CHAPTER III
TREND AND CAUSES OF GENDER DISCRIMINATION IN MEGHALAYA
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MEGHALAYA

Introduction

The United Nation ‘Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against
Women’ in 1993 defines violence against women as “any act of gender-based violence
that results in or likely to result, in physical, sexual, mental harm or suffering to women,
including threat of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty whether
occurring in public or in private life.”¹ Such discrimination are manifested in many
forms like wife-beating, rape, molestation, eve-teasing, sexual harassment and
intimidation at work place, educational institutions and elsewhere, dowry related
violence, emotional and physical abuse, desertion of women, forced pregnancy, forced
sterilization and abortion, female genital mutilation, female infanticide and prenatal sex-
selection, trafficking of women and forced prostitution etc.

Crime and discrimination against women has now become a universal issue.
Initially it is believed to be prevalent only in the male dominated or Patriarchal society.
Its presence in a matrilineal society of Meghalaya is being highlighted only in recent
years due to the fact that such phenomena was traditionally believed to be a taboo by the
society. On the basis of information obtained from relevant sources like print and
electronic media including the Police department shows that crime and violence against
women in the state is increasing. Though there maybe some variation in the nature of
crime and violence against women due to distinct social structure and cultural set up,

¹ (apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/10665/77433/1/WHO_RHR_I2.35_eng.pdf)
however common ones are present in every society, irrespective of castes, class or socio-economic status.

3.1 Crime and discrimination against women in India

From time immemorial women have been suffering from various form of discrimination in our country. A brief account of the different types of crime and discrimination against women is highlighted to obtain a clear understanding of the nature of discrimination against women prevalent in the country.

3.1.1 Types of crime and discrimination against women in the past

i. Devadasi

In India Devadasi symbolizes “servant of God” in which young girls from the lowest castes are married to an idol, deity, or temple. It is believe that parents give the girl child to temples as human offerings to appease the gods. However in reality, they are sexual slaves and forbidden from marrying and have to earn their own income by begging in the streets. Devadasi is an ancient religious practice most common in south India that ensnares young Indian girls into a life of sexual exploitation. Inspite of the fact that the Government of India has banned the practice in 1988, however, it continues to persist, particularly in south India.²

ii. Jauhar

Jauhar is associated with the Rajput custom whereby women voluntarily emulate themselves when their men get defeated by enemy and unable to protect their city or fort. This practiced is done to avoid being enslaved by Muslim soldiers as slavery and becoming sex slave of a Muslim in a harem.

² (The Guardian, Friday 21, January 2011)
iii. Purdah

Purdah, also spelled Pardah, or in Hindi “Parda” (screen or veil), was practiced by the Muslims and later adopted by various Hindus in which women are required to cover their face, body and skin to conceal their form. It symbolized subordination and curtails the right to interact freely in the society. Though, the system has gradually disappearing in Hindu society, but the seclusion and veiling of women continue to persist in a greater or lesser degree in many Islamic community of our country.

iv. Sati

Sati is an old Hindu custom in which a woman decides voluntarily to end her life along with the death of her husband. But there were many incidences in which the women were forced to commit sati even against their wish by dragging them to the lighted pyre.

3.1.2 Types of crime and gender discrimination: violation of human rights to women

Discrimination against women in India starts even when the girl child is inside the womb of her mother. Thus, indicating the very basic “right to life” is denied to women in our country. In 1993, the “World Human Rights Conference in Vienna” first recognized gender–based violence as a human rights violation and the same was declared by the United Nations Declaration. The following are different types of crime and discrimination pertaining to violation of human rights against women prevalent in the country.

i. Discrimination against right to education

Right to education is one of the most important rights of every human being regardless of gender or sex. But, in most cases, it is believe that girls are suited only to
serve as wives and mothers. Though the literacy rate in the country has increase after independence, but the gap between the male and female literacy still persist with 82.14 % and 65.46% respectively as per 2011 census. However in Meghalaya where both men and women get equal opportunity of education, the variation in the literacy rate is negligible.

ii. **Discrimination of political right**

The constitution of India guarantees equal right for both men and women but practically the representation of women in the Parliament and State Legislative Assembly shows a dismal picture where the male out numbers the female counterpart. As a result the effective role in influencing the government initiatives and policies regarding women’s welfare and development take a back seat. Inspite the vocal support for 33% reservation of seats for women in Parliament and State Legislative assembly, the representation of women till date has not reach the mark.

iii. **Discrimination of right to property**

In India the sons’ had an independent share in the ancestral property, whereas the daughter’s shares are limited. The married daughters usually faced harassment and have no rights in ancestral home and due to weak enforcement of laws protecting them, have little access to land and property. On the other hand, the system is different for the matrilineal society of the State of Meghalaya in general and East Khasi hills in particular in which women enjoy more privileged than men by the right of inheritance. However their freedom to exercise their rights as decision maker is still limited.

iv. **Discrimination of right to protection of health**

According to the World Bank publication (1996) on improving women’s health in India indicate that malnutrition is one of the causes of female infertility basically due to differences in the intra–family allocation of food between the male and female
children. In India normally, the male are fed before the female members of the family. Therefore, due to poor diet and lack of proper medication, girls and women are more vulnerable to infections and diseases.

v. **Discrimination of right to equal opportunity for employment and right to get equal wages for equal work**

In India, the employment opportunity of women in the various sectors of the economy is very low compared to men. Any technological changes in agriculture or industry are less favorable to women due to illiteracy and insufficient skills and knowledge. Indian labor market is adverse to women workers as their participation whether in large scale or small scale industries as well as technology based businesses is very limited and for the same work, women are paid less than men. According to Arvind Jayaram in an article on “In Rural India, gender equality is still a distant dream” remarked that in India where women comprise the majority of agricultural labourers, the average wage of women on an average is 30-50% or even lesser than that of men.\(^3\)

vi. **Discrimination of right to live with dignity: Eve teasing**

Eve teasing is an act that violates every aspects of life of a woman- be it physical, spiritual or moral. It is a way of creating the feeling of inferiority complex and insecurity among women. Eve-teasing includes obscene words or gesture, offensive comments and intrusive way of touching women which is perceived to be vulgar. It is a serious issue in many metropolitan cities of India as many Indian women are facing this menace. Whether it is in public transport system, public places, shopping malls or multiplexes, women are vulnerable to the threat of eve teasing everywhere. Thus, denies the fundamental right of women to move freely and carry herself with dignity, solely on the basis of her sex.

\(^3\) *(The Hindu-Businessline, July 14, 2013)*
vii. Child Marriage

As per the law, a girl cannot be married until she at least reached the age of 18. However in Indian society it is a tradition that girl’s marriage are settled even during childhood as it is believe that girls are a burden on the family. But basically this phenomenon of child marriage is linked to poverty, illiteracy, dowry, landlessness and other social problems. The impact of child marriage is widowhood, hindrance of participation in the society, education deprivation, lack of economic independence, poor health and nutritional levels due to early and frequent pregnancies etc.

viii. Dowry harassment and bride burning

The demand for dowry by the husband and his family is a common phenomenon among the Hindus in India. There are many instances in which women died due to burning which is a punishment they received if they are unable to fulfill the demand of their in-law. In spite of the Dowry prohibition Act (1961) passed by the government, which has made dowry demands in wedding illegal, the dowry incidents continue to persist.

ix. Sexual harassment at work place

Sexual harassment is described as harassment which constitutes inappropriate sexual implication and gestures. It includes patting, pinching, grabbing, hugging, brushing against and touching etc. Sexual harassment becomes even more serious when the granting of sexual favors is made in term or condition of the individual's employment, interferes with the individual's work performance or creates an intimidating or hostile work environment. The offensive conduct could be exhibited by a superior, a colleague, a subordinate or a client. These phenomena occur in the society but are not frequently reported or surfaced out due to the fear of losing the job or
promotion etc. or due to the reason that many are not aware that such acts portray discrimination.

x. **Molestation**

Molestation is the sexual acts which include touching of private parts, exposure of genital, taking of pornographic pictures and inducement of sexual acts with the molester. Molestation also applies to sexual gesture by a relative with a minor family member, and any unwanted sexual acts with adults only short of rape.

xi. **Cruelty by husband and relatives**

Cruelty by husband and relatives constitutes (1) any conduct that is likely to drive a women to suicide, (2) any conduct which is likely to cause injury to the life, limb or health of the woman, (3) harassment with the purpose of forcing the women or her relatives to give some property, or (4) harassment because the women or her relatives are either unable to yield to the demand for more money or do not give some share of the property.

xii. **Kidnapping and abduction**

The terms abduction and kidnapping are sometimes used interchangeably. As per common law, kidnapping consisted of the forcible abduction or stealing or carrying away of a person from one’s own country to another, with an intention to cause him or her to be detained against his or her will. Kidnapping may be done for ransom or for political or other reasons. Abduction is a criminal act which involves taking away a person by persuasion, fraud, or by open force or violence.

Abduction and kidnapping were considered separate and independent crimes, but they are not always mutually exclusive. Both the terms refer to the unlawful taking or detention of one person by another.

xiii. **Importation of girls and women**
Importation of girls under the age of twenty one years from any country or from the state of Jammu and Kashmir with the intention that she may be seduce to illicit intercourse with another person or forced to prostitution.

xiv. **Rape**

Rape is a forcible sexual intercourse with a woman (1) either against her will or without her consent, (2) when consent is obtained by putting her or someone she is interested in fear of death or hurt, (3) when consent is obtained because she is of unsound mind or under influenced of alcohol or drugs, (4) with or without her consent, when she is less than 16 years of age. Sexual intercourse by a husband, when his wife is below 18 years of age also constitutes rape.

Rape case is very torturing as the victim has to prove that she has been raped. Moreover it is very difficult for the victim to undergo medical examination immediately after the trauma of assault. Besides, the family too is reluctant to bring in prosecution due to family prestige and hard police procedures.

xv. **Immoral trafficking**

Immoral trafficking is sexual abused and exploitation of persons for commercial purpose. It include running of a brothel, living on the earnings of the prostitute, procuring, inducing or taking a person for the sake of prostitution and detaining a person for prostitution etc.

xvi. **Indecent representation of women**

Indecent representation of women is the depiction of the figure of women or any part of her body through advertisement or in publications, writings, paintings, or in any other manner so as to have effect of being indecent and lewd. It is a way of derogatory to or denigrating women and it is likely to deprave, corrupt or injure the public morality or morals.
xvii. Domestic violence

Domestic violence is one of the greatest obstacles to gender equality. Such violence crosses all the barriers of class, income, culture and religion. It obstructs women to secure their fundamental rights to equal protection under the law and the right to life and liberty.

Domestic violence against women is widely prevalent throughout the country and such violence remains unreported in majority of the cases. Even in a matrilineal society like the Khasis, domestic violence is not a rare phenomenon. Wife beating and abuse by alcoholic husbands are the violence perpetrated against women which are not commonly seen publicly. The husband often demands the hard earned money of the wife for his drinking habit. It is observed that most women generally try to hide such acts of husband from reaching the knowledge of other members of the family or the society, as they are ashamed of talking about it and due to the fear that their husband might leave them or be thrown away from their home. Moreover, interference by the in-laws and extra marital affairs of the husbands are other factors causing domestic violence. Besides, most women hesitate to approach the court because of negligence and due to lack of support system.

3.1.3 Constitutional provision for women

In a democratic political systems different laws, development policies, plans and programs have aimed at women’s advancement. India has also ratified various International conventions and human rights instruments committing to secure equal rights of women. Important among them is the ratification of the Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against women (CEDAW), in 1993. The
Government of India has undertaken the following constitutional and legal provision for the protection of women.

i. Article 14, confers on men and women equal rights and opportunities in Political, economic and social sphere.

ii. Article 15, prohibits, discrimination against any citizen on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex, etc.

iii. Article 16, provides for equality of opportunities relating to employment or appointment to any office under the state.

iv. Article 39 (a), (d), mentions policy security of state equality for both men and women the right to a means of livelihood and equal pay for equal work for both men and women.

v. Article 42, direct the state to make provision for ensuring just and humane conditions of work and maternity leave.

3.1.4 Legal Provisions for women

Following are the provision for women under different Acts.

i. Factories Act 1948: Under this Act, a woman cannot be forced to work beyond 8 hours and prohibits employment of women except 6 A.M. and 7 P.M.

ii. Maternity benefit Act 1961: A women is entitled 12 weeks maternity leave with full wages.

iii. The Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961: Under the provisions of this Act demand of dowry either before marriage, during marriage and or after the marriage is an offence.

iv. The Equal Remuneration Act of 1976: This act provides for the payment of equal wages to both men and women workers for the same work or work of
similar nature. It also prohibits discrimination against women in the matter of recruitment.

v. *The Child Marriage Restrain Act of 1976:* This act raises the age for marriage of a girl to 18 years and that of a boy to 21 years.

vi. *Indian Penal code:* Section 354 and 509 safeguards the interests of women.


viii. Amendments of Criminal law 1983: Provides for a punishment of 7 years in ordinary cases and 10 years for custodial rape cases.

ix. *73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment Act:* reserved 1/3rd seats in Panchayat and urban local bodies for women.

x. *The National Commission for women Act, 1990:* The Commission was set up in January, 1992 to review the Constitutional and legal safeguards for women.


xii. *Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005:* This Act protects women from any act/conduct/omission/commission that harms, injures or potential to harm is considered as domestic violence. It protects the women from physical, sexual, emotional, verbal, psychological, economic abuse.

xiii. *Protection of Women against Sexual Harassment at Workplace Bill, 2010:* The Government introduced the Bill on November 4, 2010, which aims at protecting the women at workplace not only to women employee but also to female clients, customer, students, research scholars in colleges and universities, patients in hospitals. The Bill was passed in Lok Sabha on 3.9.2012.

Moreover, various new legislations have been brought and amendments in existing laws to handle crime against women effectively. These are broadly classified.
under two categories, i.e., (A) The Crimes under the Indian Penal Code (IPC) and (B) The Crimes under the Special and Local Laws (SLL).

A. **The Crimes under the Indian Penal Code (IPC):** There are seven crimes included under this head. They are:

(i) Rape (Section 376 IPC): Rape cases have been further categorized as Incest Rape and Other Rape cases.

(ii) Kidnapping and Abduction (Section 363-373 IPC)

(iii) Dowry Death (Section 302, 304 IPC) and Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961.

(iv) Torture (Cruelty by husband and relatives) (Section 498A- IPC)

(v) Molestation (Section 354 IPC)

(vi) Sexual harassment (Section 509 IPC)

(vii) Importation of Girls (Section 366-B IPC)

B **The Crimes under the Special and Local Laws (SLL):**

Although all laws are not gender specific, the provisions of law affecting women significantly has been viewed periodically and amendments carried out to keep pace with the emerging requirements. The gender specific laws for which crimes statistics are recorded throughout the country are as follows:

(i) Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act, 1956.


(iii) Indecent Representation of Women (Prohibition) Act, 1986.

(iv) Sati Prevention Act, 1987

3.2 **The status of women in Meghalaya**

Unlike many Indian states, Meghalaya is a state in which a matrilineal setup is being adopted from ancient times, and continues till date. It is a system where
considerable social concessions such as, title, inheritance, residence after marriage and succession are traced through women. Therefore, under such social system many would consider that the women of the state are very fortunate to possess a special status which women elsewhere in the country do not have. Indeed one would believe that the matrilineal Khasi society can provide the best example in bringing about a positive attitude towards women throughout the world.

The State has experienced fast growth in many spheres since the attainment of statehood. No one can deny that with the passage of time all round positive growth and development has been taking place in the state. However, with the development, negative changes have been experienced in recent years which leads to the degradation of the socio-cultural values and the moral ethics of the entire society. The most disgusting menaces experienced and reported regularly throughout the state these days is the increasing crime and discrimination against women. Thus the society as a whole including the members of various women organization has expressed concern over the rising trends of such social evils in a matrilineal society like Meghalaya.

As mentioned earlier, Meghalaya is inhabited by the tribal communities such as the Khasis, Jaintias and Garos which follow a matrilineal social structure. The traditional matrilineal system of the Khasis is that the ancestral property or Ka Nongtymmen such as land, ancestral house including movable ones etc is passed from the mother to the youngest daughter or Ka Khadduh who is the custodian of such property and the caretaker of the aged parents and any unmarried members of the family. However, for the disposal or used of such property all major decision-making is entrusted to the males, most importantly, the maternal uncles or the Kni who is a key

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4 (Support Services to counter violence against women’ in Meghalaya- A Resource Directory, 2003, pp.11)
figure in the family. The maternal uncle is also the main spoke person in the case of marriage negotiations and in most important family issues including those pertaining to economic decisions. Therefore, the condition of women in the state is at times more intricate than those in the patriarchal societies.

The ownership of property by women in Khasi society does not ensure them the same gender opportunity as men, as access to public bodies by men often enabled them to have more social prestige and political power than women. This misleads the perception that women of the state enjoy all the rights. Moreover, as experienced by women in different parts of the world, women here too faces discrimination of different forms, thus, add more to their burden of being assumed to have more command in everything.

The social system among the Garos also resembles the Khasis and Jaintias where women held an important status by enjoying much respect and entitled the right of inheritance and lineage. On closer examination, practically the system shows that women do not have complete authority of their rights, as decision making power rest with the males (Mahari). Husband, who is considered to be the head of the family exercises full authority over household as well as other property of the family. Women also do not possess power over any village related matters because a village Nokma who is the chief of the village, has certain functions that women cannot performed. Though the system of a matrilineal society appears to be unchanged in the state but the internal structure has altered in many respects owing to many changes that are taking place in the society. The present day matrilineal system in the state is more complex in nature, where two principles of matrilineal and patriarchal seem to exist and intermingle in numerous ways. For instance, division of property among the Khasis, in certain cases has become bilateral where both sons and daughters have equal shares.
Therefore an assessment of the status of women in Meghalaya reveals the fact that despite being a matrilineal society, patriarchal ideology exists in the social system which ultimately gives way for gender inequality. Poor economic condition of the people is prevalent in which the womenfolk particularly are the sufferer. This has resulted in the occurrence of problems associated with various forms of crimes and violence against women in the state.

3.3 Crime and Gender discrimination against women in Meghalaya-
A historical account

Gender discrimination is as old as humanity itself. No one really know for sure how this evil came to be a part of human social life, nevertheless the detrimental impact on any society has been far reaching. It is true that as per any religious doctrine, women should be submissive to men. However nowhere in any religion or even in the social setting of the State or any other society, violence or discrimination against women is encouraged at any point of time. The same is also true in the matrilineal Khasi society where women are generally a respectable lot.

Many incidences of crimes and discrimination against women have been highlighted in the form of folk tales. In fact many waterfalls in the state bear the names of women who face discrimination in their life thus resulted in tragic incidents such as suicide. One of the tragic tales from the Khasi hills is about Ka Likai, which portray the most saddest and bizarre story of the cruelest kind of suffering a widow name Likai received from her second husband, U Snar. After the death of her husband, U Kynrem, Likai marry Snar, a drunkard, who betrayed her by preparing her a meal out of the body of her own child, ka Lasubon. It was after Likai had consumed the meal that she found out to be her own daughter. Therefore she ended her life by plunging into “Kshaid
Umlong” or “Dark waterfall”. This horrible fate had endowed the waterfall with an unhappy name, “Kshaid Noh Ka Likai” which till date continues to remain as an important tourist spot. It is located at Rangjiyrteh village, 20 Kms to the west of Cherrapunjee.

Sunapani is another tragic tale of a girl name Suna, who lost her parents from the time she was very young. Having no one to care for her, she was compelled to stay with her stepmother who ill-treated her in many ways. Many times she was severely punished and beaten by her stepmother even for a small mistake she committed. In one such occasion, when she can no longer tolerate the situation, she decided to end her fate by plunging into a fall which now came to be known as Kshaid Sunapani, which is located at Mawlai, 2 Kms towards the north away from Shillong city.

Cases of crimes and violence against women can also be traced in literatures. Primerose Gatphoh (1968) in his book entitled “Sawdong ka lyngwiar dpei” do mentioned tragic tales encountered by women in our society. Ka Rangli is a story told about a beautiful orphan girl who lives during the ancient days. Once there was a cruel king, who admires her and wanted to take her as his bride. Knowing the cruel nature of the king, Rangli declined his proposal. This anger the king who sends one of his helper name Borkyndad to kill her. The existence of such kind of literatures reveals the fact that crimes and violence against women is not strange in the society since olden days and is still prevailing.

The occurrence of crimes against women cannot be denied particularly in societies dominated by men, but one cannot ignore the fact that such menaces also occurs in matrilineal cultural set up like the state of Meghalaya. This is evident from the increasing number of crimes against women reported almost on regular bases in print
and electronic media. The matrilineal culture of the state of Meghalaya seems to allow women to enjoy a little more liberty than their counterparts in the rest of the country. However, in the true sense, their life is not free from violence. Desertion is a common phenomenon in the state. Rape, molestation, sexual harassment and domestic violence and many more are also in existence. The table 3.01 shows crime against women prior to the present century.

Table 3.01: Crime against women in Meghalaya prior to the present century, 1997-2000

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Rape</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Molestation</td>
<td>09</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Cruelty by husband or relatives</td>
<td>01</td>
<td>00</td>
<td>00</td>
<td>02</td>
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Source: Northeast Network, Shillong (March 2003)

The occurrence of crime and discrimination against women in the state was minimal during 1997-2000 and shows wide variation over the period of time. The figures also fluctuate and mark by irregular trend. The common types of crimes are rape and molestation including cruelty by husband and relatives. The incidence of crime is not significant in Meghalaya during 1997-2000 and even shows negative growth.

3.4 Recent crime against women in Meghalaya, 2001-2013

Meghalaya experienced many changes in its social environmental status in recent years. The fast growth of population has put pressure on various aspects of the region like overcrowding, congestion, unemployment problem, pollution and increasing anti-social activities which has become a serious problem for the state as a whole.
Despite many initiatives introduced by the government as part of the mission to overcome these problems, social evils such as rape, molestation, kidnapping/abduction, eve teasing, murder for dowry, cruelty by husband or relatives, importation of girls, immoral trafficking etc. still persist in the society.

Table 3.02: Year-wise total crime against women in Meghalaya, 2001-2013

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No</th>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th>NUMBER</th>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>72</td>
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<td>2002</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>4.05</td>
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<td>143</td>
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<td>6</td>
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<td>2007</td>
<td>171</td>
<td>7.96</td>
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<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>2013</td>
<td>391</td>
<td>18.21</td>
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Source: Office of the Director General of Police, Shillong, Office of the Superintendent of Police, Shillong, All Police Stations, East Khasi hills, Meghalaya.

Meghalaya has witnessed astonishing growth of crimes against women during 2001-2013. The number was 72 in 2001, 87 in 2002 and 85 in 2003. It rose to 110 in 2004 and 143 in 2005. The crime graph escalated further with 186 cases in 2006 and 171 in 2007. It again increases to 209 in 2008, 241 in 2009, and 279 in 2010 and reaches up to 391 in 2013. The number of crime against women vary from time to time and the increasing trend indicates the seriousness of such crimes which requires
attention by all concerns before such phenomena become complicated and hard to deal with.

Figure 3.01: Trend of crime against women in Meghalaya, 2001-2013

MEGHALAYA TREND OF CRIME AGAINST WOMEN (2001-2013)

Source: Office of the Director General of Police, Shillong, Office of the Superintendent of Police, Shillong, All Police Stations, East Khasi hills, Meghalaya.

During the period of 2001-2003, the number of crime against women in the state is very low and irregular. The figures 72, 87 and 85 during 2001-2003 appear to be very insignificant and ineffective. However, from 2004 onwards it shows an increasing trend with the figures between the previous and recent period shows wider gap with the passage of time. The figures may fluctuate in certain years, but it is obvious from figure 3.01 that there is possibility of continuous increase of crime against women in the state in the near future.

Furthermore, in Table 3.03, the different type of crime against women in the state during 2001-2013 is being highlighted. The data revealed staggering figures of rape cases which is increasing at an alarming rate over a period of time.
Table 3.03: Types of crime against women in Meghalaya, 2001-2013

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Rape</td>
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<td>36</td>
<td>41</td>
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<td>65</td>
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<td>150</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>164</td>
<td>202</td>
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<td>Kidnapping &amp; Abduction</td>
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<td>20</td>
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<td>20</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Dowry Death</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
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<td>8</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Molestation</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>47</td>
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<td>Sexual Harassment</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Cruelty by Husband &amp; Relatives</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>34</td>
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<td>27</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>27</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>Immoral Trafficking (P) Act</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
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<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>72</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>143</td>
<td>186</td>
<td>171</td>
<td>209</td>
<td>241</td>
<td>279</td>
<td>279</td>
<td>272</td>
<td>391</td>
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</table>

Source: Office of the Director General of Police, Shillong, Office of the Superintendent of Police, Shillong, All Police Stations, East Khasi hills, Meghalaya.

The study shows that the matrilineal society no longer guarantees dignity and safety to women. The most rampant of all the crimes encountered by the women in the state is rape which records the highest number of all the type of crimes against women. The number of rape increased from 26 in 2001 to 65 in 2005. With the passage of time it increases to 112 (2009) and reached up to 202 (2013). Molestation is another type of crime indicating an increasing trend next only to rape. The crime chart would be higher had the occurrence of all crimes been reported. It is learnt that most of the victims and the victims family hesitate to approach the concern authority when face with such circumstances due to many complex reasons.
Table 3.04: Types of crime against women in Meghalaya, 2001-2013

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No</th>
<th>Types of Crime</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Rape</td>
<td>1224</td>
<td>48.48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Kidnapping &amp; Abduction</td>
<td>324</td>
<td>12.83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Dowry death</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>2.77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Molestation</td>
<td>660</td>
<td>26.14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Sexual harassment</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0.24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Cruelty by husband &amp; relatives</td>
<td>206</td>
<td>8.16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Importation of girls</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Immoral trafficking (P) Act</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>1.23%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Office of the Director General of Police, Shillong, Office of the Superintendent of Police, Shillong, All Police Stations, East Khasi hills, Meghalaya.

Table 3.04 shows the total number and percentage of different types of crime against women in the state during 2001-2013. As mentioned earlier, of the total crimes, Rape constitutes the highest proportion with 48.48%, followed by molestation with...
26.14% and kidnapping and abduction 12.83%. Other types of crime though constitute a small percentage but clearly indicate of their recent occurrence in the state and may show increasing trend in the future.

With the passage of time it is observe that the nature of crime against women in the state is changing in terms of number and types. Till date, rape and molestation continues to be the most common crimes in the state. The occurrence of other crimes in recent years like cruelty by husband and relatives and immoral trafficking is highlighted.

Figure 3.03: Types of crime against women in Meghalaya in percentage, 2001-2013

The state of Meghalaya has changed practically in all spheres of activities in the recent decades. The growth and development in terms of social, economic, political, educational, health etc. has been tremendous. On the other hand, the degrading moral ethics in the society is also observed and the negative impact on the overall welfare of the state has become hard to ignore. Crime against women in the state reveal the truth
that the problem associated with this social evil cannot be done away with easily. Hence it need hard and strong effort from every section of the society to overcome such practice that threatened the security of the people especially women.

3.5 Factors influencing the increasing crime against women in the State

While examining the root cause of the increasing rate of crimes against women across the State, it is evident that there are numerous factors that have fueled the growth of all these social evils which result in the degrading of the overall social well being of the state. The occurrence of crimes against women is more rampant especially in East Khasi hills district due to concentration of a larger population belonging to different socio-cultural background. The in-migration of people from elsewhere especially the exodus of young people from rural areas in search for better livelihood and living facilities in the city such as Shillong has compounded the problem. The following are some of the factors influencing crime against women in the State.

Alcoholism: One of the factors of crime against women is alcoholism which is very common in our society from the olden days. It is a fact that once a person gets intoxicated, it encourages the individual to indulge in all sorts of misbehavior which often culminate into violence and crimes against women. When such cases occur in a society, it is sad to note that the durbar or local authority usually take up the matter only when the damage is done and has become a nuisance for the village or the locality as a whole.

Social taboo: At all point of time, the issue of crime and discrimination against women was regarded by the society as a taboo. The traditional society also has failed on their part to address the issue and no stringent laws have been adopted to arrest such
evils at the earliest. It is learnt that most of the victims and their family hesitate to approach the concern authority when encountered with violence due to the assumption that it might bring dishonor and shame to the family or due to threaten by the perpetrator.

**Lack of enforcement of prevailing laws that protect women:** Meghalaya is facing with unusual rise in crimes against women due to lack of enforcement of prevailing laws that protect women. It is evident that the conviction and punishment rate for rape cases or any offenses as of now is very low. One of the reasons for the backlog of pending trials is the usual lackadaisical nature of the court which often delays the delivery of verdict against the perpetrators therefore give way to increase of crimes.

**Lack of knowledge and awareness of human rights:** The lack of proper knowledge and awareness of human rights among women is also another reason associated with rising crimes against women as people become rather reluctant to inform any such incidences by presuming that the matter may involve a lot of formalities and expenditure.

**Influence of outside cultures and lifestyles:** The present generation are greatly influence by outside cultures (especially the western) communicated to our society through cinema, television, the internet, electronic media and various other mediums which often pollute the minds of the young generations as well as adults. It is also observed that because of easy access and exposure to such modern facilities, there is deterioration in the traditional values and resulted in a high tendency especially amongst the younger age group to be captivated by modern western trend and lifestyle that invite and encourage more perverted mindset leading to crimes and violence against women in the society.
Negative influence of print and electronic media: The negative influence of print and electronic media, in the form of advertisement linked with sexual related information published on a regular basis that attract the attention of many are also responsible for crime against women.

Easy access and exposure to modern technology like mobile phone, internet and social networking: These days regardless a person is rich or poor, the use of internet, mobile phones etc, is no longer a luxury rather it has become a necessity. No doubt development of such technologies is good and useful. However the negative influences it has especially on the mindset of the younger generation of the society such as easy exposure to pornography and other related sites seems to be more of a curse rather than a blessings to the society as a whole as many issues of crimes and gender discrimination are associated with it.

Inadequate sex awareness programs: Inadequate sex awareness programs including gender related issues amongst the younger generation at educational institutions and in the families is another factor that gives rise to issues related to women. Lack of knowledge concerning these social issues, has resulted in the deterioration of the welfare of the society including the security of women.

Lack of counseling at home: Behind all the social evils and taboos, is perhaps the lack of counseling at home, especially when both parents are too busy fulfilling other necessities of life. These days technologies like mobile phone, television, internet is taking away the time between the parents and children. Therefore parents have failed in their role to offer essential moral values to their children. This has lead to the erosion of the vital socio-cultural fabric and moral ethics further accelerating the growth of crime and gender discrimination.
The trend and patterns of crime against women in Meghalaya is not a new phenomenon. It signifies that there is no boundary for its occurrence even in a matrilineal society. The identification of the various factors responsible for the occurrence of crimes against women provides a better understanding of the nature of such crimes in East Khasi hills district. The study will further enable to adopt effective and appropriate measures to prevent the occurrence of such social evils in the society.

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