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### RESEARCH ARTICLE

#### VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN: PATRIARCHY AND POWER POLITICS.

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#### Abstract

This paper elucidates the issues regarding violence against women also termed as gender based violence, in its magnitude and its physical and psychological impact on them. Violence against women is the manifestation of gender inequality which also reflects the psyche of patriarchy to maintain unequal balance of power. The marginalisation and subjugation of women throughout ages have made them vulnerable and victim in the hands of the ruling patriarchy. The gender based violence includes horrendous crimes such as rape, domestic violence, female foeticide, dowry deaths, trafficking, acid attacks, honour killing (the list is not exhaustive) by the potential perpetrators under the mask of spouse, father, brother, son, friend and so on. The paper also unravels that men in power become the biggest perpetrators committing serious crimes against women and leave them helpless and hapless. The heinous crimes leave deep impact on the women psyche thus violating her most basic right to live. Lack of social support, slow legal procedures, and poor laws contribute to the misery of the victim thus making women empowerment a distant dream. The society where half of its population is living under threat could be anything but civilized.

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#### Introduction:-

##### **Violence Against Women: Patriarchy And Power Politics:-**

Violence against women also termed as gender based violence has its roots in the cultural norms, traditions, and religious practices besides socio-economic factors. Violence against women is the manifestation of gender inequality which also reflects the psyche of patriarchy to maintain unequal balance of power. The marginalization and subjugation of women throughout ages have made them vulnerable and victim in the hands of the ruling patriarchy. Violence against women in a family is strictly seen as compulsion on the part of male members to maintain order and control in the family. In a society where patriarchy rules and the roles and responsibilities are assigned on the basis of gender, women have no social and financial freedom and are always at risk of domestic violence. Domestic violence, which is the most under reported, occurs in many shades. It can take the form of physical injury, psychological abuse, social and financial abuse or in its worst forms sexual assault. The gender based violence includes horrendous crimes such as rape, female foeticide, dowry deaths, trafficking, acid attacks, honour killing (the list is not exhaustive) by the potential perpetrators under the mask of spouse, father, brother, son, friend and so on. The UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women states, "violence against women is a manifestation of historically unequal power relations between men and women" and "violence against

women is one of the crucial social mechanisms by which women are forced into a subordinate position compared with men."

The Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence, also known as the Istanbul Convention, provides the following definition of violence against women: "violence against women" is understood as a violation of human rights and a form of discrimination against women and shall mean all acts of gender-based violence that result in, or are likely to result in, physical, sexual, psychological or economic harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life."

#### **Impact on women health:-**

Violence not only amounts to physical injury but it has profoundly negative and traumatic effects on the women psyche thus violating her most basic right to live. The magnitude and impact of heinous crimes leave a deep impact consequently affecting the overall health and life of the victims leading them to depression and sometimes suicide. The sociological and psychological factors worsen the condition by making the women vulnerable and set a ground for further victimization. In Asian cultures the control of women is shifted from one man to another and her identity is subsumed in her family. She is expected to follow the set norms of female behaviour and any deviation on her part is not acceptable. This stereotyped arrangement does not permit her to be vocal in her protest against the wrong done hence the crime goes unreported which has the long lasting repercussions. Violence not only affects the health and wellbeing of women but also the society at large as the victim's life comes to standstill and she withdraws herself from all the spheres be it education or social participation. Lack of social support, snail pace legal procedures, and poor laws contribute to the misery of the victim. Jessica Lal murder case (1999) presents a strong picture of the bias ridden governing system which discriminates between the powerful and the underprivileged. Every effort was made to save the culprit with the influence of power and it was only after the outcry of media and public that in 2010 the deserved judgement was pronounced by the Supreme Court. The absence of objectivity, fairness and sense of justice in the governing system further enhances tribulations of the victim. Such weak governing system is taken for granted by the powerful and influential men and they commit crimes against women fearlessly thinking that they can easily escape legal action. Another example is Ruchika Girhotra a young girl of fourteen years who was molested by former Haryana DGP, SPS Rathore in August 1990 could not see justice for herself. She committed suicide in 1993 in the face of torture and harassment to her family. Special CBI court convicted Rathore and sentenced him to six months imprisonment in December 2009. The case was investigated in such a way that it took so long to nab the culprit and decide upon his punishment only because the fight was between the powerful and the ordinary. Slow legal procedures and passive investigation encourage others to commit crimes against women. Suhaib Iyasi, the host of crime reality T.V show, India's Most Wanted, murdered his own wife in 2000. It was after 18 years that he was convicted and sentenced to life time imprisonment. Such is the tragic fate of women who face violence in India. It is said that justice delayed is justice denied and cases as these prove that justice has always been denied to women.

#### **A Glance at the Situational Reality:-**

Let us evaluate with the facts and figures of the violence against women to ascertain how far we have come and how long we need to go in terms of empowering them. As per an analysis in 2013 based on the data from 80 countries worldwide, conducted by WHO with the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine and the South Africa Medical Research Council, 1 in 3 women have undergone the trauma of physical or sexual violence by an intimate partner or otherwise.

Taking into account the global and regional estimates of violence against women, around 30% women have faced violence in its various shades in a relationship by their intimate partner. As many as 38% women are murdered by their intimate partners globally. 7% women report that they are sexually assaulted by one or the other man apart from intimate partner. The intimate partner violence is prevalent in every society ranging from 23.2% in high-income countries with 24.6% in the WHO Western Pacific region and 37% in the WHO Eastern Mediterranean region to 37% in the WHO South-East Asia region.

#### **In a report by UNICEF it is estimated that around 5000 brides are murdered for dowry in India every year:-**

As per a report by National Crime Records Bureau,(NCRB) violence against women has increased many folds: violence against women is reported every 1.6 minutes in India where a girl is subjected to domestic violence every 4.8 minutes and every 13.5 minutes a rape case is reported. As per the statistics, there is a rise in the crimes against women from 41.7% to 53.9% between the years 2011 to 2015. Around 3, 27,394 crimes were reported in 2015 and it

had 34,651 crimes of rape, 4437 crimes of attempt to rape, 59,227 cases of abductions and kidnapping, 7,634 dowry deaths and cases of domestic cruelty were 1, 13,403, among others. There was an increase of 2.9% in 2016 as compare to 2015 in the crimes against women. Most of the cases were “cruelty by husband or his relatives” (32.6%) followed by “assault on women with intent to outrage her modesty” (25.0%), “kidnapping and abduction of women” (19.0%) and “rape” (11.5%).

Uttar Pradesh recorded the highest number of cases in violence against women around 14.5% which make 49,262 cases with West Bengal 9.6% amounting to 32,513 cases during the year 2016. Delhi recorded the highest crime rate of 160.4 cases over per lakh population as compare to the national average rate of 55.2

Let us have a glance at the data of some heinous crimes which almost makes women empowerment a distant dream. Female foeticide is still prevalent in almost all sections of society. The sex ratio has been declining in 80% of districts in India since 1991. States like Maharashtra, Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh and Haryana recorded 50 % decline with Punjab state being the worst. Women empowerment, education and awareness programs all put together could not affect a change in the society. The industry of sex determination and sex selective abortion run by the unethical medical professionals has grown into a 1000 crore industry. If the practice goes on it will be potentially catastrophic to the stability of society.

Reports indicate that 1500 people are attacked with acid every year across the world which has 80% women and 40% to 70% are below the age of 18 years.

There is an increase in the rape cases by 12.4% from 34,651 cases in 2015 to 38,947 in 2016. Madhya Pradesh (4882) and Uttar Pradesh (4816) recorded the highest incidents of rape during 2016 followed by Maharashtra (4189).

Crimes of kidnapping and abduction increased to 9.71% from 60,652 in 2015 to 66,544 cases in 2016. Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, Bihar, Assam and West Bengal recorded the highest number of crimes.

West Bengal is the leading state in the record of number of trafficking of women with 222 in the year 2016 followed by Kerala (189), Jharkhand (171) and Orissa (132) cases.

The figures are alarming and significantly under estimated as the violence within families is highly under reported. The graph of violence against women is rising because there is lack of fear of law and order, lack of gender justice, lack of security and above all lack of awareness among men and women that they have equal rights and opportunities to enjoy life.

Samar Halarnkar a journalist takes a serious note on the violence against women in India, "Men abuse women in every society, but few males do it with as much impunity, violence and regularity as the Indian male." Harlankar further proves his point with reference to a survey in which 370 gender specialists around the world voted India the worst place for a woman out of all the G20 countries.

Women empowerment has given platform to women to explore their potential and fight for their basic rights. Indian women are emerging as feisty contributors towards the economy of the nation. Women have been successful to some extent in erasing and recreating an image that shows their potential and capability. But the damage done by the violence against women is irreversible and irreparable which violates the basic human right to live. The society where half of its population is living under threat could be anything but civilized. It is a matter of shame and disgust for the society which fails to curb the crimes and threatening at the same time if it keeps tolerating in fact perpetuating the crimes against women. Violence against women can only be stopped with the political will, legal and civil participation from all sectors of society.

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