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Violence Against Women

Few topics today consume the attention of researchers in social sciences, governments, planning groups, social workers and reformers as the problems of women do. Approaches to the study of women's problems range from the study of gerontology to psychiatry and criminology. But one important problem relating to women which has been greatly ignored and shunned is the problem of violence against women.

Women's Harassment

The problem of violence against women is not new. Women in the Indian society have been victims of humiliation, torture and exploitation for as long as we have written records of social organisation and family life. Today, women are being gradually recognised as important, powerful and meaningful contributors to the life of men; but till a few decades back, their condition was pitiable. Ideologies, institutional practices and the existing norms in society have contributed much to their harassment. Some of these behavioural practices thrive even today. In spite of the legislative measures adopted in favour of the women in our society after Independence, the spread of education and women's gradual economic independence, countless women still continue to be victims of violence. They are beaten, kidnapped, raped, burnt and murdered. Who are the women who are victimised? Who are their victimisers or the perpetrators of violence? Where do the seeds of violence against women lie? Some scholars who

have studied some of these aspects in western society have used the 'personality' approach and the 'situational' approach to explain this problem. But both types of approaches have, however been criticised on varied counts.

Nature, Extent and Characteristics of Violence Against Women

Violence against women may be categorised as:

- (i) Criminal violence—rape, abduction, murder...
- (ii) Domestic violence—dowry-deaths, wife battering, sexual abuse, maltreatment of widows and/or elderly women...
- (iii) Social violence—forcing the wife/daughter-in-law to go for female foeticide, eve-teasing, refusing to give a share to women in property, forcing a young widow to commit *sati*, harassing the daughter-in-law to bring more dowry...

The analysis here is focussed on the first two types of violence using the data from my own empirical study on "Crimes Against Women" conducted in 1982-84 in Rajasthan (Ahuja, 1987). The cases of criminal violence against women can be obtained from the records compiled by the Ministry of Home Affairs, the Police Research Bureau, and the National Institute of Social Defence. But we know that all cases are not reported and recorded for various reasons. The cases of domestic violence like wife-battering and forced incest with the women of the household are never reported at all. But by referring to the compiled cases, we get some ideas of the nature and extent of violence against women. We analyse the extent and characteristics of six individual cases below.

Rape

Though the problem of rape is considered serious in all countries, in India it is statistically not as serious as it is in the western society. For example, in the United States, the annual rate of rape offences is about 26, in Canada it is about eight and in the U.K. it is about 5.5 per one lakh of population. In comparison, the rate in India is 0.5 per one lakh population. Taking into account the number of rape cases in our country in between 1983 and 1988, it may be said that there are three rapes in every four hours or there are 7,500 cases in one year (*Crime in India*, 1988: 12-13).

Age-wise, the percentage of victims of rape is highest in the age-group of 16 to 30 years (64.1%) while victims below 10 years account

for about 2.6%, victims between 10 and 16 years account for about 20.5%, and victims above 30 years account for about 12.8% (*Crimes in India*, 1988: 178-79). It is not only the poor girls who become rape victims but even the employees belonging to the middle class are sexually humiliated by their employers. Women inmates in jails are raped by the superintendents, women crime suspects by police officers, women patients by hospital personnel, maid-servants by their masters, and women daily wage earners by contractors and middle-men. Even deaf and dumb, lunatic and blind, and women beggars are not spared. Women who come from the lower-middle class and who are the main bread earners of their families bear sexual abuse silently and without protest. The victims face social stigma and disgrace and suffer serious guilt-pangs and personality disorders if they register protest.

My empirical study of 42 rape victims revealed the following important characteristics in the crimes committed against women: (1) rape does not always occur between total strangers; in about half of the cases the rape victim is known to her assailant; (2) nine out of every 10 rapes are situational, (3) about three-fifth rapes (58.0%) are single rapes (involving only one offender), one-fifth (21.0%) are pair rapes (that is women raped by two men), and one-fifth (21.0%) are group rapes; (4) nine out of every 10 rapes do not involve physical violence or brutality, that is, in a large number of cases, only temptation and/or verbal coercion are used to subdue the victim; (5) little less than three-fourth rapes (70.0%) occur in the victims or victimizers' homes and about one-fourth (25.0%) in non-residential buildings; and (6) the age-group of 15-20 years has the highest rate among victims while the offenders are mostly in the age group of 23-30. Youth is, thus, the main consideration in selecting victims.

Abduction and Kidnapping

Kidnapping is taking away or enticing of a *minor* (female of less than 18 years and a male of less than 16 years of age) without the consent of the lawful guardian. Abduction is forcibly, fraudulently or deceitfully taking away of a woman with an intent of seducing her to illicit sex or compelling her to marry a person against her will. In kidnapping, the victim's consent is immaterial but in abduction, the victim's voluntary consent condones the crime.

Taking an average of six years (1983 to 1988), it could be said that in our country, about 42 girls/women are kidnapped/abducted in a day or about 15,000 women are abducted in a year. The volume of

abduction in India is 2.0 per one lakh population (*Crime in India* : 1988, 13). Of the total victims abducted/kidnapped every year, 86.5% are females and 13.5% are males. Further, of the total persons arrested for kidnapping/abduction every year (21,000), 96.0% are males and 4.0% are females; 54.8% are between 18 and 30 years of age, 35.3% between 30 and 50 years, 4.5% below 18 years, and 5.4% above 50 years (*Crime in India*, 1988: 112-113).

The important characteristics of kidnapping/abduction as revealed by my study of 41 cases are: (1) unmarried girls are more likely to be victims of abduction than married women, (2) abductors and victims are acquainted with each other in a large number of cases; (3) the initial contact between the abductor and his victim frequently occurs in their own homes or neighbourhoods than in public places; (4) most often, only one person is involved in abduction. As such, a threat on the part of the offender and resistance on the part of the victim is not very common in abduction, (5) the two most important motives of abduction are sex and marriage. Abduction with an economic motive constitutes hardly one-tenth of the total abduction; (6) sexual assaults go with abduction in more than 80.0% of the cases; and (7) the absence of parental control and disaffectionate relations in the family are crucial factors in contacts between the abductor and the victim and girl's (victim's) running away from the home with some acquainted person (labelled later as abductor under pressure).

Murder

Homicide is mainly a masculine crime. Though the All-India figures pertaining to murders and their victims on the basis of sex are not available, it is well known that number of female victims of homicides in comparison to male victims is low. Whereas in the United States, female victims constitute between 20% and 25% of the total victims of homicides (about 25,000 to 30,000 every year), in India of about 27,000 murders committed every year, women constitute about 10% to 15% of the total victims. Of the total persons arrested every year for committing murders (67,500), 96.7% are males and 3.3% are females (*Crime in India*, 1988: 112-13).

The important characteristics of murderers (of females) and their victims as found in my empirical study of 33 murder cases are: (1) in a large majority of cases (94.0%), murderers and their victims are members of the same family; (2) in about four-fifth cases (80.0%) murderers belong to the young age group of 25-40 years; (3) about half

of the victims are women with long-standing relationships (more than five years) with the male murderer. The mean period spent by the victims with their husbands/in-laws was found to be 7.5 years; (4) about half of the murdered women have children. The mean number of children (of victims) in the empirical study was 3.2 and mean age of the child was 14.8 years; (5) murderers mostly belong to low-status occupation and low-income groups; (6) two-third murders (66.0%) are unplanned and committed in the heat of passion or in a state of high emotionalism; (7) four-fifth murders (80.0%) are committed without any body's help. Accomplice in planned murders are also usually family members; and (8) petty domestic quarrels, illicit relations, and women's chronic illness are the main motivations in women's murder.

Dowry Deaths

Though the Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961 has banned the practice of dowry but in reality all that the law does is to recognise that the problem exists. It is virtually unheard of for a husband or his family to be sued for insisting on taking a dowry. If anything, the demands for dowry have escalated over the years along with dowry deaths. As a modest estimate, the figure of deaths in India that occur due to non-payment or partial payment of dowry could be placed around 4,000 for one year. Most dowry-deaths occur in the privacy of the husband's house and with the collusion of the family members. Courts, therefore, admit their inability to convict any one for lack of proof. Sometimes, the police are so callous in conducting investigations that even the courts question the efficiency and integrity of the police authorities.

The important characteristics of dowry deaths as identified by my empirical study are: (1) middle-class women suffer a higher rate of victimization than lower-class or upper-class women; (2) about 70.0% victims belong to 21-24 years age group, that is, they are mature not only physically but socially and emotionally also; (3) the problem is more an upper-caste phenomenon than a lower-caste problem; (4) before an actual murder, several forms of harassment/humiliation are used against the young brides which show the chaotic pattern of social behaviour of the members of the victim's family; (5) the most important sociological factor in the causation of dowry death is the offender's environmental stress or social tensions caused by factors endogenous and exogenous to his family, and the important psychological factor is the killer's authoritarian personality, dominant nature, and his personality maladjustment; (6) no correlation exists

between the level of education of the girl and her murder committed for dowry; and (7) the composition of a family plays a crucial role in bride-burning cases.

Wife Battering

Violence towards women in the context of marriage becomes more significant when a husband who is supposed to love and protect his wife beats her. For a woman, being battered by a man whom she trusted most becomes a shattering experience. The violence can range from slaps and kicks to broken bones, torture, and attempted murder and even murder itself. Sometimes, the violence may be related to drunkenness but not always. In the Indian culture, we rarely hear of a wife reporting a case of battering to the police. She suffers humiliation in silence and takes it as her destiny. Even if she wants to revolt, she cannot do it because of the fear that her own parents would refuse to keep her in their house permanently after the marriage.

The important characteristics of wife battering pointed out by my empirical study of 60 self-identified cases are: (1) wives under 25 years of age have higher victimization rates; (2) wives younger to their husbands by more than five years run a greater risk of being battered by their husbands; (3) low-income women are more victimized, though family income is more difficult to associate with victimization, (4) family size and family composition have little correlation with wife-beating; (5) assaults by husbands generally do not involve severe injury; (6) the important causes of wife battering are sexual maladjustment, emotional disturbances, husband's inflated ego or inferiority complex, husband's alcoholism, jealousy, and wife's passive timidity; (7) exposure to violence of the assaulter in his childhood is an important factor in wife battering; (8) though illiterate wives are more vulnerable to husband's beating than the educated wives, there is no significant relationship between beating and the educational level of the victims; and (9) though wives with alcoholic husbands have higher rates of victimization, it has been observed that most of the husbands beat their wives not in a state of drunkenness but while they are sober.

Violence Against Widows

All widows do not face similar problems. A widow may be one who has no issue and who has been widowed one or two years of her marriage; or she may be one who becomes a widow after a period of 5

to 10 years and has one or two small children to support, or she may be one who is above 50 years of age. Though all these three categories of widows have to face the problems of social, economic and emotional adjustment, the first and the third category of widows have no liabilities while the second category of widows has to perform the role of a father for her children. The first two categories of widows have also to face the problem of biological adjustment. These two types are not as welcome in their husband's family as the third type. In fact, while the family members try to get rid of the first two categories of widows, the third category of widow becomes a key person in the son's family as she is made responsible for caring for her son's children and cooking food in the absence of her working daughter-in-law. The self-image and the self-esteem of the three categories of widows also vary. A widow's economic dependence is a severe threat to her self-esteem and her sense of identity. The low status accorded to them by their in-laws and others in the family roles lowers their self-esteem. The stigma of widowhood itself negatively affects a woman and she falls in her own esteem.

If we take all types of widows together, we could say that violence against widows includes physical battering, emotional neglect/torture, verbal abuse, sexual abuse, deprivation of legitimate share in property, and abuse of their children. The important characteristics of violence against widows are: (1) young widows are more humiliated, harassed, exploited or victimised than the middle-aged widows; (2) ordinarily, widows know little about their husband's business, accounts, certificates, insurance policies, and bonds, and become easy victims of fraudulent schemes fostered by unscrupulous members of their family (of procreation) who try to acquire their inherited property or life-insurance benefits; (3) perpetrators of violence are mostly the members of the husband's family; (4) of the three most important motives of victimization—power, property and sex—property is a crucial factor in victimization in middle-class widows, sex in the lower class widows, and power in both the middle class and the lower-class widows; (5) though the authoritarian personality of the mother-in-law and the maladjustment of siblings-in-law are important etiological factors in the widow's victimization, the most important factor is widow's passive timidity; and (6) age, education, and class appear to be significantly correlated to the exploitation of the widows but family composition and family size have little correlation with it.

Victims of Violence

If we take all the cases of violence against women together, we find that the victims of violence are generally those:

- who feel helpless, depressed, have a poor self-image and suffer from self-devaluation, or those who are 'emotionally consumed' by the perpetrators of violence, or who suffer from 'altruistic powerlessness';
- who live in stressful family situations, or who live in families which, in sociological terms cannot be called 'normal' families, that is, families which are structurally complete (both parents being alive and living together), economically secure (satisfying basic and subsidiary needs of members, functionally adequate (have rare quarrels) and morally conformative;
- who lack social maturity or social inter-personal skills because of which they face behavioural problems;
- whose husbands/in-laws have pathological personalities; and
- whose husbands are frequent alcohol users.

Perpetrators of Violence

Seven types of victimizers of women may be identified. They are those:

- who have depressions, inferiority complex and low self-esteem;
- who have personality disorders and are psychopaths;
- who lack resources, skills, and talents and have sociopathic personality;
- who have possessive, suspicious and dominant natures;
- who faces stressful situations in family life;
- who were victims of violence in childhood; and
- who are frequent users of alcohol.

Types of Violence

If we were to develop a typology of violence against women, we may give six types of violence :

- violence which is money-oriented;
- violence which seeks power over the weak;
- violence which aims at pleasure-seeking;
- violence which is the result of the perpetrator's pathology;
- violence which is the result of stressful family situations; and
- violence which is victim-precipitated.

Motivations in Violence

Violence against women may be explained on the basis of three factors: (i) situations which bring about violent behaviour, (ii) characteristics of victims, and (iii) characteristics of victimizers. Four causes may be identified in violence against women: (a) victim's provocation, (b) intoxication, (c) hostility towards women, and (d) situational urge.

The Victim's Provocation

Sometimes the victim of violence by her behaviour, which is often unconscious, creates the situation of her own victimization. The victim either generates or triggers off the violent behaviour of the offender. Her actions transform him into an assaulter/aggressor making him direct his criminal intentions against her. In my own survey of rape, wife-battering, abduction, ill treatment of widows, and murders, the focuss was on victims, yet some offenders/assaultors/aggressors were also interviewed. Surprisingly, only a few seemed to suffer from any feelings of shame or anxiety. A large number did not suffer from any emotional turmoil or from what psychologists call the problem of 'troubled masculinity'. The assaultors in wife battering cases instead accused their wives of back-biting, talking to person(s) they disliked, ill-treating their sisters or parents or brothers, neglecting their home, talking rudely to relatives, having illicit relations with some person, refusing to obey their in-laws, irritating them with their quarrelsome or nagging nature, or interfering too much in their affairs. Similarly, in criminal assault (rape) cases, there were assaultors who described the behaviour of the victim as a direct invitation to sexual relations or a sign that she would be available if he persisted. It is significant to determine whether the victim actually intended to invite such behaviour or not or whether it was merely the victimizer's own interpretation/perception that led him to exploit her. This may be called an 'act of omission' (failing to react strongly) on the part of the victim, if not an 'act of commission'.

Thus, the 'passive' victim contributes to the commission of violent act to the same extent as the 'active' victim. In murder cases too, we came across a few cases where, according to the assaultors, the homicide situation started when in arguments and altercations, the victims precipitated such circumstances which motivated them to attack them. In abduction cases too, some abductors pointed out that their 'victims' had willingly agreed to run away with them and marry but,

when they were arrested on the complaint of parents, the 'victim' had accused them of abduction on being coerced by their parents. On an average, 39.0% cases were found *willing abductions*, 24.0% were *forced abductions*, 17.0% *accessory abductions* (in which victims neither gave their consent of going with the 'accused person' nor opposed it but succumbed to the relationship of 'power' of the accused over her), and 20.0% were *stress abductions* (in which the victim initially agreed to leave the house willingly but later on repented when the 'offender' raped her or sold her ornaments or left her in the hotel).

This analysis enables us to classify victims as active, passive and accidental. At least two kinds of victims create a situation in which 'offender' becomes the 'victim' of the situation and/or compulsion and behaves with the 'victim' (female) in such a way that he comes to be labelled as the 'assaultor' or 'victimizer'

Intoxication

Some cases of violence occur when the aggressors are intoxicated and in a wildly excited and belligerent state of mind, scarcely understanding the consequences of their actions. For example, in a few cases of rape, the offenders assaulted the victims when they had taken so much alcohol that they were in a state of inebriation and emotional excitement. Their normal restraints had disappeared and their aggressive fantasies were intimately intermingled with sexual lust which then took the shape of irresponsible actions. Alcohol-related sex crimes illustrate a reckless disregard of time, space and circumstances.

A similar relationship between alcoholism and violence was demonstrated in a few cases of wife-battering and murder. While in my own study, I had found that wife-battering was accompanied by the use of alcohol in 31.7% of the cases, (Ahuja, 1987: 130), Hilberman and Munson (1978 : 460-71) had found it in 93.0% of the cases, Wolfgang (1978) in 67.0% cases, and Tinklenberg (1973) in 71.0% cases.

We must admit that when we interrelate violence with alcoholism, we rely only on the reported use of alcohol rather than on the measurements of alcohol levels in the blood. In fact, it is the blood alcohol concentration (BAC) which ought to be the basis of associating battering with the influence of alcohol. A very high BAC reduces the capability of the subject to cause bodily harm to others. However, we assume that the level of BAC must be such that the offender loses control over himself only to the extent that he fails to think of the

consequences of his actions. It is only in this state of mind that he becomes violent.

It is not clear whether alcohol induces violent behaviour directly or whether it acts primarily as a disinhibitor of pre-existing aggressive tendencies. The latter hypothesis is perhaps supported by the notion (Blumer, 1973: 73-87) that some perpetrators of violence drink for courage prior to using violence against persons. But not a single case was reported in my study in which the assaultor became intoxicated for the specific purpose of assaulting his victim. However, we cannot provide any proof that the ingest of alcohol alone elicits violent behaviour. There are many people who take alcohol yet they do not become violent. The use of alcohol in violence against women may, therefore, be accepted as a 'cooperative' factor rather than the 'chief' factor.

Hostility towards Women

Some of the reported cases of violence against women are of a nature that no amount of rationalization could convert the aggressors into doing any thing other than hostile acts of a cruel kind. A few of them had deeply entrenched feelings of hate and hostility for women that their violent act could be said to be primarily directed towards the humiliation of the victim. If the mere situation had been the motivating factor, it is hard to see why a violent act should have been necessary considering the fact that most of the 'offenders' are described as 'normal' persons. Perhaps a desire to gloat over the victim's humiliation was more stronger.

Situational Urge

In this category, those cases may be included where the crime is committed neither because of the victim's behaviour nor because of the offender's psychopathological personality but rather because of the *chance factors which create such situations which lead to violence*. For example, in a wife-battering case, it may be that conflict over money matters or on the ill-treatment of husband's parent(s) may provoke the husband to assault his wife; or in a rape case, a man accidentally meets a female acquaintance from his neighbouring village in a field and begins a conversation, ultimately attempting to have his way with her, or the male employer taking advantage of his young female employee finding her alone in his office/factory in the late hours of the evening, or a

young girl runs away from her father's house and accepts a lift in a truck and the truck-driver takes advantage of the situation and criminally assaults her. In all these cases, the 'offenders' had not planned the violent acts but when they found the situation conducive or provocative, they used violence. Apart from these violent acts, these offenders had not been living a life of deviant behaviour.

Personality Traits

Some identifying traits of the violence-prone personalities are: extremely suspicious, passionate, dominant, irrational, immoral, easily emotionally upset, jealous, possessive and unjust. Traits developed in the early life affect the aggressive behaviour of a person in adulthood. Aggressor's being abused as child, and/or his exposure to violence during childhood, therefore, must be examined to delve into his violent behaviour. For example, in the case of some wife-batterers, their childhood, adolescence and early adulthood experiences reveal that they learnt to respond to all emotionally distressing cues with angry and violent behaviour. Unhappy family life amounting to exposure to physical brutality or severe emotional rejection has been found to be the rule in the case of most of the aggressors. Some adult aggressors have faced such situations in their family in their childhood/adolescence where they always found their parents screaming and getting at each other, and their father beating them (children) on the slightest pretext. Often, their fathers would come home drunk and would charge around the house shouting and breaking things. Growing up in a violent home inevitably leads to violent behaviour in individuals, who become aggressive persons in their adult life. Alfaro (1978), Potts, Herzberger and Holland (1979), and Fagon, Stewart and Hansen (1981) have also pointed out a similar correlation in their empirical studies on violent men and their children. Thus, we can say that a good number of aggressors are victims of child abuse and familial violence, and exposure to violence as a child strongly influences the probability of one being generally violent as an adult.

Theoretical Explanation of Violent Behaviour

We have already presented a theoretical explanation of deviant/violent behaviour in one of the earlier chapters (Chapter 8 on "Child Abuse") by examining the different schools of thought as well by expounding our own conceptual framework. The theoretical propositions on

violence typically encountered, whether violence is a normal response of provocation, or whether it involves the acting out of some psychopathology, or whether it acts as an instrument to obtaining some end or reward, or whether it is a response consistent with norms supporting its use, are explained. Our own conceptual framework is based on a holistic approach and is presented as the 'Social Bond Theory' which explains violent behaviour to a large extent.

The psychiatric or psychopathological school focuses on the aggressor's personality characteristics as the chief determinant of criminal violent behaviour. The socio-psychological school assumes that criminal violence can best be understood by analysing the external environmental factors that exercise an impact on the individual aggressor. This model also examines the types of everyday interactions (say, stressful situations or family interactional patterns...) which are precursors to violence. Theories such as the Frustration-Aggression Theory, the Perversion Theory, the Self Attitude Theory, and the Mowse Attribution Theory also fall within the purview of socio-psychological level of analysis. The sociological school provides a macro level analysis of criminal violence. Besides these, the Theory of Sub-culture of Violence, the Learning Theory, the Anomie Theory and the Resource Theory also fall under the socio-cultural analysis.

For developing a new theoretical approach in my empirical study on violence (crimes) against women, I had two alternatives before me: either to take 'inter-family violence' and 'violence exogeneous to family' separately or combine all types of violence together and develop one theory on 'violence against women'. I used the last approach borrowing certain concepts from sociologists and criminologists like Hirschi, Schultz etc.

Violence against a person is necessarily 'violence by somebody' and 'violence against somebody'. As such, violence against women has to be understood as 'violence by an individual against an individual' in contrast to 'violence by a group against an individual' or 'violence by a group against a group'. In violence by the individual, its origin or form must be determined in the individual himself and the situation around him. In this approach, not only individual's innate behaviour but also his acquired behaviour has to be taken into account. Our 'Social Bond Approach' takes into consideration both types of behaviour as well as the social structural conditions. This has been discussed in the earlier chapter. It explains the kind and patterns of violence against women in terms of variations among individuals (offenders) in their social

adjustments, frustrations and relative deprivations, their social structural conditions, and the 'resistance potential' of the victims.

The Depersonalisation Trauma and Humanisitic Approach

What measures should we adopt to prevent women's abuse and to reduce violence against women in our society ? The suggestion that improving the general status of women through education, effective legislative measures, providing training and employment opportunities will reduce violence against women may be valid and logical but is too broad a suggestion. Similarly, it is suggested that too much prominence should not be given to cases of violence against women in the mass media. Although, there are ethical and humanitarian reasons for censoring violence against women in the mass media, we have no evidence that such a move will necessarily lead to reduction in violence. The same is true of providing deterrent punishment to perpetrators and social ostracisation by one's kin, neighbours and friends. These measures may be desirable for their social effects but we cannot be certain that they will lessen the exploitation of women to any extent. While there is lack of evidence to identify which general policies deserve priority, there are nevertheless a number of measures which could be adopted to contain women's harassment.

First, we take up the issue that is already receiving attention from many women's organisations as well as government and private/public institutions. This is to meet the needs of *protection, support and advice* of the victims. What some, if not all, women need most is the shelter. Women living with authoritarian in-laws and alcoholic husbands would leave their homes, temporarily or permanently, if some shelter is available to them. Voluntary organisations providing such accommodation to women have to publicize their schemes. It has to be borne in mind that even the existing Homes for Women—single and/or married—are not able to meet the required demands. They are often over-crowded, lack financial support and fail to meet safety regulations. Providing short-term accommodation to women, particularly married women who are in distress, or victims of violence like rape, abduction, attempt to murder, and ultimately helping them find a permanent house by the women's organisations will contribute to the alleviation of the distress suffered by many women. There is an urgent need to evaluate and compare the different types of short-term accommodation that could be provided to the victimized women, including widows.

Second, assistance in finding employment and child-care facilities and temporary financial support is also the need of the suffering women. Advisory centres for this purpose could be located centrally but away from the Women Homes so that they can be well advertised without affecting the safety of the residents in the Homes.

Third, establishment of cheaper and less formal courts could also be a measure to help women who are victims of exploitation. It is not being suggested that these courts will handle only the female cases. Their scope has to be wider. We have at present the system of Family Courts in some states in our country. But these courts are mainly concerned with preventing the break-up of the marriages. The scope of these courts could be extended to deal with all types of domestic and non-domestic problems of women. The establishment of courts with judges, magistrates and lawyers chosen for their knowledge and interest in female matters would be an improvement and it will increase the number of women entering the legal profession. To many women, the courts and the laws would seem less frightening and more approachable, if they are less dominated by men. Female judges and lawyers may not differ significantly from their male counterparts in their attitudes and beliefs and in their interpretation of laws, but female victims might be happier to appear before other females in the expectation that they would be more understanding about the problems faced by women.

Fourth, strengthening and increasing voluntary organisations which could take up individual women's problems with their in-laws or the police or the courts or the concerned individuals is equally necessary. This is because the voice of an individual woman carries no weight. In fact, she is accused of being outspoken if she demands her rights or holds radical views or expresses her views and releases her frustrations. But if a group of women join together and raise their voice against woman's suffering, they can assert their views and make an impact.

Fifth, publicity has to be given to those organisations which provide free legal aid to women so that the needy women could approach them and seek their help.

Last, a change in parents' attitudes is also necessary in women's cases. Why do parents force their daughters— married or widowed—who are frequently beaten by their husbands or ill-treated by their in-laws to live in their husbands' house against their own wishes? When parents come to know of their daughter's harassment, why should they not permit their daughters to live with them for a short time till they are

able to fend for themselves ? Why should they remain so concerned about the social stigma and sacrifice their daughters for the sake of their family ?

Why should women submit to oppression ? Why do they not realise that they have the potential to look after themselves and their children ? Why do they not comprehend that their torture creates an emotional trauma for their children also ? Women have to learn to be assertive and accept new roles for themselves. They have to develop an optimistic and hopeful approach to life.

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