt to address the various issues of violence against women in India. This paper has short sighted the definitions, various dimensions of violence, causes of violence, consequences of violence, prevention, the law and conclusion.

**Key Words:** dimensions, violence, gender-bias, discrimination, diminishes, fundamental

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**Introduction:** Developing a holistic and multidisciplinary approach to the challenging task of promoting families, communities and states that are free of violence against women is necessary and achievable.

Beijing Platform for Action, article 119

Violence Against Women (VAW) is present in every region, culture, class, ethnicity and age.VAW is a violation against women's human rights. This violation is often take place within the home and more over women bear it silently. There are limitations of the violence at global. The European Union defines violence against women is:

Any act of gender based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life. (Web)

Across the globe, either rich or poor countries, VAW is a common-women a being beaten, trafficking, rape and kill-in the patriarchal world. Men are treated as demigod in the male dominated patriarchal society. Women are treated as inferior to men, men are victorious and women are losers.Even though women constituted an

important part of the society for themselves. They are treated as half-of-the sky, but due to their inferior physical and psychological strength they are easily subdued. The phallogocentric society has given an opportunity to - the feminine section - compromise by participating in a "patriarchal bargain" to protect themselves and their off springs in means of marriage and other bondage – sister, mother, daughter, wife and son on. In the act, *The Taming of the Shrew*, Shakespeare's Kate, articulate her patriarchal inferiority as a wife:

Thy husband is thy lord, thy life, the keeper,  
Thy head, thy sovereign; one that cares for thee  
And for thy maintenance; commits his body  
To painful labour both by sea and land  
To watch the night in storm, the day in cold  
Whilst thou liest warm at home, secure and safe.  
(Shakespeare 109)

Violence diminishes women's and girl's ability to gain an education, earn a living and participate in public life, live a life of free of fear, health and productivity. The male dominated society has given the subordinate and secondary status to women in the phallogocentric world.

The different kinds of definitions are expressed on violence against women. Various organizations, societies, reports and sociologists opined on violence against women. Such as:

1. United Nation resolution designated "25 November as International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women."
2. World Health Organization defines ground breaking report on VAW in the World Report on Violence and Health "the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, mal development or deprivation." (Krug et al 5)
3. United Nations defines VAW in the special report, 1995 on violence: physical, sexual and psychological violence occurring in the family, including battering, sexual abuse of female children in the household, dowry related violence, marital rape, female genital mutilation and other traditional practices harmful to women, non spousal violence and violence related to exploitation, physical sexual and psychological violence occurring within the general community, including rape, sexual abuse harassment and intimidation at work, in educational institutions and elsewhere, trafficking in women and forced prostitution, physical, sexual and psychological violence perpetrated or condoned by the state wherever it occurs.

**Dimensions Of Violence:** Women share care and support to families even though the society shows a fundamental social

bias, discrimination and inequality. Women have been confined to the level of an animal. Women are treated as a machine of reproduction and caring for the young. She is destined only to dedicate her sexuality for satisfying man and so she is not encouraged to appease her bodily appetites. She is only a toy in the hands of man. She is restricted to the four wall of the house. The violent behavior against women is interlinked with the development and propagation of culture and social factors. The patriarchal society teaches men to take up stereotyped gender roles and women to take up submission, dependence and respect of authority. This sense of psychological weakness led her to exploit at every stage of life. VAW has seen as a natural expression of male dominance. The male dominance has suffered by women in silence. This violence has an extremely wide range of variables in the society. It includes:

- Physical, sexual and psychological violence occurring in the family, within the general community or in the institutions, which include-domestic abuse, rape, incest and child sexual abuse.
- Sexual harassment and intimidation at work and in the public sphere-commercial sexual exploitation including prostitution, pornography and trafficking.
- Dowry related violence
- Female genital mutilation

- Forced and child marriages
- Honor crimes
- Commercial sexual exploitation-pornography, prostitution, stripping, lap dancing, pole dancing and table dancing
- Emotional violence
- Psychological violence
- Sexual and physical abuse, coercion and constraints
- Violations of women's human rights-trafficking in women and girls, rape, wife abuse, sexual abuse of children and *Sati*
- Violence related to exploitation
- Forced pregnancy, abortion and forced sterilization
- Violence by intimate partner
- Female infanticide, prenatal sex selection, miscarriage, pre-term labor and low birth weight
- Honor killing-women are murdered in the name of family honor and *Sati*

VAW can be categorized into different stages which is visible throughout the life. Such as:

- Prenatal-pre-birth elimination of females and physical battery during pregnancy
- Infancy-female infanticide and different access to care, nutrition, healthcare and education
- Childhood-child marriage, child sexual abuse, child prostitution
- Adolescence-molestation, eve teasing, rape, incest, sexual harassment in the work place, forced prostitution, trafficking, violence associated with pre-marital pregnancy, abortion, kidnapping and abduction
- Youth and adulthood-domestic violence, marital rape, dowry related abuse and murder, coerced pregnancy, homicide, sexual harassment in the work place, molestation, sexual abuse, rape desertion
- Old age-abuse of the elderly, abuse of widows, threat of sexual violence, lack of access to care, nutrition and medical facilities.

**Causes Of Violence:** One cannot find a single cause to account for VAW. There are many complexes, social and cultural factors directed to women with unequal power relations between men and women. The cultural, economic, legal and political factors cause to continue the VAW for a long time. Such as:

- Cultural-gender specific socialization, cultural definitions of appropriate sex roles, expectation of roles within relationships, belief in the inherent superiority of male, values that give men proprietary rights over women and girls, notion of the family as the private sphere and under male control. Customs of marriage, acceptability of violence as a means to resolve conflict.
- Economic-Women's economic dependence on men, limited access to cash and credit, discriminatory laws regarding inheritance, property rights, use of communal lands, and maintenance after divorce or widowhood, limited access to employment in formal and informal sectors, limited access to education and training for women.

- Legal-Lesser legal status of women either by written law and/or by practice, laws regarding divorce, child custody, maintenance and inheritance, legal definitions of rape and domestic abuse, low levels of legal literacy among women, insensitive treatment of women and girls by police and judiciary.
- Political-Under representation of women in power, politics, the media and in the legal and medical professions, domestic violence not taken seriously, notions of family being private and beyond control of the state, risk of challenge to status quo/religious laws, limited organization of women as a political force, limited participation of women in organized system.
- Male dominated society.
- Lack of awareness of laws.
- Laxity in implementation of the existing acts.
- Bureaucracy and fear.

**Consequences Of Vaw** are the obsolete denial fundamental rights to women and girls. The VAW impacts severe mental health and fatal consequences. Battered women experiences, stress-related illness-post-traumatic stress syndrome, panic attacks, depression, sleeping and eating disturbances, elevated blood pressure, alcoholism, drug abuse and low self-esteem and so. Children face “excessive health and behavior problems, weight, eating and sleep” (Jaffe 39). Sexual assaults and rape may lead to unwanted pregnancies, abortions other dangerous and “high risk of contracting sexually transmitted diseases and HIV/AIDS” (Heise 46). The violence erodes and hampers the good governance and the development of the human society. The VAW outcome the *physical health* consequences-internal and external organs injury, unwanted pregnancy, gynecological problems, STD’s including AIDS/HIV, miscarriage, pelvic inflammatory disease, chronic pelvic pain, headaches, permanent disabilities, asthma, irritable bowel syndrome, self-injurious behaviors, and the *mental health* outcomes are: depression, fear, anxiety, low self-esteem, sexual dysfunction, eating problems, obsessive compulsive disorder and post traumatic stress disorder and the *fatal outcomes* are: suicide, homicide, maternal mortality and HIV/AIDS.

**Recommendation to Prevent the VAW:** It is being recognized that VAW is a serious concern. Both state and non-state initiated against the violence innovative and effectively. Efforts are made culturally to provide high quality services committed. Alternate forums were established to resolve the cases of VAW at grass root levels with collective efforts in some parts of the country as a pilot project. Such as: *NariAdalt, MahialPanch, Sahara Singh, MahialSaamakhya, Shalishi, ShramjibeeMahialSamity, Prajwala, Nirman, Sarthak, Dilaasa, Vimochana* are run for women-centered which is completely based on the principles of democracy, transparency and community involvement. It is the need of hour to end or prevent the VAW. It requires the strategic coordination among the private and public sectors of society at community and national levels. In

due course of time, various recommendations have been made by women’s organizations, policy matters, national and international bodies. Some recommendations are mentioned below by Amnesty International Report for change and action. They are:

- Make the reduction of VAW/G an integral part of all development initiatives.
- Capacity building and extensive training to service providers and law enforcement officials to handle cases of VAW.
- Increase budgetary allocations for support services to victims of violence such as women-friendly short stay homes, counseling centers and shelters.
- Strengthen policies and programs aimed at improving women’s economic status.
- Ensure male involvement and devise programs for abusers.
- Accept VAW as a grave and life threatening offence and display “Zero” tolerance towards any form of VAW and girls.

The young girls and women are at higher risk of gender-based violence at “increased risk of death from maltreatment” as per the WHO report of 2006. A transformative agenda should engage at all levels of the socio-political system to prevent the VAW and girls. Governments, International Organizations, funders and research institutions began the prevention of VAW and girls. Some of the elements from different sources are:

- The state has primary responsibility for preventing VAW and girls.
- Action should be informed by evidence and work to build it.
- Identity and address the causes.
- Evaluate progress and build knowledge.
- Holistic, multi-sector and sustained strategies are necessary to achieve results.
- Use a variety of coordinated interventions and strategies.
- Direct participation and individual skills-building.
- Community strengthening and mobilization.
- Social marketing and communications.
- Development, implementation and monitoring should be based on human rights principles and norms.
- Empower women and girls.
- Ensure non-discrimination and equality of outcomes.
- Strengthen systems of accountability.
- Align with International Human rights standards.

**Prevention And Laws:** VAW can be prevented by the strict implementation of criminal acts and relevant laws such as:

- Section 498A of the IPC.
- Nirbhay Act
- Section 304B IPC, 1962.
- The Dowry Prohibition Act, 1984 and 1986.
- Section 174 of the Criminal Procedure Code.
- Sections 113 and 133B of Indian Evidence Act.

There are some other major inter government organizations and international and regional NGO’s

who work on various issues related to VAW and girls. According to UNICEF (22-25) the contacts are:

- United Nations Divisions for Advancement of Women.
- United Nations Children's Fund.
- United Nations Development Program.
- United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.
- United Nations development Fund for Women.
- United Nations Population Fund.
- Pan American Health Organization.
- World Health Organization.
- Inter-American Development Bank.
- Centre for Health and Gender Equity.
- CHANGE: Non-Consensual sex in marriage program.
- Woman in Law and Development in Africa.
- International Women's Rights Action Watch Asia Pacific.
- Latin American and Caribbean Women's Network against Domestic and Sexual Violence.
- Isis-Women's International Cross Culture Exchange.
- The protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act 2005, in this few important sections of Act are mentioned from 5 chapters and 37 sections, such as: sections 2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10,11,12,13,14,15,16,17 and 19 helps victims to secure an alternate accommodation on to provide support to women from facing violence against men.

The voluntary organizations and electronic media are also working in India apart from international organizations to support the women and girls who are the victimizers of the male dominated patriarchal society in India. The details of the organizations are:

- *Abhay Ashram* provides a home for destitute and battered women. The Ashram tries to prevalent-selling of women and prostitution. It provides employment, training, placement, counseling and legal advice to women. It is located at 4<sup>th</sup> Cross Wilson Garden, Bangalore, 560027, India.
- *Central Social Welfare Board India* focuses on domestic violence and situated at B-12, Tara Crescent, Qutab Institutional Area, New Delhi.
- *Forum Against Oppression of Women* campaigns against dowry, wife beating and sexual harassment and located at 29 Bhatia Bhawan, Babrekarmarg, Gokhle Road (North) Dadar, Mumbai.
- *Men Against violence and Abuse* acts to prevent violence against women and girls through media and the arts. The organization is located 12-A Parishram Building, Bhandar Line, Lady Jeshadji Road, Mahim Mumbai.
- *Recovering and Healing from Incestiis* a Delhi resource centre works for adult women research, counseling, credit, education, reproductive rights and Aids works from New Delhi.
- *Asmita Resource Centre for Women* provides legal aid for women in distress by providing credit, savings and awareness from East Maredpalli, Secunderabad.
- *Adithi, MahilaSamuch. Maitree, Vimochana, Swayam*

*and Nirbhya Act 2013* help the victims of domestic violence, conducts various programs. The Women's Wall, StreeUtsav, Angala, Streelekha, social upliftment and more. It advocates against dowry deaths, infanticide, domestic violence and educational discriminations.

The electronic media also plays pivotal role to control VAW/G which is prevalent in the phallogocentric society. In this, internet contributes innumerable resources for the victims. A mere click is enough to get the information and justice. The list of websites which are related to VAW and girls are:

- [www.jhuccp.org](http://www.jhuccp.org)
- [www.asksa.com](http://www.asksa.com)
- [www.hrw.org](http://www.hrw.org)
- [www.asiatica.org](http://www.asiatica.org)
- [www.womenasia.com](http://www.womenasia.com)
- [www.unicef.org](http://www.unicef.org)
- [www.unifem.org.in](http://www.unifem.org.in)
- [www.unfpa.org](http://www.unfpa.org)
- [www.un.org/womenwatch](http://www.un.org/womenwatch)
- [www.genderhealth.org](http://www.genderhealth.org)
- [www.sigi.org](http://www.sigi.org)
- [www.who.ch/frh-whd.com](http://www.who.ch/frh-whd.com)
- [www.ilo.org](http://www.ilo.org)
- [www.indiafemalefoeticide.org](http://www.indiafemalefoeticide.org),
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- [www.umn.edu/humanrts/instree/auoe.htm](http://www.umn.edu/humanrts/instree/auoe.htm)
- [www.womensnet.org.za](http://www.womensnet.org.za)
- [www.hrweb.org](http://www.hrweb.org)
- [www.law-lib.utoronto.ca/diana](http://www.law-lib.utoronto.ca/diana)
- [www.whrnet.org](http://www.whrnet.org)
- [www.un.org/womenwatch.org](http://www.un.org/womenwatch.org)
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**Conclusion:** It is utmost necessary to break the silence VAW/G and emphasize to change the traditional mind set of the male dominant society. To overcome the challenges, parliamentary committees should carry out their work effectively and hold meetings, seminars and debates on the topics at community and government levels. It helps to spread the awareness on VAW/G in the community. It should be ensure that, women and as well as men were involve in all the activities as it is vital for men to be represented in communities on gender equality. Without the participation of men, the votes taken by the committee have limited credibility. In all the activities and programs participants were advised to resolve the challenges in the best way so that women were ensure to elect to play key government positions. A charter on VAW/G could also be drawn up and signed globally. Building safe public spaces and work environments for women is the foremost priority by the government. We must inculcate the words *Together we Must* in the working places to prevent the violence. The single strategy cannot be effectively implemented isolate; the collective efforts by government and NGO's should asses and scale the implementations of programs

effectively. The VAW/G should not be remaining in the shadows due to cultural taboos.

Read the full Scottish Government definition in 'Safer Lives: Changes Lives a shared approach to tackling

violence against women in Scotland.' This frame work published in June 2009 aims to provide a shared understanding and approach to guide the work of all partners to tackle violence against women in Scotland.

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