CHAPTER VI

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The status of women in the district, both historically and socially, has been one of the respects and reverence, but they continue to struggle for their own identity and esteem. Despite the constitutional provisions that guarantee equality of sexes, rampant discrimination and exploitation of women continue to persist. It is time that women should be given the status they deserve in the society.

The study has brought into light the vital issue of understanding the social dilemma associated with crime and violence against women in East Khasi hills district. Crime and discrimination against women in East Khasi hills shows wide variation of occurrence in terms of time and space and indicate increasing trend. Identifying specific reasons behind the tremendous increase of crime and discrimination in the district is not easy as the problem become more complex in a geographical setup which embraces larger population from diverse socio-economic structure. Complete eradication of such anti social activities seems to be far from reality, however, initiatives can be taken to control the menace.

6.1 Findings

1. Rape and molestation the most common type of crime against women. Of all the types of crimes against women in the district, rape and molestation are the most common. Similarly it is the same in other districts of the state. The occurrence of such crimes is more regular at all point of time compare to other types of crime against women.
2. **Crime and discrimination against women is higher in the lower income family.** Study shows that crime and violence against women is higher among the lower economic groups. This group constitutes women with low financial resources. They are illiterate and lack of sufficient knowledge and have no alternatives to prevent violence. It also occurs among the higher income groups but they are able to tackle such violence as they have better economic status.

3. **The perpetrators of crime and violence against women are well known to the victim.** Crime against women is perpetrated by persons well known to the victim and the family. It usually involves those people who have a good and cordial relationship with the family like neighbours, friends and lovers and even close relatives and family members like husband, fathers, step-fathers, uncle etc. In most cases the rights of the victims are usually sacrificed in order to protect the name of the family and that of the perpetrator. Even accounted crime fails to capture such crucial information (Clippings 20).

4. **Perpetrators of crime and violence are normal persons.** Study also shows that crime and violence against women is associated with alcoholism, and the perpetrators are usually normal persons.

5. **The awareness of the right of women leads to the increase in the number of reports on crime against women.** In recent years increasing knowledge and awareness by the people about their rights has encourage the victim to confront the issue. Urban areas show more number of crimes than the rural areas due to easy access to support services and more awareness by the people.

6. **The attitude of the law enforcing agencies towards the victim is indifferent.** In many cases when the victim complaint of any incidence against them the attitude of the
police is generally indifferent and negative, rather than helpful and cooperative. A case was reported by a women about an assault receive from her husband but the police officer by ignoring her complaint ask her to report when the incident happen again. This has created an obstacle for the victim who seeks protection when encounter with violence. Study also shows that 51.72 % of the victims prefer the help of counselors and women support service centers than reporting the issue to the police.

7. **Compensation scheme for the victims.** The Meghalaya Victim Compensation Scheme 2011 introduced by the Government meant for the rape victim with a maximum amount of Rs.50,000 and Rs. 25,000 for injuries causing severe mental agony. However, it is universally agreed that the compensation scheme for the victim can never be the solution to women issue in the society because the mental and physical damage is un-repairable and the loss of dignity, trauma and stigma cannot be compensated. Moreover the compensation scheme is not even aiming at solving the problem of crime and violence against women since the perpetrators of crimes are not the one’s paying the compensation.

8. **Negative influence of modern communication technology.** The use of mobile phones and internet facilities has now become more of a necessity than a luxury for the people. There is no boundary with regard to age, social class or economic status for any person to get access to internet facilities. The negative impact it has on the mindsets of the people, particularly the younger generations is enormous and one such examples is easy accessible and exposure to pornography and other related sites which result to more complicated issue associated with crimes and violence against women. Such technology acts like platforms whereby women are being sexually exploited and disgracefully presented and flashed out through mobile phones and social networking sites. Cyber crime is another serious issue encountered by women these days.
The media is regularly communicating with the people from various section of the society. The media coverage of high-profile crime incidents has helped to increase community awareness of the issues of crime and violence against women. It is observe that media sometime exaggerated the issue in order to attract public attention to buy the news usually term as paid news.

9. **Crime and violence against women varies in urban and rural areas.** Rural areas are represented by population which is comparatively uniform in terms of socio-cultural and economic condition make the issue less difficult to handle. Whereas urban areas like Shillong which constitute larger population from different socio-economic background make the issue more difficult and complicated.

10. **Social taboo attach with reporting of such crime by the victims.** The issue of crime and violence against women is usually considered as a taboo. Such mentality becomes more of a hindrance for the victims to confront any crime perpetrated against them and prevent them from acquiring their rights.

    When crime and violence occurs within the family it is tolerated in many contexts and goes unnoticed due to shameful feelings and to protect the family from the social stigma. In certain cases, the victim withdraws themselves after reported as they choose to compromise with the perpetrators. Yet some of them due to negligence disappear without any respond. Most of the incidence of crime and violence remain hidden from the knowledge of the concern authority, thus making the task for eradicating such social evil from the society even harder.

    Study also shows that the conservative attitude in the family system create the feeling of fear in the victim to reveal any incidence of crime against them as the reaction of the family members of the victims is rather sensitive than sympathetic. Therefore,
putting their life at risk and inviting more problems. There are incidences in which victims choose to stay with friends and close relatives rather than returning back to their parents when encountered with violence.

11. Improper maintenance of the data related to crime against women. Data related to crime and violence against women in the district is collected from accurate and relevant sources like the department of police. Lack of information related to age and other relevant information about the victim and the perpetrator has created lots of hindrances in the process of getting a complete picture of the problem. The negligence of those who are responsible in the process of compilation and updating of the data have resulted to wrong impression on women related issues. However, in recent years, computerized method was adopted to update the data on a regular basis.

12. Poor implementation of laws concerning crime and violence against women. Unusual rise in crimes against women is due to lack of enforcement of prevailing laws that protect women. Easy availability of bail by the culprit makes the investigation more difficult. Study also shows that the accused is getting bail even during the process of investigation causing the victims to seek help and protection.

13. Domestic violence. The issue of crime and violence in the family is the most serious arising from broken family, dispute and misunderstanding among the members of the family, drinking habit of the male member, financial crisis or economic stress etc. thus further lead to all sorts of crime and violence. Children who are exposed to such violence at home are more aggressive in behaviour and have the potential of creating any issues of crime and violence in the society. Thus parents who failed in their role as mentor and guide to the younger members of the family and to impart them good moral examples contributes to anti-social activities in the society.
Crime and violence against women in East Khasi hills district shows an increasing trend during the period 2001-2013. It is difficult to assess the causes and solutions to women’s issues when diversity in the socio-cultural and economic aspects exists in the society. Addressing the issue of violence against women in recent years has gained momentum, but the scope and magnitude of the problem is an on-going debate. The problem of crime and violence is deeply rooted and complex in nature. Mere enacted of laws would not be adequate to protect women from discrimination, unless they are implemented sincerely, honestly and effectively.

6.2 Suggestions

Elimination of all kinds of crime and violence against women would require cooperation and collective participation of all concerns. Therefore, understanding the nature of the problem in the study area and the measures to be adopted to eradicate such menace should encompass every sphere of the society. Moreover, due to the sensitivity of the issue, intervention at multi-levels is essential. The following suggestions have been considered with a positive aim that it would be appropriate if any steps are to be adopted to tackle crime and violence against women.

1. The role of Individual

Regardless of gender or sex, every member of the society is responsible for the occurrence of crime and violence against women. It has been observed that in almost all the cases men are responsible for the occurrence of crime against women. When examine closely into the problem, women are equally responsible for such social menace. Therefore it requires a gender-neutral approach when dealing with gender issues. It is the responsibility of each and every members of the society to control and prevent the occurrence of crime against women. An individual’s self-respect, self-
control, self-discipline, self-conscious and so on sometimes determines crime and gender discrimination in the society. Therefore, every citizen should identify themselves as responsible individuals and participate in order to bring about a better and safe social environment. Women should be more positive to express any violence perpetrated against them in a right way so that appropriate method could be adopted in addressing the problem. They should be cautious enough both mentally and physically to ensure their security, that no one could exploit them under adverse circumstances in life.

2. The role of the family

Family is the best place that inculcates both the sexes the positive values of life like honesty, simplicity, modesty, sense of responsibility and respect for others. However, it is observed that there is something fundamentally wrong in the way the younger generations are brought up within the families these days. Increasing number of broken families, growing uncompromising disputes and disharmony among family member are the common features of modern family which has greatly deteriorate the very essence of moral values and ethics which is highly required in the family. It is observe that high exposure to technology like television, social networking and mobile phones etc has created a gap between the parents and the children resulting to the erosion of the vital socio-cultural fabric and moral ethics further accelerating the growth of crime and gender discrimination. It is high time that family should realize their role by taking the initiative to teach their children the right way of life without gender biasness. (Clippings 44, 47)

Training of gender sensitization from the family itself is very important where men learn to treat women with all respect. Moreover, parents should not hesitate to discuss the issues related to crime against women with the children so that they learn to
protect themselves and to handle the situation in time of need. Parents should break the gap with their children and should be serious enough to listen to their complaints about anyone who behave differently and tries to take advantage of them. Thus, changes should start from home and require each family to change their mindset about gender issues as only a strong family support that can deal with violence against women in the society.

3. **The role of the society**

The role of the society to identify the root causes of the problems related to various women issues is very important (Clippings 48). It is high time for gender sensitization in the society too where women should be given the rightful place and that the conservative attitude which looks upon them as inferior and weak should be changed. Moreover, their role as mothers, sisters, daughters and good companion need to understand and respect.

When issues of crimes and violence against women occur in the society, it is usually ignored by the local authority and the society. Earlier, the traditional society also had also failed on their part to address the women issues. Therefore, it is important to suggest that the Village Defense Parties (VDPs) should be empowered to maintained strict and regular vigilance and to prevent the locality from the occurrence of such problems and not to be mere spectators but to take necessary action at the earliest. The society needs a combine effort of strong community leadership and women’s organization etc. to play a proactive role in order to strengthen the position of women in the society. Empowerment of women in the society is essential to combat crimes against women.
Religious institutions also can play important role in eradicating the issue of crime and gender discrimination against women in the society. So far their role to address such issues remains insignificant. Various religious institutions are found to be located in every locality, can easily reach the people from different sections of the society and make the task easier to combat such evils. It is learnt that people usually listen to religious leaders more than others in the society. Therefore, it is high time for the religious institutions to take up measures and to discuss the issue seriously and openly so that the people can acknowledged the problem.

4. Role of Educational Institutions

Educational institutions too can play a very important role as they are directly connected with the most vulnerable and younger age group of the society. No doubt, women cells have been established in colleges and universities for the protection of women. However, the present of such cells may not have much impact. It is suggested that if the issues concerning women are to be considered seriously, introduction of sex education in the academic curriculum is required. Though such studies may not help complete eradication of the problem of crime and gender issues, yet the information and knowledge that the younger generation may received from such studies, will at least help to reduce the problem.

Besides, initiatives can also be taken to include Human Rights studies including women’s right as part of the curriculum at educational institutions as such studies will enable the students to be aware of their rights in the society which is very much needed when concern with the issue of crime and gender discrimination. Such knowledge and awareness will surely help young people to become better citizens in the future.
5. **The role of Women organizations and Non-Governmental organizations**

One cannot ignore the role of Non-governmental organizations such as the North East Network, the IMPULSE NGO, the Governmental agencies like the State Commission for women, Women support centers etc in combating the issue of crime and gender discrimination in the district and the state as a whole. Infact without their effort the issue would have remained imperceptible from the society. Moreover, it is appreciating that such organizations has made efforts to identify the victims and help them to take the right steps to fight for their rights and justice. However, it is suggested that such organizations should conduct series of awareness programmes, seminar, workshops at different locations on the various aspects of violence and oppression against women by involving people of the society including the students. Moreover, focused should be made to discussions on remedial measures to counter the issue.

The presence of women support service centers is very essential in providing counseling and support services to the victims in time of need. However, studies shows that they are mostly confined in few areas like Shillong thus making it difficult for the victims from far off places to get easy access to such services. It is suggested that support centers should be established at different locations approachable to the victims.

The women support centers and other Government agencies like the Meghalaya State Commission for Women, the Social Welfare, the NGO’s etc. are playing very important role by providing counseling to the victim of crime and violence, especially women. Moreover, Victims of crime do not require professional counseling but need only supportive persons who can listen to them sympathetically and help them face the legal, psychological and social crisis. It is also felt that it is equally important that men
should also received counseling. Thus, if counseling centers for men is setup, it is likely that the problem may be reduced in the near future.

6. The role of Print and electronic media

The role of print and electronic media is very important in bringing women issues to public domain in an effective manner. It is a platform whereby eminent personalities, experts and decision-makers share their point of views on various aspects of gender issues. However, it is suggested that the media should avoid making certain issue larger than it is suppose to be as it may have a negative influence on the society at large.

7. The role of the Government

The Government is the most important institution in dealing with the overall development and well being of the people at large. It is the task of the government to arrest continuously deteriorating law and order situation in the society. Government institutions such as the Police department are performing their duty all round the clock to combat anti social activities from time to time. Considering the issue of increasing crime and violence against women, the government has recently established separate women police stations in all the districts of the state including women police cells at all police stations. The effort is highly appreciated, as it has helped in many ways to handle women related issues. It is important to suggest that the human resource in the women’s police should be strengthening to ensure easily handling of the case in the near future. Moreover, cordial relationship between the Police and the public is very important to help the victims of crime and violence to counter their problems in a better way.

It is appreciating that the police department have adopted computerized method to regularly update the incidence to reported crimes against women. It is strongly suggested that the police department should ensure accurate and proper maintenance of
reports on crime and violence against women to prevent wrong impression and avoid misinterpretation to the issue in the future.

Free legal aids and medical assistance offered by the Government for the victims of crimes should reach the knowledge of everyone in the society particularly in the rural areas to ensure that those who deserve such facilities are benefitted. It is suggested that the same should be sincerely implemented for the welfare of all concerns.

It is appreciating that the government has taken the initiatives by introducing compensation schemes for the victim particularly the rape victim. It is important to suggest that such compensation would be effective if the perpetrators should pay the amount rather than the government.

There is however no proper short stay homes or shelter home to rehabilitate the victims of crime and violence in cases of requirement, even on a temporary basis. It is learnt that there is no resource for the establishing of such facilities. Therefore, it is suggested that if such initiatives be taken up by the concern authority would strengthen further support.

8. **Proper implement of laws pertaining to crime and discrimination against women which can be shaped only through conscious Political action**

The Government has amended laws pertaining to crime and gender discrimination against women. It is observed that due to lack of proper implementations of the laws by the concern authorities many issues related to crimes and violence against women could not be solved. It is suggested that such laws should be implemented honestly. Speedy time-bound justice is required to reduce such menaces in many ways.
6.3 Summary and Conclusion

The issue of crime against women in the society is a sign of social malfunction resulting from psychological and spiritual dilemma. Such perpetrations are criminal offences beyond the preview of ordinary citizens to deal with. Therefore it requires competent authorities to adopt stringent and appropriate steps against the perpetrators as per the law suitable with the nature of the crime. It is appreciating that the State Government has address the issue in a positive way. Moreover, the role of other institutions like the Meghalaya State Commission for Women, the Department of Social Welfare, Government of Meghalaya, the NGOs and other organizations to curb the presence of such social evils in the society has been remarkable. The Police department also has done tremendous job to mitigate such problems and it is a welcome effort from the Government of setup women police stations in all the district headquarters to monitor and address this menace. The setting up of special court to deal with cases related to rape is also a commendable effort of the judicial authorities.

Inspite of all the efforts to bring a change towards a more gender-just society crime and violence against women continues to persist. In recent years, the incidents of aggressive violence against women have been reported to be escalating alarmingly which is a cause of concern. The increasing awareness of the rights among women gives rise to feminist movement and results in a new sensitivity to all forms of suppression of women by men. Women remain economically disadvantaged, making them vulnerable and unable to escape violence. They are also unable to depend on the government to protect them from physical violence occurring at home. The incident of the most inhuman and brutal gang-rape of an innocent girl in a moving bus at Delhi on 16th December 2012 has set an example that women are not free from violence against them.
The incident has caused common men to react and express emotions. Moreover, mass protests and agitations all over the country suggest that the society can no longer bear injustice silently.

The study also shows that not only socio-economic deprived women but even employed women also face crime and violence. Infact many women live in conditions of abject deprivation of their fundamental human rights for no other reason than they are women. The findings show that the types and numbers of crime against women in the study area are changing and increasing with time. It is essential to acknowledge their presence so that effective precautions can be taken at the earliest. The concentration of crimes is also not uniform. Though focusing on those areas of high concentration is required but identifying the remedial measures from general perspective is important so that the overall betterment of the society is achieved.

People are perhaps intensely debating about many genders related issues in order to arrive at possible legal and non-legal remedies. The women of the present century can no longer bear violence silently. They have raised voice against all kinds of discrimination and oppression against them including the insensitivity of the government and sluggish judicial system and are now seeking for basic human rights and privileges. It is high time that Government should take appropriate action so that such social menace can be control and minimize in the society.

None-the-less the spirit of the International Women’s Day 2013 on “The Gender Agenda: Gaining momentum.” including the UN theme for International women’s Day 2013 which pledged “A Promise is a promise: Time for action to end violence against women”, should not lose power and the message should be spread out and reach to each and every society and family. To overcome these evils in the society, it should start
from home, where parent guide their children to lead a decent and respectable live in the society. Crimes against women cannot be stopped by the Police alone nor do NGO’s and other organizations can reduce the problem if the society at large is ignoring the same. Therefore it is sincerely believe that only collective responsibility can eradicate such menace. The observation of International women day is to recognized women in the society and number of women organizations have been actively working for the freedom and empowerment of women. However, all the efforts to express the problem outwardly cannot ensure solution to the problem so far as the damage from inside is not taken care of. Educating women will not completely solve the problem in the society. However, empowerment of women with socio-economic status would minimize exploitation against them and ensured their security. Further, lack of well-planned educational, economic and social programmes from the grass root level is another factor responsible for such acute and pitiable condition of the women in the society. Women being vulnerable, are prone to land up in unpleasant activities, such as abused, sexually exploited and prostitutions for the sake of surviving in life.

The adoption of international indicators on the scope, prevalence and incidence of violence against women will strengthen the knowledge base on the issue. Such indictors provide an incentive to collect data on violence against women and to monitor the extent of such violence, and trends over time. The data can enhance the capacity to evaluate legislative and policy reforms to address and eliminate violence against women.

To conclude the study is a wake-up call. The society, communities and individuals need to change their mindsets, attitudes and beliefs towards women. Women and girls also need a healthy social environment. By promoting their participation and empowerment in the society can contribute to end violence against them. Women
should not be neglected for their source of immense power. They act as educator and
guide being a mother, sister and companion. It is never too late to end the exploitation
of women and girls through proper education and strong social, moral and cultural
values.

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