

## Domestic Violence: A Content - Analysis Based Study of Atrocities Against Women in Jharkhand

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**KEY WORDS** Domestic violence; atrocities; Prabhat Khabar; dowry demands.

**ABSTRACT** The present paper has tried to examine the atrocities against women, termed as domestic violence in the newly constituted state of Jharkhand. It is based on the content-analysis of a Hindi daily newspaper, most widely circulated in the state. The analysis has revealed the frequency of murder and suicide, torture and physical assault, rape and sexual harassment and their mode of operation. It has also analysed the causes of women atrocities. The dowry demand has emerged as the most important cause of domestic violence.

### INTRODUCTION

Domestic violence refers to the violence involving the unjust exercise of force to dominate, abuse, or coerce another using physical aggression, sexual assault (Hampton et al., 1993) in the privacy of home where there exists marital or intimate co-habiting relationship. The word violence is used because this is not a question of minor arguments or disputes but rather, intentional, hostile and aggressive physical or psychological acts, such as assault, sexual harassment, beating, rape, mutilation and murder etc.

Domestic violence has been accepted as the biggest threat to women in a report of the Journal of the American Medical Association (1992), which stalks women throughout their lives - from cradle to grave (Human Development Report, 1995). Feld and Straws (1989) reported that more than 50 percent of American Medical Association estimated that each year almost 4 million women are victims of severe assaults by their boy friends and husbands and that about one in four women is likely to be abused by a partner during her life time (Glazer, 1993). Alarmingly, there is almost universal agreement that domestic violence escalates in frequency and intensity over time (Dobash and Dobash, 1984; Gelles, 1974). Women who have experienced domestic violence come from all

walks of life. Social class, family income, level of education, occupation and ethnic or racial background make no difference.

In Canada a 1987 study showed that 62 % of the women murdered in that year were killed by an inmate male partner. In 1992 it was reported that women in the United States are more likely to be assaulted, injured, raped or murdered by a current or former male partner than by all other types of attacks combined. According to a world bank Study, *Violence against women: the Hidden health Burden*, national surveys suggest that upto one-third of women in Norway, the U.S., Canada, New Zealand, Barbados and the Netherlands are sexually abused during childhood. A review of rape studies suggest in 1993 that between 14 to 20 percent of women will be victims of rape during their life times. According to Human Rights Watch an estimated 20,000 to 30,000 Burmese girls and women work in brothels of Thailand while soan 20,000 to 50,000 Nepalese girls work in Indian Brothels. Due to increasing demands of younger prostitutes by customers the age level of recruits has declined from 14-16 years in 1980's to 10-14 in 1994 (Nelson, 1996)

Reports of domestic violence and atrocities on female sex are no less in Indian sub-continent. Abortions of female foetuses after amniocentesis tests in Bombay and other cities, infanticides of females in the villages of Tamilnadu and Andhra Pradesh, cases of juvenile sexual harassment in big cities including Delhi - the capital of India, group rapes and high increase in 'dowry-death' (dowry-burnings) are different forms of violence. Incest, an appropriate sexual behavior among family or surrogate family members (West, 1987) is also increasing in India (Kapur, 1993). Uberoi (1994) observes family—"a site of violence and exploitation of men over women". Researchers have accepted that faulty socialization of children

in families and societies lead to domestic violence (Bhave, 1988; Desai, 1990a; Dube, 1988; Leacock, 1986).

The increasing frequency of domestic violence creates the necessity of studies through various agencies and thorough investigation of the underlying causes and searching of the preventive and curative measures so as to decrease the graph of violence in India.

*Purpose of the Study:* The research aims at gathering information of (i) frequency of domestic violence, (ii) its different forms and (iii) causes in Jharkhand, a newly constituted state in previous South Bihar. These information will be sought from the analysis of one of the daily Hindi papers widely circulated in this region.

### METHODOLOGY

*Tools:* The Research proposes to use content-analysis as a tool for the collection of data. The publications of news concerning atrocities against women in "PRABHAT KHABAR" a daily Hindi Newspaper published simultaneously from Ranchi, Jamshedpur and Dhanbad. Ranchi being the headquarter. The paper is widely and largely circulated in Jharkhand (South Bihar). Its circulation also covers the other areas of Bihar. It is one of the oldest Newspapers published from Ranchi, the capital of the new state.

*Sample:* The present study is based on the analyses of the news concerning the domestic violence published in the *Prabhat Khabar*, a daily Hindi paper of Ranchi between 1<sup>st</sup> August 1999 to 31<sup>st</sup> January 2000.

*Data Collection:* The news concerning the atrocities against women and published during the period mentioned earlier in the *Prabhat Khabar* were analysed and retained.

### ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

The purpose of the present study is to collect the frequency of and causes of different forms of atrocities against women. An analysis of the concerned news published in the above referred paper during 01.08.1999 to 31.01.2000 (both the days inclusive) has been made. The frequencies and forms of different domestic violence along with their modes of commitment have been presented in the table 1.

**Table 1: Frequency of domestic violence against women during six months in Jharkhand (previously south Bihar) (Forms and modes of violence)**

S. No.	Nature of violence	Frequency	Mode of violence
1.	Torture/ Assault and harassment	21	Kicking, beating, abusing, pouring hot tea, making nude publicly, electric shock, slapping forced to drink urine etc.
2.	Murder	21	Burning after pouring Kerosene oil, choking off the throat, throwing into well, cutting by sharp weapons etc.
3.	Suicide	9	Drowning into well, burning, eating poison, jumping from high places etc.
4.	Rape/Sexual harassment	12	Sexual assault by others (such as friends, friends of relative & intimates) and relatives (uncle, brother, cousin etc.)
Total		63	

*Source:* The Prabhat Khabar, Hindi Daily, Ranchi 01.08.1999 to 31.01.2000

The table 1 reveals several aspect of domestic violence. As many as sixty three cases of domestic violence against women have been gathered from the newspaper publications. It may be noted here that only such cases are published in the papers where the victims dare to lodge an FIR to the nearest Police Station. Normally it is believed that female victims, on several reasons, try to bear the trouble and not to disclose it for the sake of their prestige. Only such cases are registered with the Police Stations where the victim is compelled to do it. Hundreds of minor and major physical, psychological and emotional abuses/harassments are unreported and the victims have to bear them.

#### Murder and Suicide

Among 63 domestic violence of different forms in 50% of the violence the victims (female) have lost their lives, either murdered or forced to commit suicide. It is an alarming signal which shows the inhuman faces of human beings. A number of cases of murder and suicide remain hidden in the interior villages. In a small state like Jharkhand such number of domestic violence

leading to the death is an eye-opener.

As far as the mode of murder is concerned 35% women were choked, 27% burnt after pouring kerosene oil on them and remaining murders by using knife and sharp weapons for stabbing or cutting the body parts etc. In two cases the victims were thrown into a well and in a single reported case she was hanged to death by her in-laws. Choking is the most popular means of murdering in homes. In committing suicide the preferential mode is taking of poison (33%) and self-burning. About 22% women jumped into the well and took their lives. In a peculiar case a lady threw her 3 year old son from the roof of 5-storey building first and then she jumped herself and both died.

An analysis of the causes of murder and suicide reveals that dowry demands by the in-laws caused 62% of murders. The very significant aspect of dowry demand is that there are persons irrespective of the religion, caste, education, income and residence who have demand. The study reveals that an IAS officer in a city as well as a poor farmer in a village, both put the demands before in-laws, except with a difference, that the former demands a Maruti or a flat and the latter asks for a cow or a bicycle. Family tension seems to be another cause of murder. Regular hot exchanges between wife, husband and in-laws cause family tension. Most of the girls commit suicide when they feel that their parents can't fulfill the demands of their in-laws and they have to face tortures in life. In some of the cases the cause of suicide is unknown. In a single case a lady along with her three children took poison as she had no means of livelihood and was leading a pity life with hungry children.

### Torture and Harassment

Most of the cases of torture and harassment remain unreported. Only those cases come into focus where an FIR is lodged or decision is taken by local Panchayat or any association. Even the cases of murder and suicide have the previous history of torture and harassment. Of total cases of domestic violence, 33% are of torture and harassment in Jharkhand during six months. Different forms of torture and harassment constitute slapping, beating, kicking off from the house and abusing them. In a case the in-law used electric shock and in a revengeful act a

lady was completely undressed and brought to the streets before the public. Two humiliating inhuman behaviour have also been reported where a lady was forced by her husband to pull a bullock-cart keeping the puller on her neck as the oxes do and in other incidence a lady was beaten and compelled to drink solution of human excreta.

Dowry demands have been the most important cause of torture and harassment for women. Next important cause of such acts has been imbalanced temperament of in-laws. Revenge, sometimes is taken through torture.

### Rape and Sexual Harassment

The Cases of rape and sexual harassment are often kept hidden mainly due to the involved prestige of women. The guardians of the females try to keep it secret as possible as they can. Child-girls and major girls, both are sexually harassed by relatives, friends of relatives and others. Sometimes this is taken as a revenge and in most of the cases it is a deviant behaviour.

The frequency, modes and causes presented earlier in Jharkhand within six months are alarming, Sociological factors such as religion, caste, education, income and residence do not have significant role.

A table prepared from the reports on the incidences of female atrocities in Bihar during 1995-1999 supports the analysis discussed above.

The table 2 clearly depicts the atrocities against women in Bihar. The figure is in increasing rate. The frequencies of rapes and dowry deaths are very disturbing, Jharkhand is a small part of Bihar and Table "1" is a part of Table "2" depicting the figure in Jharkhand.

In a study (*Prabhat Khabar*, 09.09.1999) by a senior professor of NIMHANS, Bangalore it was revealed that 83% of the girls interviewed had the experiences of being teased, both

**Table 2: Incidences of female atrocities in Bihar (1995-1999)**

S. No.	Year	Rapes	Eve-teasing	Harassment	Dowry death
1.	1995	1034	159	274	*****
2.	1996	1209	161	***	*****
3.	1997	1318	188	***	*****
4.	1998	1305	181	***	531
5.	1999	1139	427	927	350

Source: Prabhat Khabar: 01.01.2000

physically and sexually, about 13% of which had it at below 10 years of age. Girls who had the painful experiences of such teasing had developed ill feelings to males. Most of them, without naming any one disclosed that they were teased by their relatives, neighbours and friends and they were afraid of their relatives.

### MAIN CONCLUSIONS

The following conclusions are drawn from the analysis presented above :

1. The frequency of different forms of domestic violence is increasing in Jharkhand as in other parts of the country.
2. The rate of murders/suicide is higher than any other forms of violence.
3. The dowry demands are becoming the root cause of domestic violence
4. There is a need of thorough investigations by social scientists.

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