PAST AND PRESENT SCENARIO OF WOMEN IN INDIA AND A STUDY IN THE CONTEXT OF ANDAMAN AND NICOBAR ISLANDS

SUBANKAR ROY

Violence against women is experienced by women of all ages and social classes, all races, religions and nationalities, across the world. It is overwhelmingly perpetrated by men. It is the most pervasive violation of human rights in the world today. Its forms are both subtle and blatant and its impact on development is profound. And it is so deeply embedded in cultures around the world that it is almost invisible. The term violence derives from the Latin word vis, which means force and refers to the notions of constraint and using physical superiority on the other person. Violence is mutant, as it is influenced by very different times, places, circumstances and realities. There is tolerated and condemned violence, as violence has existed on Earth if mankind, assuming different, increasingly complex and at the same time more fragmented and articulated forms.

Violence against women is a manifestation of the historically unequal power relations between men and women, which have led to domination over and discrimination against women by men and to the prevention of women's full advancement of women". In all societies, poverty, discrimination, ignorance and social unrest are common predictors of violence against women. Yet the most enduring enemies of a woman's dignity and security are cultural forces aimed at preserving male dominance and female subjugation-often defended in the name of venerable tradition. Violence against women throughout the life cycle derives essentially from cultural patterns, the harmful effects of certain traditional or customary practices and all acts of extremism linked to race, sex, language or religion that perpetuate the lower status accorded to women in the family, the workplace, the community and society.

Violence against women has been accepted and even condoned throughout history. More than 2,000 years ago, Roman law gave a man life and death authority over his wife. In the 18th Century, English common law gave a man permission to discipline his wife and children with a stick or whip no wider than his thumb. This "rule of thumb" prevailed in England and America until the late 19th century. Many feminists claim violence against women is the result of a deeply entrenched patriarchal culture that encourages and rewards male domination. They say that in a patriarchal culture, men are more likely to use violence to keep their dominant position. While society claims to abhor violence, we often make heroes of men who are aggressive. In the culture of masculinity, heroes are often predicated on some kind of violent action. The traditional model of masculinity encourages men to exude an aura of daring and aggression.

The status of women depicts the social, economic and mental condition in a nation. Women have been regarded as a symbol of spirituality in our scriptures. Yet, women were denied rights and equality in ancient Indian civilization. They have been treated badly and unequally to men. Social evils such as dowry, sati-system, child marriage, and female infanticide were widely prevalent in the early ages. The spread of education and self-consciousness among women has led to their progress over the period. Women of today are empowered. Also, women are gaining advancements and success in each and every field. True female liberty is only achievable when people shift their restrictive attitudes and mind-set's regarding women.

Historical Status of Women in India

Going back to our origins, we can see how vital women are to society, not only biologically, but also culturally. Women have been mentioned in our Vedas and ancient books since ancient times, and they have been assigned important positions. Because of the contributions of women, the texts of Ramayana and Mahabharata have been tremendously influenced and due to women, they may have become the most sacred of all.

But during the past few centuries, the conditions of women worsen. Previously, women were referred to as housekeepers. It was thought and passed down to others that women are meant to marry, take care of the house and their in-laws, and sacrifice all of their aspirations in order to realise the dreams of their husbands and children. Furthermore, women were kept out of school because families believed that only boys deserved to be educated and follow their aspirations. Women were married off at a young age, and occasionally without their consent. They have also been subjected to a slew of dehumanising practises, societal neglect, and rituals designed to limit them, and they are frequently considered commodities rather than human beings.

Women in India in Ancient Age

Women, in the early ages, were very educated but suffered from the evils of society. Some open-minded citizens like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Swami Vivekananda, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, and others worked for the wellbeing of women. Thus, the practices of sati, child marriage, and others were abolished. Various acts such as the Child Marriage Restraint Act were passed in this direction. Mahatma Gandhi also emphasized the abolition of child marriages.

Women were also provided training in martial arts. Moreover, women acquired a significant position in politics. Sarojini Naidu was a key figure in this context. She was the first Indian woman to become the President of the Indian National Congress and the governor of a state in India. Indira Gandhi was another woman who stood out in a male-dominated field. She became India's first female Prime Minister and effectively led the country for fourteen years, contributing to domestic and financial progress.

Understand violence against women in the Ecological Model

This proposal is based on different authors' work and proposes "an integrated ecological framework" with a view to studying and getting to know violence against women. The ecological model studies factors active in four distinct spheres: individual, family, communitarian and sociocultural, as shown in Figure 1. This model focuses on violence in the interaction among its distinct levels. These are superposing causality levels, in which there is not only single determinant, but an interaction of operating factors, favoring violence or protecting the individual against it. These causal factors and their interactions need to be known in their distinct contexts and cultural environments.

The Ecological Model to Understand Violence

Society
I
Community
I
Relations
I
Individual

The main point in the model is that it helps to acknowledge and distinguish between countless factors influencing violence and, at the same time, provides a framework to understand how its different elements interact. The First World Report on Violence and Health tries to understand the multifaceted nature of violence through this model (2) the ecological model, classified in four levels, makes it possible to analyze the factors influencing people's behavior and factors increasing the probabilities of people turning into victims or perpetrators of violent acts."

The First Level

Identifies biological and personal history factors. Traceable data include personal and demographic characteristics (age, sex, education, income),

Antecedents of aggressive or self-devaluation behaviors, mental or personality disorders and substance-related disorders.

The Second Level

The 2 level includes closer relations, such as those between couples and partners, other family members and friends. It has been observed that these increase the risk of suffering or perpetrating violent acts. Having friends who commit or incite violent acts can increase the risk that young people will suffer or execute these actions

The Third Level

Explores the community contexts where social relations are developed in, such as schools, work places and neighborhoods. Attempts are made to identify the characteristics of these environments, as they can increase the risk of violent acts. The risk can be influenced by factors like mobility of the place of residence, population density, high unemployment levels and existence of drugs traffic in the region.

The Fourth Level

It is directed at general factors, related to the structure of society. These factors contribute to create a climate that incites or inhibits violence, such as the possibility of obtaining arms due to social and cultural standards. These include standards that prioritize parents' rights over their children's wellbeing. Consider suicide as a personal option more than as a preventable act of violence, reaffirm men's dominion over women and boys, back the excessive use of police force against citizens or support political conflicts. This level also includes other facts, such as sanitary, economic, educative and social policies, which contribute to maintain economic or social inequalities among groups, the above figure shows the superposition of different rings, illustrating how factors at different levels reinforce or modify each other. Thus, for example, the probability that a person with an aggressive personality will act violently inside a family or community that is used to solving conflicts through violence is higher than if he is in a more pacific environment. Violence against women is increasingly faced as an important public health problem. Thus, there is an urgent need to establish early detection and effective intervention programs. There is a wider offer of victim support and protection services, providing orientations, legal advice, educative and work training. Some of these develop alternative services, directed at the aggressors, as physical violence exerts economic, morbidity and mortality repercussions in different age groups.

THE SITUATION OF WOMEN IN INDIA

In Indian society, women are traditionally discriminated against and excluded from political and family related decisions. Despite the large amount of work women must do on a daily basis to support their families, their opinions are rarely acknowledged and their rights are limited.

From the time they are born, young Indian girls are the victims of discrimination. According to a 2005 report from the Indian Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, the infant mortality rate among girls is 61% higher than that for boys. This gender inequality is also present in education; only 2/3 of girls between the ages of 6 and 17 are sent to school, compared to 3/4 of boys of the same age. Also, in the countryside, only 46% of women are literate, which is almost one-half the literary rate for men.

Instead of going to school, girls often find themselves forced to work in order to help their families, often from a very young age. Even more worrisome, 25% of women marry before the age of 15 and very often, they marry against their will. This has profound consequences, notably on women's health and their precarious situation often prevents them from receiving proper health care. For many Indian women, poor treatment, violence and exploitation take place on daily basis.

However, in the last decades, the situation of women in India has greatly improved. An increasing number of Indian women are entering local and national politics and since 2007, the country has been under the rule of a woman, Pratibha Patil. She is the first woman to hold this position since the creation of the Indian Republic in 1950.

Women in Free India

Gender equality

Women today are eager to take up professions and work. Thus, they enjoy equal respect and dignity in the family. Women in free India also enjoy equal pay for equal work in comparison to men. Also, there are provisions for maternity leave for them. Furthermore, females are provided equality of opportunity under Article 16 of the Constitution of India.

Educational Status

The girls in urban areas are almost at par in education with the boys. But there is a less educated female population in rural areas. This has also affected the social and economic development of rural India. The poor (hygienic facilities) facilities at school and lack of female staff have affected education. Kerala and Mizoram have a universal literacy rate.

Women and Politics

The maximum figure of female politicians in the world is from India. Women have occupied significant positions i.e. of President, Prime Minister, Speaker of the Lok Sabha and other high offices. "Indira Gandhi", is the first female who held the office of the Prime Minister for 15 years.

Evils Against Women

The violence against women in India includes kitchen fires for want of dowry, sexual assaults, cases of rape, prostitution, throwing of acid. Also, the evils of child marriages are also widespread even today. Female infanticide, indecent behaviour, and honour killings add to the misery of the women. Also, sex-selective abortion is a deep-rooted evil leading to inequality in the sex ratio.

Current Status of Women in India

Following the development of the freedom movement across the nation, the ladies of the society began to emerge and burst through their shells. A larger proportion of women began to be given the opportunity to study and seek education. Currently, India does not have a shortage of women in the medical, technical, teaching, legal, or any other profession. India has seen an increase in the number of empowered women holding higher positions in various offices and organisations.

Women are involved in a variety of occupations and compete alongside males in a variety of disciplines such as technology, law, administration, teaching, and so on. Apart from traditional occupations, we have women who thrive in sports, such as P.T. Usha, Sania Mirza, P.V Sindhu, Mithali Raj, Mary Kom, Saina Nehwal, Dipa Karmakar, and others, who have represented and inspired many aspiring sportswomen in India.

Government of India play an important role to improving the status of women

The government has adopted numerous regulations and laws in favour of women. The Indian government launched a slew of initiatives aimed at empowering women in the country. Each of these plans is created with a focus on women and their needs in mind, so that Indian women, like women all around the world, can achieve all of their goals and enjoys a life of equal status. Among the most well-known schemes are:

- ❖ Beti Bachao Beti Padhao
- ❖ Women Helpline Scheme
- ❖ Nari Shakti Puraskar

❖ Nirbhaya

❖ Mahila Police Volunteers

❖ Mahila Shakti Kendras (MSK)

Women's standing in India has evolved as a result of education and other societal progress. They are also given the freedom to pursue their objectives, obtain an education, and make their job goals a reality. Even in marriage, women are given the liberty to express themselves. Women in India today are well aware of their rights and benefits, and they are no longer politically, socially, economically, or educationally backward. They now have the same opportunities and rights as everyone else. They are capable of achieving any position or status in life.

Types of violence against women and girls

Violence against women and girls is defined as any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or mental harm or suffering to women and girls, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life. Violence against women and girls encompasses, but is not limited to, physical, sexual and psychological violence occurring in the family or within the general community, and perpetrated or condoned by the State.

Domestic violence

Domestic violence, also called domestic abuse or intimate partner violence, is any pattern of behaviour that is used to gain or maintain power and control over an intimate partner. It encompasses all physical, sexual, emotional, economic and psychological actions or threats of actions that influence another person. This is one of the most common forms of violence experienced by women globally.

Domestic violence can include the following.

Economic violence

Economic violence involves making or attempting to make a person financially dependent by maintaining total control over financial resources, withholding access to money, and/or forbidding attendance at school or employment.

Psychological violence

Psychological violence involves causing fear by intimidation; threatening physical harm to self, partner or children; destruction of pets and property; "mind games"; or forcing isolation from friends, family, school and/or work.

Emotional violence

Emotional violence includes undermining a person's sense of self-worth through constant criticism; belittling one's abilities; name-calling or other verbal abuse; damaging a partner's relationship with the children; or not letting a partner see friends and family.

Physical violence

Physical violence involves hurting or trying to hurt a partner by hitting, kicking, burning, grabbing, pinching, shoving, slapping, hair-pulling, biting, denying medical care or forcing alcohol and/or drug use, or using other physical force. It may include property damage.

Sexual violence

Sexual violence is any sexual act committed against the will of another person, either when this person does not give consent or when consent cannot be given because the person is a child, has a mental disability, or is severely intoxicated or unconscious as a result of alcohol or drugs.

Sexual violence can include the following.

Sexual harassment

Sexual harassment encompasses non-consensual physical contact, like grabbing, pinching, slapping, or rubbing against another person in a sexual way. It also includes non-physical forms, such as catcalls, sexual comments about a person's body or appearance, demands for sexual favors, sexually suggestive staring, stalking, and exposing one's sex organs.

Rape

Rape is any non-consensual vaginal, anal or oral penetration of another person with any bodily part or object. This can be by any person known or unknown to the survivor, within marriage and relationships, and during armed conflict.

Corrective rape

Corrective rape is a form of rape of perpetrated against someone on the basis of their sexual orientation or gender identity. It is intended to force the victim to conform to heterosexuality or normative gender identity.

Rape culture

Rape culture is the social environment that allows sexual violence to be normalized and justified. It is rooted in patriarchy and fuelled by persistent gender inequalities and biases about gender and sexuality.

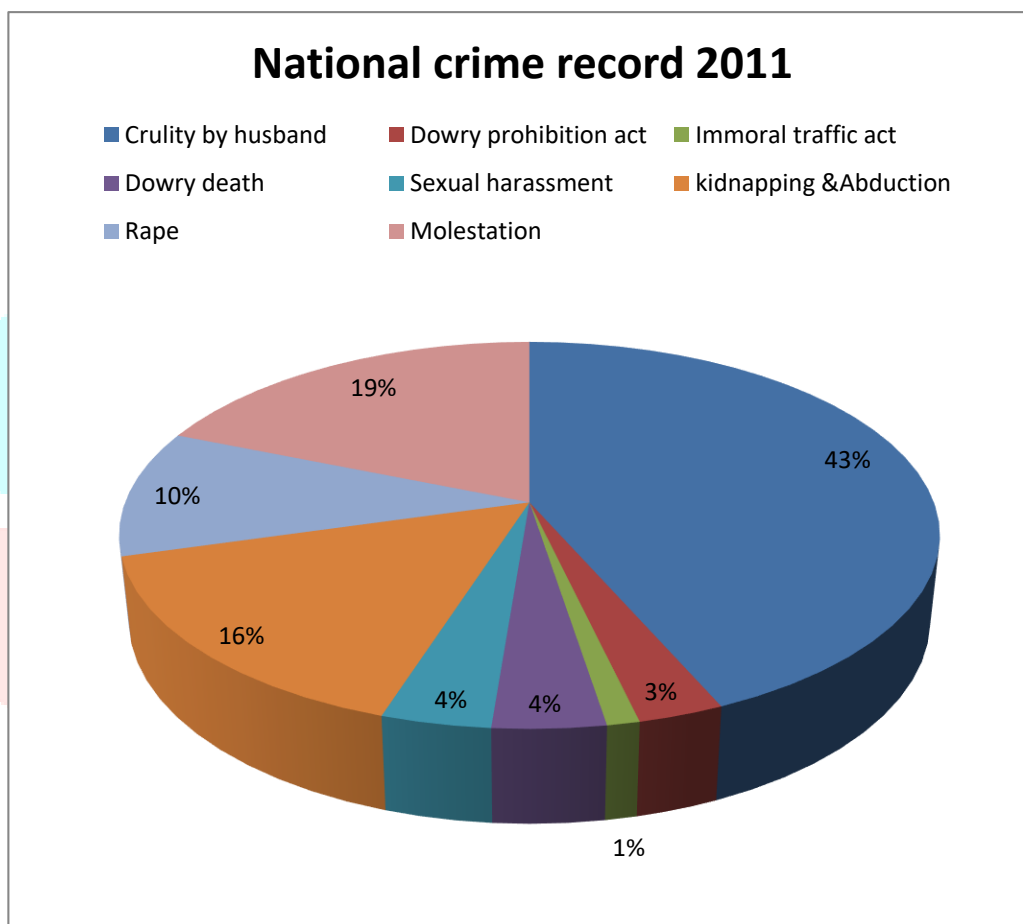## Human trafficking

Human trafficking is the acquisition and exploitation of people, through means such as force, fraud, coercion, or deception. This heinous crime ensnares millions of women and girls worldwide, many of whom are sexually exploited.

Child marriage

Child marriage refers to any marriage where one or both of the spouses are below the age of 18. It is a violation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which states that "marriage shall be entered into only with the free and full consent of the intending spouses." Girls are more likely to be child brides, and consequently drop out of school and experience other forms of violence.

National crime record 2011

- Crulity by husband
- Dowry prohibition act
- Immoral traffic act
- Dowry death
- Sexual harassment
- kidnapping &Abduction
- Rape
- Molestation

43%
3%
1%
4%
4%
16%
10%
19%

PROFILE OF ANDAMAN AND NICOBAR ISLAND AND SITUATION OF WOMEN

The Union Territory of Andaman and Nicobar Islands is separated from the Indian mainland by 1200 Kms of sea. The connectivity to the Islands is only by sea and air. Indian Airlines operates five days a week both from Chennai and Kolkatta, while Jet Airways operates daily from Chennai. The frequency of flights may vary according to the passenger flow or the weather conditions. Till recently only Boeing 737' s have been operating on these routes, and due to load factor they have only a limited capacity.

Connectivity by sea is through shipping services operated by Shipping Corporation of India and the Directorate of Shipping Services, Andaman & Nicobar Administration. Five ships operate on the mainland-island sector and connect Port Blair with Chennai, Visakhapatnam and Kolkatta. The ships have a capacity of 1200 passengers. The

time taken for each sailing on a direct route between Port Blair and Chennai is 60 hours and via Car Nicobar and Campbell Bay is 110 hours. The time taken for Kolkatta on a direct route is 54 hours depending on tide and current and via Mayabundar is 65 hours. The time taken for Visakhapatnam is 54 hours by ship. The frequency per month is 5-6 trips on the Port Blair Chennai sector, 3-4 trips on Port Blair Kolkatta sector and once a month on Port Blair Vizag sector. Once every month the Port Blair- Chennai voyage is routed via Car Nicobar and via Hut Bay, Nancowry and Campbell Bay once in two months. Once in a month the Port Blair Kolkatta voyage is routed through Mayabundar. All these timings and schedules are subject to fair weather conditions and availability of ships. Schedules can be changed if ships are sent to dry-dock for annual maintenance. Within the Islands there are 3 modes of connectivity land, water and air. The Andaman Trunk Road runs for 333 Kms from Port Blair in South Andaman to Diglipur in North Andaman. It traverses through the forest reserve areas and Jarawa territory. It is not a continuous stretch and is broken by two straits Middle Strait and Humphery Strait which have to be crossed by vehicle/passenger ferry. As per the Prof. Shekhar Singh Committee Report to the Supreme Court, the stretches of the road which run through the Jarawa territory have to be closed to ensure protection of the Jarawas. Other major roads are the Little Andaman Trunk Road in Little Andaman and the North-South Road and East-West Road in Great Nicobar Islands. These roads are the only means of long distance intra island land connectivity.32

Between the Islands, the shipping services are in the Inter Island Sector providing services between Port Blair and the distant group of islands with medium size vessels, the Foreshore sector providing services between Port Blair and nearby islands with small size vessels and the Harbour Ferry Services providing service within the sheltered water and narrow creeks with ferry vessels. These vessels operate at the speed of 8-9 knots per hour as compared to the mainland vessels which operate at 12.5 knots per hour. There are a total of 72 vessels with the Administration in all the four sectors.

The third mode is through the Pawan Hans Helicopter services which have been started recently. The helicopter can carry up to 7 passenger till Car Nicobar and 5 passengers beyond. The service is run as per schedule depending on the weather conditions. Helicopter services are also pressed into service whenever there is any emergency.

The foregoing paragraphs are a curtain raiser to the peculiar situation that prevails in the Islands. Though the problems faced on the mainland by the population and women in particular are by and large absent here but the the problems faced in the Islands are peculiar to their location and consequent lack of connectivity. The major problems due to the above factors and cited by the women activists and NGO representatives in their interaction with the National Commission for Women are

● Alcoholism

● Suicide

● Polygamy/Desertion

● Crime against women

● Lack of family courts

ALCOHOLISM

Alcoholism is reported to be rampant in the islands. Though no reliable statistics are available it could be a consequence of the isolation factor. If an analysis of the violations under special laws is taken then it is found that the violations under Excise Regulations have been increasing and reflects the increasing incidence of alcoholism. It has gone up from 78.0% of violations under special laws in the year 2000 to 93.64% in the present year. This could be due to any or both the factors namely, the incidence of bootlegging has risen or the police has become more vigilant.

PROPORTION OF VIOLATIONS OF
EXCISE REGULATIONS 2000-2004
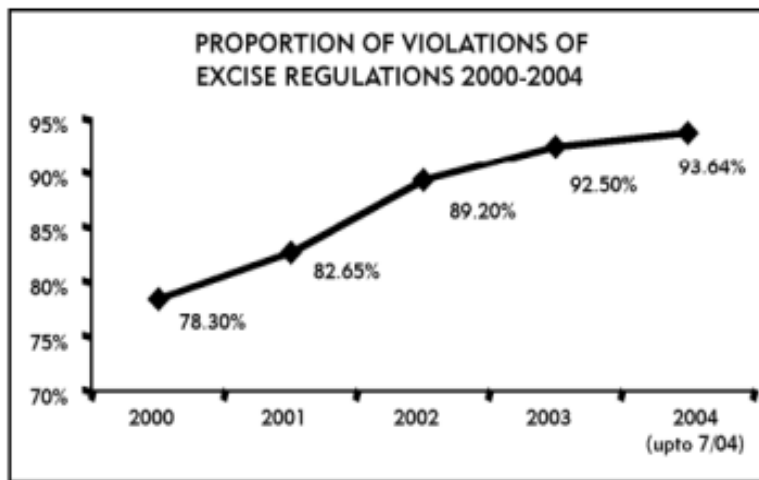
Year	Violations under special laws	Violations under Excise Regulation
2000	2907	2279
2001	3580	2959
2002	4316	3850
2003	6003	5553
2004	3698	3463

Source: Andaman and Nicobar Police.

This rise is an unhealthy trend and could be a major cause of domestic violence. An interesting factor which is revealed is that women and children too are involved in sale of liquor. Nearly 15% of the violations under the excise regulation have been committed by women and children.
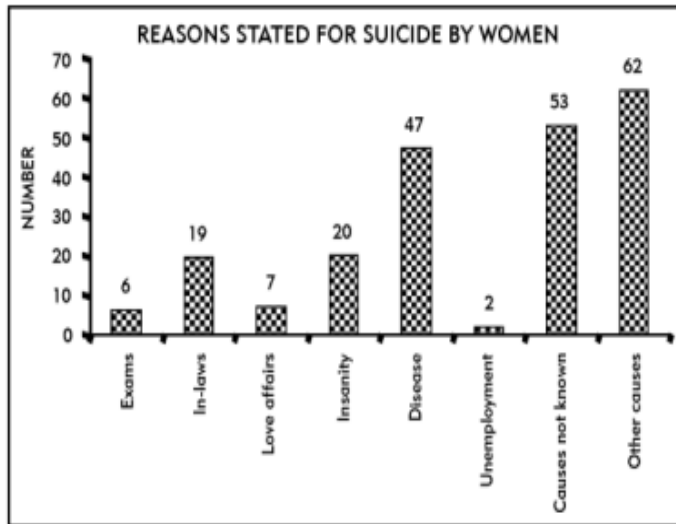
Suicide

Andaman and Nicobar Islands ranks second only to Pondicherry in respect of suicides in the country.

Suicides - 2000

	No. of suicide	Percentage share in total suicide	Estimated mid year population in lakhs	Rate of suicides	Rank
India	1,08,593	100	10021.42	10.84	
A&N	128	0.12	3.88	32.99	2

Source: Accidental Deaths and Suicides in India 2000, National Crime

REASONS STATED FOR SUICIDE BY WOMEN

Year	Total Suicides	Females	Percentage of women suicides
2000	128	49	38.28%
2001	129	50	38.75%
2002	144	53	36.80%
2003	113	43	38.05%
2004 (up to 7/04)	69	21	30.43%
Total	583	216	37.04%

Source: Andaman and Nicobar Police

Types of Crimes Perpetuated against Women 2000-2004

Crime Head	2000		2001		2002		2003		2004 (up to 7/04)	
	Rep	Worked out	Rep	Worked out	Rep	Worked out	Rep	Worked out	Rep	Worked out
Murder	2	2	6	5	6	6	8	6	1	
Attempt to murder	2	2	-	-	1	1	1	1	1	
Rape	5	3	3	3	2	2	2	2	4	1
Abetment to suicide	2	2	-	-	-	-	1	1	-	
C.H. not amounting to murder	-	-	-	-	1	1	-	-	-	
Molestation	23	22	20	20	17	16	9	9	2	2
Kidnapping & abduction	3	2	2	2	1	1	2	1	2	1
Eve teasing	1	1	1	1	3	2	2	2	1	1
Cruelty by husband or his family	12	7	9	6	4	2	7	4	1	1
Total	50	41	41	37	35	31	32	26	12	6
Workout Percentage	82%		90.24%		88.57%		81.25%		50%	

Source: Andaman and Nicobar Police

The main crime directed against women is molestation. It forms nearly 50% of the crimes. The second highest crime is cruelty by husband or his family.

Presenting the 2010 to 2022 missing women data in A&N Island

Year wise data of missing women in Andaman and Nicobar Island

YEAR	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
MISSING	04	09	06	02	03	06	03	07	10	15	08	06	02

EMPIRICAL STUDY

An attempt has made to analysis the data collected from the field. Tables have been prepared and analysed item wise.

women are treated equally in our society

AREA	YES	NO	TOTAL
KISHORI NAGAR	10	20	30
PARANGARA	13	17	30
TOTAL	23	37	60

The table shows out of 60 respondents, 38.3% respondents say "Yes" women are treated equally in our society and remaining 61.6 % respondents says 'No'.

In the Parangara area, out of 30 respondents, 33.3% respondents say 'Yes' women's are treated equally in our society and remaining 66.6% respondents says 'No'.

In the Kishori Nagar area, out of 30 respondents, 43.3% respondents say 'Yes' women are treated equally in our society and remaining 56.6% respondents says "No".

Perception regarding violence against women

AREA	YES	NO	TOTAL
PARANGARA	06	24	30
KISHORI NAGAR	12	18	30
TOTAL	18	42	60

The table shows out of 60 respondents, 30% respondents say 'Yes' they are facing violence just because of women and remaining 70% respondents says 'No'.

In the Parangara area, out of 30 respondents, 20% respondents say 'Yes' they are facing violence just because of women and remaining 80% respondents says 'No'.

In the kishori Nagar area, out of 30 respondents, 40% respondents say 'Yes' they are facing violence just because of women and remaining 60% respondents says 'No'.

domestic violence

AREA	YES	NO	TOTAL
PARANGARA	20	10	30
KISHORI NAGAR	15	15	30
TOTAL	35	25	60

The table shows out of 60 respondents, 58.3% respondents say 'Yes' domestic violence happened and remaining 41.6 % respondents says 'No'.

In the Parangara area, out of 30 respondents, 66.6% respondents say 'Yes' domestic violence happened and remaining 33.3% respondents says 'No'.

In the kishori Nagar area, out of 30 respondents, 50% respondents say 'Yes' domestic violence happened and remaining 50% respondents says 'No'.

CONCLUSION

Indian society does indeed recognize many women's rights, including the rights to political involvement, family allowance and set up a business. Nevertheless, in rural areas, poverty and a lack of information represent real barriers to women's independence and empowerment. Programs aimed at advancing human rights, literacy and microfinance are therefore necessary in order to restore Indian women to the place they deserve and open doors to a better future.

The rising incidence of alcoholism is supported by data on violations under the excise regulation. Alcoholism is a cause for domestic violence and affects women adversely. The punishment for violators under excise regulations should not be only a monetary fine; imprisonment as per law should be imposed as penalty to act as a deterrent. The fact that women and children are also involved in bootlegging is not a good sign. Location of the licensed liquor shops near residential areas should be avoided.

The territory ranks second in suicide in India. Women contributed about 37% of all total suicides in the last five years. In 53% of the cases the reason for suicide is not clear; it is reported as either causes not known or other causes. This needs to be researched more thoroughly and link if any to the isolation factor needs to be established.

Though there are no figures available on polygamy and desertion of women by men from the mainland but the fact that the sex ratio among immigrants is only 654 females per thousand males and the fact that the territory has more divorced and separated women than males points to the fact that the males from the mainland could be indulging in polygamous relationships and consequent desertions.

Crime against women is about 6% of the total crimes and half the cases are of molestation. The work out rate is above 80% in all cases of crime against women. There is negligible incidence of crime against children.

Family courts need to be opened in the Union Territory

Social problems like dowry, child marriage, female feticide, sati, trafficking in girls normally faced by society on the mainland are by and large absent here. The Administration in a bid to promote tourism is contemplating twinning the cities of Phuket in Thailand and Port Blair. Some sections of the society have voiced fears about adopting the Phuket model of tourism and its consequences.