

Crimes against Women in India

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Crimes against women include a range of violent and non-violent acts against women such as- domestic abuse, sexual assaults, murder, female infanticide, acid throwing, forced pregnancy, forced marriage etc. However of all the crimes against women sexual assaults on women have been a serious matter of concern in recent years throughout the world. The ultimate form of sexual assaults on women is rape. "Rape is referred to a type of sexual assault that involves sexual intercourse or other forms of sexual penetration against a person without their consent. In other words, it is an unlawful activity carried out forcibly against a person under the threat of injury. As quoted from justice Arijit Pasayat, "while a murderer destroys the physical frame of the victim, a rapist degrades and defiles the very soul of a helpless female".

Sexual assault has been one of the most serious and fastest growing crimes that face the world today. The painful effects of sexual assault or rape vary from mild to severe, from psychological to physical. More specifically in the developing countries, sexual abuse of a woman has been considered till recently a violation of a man's property rights rather than a violation of a woman's human rights since women have been viewed as under the controls of their fathers and husbands.

In certain countries where men dislike women in taking initiative or assuming positions of authority or power, punitive rape is sometimes practiced. In Latin America, feminists argue that women are raped as a way to force them back into the traditional sphere of home and children. Rape is also practiced as a weapon of war or as a right of victorious forces. However it needs to be mentioned that there is little accurate information on the rates of rape and sexual assault, especially in developing countries. The challenge of defining rape across cultures makes data collection difficult and underreporting raises doubt about the actual number of incidents. The shame, disbelief and revenge attached to speaking out regarding the incidents of rape makes it nearly impossible to obtain accurate national statistics on rape in many countries. Having suffered from one trauma, many women do not want to undergo additional emotional pain at the hands of the police. Rape and other gender-based sexual assault are closely linked to suicide, prostitution, trafficking for sex, substance abuse, murder, high-risk and unintended pregnancy, HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) finally caused to disability of the victims. Moreover, an individual's

utilization of health care services is also increased by the suffering from rape and other sexual assaults.

Marital rape and acquaintance rape are the most common types of rape around the world. Rape has little to do with the sexual relations associated with love and marriage. It is an act of violence by one person against another. Rape is a violation, whether it occurs within the home at the hands of an abusive husband or partner or at the hands of a stranger.

According to several widely publicized studies, young women are at high risk of sexual assault by acquaintances or boyfriends. Studies have found rates ranging from a low of 15% for rape to a high of 78% for unwanted sexual assault. Researchers guess that acquaintance rape is especially underreported because the victims believe that nothing can or will be done, feel unsure about how to define the occurrence or are uncertain about whether the action qualified as abuse or not. Other types of rape include College Campus rape, Gang rape, Prison rape, War rape, Military rape and so on.

Along with the rest of the world, India is as well experiencing a high rate of crimes against women. As

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per the report of the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) over thirty thousand women are raped or sexually assaulted annually in India. It needs to be mentioned that 61% of these rapes occur with women above the age of eighteen and 89% of the rapes were committed by the person known to the victim. Drugs and alcohol play a significant role in the occurrences of rapes and sexual abuses. Several researchers estimate that nearly two million marital rapes occur each year in India and that this form of rape is more common than both stranger and acquaintance rape. Although the legal definition varies from state to state, marital rape is generally defined as any sexual activity forced from a wife unwilling to perform it. Research on marital rape indicates that 10% to 14% of married women have been raped by their partners and that marital rape accounts for about 25% of all rapes. Since marital rape frequently occurs in relationships plagued by other types of abusive behavior, some researchers view it as just another expression of violence by the intimate partner.

According to the report of National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) although the registered crimes against women dropped temporarily in India during the lockdown period for Covid 19 pandemic in 2020, the total registered crimes against women has been increased steadily during the post pandemic period with more than 4.45 lakh cases in 2022, followed by

4.48 lakh cases in 2023 and 4.41 lakh cases 2024. Of the total registered crimes against women in India during the period from 2020 to 2024, cruelty by husband or relatives consistently accounts for the highest percentage ranging from 27% to 31% registering over 1.2 lakh to 1.4 lakh cases annually. The second largest category of crimes against women has been recorded in kidnapping and abduction ranging from 15% to 19% of the total registered cases. Molestation comprises around 11% to 18% of the recorded crimes against women. Rape accounts for 6.5% to 7.10% of the total registered cases against women (29000 to 32000 cases annually). Cases registered for dowry death ranges from 57000 to 65000 annually in India.

The recent report on Crime in India, published in 2025 the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) highlights that Assam has reported the highest rate of crimes against women in India for the last five consecutive years. Although Uttar Pradesh accounts for the highest absolute number of registered crimes against women, Assam consistently records the highest rate of crime against women (number of crimes per 100,000 female population) in India, ranking 1st in crime rate for multiple consecutive years. A detail account of crimes against women in Assam in recent years in different categories is presented in the following Table-1.

Table-1 Crime against women in Assam for the years 2021 to 2024 in Assam

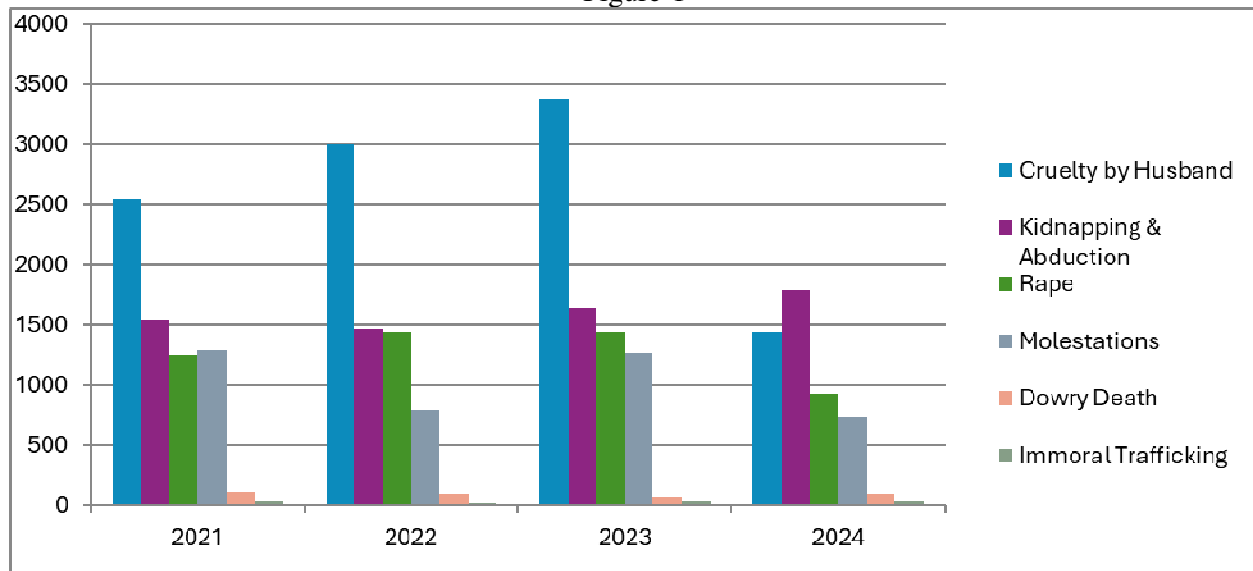
Types of crimes	Number of cases of crimes in			
	2021	2022	2023	2024
Cruelty by Husband	2548	3000	3379	1441
Kidnapping & Abduction	1544	1471	1636	1787
Rape	1244	1437	1434	927
Molestations	1290	789	1267	743
Dowry Death	105	100	70	94
Immoral Trafficking	29	23	32	26

Source: CID Headquarters, Guwahati.

Table 1 above depicts that amongst the crimes against women in Assam, cruelty by husbands accounts for the highest number of registered cases, followed by kidnapping and abduction, rape and molestation. It is observed that while 2548 cases were registered due to cruelty by husbands in 2021, it increased to 3000 and 3379 in 2022 and 2023 respectively, which however decreased to 1441 in 2024. Kidnapping and abduction accounted 1544 cases in 2021 with a slight decrease to 1471 in 2022, then again increased to 1636 in 2023 and to 1787 in 2024. The incidence of rape was recorded at 1244 in 2021 which steadily increased to 1437 and to 1434 in 2022 and 2023 respectively, with a reduction to 927 in 2024. Regarding molestation, 1290 cases were registered in 2021, with a decline to 789 in 2022, further increased to 1267 in 2023, which is however observed to have declined to 743 in 2024. Similarly, dowry death and immoral trafficking have also been observed with their own existence in Assam. It needs to be mentioned that Assam accounted the highest rate of crimes against women (i.e. registered crimes against per 100000 women population) with 154 cases in 2021, which increased to 168 cases in 2022 and then to 181 and to 187 in 2023 and 2024 respectively, that was roughly three times more than the national average.

The above statistics are presented in a multiple bar diagram in the following Figure-1.

Figure-1



Crimes against women has been considered as one of the most significant hindrances to the achievement of gender equality, development and peace. The World Health Organization (WHO) also highlights crimes against women as a human rights issue and a significant threat to women's health and well-being. Therefore, it is the urge of time to undertake an operational analysis to ascertain the causes behind the occurrences of crimes against women, consequences faced by the victims of crimes and suitable policies to be implemented by the government as well as the non-government organizations (NGO) for controlling crimes against women.

Causes of Crimes against Women

It needs to be mentioned that the causes of crimes may a little bit be different with respect to different locality as well as socio-economic structure. The primary cause of high crime rates against women in Assam along with the entire North-East region is the deep-rooted perseverance of patriarchal social structures combined with rising socio-economic pressure, misuse of alcohol and ever-changing cultural norms. Moreover different personal, social and structural factors are mutually responsible for the occurrence of crimes against women as expressed below-

- A. Domestic Dominance:** It has been considered as one of the prime reasons of crimes against women. Traditional family systems induce men as absolute authorities within the household, regularizing the psychological and physical control over women.
- B. Social Disgrace and Silence:** Victims of different crimes often stay in abusive relationships due to severe social disapproval and dishonour, fear of community condemnation and lack of safe alternative housing or shelters. Taking the advantage of silence of the victims criminals use to commit crimes against women.
- C. Alcohol and Drug Addiction:** Use of alcohol and addiction of drugs specifically by males induces physical violence and crimes against

women, which is more frequently observed in rural belts, tea estates and specific pockets.

- D. Economic Weakness:** It is as well observed that financial dependence due to economic weakness and poverty suppresses the capability of a woman to escape or report abusive environments. The situation contributes to the growth of crimes against women.
- E. Erosion of Traditional Safeguards:** Growth of consumerism and urbanization by the advent of economic development has weakened traditional bindings as well as community value systems, which earlier exercised informal social controls. Thus, the erosion of traditional safeguards is also inducing crimes against women.
- F. Changing Lifestyles vs. Safety Gaps:** The crimes against women are also growing due to safety gaps in the changing life styles. As modern employment patterns require women to travel or live independently in urban centers, they use to be victim of different crimes due to safety gap and absence of competent law suitable to the situation. The governments have also been slow to establish fully secure infrastructure of public and workplace.
- G. Trafficking Networks:** Crimes against women has been increased due to trafficking networks. Traditionally, economically vulnerable women of the rural and interior areas are being targeted for

trafficking, who have been victimized of different type of crimes against them. Moreover, women in Assam and the north-east more exposed to be exploited by human trafficking due to absorbent international and state borders.

H. Easy access of internet: Internet has been more commonly and inevitably used in modern life. Uses of android devices and intentional or unintentional watch of objectionable videos, photos etc. leads to the growth of different crimes against women.

Consequences of Crimes against Women

Crimes against women lead to severe physical, emotional, social and economic consequences for the victims, their families and the society as a whole. Consequences of crimes against women can be observed through its' impact on their physical and mental health, social and familial status as well as economic and legal repercussion.

Impacts on Physical and Mental Health

A. Severe Trauma: Victims of domestic crimes through physical attack, molestation and rape suffer from long-lasting physical injuries, chronic pain and profound psychological distress including post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and depression. It affects their self esteem and ability to work.

B. Health Risks: Crimes against women often leads to complications in reproductive health. Forced or unsafe pregnancies and nutritional neglect may cause serious risk of health.

Social and Familial Consequences

A. Stigmatization: Victims of different crimes often face social ostracization and blaming making it tough to them to reintegrate in the society. Thus victims of crimes later becomes the victim of the society living a painful life.

B. Disrupted Childhoods: Children in violent or abusive households experience struggles in mental health and developmental delays. Taking the advantage of disrupted childhood criminals often attempt to commit different crimes against women.

Economic and Legal Consequences

A. Financial Insecurity: Victim women of different crimes often unable to earn their livelihood regularly compelling them to live under financial insecurity. Moreover, economic abuse and domestic insecurity leave many women financially dependent, isolated and lacking access to property rights or independent livelihoods.

B. Systemic Burden: High rates of crime in Assam is consistently recording high per-capita crime rates compared to the national average. Under this circumstance, stress has been created on the enforcement of local laws, legal systems and public infrastructure.

Conclusion

Thus to conclude, along with the rest of India, crimes against women in Assam must have to be controlled for the greater interest of her comprehensive economic growth and development. Both the government as well as the non-government organizations (NGO) should come forward with deliberate efforts for minimizing the crimes against women. Strong Laws should be passed by the government with the provision of fast track court to control crimes against women. Moral education may be persuaded by the government with the help of NGOs for making the people conscious regarding the crimes against women. It needs to be mentioned that the target of attaining a crime free atmosphere against women can be attained through the empowerment of women. Therefore, the government should undertake appropriate policy formulations for the empowerment of women.

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