The primary purpose of this research was to explore the nature and
dowry crimes against women and to analyse the characteristics of the offence,
the offenders and the victims. The emphasis in the study was not on the
psychological dynamics of the individual murderers and their victims but on
their social characteristics, social relationships and on the offensive acts
themselves, i.e., on the modus operandi of the crime and the situations in
which crime occurred. Patterns were sought regarding the planning of the
offence; the age, income and education, etc., of the victim and the offender;
spatial and temporal patterns; techniques and strategies; the degree of violence
and resistance; and so forth.

The orientation towards these problems was strictly empirical though
qualitative and partially statistical, and the model used was phenomenological.
While the study was conducted with a sociological or socio-cultural perspective,
it was not guided by a specific theory. The associations between various
variables were tested with several tests of significance. The study is, thus, now
able to refute some of the myths and misconceptions surrounding crimes
against women - crime like dowry-death indicate important policy measures for
both treatment and prevention.
7.1 DOWRY DEATH AND HARASSMENT

1. Middle-class women have a higher rate of victimisation than lower-class or upper-class women.

2. Seven out of ten girls who are killed over dowry issue belong to the age-group of 21-24 years, i.e., they are matured not only chronologically but socially and emotionally too.

3. No correlation exists between the level of the education of the girl and her murder on the dowry issue.

4. Bride-burning shows no pattern or trend in terms of income.

5. Dowry death is not a lower-class phenomenon, but also upper-class problem.

6. There is no relationship between age at marriage and the amount of dowry given.

7. The two persons who contribute most to bride-burning are the victim's husband and mother-in-law. Thus, brides living in households headed by dominant mothers-in-law and uncompromising husbands have noticeably higher victimization rates.

8. The most important sociological factor in the causation of dowry-death is the offender's environmental stress or social tensions caused by factors endogenous and exogenous to his family, and the important psychological factor is the killer's authorization personality and his personality maladjustment.
9. The composition of a family plays a crucial role in bride-burning cases.

10. Before an actual murder, several forms of harassment and humiliation are used against the young brides which show the chaotic patterns of social adaptation of the members of a victim's family of procreation.

11. Some bride-burning cases are, in fact, cases of suicides committed out of a feeling of frustration due to maladjustment, but made out to be "economic" by the victims who often like to play the role of martyr.

12. The role of the police in dowry-deaths is mostly callous and biased and sometimes they connive with the offender's family to fabricate the evidence.

7.2 DISCUSSION AND SUGGESTIONS

7.2.1 Need for New Measures

Keeping in view the above findings, it is necessary to suggest some measures to prevent woman's abuse in our society, for tackling Dowry crimes against women and for dealing with female depersonalization trauma. There are four main categories: (1) socially redefining violence, (2) strengthening women's organisations, (3) the need for a humanistic approach, and (4) changes in the criminal justice system. These are discussed each separately.
7.2.1.1 Socially Redefining Violence

The first and most important task is to socially redefine the concept of "violence against women". This means seeing crimes like dowry-death as "acts of violence motivated by power and authority". This means making people realise that these violent acts can occur in many circumstances where people normally will not acknowledge them. This means a bride can be burnt when she brings dowry worth thousands and lakhs of rupees but fails to bring the few additional thousands demanded by her greedy in-laws. The wife can be beaten when she works all through the day but refuses to obey an irrational command of her husband. A woman can be murdered because she asks her husband not to have illicit relations with other women. The meaning and definition of "violent act" has to be brought to the notice of the public by women's organisations. Women have now to say things publicity which they dared not say before. The masses have to be awakened by holding conferences, pressurizing legislatures, demonstrating before police stations, and in countless other ways to accept this new meaning of violence. Only the collective acceptance of this new definition can help in understanding the victimization of innocent women.

True, there are laws which define and prohibit all these acts, and the public also condemns these acts: yet these are the acts in which victims are not considered "dangerous" to their offenders i.e., husband, in-laws. Victims cannot relate their experience to others and have it confirmed by them. Infact, it will not be wrong if we maintain that our courts punish mainly those offenders who commit offences "inappropriately and uncunningly". Convictions for dowry-death are few. Bride-burning cases are difficult to prove because they take
place in the privacy of homes in the absence of witnesses. Thus, what happens in dowry crimes against women and subsequently in the criminal justice system reflects the male and female roles in the broader society. The police, the lawyers and the judges etc., have traditional ideas of how a woman ought to act, and base their judgements on such traditional and stereotyped considerations. In these images women are at a disadvantage vis-a-vis men. The cultural definitions and values pertaining to "the way women ought to behave" place women in a structurally disadvantaged power position. Because the criminal justice systems rely on these cultural stereotypes and "accepted" definitions in "uncovering" motives in dowry crimes against women, most cases of victims are lost long before they enter the legal and judicial systems. It is, therefore, important that violence against women be redefined and delegitimised.

7.2.1.2 Strengthening women’s Organisations

The voice of an individual woman carries no weight. In fact, she is accused of being outspoken for holding radical views if she expresses her lone views on some social issues in order to provide for herself an outlet for her frustrations. However, if a group of women of like-minded views join together, form an organization and raise their voice against women’s suffering, they can assert their individually and make an impact. It is thus through these organizations alone that women can attack the outdated social norms and values which need to be overhauled. It is, therefore, necessary that more and more women’s organizations be developed to create an awareness among women to struggle against their oppression and to fight against the men who exploit, humiliate and torture women.

207
7.3 SUGGESTIONS

7.3.1 The Need for a humanistic Approach

It is necessary to develop a humanistic approach to the victims of crimes committed against females by males. This approach includes three important things: (a) a rethinking of roles, (b) the creation of rehabilitative programmes for victims, and (c) the evaluation of organizational procedures. (Details in Annexures).

Women organizations can undertake some activities regarding women’s oppression; (see Annexure).

7.3.2 Changes in criminal justice System

It is suggested three changes in this context: (a) a change in attitudes and values of judicial officials, (b) the establishment of family courts, and (c) a change in police attitude (Details in Annexures)

7.3.3 Treatment Processes

The analysis in this study has pointed out that three types of men are more prone to commit offences against women; (1) those who experience traumatic incidents in childhood which negatively affect their attitudes towards women, (2) those who face miseries and discontent in their life which sour their heterosexual relationships, and (3) those who have bitter experiences of family life that culminate in violent attacks on women.
This raises the question of the therapeutic processes and treatment techniques needed to improve self-awareness of the three types of deviants. Linked with this question is the important question as to whether an offender's crime is to be taken as a sick act, alien to his own better judgement and conscious ideals to which he had been driven by emotional urges that he could not, at the time, fully comprehend or control. If this viewpoint is accepted, it would mean that (1) men commit crimes against women only during states of emotional turmoil and are swiftly followed by considerable guilt and remorse, (2) there is no category of uninhabited offenders who have no regrets of any type after committing a crime because they think that the female involved was of "bad" character or was "asking for it", and (3) there are no inhibited offenders whose offences are situational.

Taking all these categories of offenders together, what measures can we propose for their treatment? It is contented that discovering what goes on in an offender's mind may lead to safer methods of control than years of unconstructive detention, leading to the eventual release of men in a state more embittered and anti-social than when they were first sentenced. It is necessary to explore the offenders motives and characters, to understand them as people and to expose their need for psychiatric and social help.

For purposes of treatment, it may classify offenders committing offences against women in three groups and suggest a separate treatment for each type.
(1) Those morally deviated and socially normal: These are amoral offenders. Since they are free from personality disorders, they may be treated by counselling as out-patients in psychiatric clinics and counselling institutions rather than in the contaminating environment of closed penal institutions.

(2) Those normally normal and socially deviated: These are normal persons but impulsive offenders. They deserve behaviour therapy as well as suitable psychotherapy.

(3) Those morally and socially deviated: They are aggressive in their hostilities against society. They reserve imprisonment with a focus on correction rather than punishment.

There are number of socio-economic changes happened in women’s life. Striking changes sometimes do occur after the treatment which are likely to alter a man’s whole life for the better. For example, at the start of the treatment, an offender might be rebellious, suspicious and sulky towards the staff, and explosive-tempered in his dealings with other inmates in the institution in which he is getting treatment. Over a period of time, he might become more equable, more confident, in his relations with others, able to stand frustrations without exploding and able to put across his feelings and point of view without losing his temper or giving offence. Another offender might start off by being uncommunicative, socially isolated, always answering politely, but never giving away his real feelings, never standing up for his rights, meeting frustrations silently and without complaints but at the cost of
unexpressed tension and bitterness. In time, he might learn to open up, to talk freely to the staff, to assert himself appropriately and to disagree when occasion demands. Such changes make life after treatment from the institution run more smoothly and hence lessen the risk of his indulging in further deviant behaviour.

7.3.4 Inter-Professional Co-operation

As victims go through the police, the Rescue Home and court ordeals, they often feel depersonalised, lost and neglected. Although sometimes they may find sympathetic, supportive individuals within these institutions who help them, yet the overall organizational structures of these institutions contribute to their feelings that persons associated with these institutions do not care very much about them. They may also feel that society at large does not care much about what happens to the victims of violent crime.

Victims dealing with police, courts and Rescue Homes face organizations which have many of the characteristics Max Weber talked about in his ideal-type analysis of bureaucracy. For example, a highly complex division of labour, governance of operations by a system of abstract rules, officials who carry out their duties in a spirit of formalistic impersonality, and management based on written documents - the files. Furthermore, these organizations have their own routines which are set up more for the convenience of the staff than for the public they are to serve. They, therefore, treat victims as a "matter of routine". The victim, therefore, feels lost and neglected. With low or moderate income, the victims and their
parents/husbands cannot afford to give "gifts", to the personnel in these organizations. Above all, the victims of abductions and rape are left by the society also on their own to cope financially, legally and emotionally with the aftermath of the crime inflicted upon them.

The five main groups of professionals who work with victims are the police, the doctors, the lawyers, the magistrates and the Rescue Home officials. The most striking thing about these five groups is their high degree of specialization and the lack of communication between them. Each group sticks to its own field, and neither learns from others nor teaches others any of its specialized knowledge, even though this knowledge may be relevant to the duties at hand. Physicians who gather evidence, and police officials and lawyers (prosecutors who prosecute cases and defence lawyers who represent the accused) who need this evidence for their court-room arguments do not talk to one another, except perhaps about an individual case. They do not discuss ways in which their joint work might be integrated so as to better protect the right of both the victim and the defendant. Physicians are uninformed about legal procedures. Thus, the medical evidence that will be used in court either to acquaint an offender or to prove him guilty is collected by physicians who do not know the definition of various crimes and about the types of evidence needed.

This lack of communication between professional groups is a phenomenon which victims face when they go through the criminal justice system. It is, therefore, necessary that all these agencies and professionals combine their efforts and try to jointly tackle the victims of violence.
7.3.5 Policy Recommendations

Examination of dowry crimes against women through "the victims and offenders" background, through causes, through the processes and patterns involved, as well as through the criminal justice system are accounted for some consideration. Considering the trauma victims suffer and also realizing that the institutions of police, courts and Rescue Homes which are supposed to help the victims actually harm them, this study requires some thinking on procedural issues and policy recommendations. Some value judgements could be made about the findings presented in this study. One could blame victims in dowry-death and murder cases; one could blame offenders and one could also find fault victims' parents, and so forth. Similarly, one could sympathize with victims and point out that they are doubly victimized - by the crime and by the subsequent attitudes of police, court and societal reactions. One could also sympathize with the offenders and consider their crimes as victim-precipitated. Likewise, one could describe the procedures adopted by the police and the court as being logical and rational.

However, the attempt hold that dowry crimes against women deserve a scientific study and the victims of these crimes require an objective approach in reactions and a more humanistic response in dealings. It is also accept efforts of concentrate on the treatment of women exploiters, as well as a well-defined criminal justice system.
The data in this research hold several implications for the prevention of dowry crime against women as well as the control of both domestic and extra-domestic violence against females:

First, those looking to counteract violence against women in society should look first to the violence in the home. As suggested earlier, a thorough assessment of the violence potential must take into account the childhood and adolescent experiences of the violent individual. The artificial separation of the traditional upbringing and experiences from the modern attitudes and violent behaviour toward women in research efforts creates a biased view in analysis, and shows a lack of contextual understanding of the relationships among sex roles, violence and underlying social norms.

Second, the risk factors for violence (or crime) against women, both inside and outside the home, include young age, illiteracy, poverty and strains. A lack of adjustment, attachment and commitment creates frustration which is the most important contributing factor in crime against women. This of course, requires further study with a wider sample of male criminals and female victims.

Third, undertaking more researchers will contribute to our knowledge of crimes and criminals against women as well as the types of women who fall prey to men's violence. This will not only enrich our theoretical knowledge but will also help us in the development of "treatment programmes" as well as "prevention strategies".
Fourth, evidence in this research and elsewhere points overwhelmingly to men as the perpetrators of violence against women. Unless men change their attitudes and unlearn their traditional beliefs towards women, liberation movements initiated by women, social legislative measures and stringent punishment to criminals, etc., will only reduce crimes to some extent.

Finally, tougher strategies than mere persuasiveness are necessary to fight harassment and humiliation. The most striking features of the five types of offenders: rapists, abductors, murderers (including murder on dowry issue), and barterers are unhappy childhood, non-affectional family relations, aggressive tendencies, numerous indications of psychological instability, and above all poor integration into family and community.

The contention is that aggression is neither an "instinct" nor it is innate in man, that is, a man has no internal urge to attack a woman and commit crime against her. It was held that aggression is a "learning" process in which environment plays an important role. Man's maladjustment, non-attachment and non-commitment to roles, values and norms is an objective danger which may lead to the exploitation of women. Women are too physically weak to protect themselves, economically incapable of supporting themselves and too socially warped to guard themselves from the advantages that men take from their weaknesses. Since dowry crimes against women are partly the product for social systems and partly the result of individual pathologies, only a therapeutic attitude towards men committing dowry crimes against women and a reformatory attitude towards institutional structures in our society can instill a healthy sense of confidence and dignity in women and help them lead a new life.
1. Dowry Menace and infanticide in Tamil Nadu.

2. Comparative Study of case laws pertaining to Dowry case judgements in Tamil Nadu and other states in India.

3. Use of Lie Detector in investigation of dowry crime cases.

Bibliography