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THE ROLE OF WOMEN'S RIGHTS IN COMBATING GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE IN INDIA

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Abstract

Gender-based violence remains a pressing global issue, with profound consequences for individuals and society as a whole. This research paper examines the pivotal role of women's rights in combating gender-based violence in India, a nation marked by its rich cultural diversity and complex social dynamics. Drawing upon an extensive review of literature, empirical data, and case studies, this paper investigates the multifaceted dimensions of gender-based violence and its adverse impact on women's lives. The research paper explores the historical context of women's rights in India, highlighting key milestones and legislative measures aimed at addressing gender-based violence. It delves into the role of women's empowerment, education, and economic independence as critical determinants in reducing vulnerability to violence. Moreover, the paper examines the significance of legal frameworks, support services, and grassroots initiatives in providing protection and assistance to survivors of gender-based violence. The paper concludes by emphasizing the importance of a holistic and intersectional approach to addressing gender-based violence, one that recognizes the interconnectedness of women's rights, social justice, and sustainable development. This research paper contributes to the growing body of knowledge on the pivotal role of women's rights in combating gender-based violence, providing valuable insights for policymakers, activists, scholars, and practitioners committed to fostering gender equality and social justice in India and beyond.

Keywords: Gender Equality, Rights for Women, Indian Judicial Reforms and Violence History.

1. Introduction

Millions of women and girls throughout India are victims of the widespread and deeply ingrained problem of gender-based violence. A startling 30% of Indian women between the ages of 15 and 49 report having been physically abused since they were 15. Gender-based violence takes many forms, such as emotional abuse, sexual harassment, and economic exploitation, of which this horrifying statistic just scratches the surface.¹ These types of abuse not only hurt victims physically and psychologically, but they also make it more difficult for women to live successful, meaningful lives. *Nirbhaya Gang Rape Case (2012)* this brutal gang rape and murder case in Delhi sparked outrage and led to significant legal reforms related to sexual violence against women. It resulted in the Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, 2013, which introduced stricter punishments for sexual offenders.

The problem's scope increases even more when we take into account India's many regional and cultural characteristics. The frequency of gender-based violence is much higher in some areas than it is nationwide, such as the northern states, highlighting the intricate and varied character of this issue. In light of this concerning issue, women's rights advocacy and protection have become essential instruments in the fight against gender-based violence. The term "women's rights" refers to a broad variety of concerns, such as the freedom from discrimination, legal entitlements, and access to healthcare and education. The incidence of gender-based violence is demonstrably declining when women's rights are respected and promoted. Research indicates that women who possess access to education and economic possibilities are more capable of escaping abusive situations and pursuing legal recourse.² *Gulshan Banu v. Union of India (2019)* this case addressed the issue of Triple Talaq (instant divorce) among Muslim women. The Supreme Court upheld the validity of the Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Marriage) Act, 2019, which criminalizes Triple Talaq and provides legal protection to Muslim women against arbitrary divorce.

In the Indian context, this study intends to investigate the complex relationship between women's rights and the prevention of gender-based violence. Investigating the complex interactions of legal frameworks, cultural norms, and socioeconomic factors that either exacerbate or lessen gender-based violence is the aim of this research. Through elucidating

¹ Kumari, S. S., Suman, B. A., Kiranmai, D., & Bhardwaj, A. (2023). DHEERA reaching the young, a novel approach addressing gender-based violence in India. *International Journal of Gynecology & Obstetrics*.

² Chauhan, K. K. Gender-Based Discrimination and Disparities in India.

the importance of women's rights, this research endeavors to enhance comprehension of how women's empowerment and the advancement of their rights might result in a more secure and just society in India. This study acknowledges that there can be variations in the dynamics of gender-based violence and women's rights among other regions and groups in India, but it focuses on that particular setting. The study delves into the ways in which caste, class, religion, and ethnicity intersect with gender-based violence. To give a thorough picture of the problem, the study also takes into account both urban and rural environments.

1.1 Background

India is a country known for its intricate social structure and rich cultural diversity, but it also has shockingly high rates of gender-based violence. This pervasive problem impacts millions of women and girls nationwide and knows no geographic bounds. Deeply ingrained historical, cultural, and socioeconomic elements are the roots of this issue.³ Patriarchy, which has dominated Indian society for many years, is a major factor in the continuation of gender-based violence. Men are frequently in positions of authority and control due to traditional gender norms and power structures, leaving women and girls open to abuse both inside and outside of their households. These conventions are passed down from generation to generation, further entrenching gender hierarchies and making it difficult to escape the cycle of abuse.⁴ *Vishakha v. State of Rajasthan (1997)* this case played a pivotal role in addressing workplace sexual harassment. The Supreme Court of India laid down guidelines, known as the Vishakha Guidelines, to prevent and redress sexual harassment at the workplace, providing a framework for employers to create a safe working environment for women. *Mathura Rape Case (1979)* this case raised questions about custodial rape and consent. It led to discussions on the treatment of rape victims in the legal system and the need for legal reforms to protect the rights of sexual assault survivors.

A major contributing factor to the occurrence of gender-based violence is also cultural norms and attitudes. Women's duties and behaviors are governed by these norms, which frequently confine them to lower positions. The stigmatization of women who defy these expectations might prevent them from reporting crimes and from getting assistance, which promotes a

³ Ganguly, S. (2023). Sexual Gender-Based Violence Policy Implementation in India. *International Journal of Gender Studies*, 8(2), 1-9.

⁴ Mehra, D., Srivastava, S., Chandra, M., Srivastava, N., Laaksonen, M., Saarinen, H. E., & Mehra, S. (2023). Effect of physical mobility, decision making and economic empowerment on gender-based violence among married youth in India-SAWERA project. *BMC public health*, 23(1), 1-14.

culture of silence on the subject. Economic inequalities make the issue worse. In India, women frequently have restricted access to financial freedom, career possibilities, and education. Women who are economically dependent on male family members may become stuck in abusive relationships because they fear losing their money if they leave their abusers. In India, violence against women and girls occurs in a variety of contexts, including the home, the workplace, and public areas. A variety of behaviors, such as physical abuse, emotional manipulation, sexual harassment, and economic exploitation, are examples of this violence. Remarkably, social and legal impediments frequently obstruct victims' attempts to seek justice or support. The importance of women's rights in resolving this widespread issue has come to light more and more in recent years. The term "women's rights" refers to a broad range of legal, social, and economic privileges. The *1992 Ajmer rape case* this case involved the serial gangrape and blackmailing of numerous Hindu school and college-aged girls in Ajmer, Rajasthan. The perpetrators were reportedly a group of young Muslim men, including individuals from the Khadim family responsible for the caretaking of the Ajmer Sharif Dargah. In September 1992, 18 individuals were charged in connection with the case, and the first eight to go to trial were sentenced to life in prison. However, some of them were later acquitted by the Rajasthan High Court in 2001. Subsequently, in 2007, one of the key accused, Farooq Chishti, was convicted, but in 2013, the High Court released him on time served. The case was marked by various challenges, including the fear and pressure faced by victims, their reluctance to testify against influential individuals, and witness hostility during the legal proceedings. The case brought to light the complexities and difficulties associated with addressing sexual violence and securing justice in such cases.

2. The Legal Framework for Women's Rights

The legal framework for women's rights is a crucial component of efforts to promote gender equality and protect the rights of women around the world. This framework encompasses a variety of international agreements, regional treaties, and national laws that collectively address issues such as discrimination, violence, economic empowerment, and political participation affecting women. Numerous international agreements have been instrumental in establishing a legal framework for women's rights. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW, 1979) are two foundational documents. CEDAW, often referred to as the "international bill of rights for women," obliges signatory nations to

take measures to eliminate discrimination against women in all spheres of life. It also includes provisions on issues such as marriage, education, and political participation.

2.1 Evolution of Women's Rights Legislation in India

The laws in India that apply to women's rights have undergone significant revisions during the course of Indian history. These revisions are a reflection of altering social mores and an increased awareness of the necessity to combat gender-based injustice. In the 19th century, when social reformers like Jyotirao Phule and Raja Ram Mohan Roy gained traction, some of the earliest attempts to improve women's legal standing may be traced back to this time period.⁵ By advocating for the education and protection of women's property rights, these legal reform pioneers laid the way for subsequent legislative changes. In the years leading up to independence, historic laws such as the Hindu Succession Act of 1956 were passed with the intention of granting Hindu women the same property rights as males.

These laws were intended to overturn traditional practices that favored male heirs. A further step forward in the post-independence era was the passage, in 1961, of the Dowry Prohibition Act, which made an effort to abolish the harmful practice of dowry. This act was an attempt to outlaw dowry. On the other hand, between the late 20th and early 21st centuries, India saw an increase in the number of laws that were created specifically to address gender-based violence.⁶

2.2 Key Laws and Policies Addressing Gender-Based Violence

The Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act of 2005 is one of the most important laws and regulations that India has passed to combat gender-based violence. This groundbreaking law represented a change from earlier strategies that frequently confined domestic abuse within the home. The Act offers a thorough legal framework to treat emotional, financial, physical, and sexual abuse, among other types of domestic violence. It's significant that it offers protection to women who cohabit.⁷ Apart from the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, other laws that have been enacted in India include the Sexual

⁵ JAWDEKAR, M. M. (2023). Navigating Women-Oriented Legal Frameworks: A Critical Examination Of Laws Addressing Gender-Based Violence And Empowerment. *Journal of Namibian Studies: History Politics Culture*, 34, 1946-1955.

⁶ Raghav, M., & Marwaha, S. S. (2023). Indian Legal Framework on the Right to Privacy in Cyberspace-Issues and Challenges. *Fiat Justisia: Jurnal Ilmu Hukum*, 17(1), 1-16.

⁷ Moin, M. A. M., & Singh, J. (2023). Social Changes as Causes of Legal Changes in India. *Issue 2 Indian JL & Legal Rsch.*, 5, 1.

Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition, and Redressal) Act, 2013, which requires employers to set up procedures for dealing with harassment that occurs in the workplace. A number of new laws and modifications have been proposed to address problems such as female infanticide, acid attacks, and stalking.

2.3 Effectiveness and Implementation of Women's Rights Laws

On paper, India's legal framework for women's rights and the prevention of gender-based violence is extensive; nonetheless, there are still difficulties in effectively implementing this structure. A key obstacle is the underreporting of cases due to cultural stigmatization and the fear of retaliation, both of which are substantial barriers. In spite of the protections in the law, a significant number of women do not know their rights or do not have access to legal counsel. A crucial part of putting these laws into effect is played by the various branches of the judicial and law enforcement systems.⁸ However, because of a backlog of cases and delays in judicial proceedings, survivors are frequently dissuaded from seeking justice. Another area that needs to be improved is the capacity of support networks, which might include things like shelters and counseling services, in order to guarantee that survivors will receive the necessary aid.

3. Women's Rights Advocacy and Organizations

Women's rights advocacy and organizations have played a pivotal role in advancing gender equality, combating discrimination, and promoting the empowerment of women worldwide. These efforts encompass a wide range of activities, from grassroots activism to international advocacy. Historical Roots women's rights advocacy has deep historical roots, dating back to the 19th and early 20th centuries when the first-wave feminist movements emerged in countries like the United States and the United Kingdom. These movements fought for fundamental rights such as women's suffrage and property ownership. Over time, the women's rights agenda expanded to include issues like reproductive rights, workplace equality, and protection against violence. International Platforms the United Nations has played a central role in providing a global platform for women's rights advocacy. The adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948 marked a significant milestone by affirming the principle of gender equality. The subsequent creation of UN Women in 2010 further consolidated efforts to advance women's rights globally.

⁸ Kulshreshtha, N. (2023). The contemporary status of rape shield laws in India. *The International Journal of Evidence & Proof*, 27(1), 3-25.

3.1 The Pioneering Role of Women's Rights Organizations

The fight for gender equality and the elimination of gender-based violence in India has been significantly aided by the work of groups in India that advocate on behalf of women's rights. These groups have a strong history of activity that dates back to the early 20th century, when movements like the All-India Women's Conference (AIWC) were taking place.⁹ AIWC was essential in laying the groundwork for following organizations, which in turn helped to cultivate a culture of women's activism and empowerment in India. Combating gender-based violence has been one of the key priorities of organizations in India that are working to advance the rights of women.¹⁰ *Shayara Bano v. Union of India (2017)* women's rights organizations were actively involved in this case, which challenged the practice of Triple Talaq (instant divorce) among Muslim women. The Supreme Court declared the practice unconstitutional, emphasizing gender justice and the need to protect the rights of Muslim women.

These groups put in countless hours to spread awareness about the problem and offer assistance to those who have survived it. They frequently work along with governmental institutions, legal entities, and grassroots efforts in order to address the myriad of facets that are involved in gender-based violence. In the fight against domestic abuse, for instance, organizations such as "Sakshi" were among the first to make significant headway. Survivors can receive counseling and legal assistance from Sakshi, which is provided through the organization's crisis centers and helplines. In addition to this, they organize awareness campaigns with the goal of challenging societal norms that contribute to the continuation of violence against women.

3.3 Case Studies of Successful Initiatives

A number of organizations in India that advocate for women's rights have successfully implemented activities that have led to a considerable reduction in the incidence of gender-based violence. One example that is particularly remarkable is the "*One Stop Centre*" scheme that is run by the Ministry of Women and Child Development.¹¹ These facilities provide victims of violence with comprehensive assistance, which may take the form of

⁹ Lodhia, S. (2009). All-India Women's Conference.

¹⁰ Dhiman, D. B. (2023). Role of Women Journalists in the Development of India. Available at SSRN 4319132.

¹¹ Scheme, I. C. P. (2009). Ministry of Women and Child Development. *Govt. of India*.

emergency medical care, advocacy, therapy, or even lodging for a brief period of time. Another enterprise that has been met with great success is "Breakthrough," an organization that is well-known for its innovative multimedia advertisements that challenge preconceptions and address issues such as domestic violence and street harassment. For instance, as part of their "Bell Bajao" program, which promoted a community-based approach to abuse prevention, bystanders were encouraged to intervene when they witnessed instances of domestic violence.¹²¹³

In addition, *Sampat Pal Devi's "Gulabi Gang"* garnered international attention for its grass-roots campaign against harassment associated with dowries and domestic abuse. By combining their individual strengths, this group of women who live in remote areas has been able to stand up to abusers and provide support to survivors.¹⁴ The fight to end violence against women has been significantly aided by organizations in India that support women's rights and advocate for their protection. In addition to empowering women, the dedication, advocacy, and successful projects of these women have resulted in increased awareness and have had an effect on changes in legislative policy. These organizations continue to play an essential role in the fight for gender equality in India and the elimination of violence committed against women.¹⁵

4. Challenges and Barriers

4.1 Identifying Challenges and Barriers

In India, there are a myriad of obstacles and problems that must be overcome in order to effectively prevent gender-based violence. These obstacles are profoundly ingrained in the sociocultural fabric of the country, and they represent significant roadblocks on the path to making genuine progress in this area. One of the most significant difficulties is going to be encountered in the area of law enforcement. In spite of the fact that progressive legislation is on the books, the implementation of these laws frequently falls short of expectations. There is a possibility that law enforcement personnel and judicial authorities do not have the level of

¹² Igras, S., Kohli, A., Bukuluki, P., Cislighi, B., Khan, S., & Tier, C. (2021). Bringing ethical thinking to social change initiatives: Why it matters. *Global Public Health*, 16(6), 882-894.

¹³ Palit, M., & Mittal, M. (2021). Intimate partner violence in India. *International Perspectives on Intimate Partner Violence: Challenges and Opportunities*, 41-51.

¹⁴ Richards, M. S. (2016). The Gulabi Gang, violence, and the articulation of counterpublicity. *Communication, Culture & Critique*, 9(4), 558-576.

¹⁵ Miller, K. (2014). *The Gulabi Gang as a Social Movement: An Analysis of Strategic Choice* (Doctoral dissertation).

sensitivity or training required to handle incidents of gender-based violence effectively. When survivors try to seek justice, this might make it difficult for them since it can result in apathy, victim blaming, or bureaucratic roadblocks.¹⁶

There is a huge problem with underreporting of instances since many victims are reluctant to report their experiences to law enforcement out of fear of vengeance or the associated social stigma. This lack of reporting makes it much more difficult to get an accurate picture of the extent to which gender-based violence is prevalent. The continuance of gender-based violence is largely aided by both the cultural norms and societal attitudes that pervade society. It can be difficult to dispute and alter these conventions because of the deeply embedded patriarchal ideals and traditional gender roles in our society, which often serve to maintain unequal power relations. Some examples of cultural norms that contribute to the perpetuation of violence against women include honor-based violence, violence tied to dowries, and practices that encourage the isolation of women.¹⁷ Efforts to combat such practices often run into opposition from communities and families who see them as fundamental components of their cultural identity and are therefore reluctant to give them up.

4.2 Role of Patriarchy and Gender Inequality

In India, patriarchy continues to be a barrier that is prevalent and deeply ingrained in the effort to eradicate gender-based violence. In Indian society, the patriarchal framework maintains the status quo of male domination and female subjugation, therefore contributing to the cycle of gender inequity.¹⁸ This imbalance of power not only contributes to violent behavior but also makes it more difficult to address and prevent it. Economic inequalities, limited access to education, and gender wage discrepancies all contribute to women's vulnerability and dependence on male family members, which in turn makes gender inequality even worse. Gender inequality is further aggravated by economic disparities.¹⁹

In order to combat gender-based violence, it is necessary to tackle the underlying structural inequities that exist in society. In India, effectively combatting gender-based violence

¹⁶ Koneru, K. (2017). Women entrepreneurship in India-problems and prospects. *Available at SSRN 3110340*.

¹⁷ Helpingstine, C. E., Stephens, D. P., Jayakrishna, P., Pramathesh, R., Madhivanan, P., & Ramarao, I. (2022). Anti-human Trafficking Service Professionals in India: Challenges and Barriers to Service Provision. *Journal of Human Trafficking*, 1-16.

¹⁸ Kumar, T. (2021). The culture of patriarchy, gender bias, and class discrimination in Mahesh Dattani's Tara. *Linguistics and Culture Review*, 5(S1), 60-69.

¹⁹ Siddiqi, N. (2021, May). Gender inequality as a social construction in India: A phenomenological enquiry. In *Women's studies international forum* (Vol. 86, p. 102472). Pergamon.

presents a number of complex hurdles and barriers.²⁰ These include problems with law enforcement, deeply ingrained cultural norms, and the ongoing legacy of patriarchy and gender inequity. Each of these factors contributes to the difficulty of the situation. In order to overcome these obstacles, comprehensive strategies are required.²¹

5. Empowerment through Education and Awareness

Empowerment through education and awareness is a transformative process that enables individuals and communities to gain knowledge, develop critical thinking skills, and become informed and active participants in society. This approach encompasses various aspects of personal and collective growth, fostering self-confidence, agency, and the ability to make informed decisions. Access to quality education is often the foundation of empowerment. Access to quality education, regardless of gender, socioeconomic status, or geographic location, is crucial for individuals to acquire the knowledge and skills needed to navigate life effectively. It provides the tools to understand complex issues, critically analyze information, and make informed choices. Promotion of gender equality education is a powerful tool for promoting gender equality. Empowering girls and women through education not only enhances their individual well-being but also contributes to breaking the cycle of gender-based discrimination and inequality. Educated women are more likely to participate in the workforce, engage in decision-making processes, and advocate for their rights.

5.1 The Importance of Education and Awareness

Education and raising awareness are two of the most important factors in the fight against gender-based violence and the advancement of women's rights in India. These aspects are absolutely necessary for transforming cultural perceptions, empowering women, and challenging the norms that are already in place. Many people believe that getting an education is one of the most effective ways to empower women. It provides women with the knowledge and skills necessary to make informed decisions about their life and to claim their rights. This empowers women. Literacy programs, vocational training, and leadership development are just a few of the many facets of education that are being targeted toward

²⁰ Batra, R., & Reio Jr, T. G. (2016). Gender inequality issues in India. *Advances in Developing Human Resources*, 18(1), 88-101.

²¹ Kohli, S. (2017). Gender inequality in India. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science Studies*, 3, 178-185.

women and girls through various programs and initiatives.²²

The "Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao"²³ campaign, which strives to improve the status of females in Indian society by tackling issues such as female foeticide and ensuring access to excellent education, is an example of a successful program. The campaign's name literally translates to "Save the Daughter, Educate the Daughter." In order to challenge the social norms and attitudes that contribute to the continuation of gender-based violence, awareness campaigns and initiatives are of equal importance. These campaigns frequently make use of a variety of media, such as television, radio, and social media, in order to communicate with a large number of people.

For instance, the documentary film "Daughters of Mother India"²⁴ delves into the topic of gender-based violence and has been responsible for igniting significant debates over the rights of women. In a similar vein, social media initiatives such as #MeTooIndia²⁵ have enabled survivors to speak out and share their experiences, thereby drawing attention to the widespread nature of sexual harassment and assault.

6. Case Studies

6.1 Case Study 1: *The Nirbhaya Case*

The Nirbhaya tragedy, which took place in December 2012, is widely regarded as one of the most heinous and terrible instances of gender-based violence to have taken place in India. Jyoti Singh Pandey, a medical student who was 23 years old, was viciously gang-raped and murdered in a bus while it was travelling in the city of Delhi.²⁶ This horrible event triggered substantial reforms in India's strategy to combating gender-based violence and sparked public outcry as a result. The outrage from the public that followed the Nirbhaya case led to an increased awareness about the incidence of such crimes, as well as a desire for harsher regulations and improved enforcement of existing laws. After thereafter, the Criminal Law

²² Kondal, K. (2014). Women empowerment through self help groups in Andhra Pradesh, India. *International Research Journal of Social Sciences*, 3(1), 13-16.

²³ Parmar, M. S., & Sharma, A. (2020). Beti Bachao Beti Padhao Campaign: An Attempt to Social Empowerment. *Journal of critical reviews*, 7, 13.

²⁴ Jain, J. (2006). Daughters of Mother India in Search of a Nation: Women's Narratives about the Nation. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 1654-1660.

²⁵ Dey, A., & Mendes, K. (2022). 'It started with this one post': #MeToo, India and higher education. *Journal of Gender Studies*, 31(2), 204-215.

²⁶ Dey, A., & Orton, B. (2016). Gender and caste intersectionality in India: An analysis of the Nirbhaya case, 16 December 2012. In *Gender and race matter: Global perspectives on being a woman* (Vol. 21, pp. 87-105). Emerald Group Publishing Limited.

(Amendment) Act, 2013, was passed into law. This act brought about substantial revisions, such as increased punishments for sexual offences and the criminalization of stalking as well as acid assaults. The case brought to light not only how urgent it is to combat gender-based violence but also how powerful public mobilization can be in the process of bringing about changes in the judicial system.²⁷

6.2 Case Study 2: *The Impact of Self-Help Groups in Kerala*

The women's self-help group project known as the Kudumbashree Mission has made tremendous progress in the Indian state of Kerala towards its goals of empowering women and decreasing gender-based violence. Micro-businesses and activities rooted in the community are the vehicles through which Kudumbashree helps women gain economic and social independence.²⁸ As a result of this program, women in Kerala have achieved greater economic autonomy and have been given a louder voice in the political and social spheres of their houses and communities. As a consequence of this, studies have demonstrated a decrease in instances of domestic violence in regions that have a significant presence of Kudumbashree organizations. These case studies illustrate the transforming potential of women's collective action and economic empowerment in the fight against gender-based violence.²⁹

6.3 Case Study 3: *The Success of the "100 Safe Cities for Women" Campaign*

The Ministry of Women and Child Development in India has begun a campaign called "100 Safe Cities for Women" with the intention of reducing incidents of gender-based violence and harassment in urban areas.³⁰ The initiative's primary focus is on creating secure urban environments for women. This effort has seen participation from a number of cities all across the world, including Delhi. As a result of this campaign, a number of cities have put into effect a variety of measures, including the enhancement of street lighting, the creation of public places that are welcoming to women, and an increase in the amount of police patrolling in areas with a high incidence of harassment. Positive results have been shown in evaluations, including an increased sense of safety among women in these cities as well as a reduction in the number of recorded occurrences of harassment. These case studies highlight

²⁷ Lapsia, T. P. (2015). Impact of the "Nirbhaya" rape case: Isolated phenomenon or social change?.

²⁸ Minimol, M. C., & Makesh, K. G. (2012). Empowering rural women in Kerala: A study on the role of Self Help Groups (SHGs). *International Journal of Sociology and Anthropology*, 4(9), 270.

²⁹ Mohindra, K. S. (2003). A report on women Self Help Groups (SHGs) in Kerala state, India: a public health perspective. *Université De Montréal. Mar.*

³⁰ <https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/op-ed/the-long-wait-for-safety/article61557981.ece>

the significance of targeted urban interventions in the process of establishing surroundings that are safer for women.

These case studies examine the real-life impact of women's rights activities in India. They demonstrate how legal reforms, self-help groups, and urban safety campaigns have contributed to the reduction of gender-based violence and the promotion of women's rights in a variety of different circumstances. They serve as useful examples of successful techniques that can be developed and scaled up to better effectively address the complicated problem of gender-based violence.

7. Data Analysis

7.1 Prevalence of Gender-Based Violence in India

Examining a variety of data sources is required in order to conduct an analysis of the prevalence of gender-based violence in India. The results of national and regional surveys, such as the National Family Health Survey (NFHS)³¹ and the reports compiled by the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), provide insightful information regarding the prevalence of gender-based violence as well as its specific characteristics. The National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) publishes annual reports titled "Crime in India" that contain data on crimes committed against women. These reports include information on rape, deaths caused by dowry, and cruelty committed by husbands and other relatives. These studies highlight concerning tendencies, such as a steady rise in the number of reported cases over the course of several years. However, it is vital to highlight that recorded cases represent only a fraction of the actual occurrence, as many cases go unreported due to different hurdles, such as the fear of reprisal and the social stigma associated with reporting the incident.

³¹ Dhirar, N., Dudeja, S., Khandekar, J., & Bachani, D. (2018). Childhood morbidity and mortality in India—analysis of national family health survey 4 (NFHS-4) findings. *Indian pediatrics*, 55, 335-338.

Table no.1 Summary of Notable Cases with Landmarking Judgements

S. NO	NOTABLE CASES	ARTICLE/SECTIONS	LANDMARKING JUDGMENTS
1	Nirbhaya Gang Rape Case (2012)	Gangrape and Murder	The fast-track court delivered death sentences to four of the adult accused, setting a precedent for swift justice in heinous crimes.
2	Vishakha v. State of Rajasthan (1997)	Workplace Sexual Harassment	The Vishakha judgment laid down guidelines to prevent and address workplace sexual harassment, often referred to as the "Vishakha Guidelines."
3	Indira Jaising v. Supreme Court (2003)	Equality and Gender Justice	The case contributed to discussions on equality and gender justice and emphasized the need for gender-sensitive legal reforms and judicial sensitivity in cases involving women's rights.
4	Laxmi v. Union of India (2015)	Acid Attack Laws and Compensation	The Laxmi judgment led to significant legal reforms in acid attack laws and compensation for victims.
5	Shakti Vahini v. Union of India (2018)	Trafficking of Women and Children	This case addressed issues related to trafficking of women and children.
6	Gulshan Banu v. Union of India (2019)	Triple Talaq and Muslim Women's Rights	The Gulshan Banu case was significant in the context of triple talaq (instant divorce) and Muslim women's rights.
7	Rohtak Sisters' Case (2014)	Self-defense and Women's Rights	This case highlighted the importance of self-defense and women's rights.
8	Indian Young Lawyers Association v. State of Kerala (2018)	Women's Right to Enter Religious Places	The Supreme Court of India, in its judgment, allowed women of all ages to enter the Sabarimala Temple, asserting the principle of gender equality and women's right to worship.
9	Mathura Rape Case (1979)	Custodial Rape and Consent	The trial court acquitted the accused, it prompted discussions about legal reforms related to rape laws and consent.
10	Priyadarshini Mattoo Case (2006)	Stalking and Murder of a Law Student	The judgment in this case played a significant role in discussions about stalking laws and women's safety in India.

7.2 Changes and Trends Over Time

A more comprehensive view of the problem can be gained by analyzing the changes and patterns that have occurred over time in the statistics on gender-based violence. One encouraging development is the growing willingness of survivors to report instances of violence that they have experienced. This pattern can be linked to a number of different factors, such as increased awareness as a result of increased media coverage, legal amendments that prioritize survivors' rights, and the growth of support services for survivors. In addition, there have been observations of shifts in the nature and presentation of gender-based violence. New kinds of violent behavior, such as cyberbullying and online harassment, have emerged with the advent of the digital age. This trend indicates the changing nature of gender-based violence and highlights the necessity for updated legal frameworks and tactics in order to successfully handle these new concerns.

The issue of underreporting continues, despite the rise in awareness and the number of reports that are being filed, however. Many survivors, particularly in rural and marginalized communities, are still reluctant to report occurrences due to the fear of social ostracism or insufficient access to support services. This is a problem because reporting incidents can help prevent further abuse. Therefore, while the increase in reporting is a great indicator, it also underscores the need for continuous efforts to create an environment that is safe and supportive for survivors who come forward with their stories.

8. Efforts and Progress

Advancing gender equality stands as a crucial objective for any society, and India has implemented a range of initiatives and policies to address gender-based disparities and empower women. These endeavors seek to create a more inclusive and equitable society by tackling issues related to education, healthcare, employment, and societal norms.

- 1. Legislative Measures:**³² India has established legal frameworks aimed at safeguarding women's rights and combating gender-based discrimination. These encompass laws addressing dowry-related issues, domestic violence, and sexual harassment.

³² Klugman, Jeni. "Gender based violence and the law." (2017).

2. **Awareness and Advocacy:**³³ Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and civil society groups actively engage in raising awareness about gender-related concerns and advocating for policy changes.
3. **Government Initiatives:**³⁴ The Indian government has launched initiatives such as the "Beti Bachao Beti Padhao" (Save the Girl Child, Educate the Girl Child) campaign, which targets gender imbalances and promotes girls' education.
4. **Women's Empowerment Programs:**³⁵ Various programs are designed to empower women both economically and socially. These encompass skill development initiatives and microfinance schemes.

Notable Initiatives and Programs:

- **Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP):** Launched in 2015, this initiative concentrates on enhancing the status of the girl child by addressing gender-biased sex selection, female infanticide, and the promotion of girls' education. It endeavors to alter mindsets and foster the value and education of girls through community engagement and awareness campaigns.
- **Mahila Shakti Kendra (MSK):** Under the BBBP initiative, MSK seeks to empower rural women through community participation, skill development, and awareness about various government schemes.
- **Sukanya Samridhi Yojana:** Introduced in 2015, this small savings scheme encourages parents to save for the education and future of their girl child by offering a higher interest rate than regular savings accounts.
- **Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY):** Initiated in 2017, PMMVY provides financial assistance to pregnant and lactating women to support their health and nutrition during pregnancy and childbirth.
- **Swachh Bharat Abhiyan (Clean India Campaign):** Although not exclusively gender-focused, Swachh Bharat Abhiyan significantly impacts women's health and dignity by promoting access to clean and safe sanitation facilities.

³³ Bhandari, M. (2014). Civil society and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) movements in Nepal in terms of social transformation. *Pacific Journal of Science and Technology*, 15(1), 177-189.

³⁴ Gupta, K. Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao.

³⁵ Priyadarshini, A., Thiagarajan, R., Kumar, V., & Radhu, T. (2016, December). Women empowerment towards developing India. In *2016 IEEE Region 10 Humanitarian Technology Conference (R10-HTC)* (pp. 1-6). IEEE.

- **One Stop Centres (OSCs):** OSCs offer comprehensive support services, including medical, legal, and psychological aid, to women affected by violence. They serve as a one-stop solution for survivors of gender-based violence.
- **Women Helpline (181):** This toll-free helpline provides immediate assistance to women in distress, connecting them to relevant support services and authorities.
- **Support to Training and Employment Programme for Women (STEP):** STEP aims to provide skill development and employment opportunities for women, enhancing their employability and economic independence.
- **National Rural Livelihood Mission (NRLM):** NRLM concentrates on promoting self-employment and income-generating activities for rural women, particularly those from marginalized communities.
- **Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY):** While not exclusive to women, PMKVY offers skill training to enhance employability, including for women in various sectors.
- **Maternity Benefit (Amendment) Act, 2017:** This act extends maternity leave from 12 weeks to 26 weeks and introduces provisions for work-from-home options for nursing mothers.
- **Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition, and Redressal) Act, 2013:** Mandating that organizations establish mechanisms to prevent and address sexual harassment in the workplace.
- **National Policy for Women, 2016:** This policy provides a comprehensive framework for addressing women's issues, encompassing health, education, economic empowerment, and social welfare.

9. Conclusion

The multifaceted issue of gender-based violence in India, as well as an investigation of the essential part played by women's rights in the fight against this persistent issue. The complexity of this matter has been illuminated by our investigation, which has led to the discovery of various important findings. We discovered that while India has made tremendous strides in legislating against gender-based violence, issues remain in the effective implementation of these laws. This is despite the fact that India has made significant strides in this area. The persistent power of patriarchy, along with the cultural norms and attitudes of society, continue to be strong obstacles in the way of progress. However, initiatives

spearheaded by women's rights organizations, educational programs, and awareness campaigns have shown encouraging achievements in terms of empowering women and challenging conventions that have been entrenched. The findings of our study highlight the critical need of protecting women's rights when tackling issues of gender-based violence. In addition to being an issue of legal equity, the protection of women's rights is an essential component of the larger movement to end all forms of violence against women. Women are more equipped to break free from cycles of violence and discrimination when they have access to education, economic autonomy, and assistance from comprehensive legal frameworks. This is because education and economic autonomy are two of the most important ways in which women are empowered.

It is impossible to stress the importance of the connection between the protection of women's rights and the elimination of violence against women and girls. Legal reforms, access to education, and awareness-raising campaigns are not stand-alone endeavours; rather, they are interlinked components of a comprehensive plan to question and change societal norms, promote gender equality, and, eventually, create communities that are safer and more equitable. The ramifications of this study can be extrapolated much beyond the scope of our investigation.

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