CHAPTER 2
Crimes against Women: Global, National and State Perspectives

Any discussion on crimes against women requires an overall analysis of the problem. Therefore, this chapter deals briefly with the meaning and concept of crimes against women. It focuses on the various forms and it also looks into the problem as seen at the international, national and State levels. Crimes against women are social phenomena that cut across cultural, geographic, religious, social and economic boundaries. It is an indispensable part of some women’s lives, though the nature and intensity of the crimes are often determined by the class, caste and ethnicity. Women of all ages have experienced acts or threats of violence inside or outside home. It is not a new or recent issue and has been in existence from a very long time. Women have been victims of humiliation, torture and exploitation as long as we have had written records of human history.

2.1 Meaning and Definition

The semantic meaning of the term ‘crime against women’ refers to those criminal offences which are committed against women. The phrase ‘crime against women’ contains two parts: ‘crime’ and ‘against women’. The first part refers to such acts of violence that are intentionally committed but forbidden by law and punishable by the court of law. The second part emphasizes their relation to women; these acts of violence specially target women; as such only women can fall victims to such violence (Veer, 2004). In other words, crimes against women refer to those crimes involving physical, sexual, psychological and economic violence against women.
It is also important to clarify the concept of ‘violence against women’. The term ‘violence against women’ refers to any act or a series of acts that causes or likely to cause bodily or mental harm to a woman. The most extensive and wide ranging definition of violence against women was given by United Nations when the General Assembly adopted the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women in 1993. Article 1 of this Declaration defined violence against women as ‘any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual, or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life’. Article 2 of this Declaration further specifies that violence against women shall be understood to encompass but not be limited to,

physical, sexual and psychological violence occurring in the family, including battering, sexual abuse of female children in the household, dowry related violence, marital rape, female genital mutilation and other traditional practices harmful to women, non-spousal violence and violence related to exploitation;

physical, sexual and psychological violence occurring within the general community, including rape, sexual abuse, sexual harassment and intimidation at work, in educational institutions and elsewhere; trafficking in women and forced prostitution; and physical, sexual and psychological violence perpetrated or condoned by the state, wherever it occurs (UN General Assembly, 1993).

In short, violence against women encompasses a multitude of physical, psychological, sexual and economic abuses committed over the life span against women and girls that result in bodily or mental suffering to women.

2.2 Forms of Crimes against Women

Crimes against women persist in every society around the globe. It is social problem that reflects deeper socio-cultural ambience and characteristics of a particular community or society. The forms and manners of infliction of violence, therefore,
may vary from one society to another. But certain forms of violence are universal.

These can broadly be categorized under following heads:

2.2.1. Domestic Violence

Domestic violence, also known as family violence, is the violence experienced by the vast majority of women throughout the world. It is a pattern of behavior which involves violence or abuse by one family member against another. It is a form of abuse which is mostly instigated by intimate partners and in some cases, other members of the family. Intimate Partner Violence is the violence perpetrated by one person against another in an intimate relationship. In other words, Intimate Partner Violence refers to any behavior involving violence by a partner against the other partner within an intimate relationship. It includes acts of physical violence such as slapping, punching, hitting, choking, kicking and beating, sexual abuse such as forced sexual intercourse and any other forms of unwanted sexual contact; psychological violence such as insults, constant criticism, humiliation, intimidation and controlling behavior such as isolating the partner from friends and family, controlling or restricting partner movements, and denying the partner access to financial resources, employment, education or medical care. Almost one third of women (30%) who have ever lived in intimate relationship worldwide, are reported to have experienced some form of physical and sexual violence by their intimate partner in their lifetime (WHO, 2013). It occurs between same or opposite sex, includes both former and current partners and intimate partners who may be dating, cohabiting or married (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 1999). But men's perpetration of Intimate Partner Violence against women is one of the most common forms of domestic violence in most parts of the world. The prevalence of Intimate Partner Violence varies from region to region. It is most highly prevalent in Africa, Eastern Mediterranean and
South East Asia (around 37%) followed by Americas (30%); the lowest number is in high-income countries and the European and Western Pacific regions (25%) (WHO, 2013).

2.2.2. Traditional Practices

There are certain traditional practices and beliefs in the world which are harmful to women and girls. These harmful traditional practices include preference for male child, female genital mutilation, forced and child marriage, dowry related violence and death, honour killing etc. The UN’s Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (1992) describes harmful traditional practices as: ‘traditional attitudes by which women are regarded as subordinate to men or as having stereotyped roles’ and perpetuate widespread practices involving violence or coercion, such as family violence and abuse, forced marriage…. Such prejudices and practices may justify gender-based violence as a form of protection or control of women. The effect of such violence on the physical and mental integrity of women is to deprive them of the equal enjoyment, exercise and knowledge of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

These traditional practices are marked by certain abuses which not only impose subordination of and discrimination against women but also cause physical as well as psychological harm including disability and even death for a considerable number of women all over the world.

The preference for sons over daughters is a tradition in many societies. This traditional practice carries a baggage of belief and practices whose common feature is preference for a male child with concomitant negligence for the girl child. Sons are generally preferred to daughters for a variety of socio-economic and religious reasons. One of the major reasons why sons are preferred to daughters has economic base. There is a common belief that a son has more economic utility: he can take care
of family business or agriculture; he is more likely to get employment to earn money; he makes the family wealthier even through his marriage as that will bring dowry. He can also look after his parents in their old age. The perception about the girl child, on the other hand is that she is more a liability than an asset. After marriage, she takes responsibility of her husband’s family even if she earns and she is more accountable to that family. Marrying off a daughter is an expensive affair; in many South Asian countries, parents of a daughter have to pay a heavy amount of money and give other valuable gifts as dowry to the groom and his family. A girl child is, therefore, unwanted in many communities.

The One Child Policy introduced by the Chinese Government in 1979 is another context in which the question of girl child can be examined. This Policy increased feticide and female infanticide in China. The Chinese Ministry of Health in 1989 banned sex determination except in the case of diagnosing hereditary diseases. Even then many people with private connections to doctor gets sex determination done because of the One Child Policy as they prefer to have a male child as the single child. This craze for a son in most culture is driven by the traditional belief that only a son can carry on the family lineage. In many religions, there are practices where a male has unique role to play. For example, according to Hindu tradition, sons are ‘needed for cremation of the deceased parents, because only sons can light the funeral pyre’ (Arnold et al., 1998).

The preference for son is prevalent in a large number of countries from North Africa through the Middle East and South Asia to East Asia (Ansari -Lari and Saadat, 2002). The neglect and discrimination of the girl child caused by this preference get manifested in the forms of lack of education, health care, and economic opportunity and in some cases even food and other basic necessities for the girl child. As per an
estimate done by the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), more than one million female babies die every year because of discrimination in health care, food and other essential care (Jan, 2016). Some researchers even put the global number of ‘missing’ females—those who should currently be living but are not because of discriminatory practices—between 50 million and 100 million, telling ‘a terrible story of inequality and neglect’ (Sen, 1990). The preference for a son is most typically demonstrated through neglect of the girl child. However, the most extreme form of this demonstration is female infanticide leading to intentional killing of baby girls. But in recent times, the trend has been to determine the sex of the fetus and kill it if it happens to be a girl. The discrimination against the girl child has thus been shifted from the postnatal stage to the prenatal stage.

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) also commonly known as Female Circumcision or Female Genital Cutting is a gruesome practice that leads to partial or total removal of the external genitalia of girls or young women or cause injury to the genital organ for which there is no medical ground (WHO, 2008). It is done in the belief that it preserves the girl’s virginity till marriage, prevents a married women from becoming unfaithful, increases sexual pleasure of men, adds to the woman’s fertility, upholds family honor and keeps one devoted to religious dictates. It has no health benefits and causes harm to girls and women in many different ways. Some of the immediate complications are bleeding, hemorrhage, infections, tetanus, oliguria, sepsis, and even death. Among the long-term effects are psychological and psychosexual trauma, infertility, susceptibility to bacterial vaginosis and genital herpes. Prenatal death may occur owing to obstetric complications (Ramu, 2015). Female Genital Mutilation is one of the cruelest forms of violence against women which is mostly performed on girls between infancy and 15 years. However,
occasionally, adult and married women are also subjected to genital mutilation. It is estimated that every year as many as 100-140 million girls and women are subjected to this evil practice; about three million girls every year are estimated to be at the risk of falling victim to it (UNFPA, 2000). It is usually practiced by people of different religious and ethnic groups. It is reported to have been still in practice in 30 African countries in the Sub-Saharan and North-Eastern region besides parts of the Middle-East, Indonesia, Malaysia and among some migrants who lives in Europe (Berggren, 2005). It is usually carried out in a single ritual ceremony where it is performed on a number of girls of the community. It is often conducted in very unhygienic conditions and the devices used are crude and unsterilized. Sharpened rocks, knives, razors, scissors, finger nails and pieces of glass are the tools used in these operations. In fact, these instruments are repeatedly used on numerous girls who undergo such mutilation, thus increasing the risk of blood-transmitted diseases, including HIV/AIDS. Moreover, the mutilation is generally done by older women of the community some of whose only experience is working as attendants at the time of a baby’s birth. They have no formal training; they have acquired their skill as a tradition that has come down from one generation to another. However, in some countries female genital mutilation is now taken care of by medical professionals so that health risks and other immediate complications can be avoided (Jenny, 2010).

Child marriage, also known as early marriage is a formal marriage or informal union entered into by an individual before reaching the age of 18. In most countries the age of 18 is recognized as the minimum legal age for marriage of a girl. However, in the case of the other countries, it varies from one country to another and from one state to another within the same country. As many as 158 countries in 2010 reported that 18 years was the minimum age recognized by the law for a girl marriage without
consent from parents or approval by a pertinent authority. There are 146 other countries that allow a girl to get married as per state or customary law without parental consent or permission from other authorities (UNPF, 2012).

Child marriage is a reality for both boys and girls, although girls are disproportionately the most affected. Worldwide, there are 700 million women alive today who had been married or entered into union before they reached the age of 18 years. Out of them, 250 million, that is one among three married or entered into union before attaining the age of 15 years (UNICEF 2014). There are several international treaties as well as national laws that prohibit the custom of child marriage, although it remains a common practice in many of the countries. Communities where the girls are trivialized and looked upon as a burden practice child marriage much more widely than other communities. This practice is also driven by poverty, lack of access to education, bride price, dowry, religious and social norms and lack of enforcement of laws forbidding child marriage. Very high rates of early marriage are reported from West, East and Central Africa and South Asia. In the countries of these regions, approximately 30% or more of the girls belonging to the age group of 15 to 19 years are already married (Mathur et.al., 2003).

Early marriages have several negative impacts on young married children. They have what may be called ‘lost childhood’ because the joys of childhood are lost to them under the heavy burden of domestic chores. Since they are also unable to avail of opportunities to educate themselves, they are deprived of any gainful employment which leads to financial independence, decision making and freedom of choice (Panchal and Ajgaonkar, 2015). It often results in early and unwanted pregnancies, posing life-threatening risks for a girl child. Physical immaturity and young age of a child bride put her at greater risk of being exposed to infections like
HIV (Bolan et al., 1999). Added to the two aforementioned factors are their ignorance about safer sex, frequency of unprotected sex and pressure on them to show their fertility. A child bride is very likely to believe that husband’s beating of women is normal and accept it without protest. As such, a wife is more prone to fall victim to domestic violence (Jenson and Thornton, 2003).

The evil of dowry system has been a matter of serious concern for many societies. Traditionally, dowry has been broadly defined to include any item or cash given to the groom’s family from the bride’s family at the time of marriage. It is a custom of the Hindu society which has existed since time immemorial. The Hindus associate marriage with ‘Kanyadan’ (Manu Smriti, III). This is true of every type of marriage: Brahma, Daiva, Arsha, Prajapatya and Asura. According to the Dharamashastra, the auspicious act of giving away a daughter (Kanyadan). Since ‘Daan’ (donation) is incomplete without ‘Dakshina’ (payment of gratefulness) to the receiver, Kanyadaan also remains incomplete if the groom is not offered ‘Dakshina’. The Brahma form of marriage mentions two aspects of Kanyadan: Varadakshina and Stridhan. The manner of Kanyadan is also mentioned: the father should give away the daughter to the bride groom after decorating her with costly dress and ornaments and honoring her with jewels. In doing so, he should also offer the groom ‘Varadakshina’ in cash and kind which is voluntary and given with love and affection to honor the groom though the quantum may vary depending on the level of prosperity of the bride’s father. ‘Stridhan’ is what the bride receives from her father and the husband in the form of cash, jewellery, costume and other valuables. It seems such gifts were meant to provide her with some sort of financial support in case she has to live in dire poverty (Diwan, 1987). In the course of time, the custom of giving gifts to the bride and the bridegroom must have degenerated into the present social evil called dowry
which is a curse to the father of a bride. Dowry has come to be associated with compulsion, coercion, threat, violence and force. Interestingly, this social evil has spread to other communities that were traditionally free from it. Conspicuous consumerism seems to be at the root of this.

Dowry is practiced in a large number of countries all over the world, while dowry related violence takes place only in the South Asian countries of India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh (Jena and Acharya, 2014). In fact, in some countries in South Asia, the terms ‘dowry-related violence’ and ‘dowry death’ have become almost synonymous with domestic violence. Dowry is very often found to be at the root of domestic violence. To extort dowry payments and other properties from the bride’s family, domestic violence is often used. It is also used as a means of punishments sometimes by both the husband and his relatives for not providing sufficient dowry on the marriage day and for failing to meet dowry demands even after marriage. Reports of violence against women come more frequently and in large number from such families whose level of satisfaction over dowry turns out to be insatiable (Babu and Babu, 2010).

Bride burning cases are normally attempted to be presented as suicide cases as the modus operandi is almost similar; a woman, usually a newlywed one, is set on fire after she is doused with kerosene or other inflammable substance because of the failure of her family to meet the dowry demands. Such deaths are sometimes described as ‘kitchen accident’ because it can be claimed to have occurred owing to the bursting of a faulty kerosene stove during cooking. There are genuine suicide cases too because a newlywed bride cannot bear with the extreme mental agony caused to her parents or other family members by persistent demand of dowry from her husband or his family. Dowry death, therefore, is the utmost violence against
women. India records the highest number of dowry deaths in the world. A bride is burned here every ninety minutes; dowry issue cause 1.4 deaths per year per 1,00,000 women (Hitchcock, 2001). Pakistan has the highest rate of dowry death per year, per 100,000 women which is 2.45. It gets report of more than 2000 dowry related deaths per year (The Express Tribune, 2016).

Honour killing is the killing of a member of a family who is perceived to have brought shame on the honour and name of the family by other members. It is a practice which is often directed against women, although men also can be a victim of honour killing. Human Rights Watch (2001) defines ‘honor killings’ as ‘acts of vengeance, usually death, committed by male family members against female family members, who are held to have brought dishonor upon the family, by: refusing to enter into an arranged marriage, being the victim of a sexual assault, seeking a divorce, even from an abusive husband or allegedly committing adultery. In fact, the mere perception that a woman has behaved in a way that “dishonors” her family is sufficient to trigger an attack on her life’. In other words, if a girl or a woman rebels against the norms, usually set by the males of the community to which she belongs or if she behaves improperly in sexual relations or if she falls victim to other male’s violence like rape or forced marriage, she has to face brutal retaliation in the form of violent death in the hands of her own people. Though such killings are done by the male members of the family, the women members, too, support it in the name of preserving the family’s honor even if it comes at the cost of a woman’s life. Women are forced by circumstances to do so because in such community no man will come forward to marry the sister of a ‘shamed’ girl or woman until and unless the family is purified and its honor brought back by killing the woman member who has brought dishonor (Sharma, 2011). In fact, an honour killing is not an individual act of
violence because it has social approval based on values upheld by the community concerned. This type of killing may be described as a collective and pre-planned. Sometimes, members of such a family force the victim to commit suicide so that they can get rid legal entanglement consequent upon killing her.

Countries from where honour killing has been reported are: Iran, Turkey, Afghanistan, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Palestine, Jordan, Bangladesh, Algeria, Brazil, Ecuador, Morocco, Israel, Ethiopia, Somalia, Uganda, the Balkans, Sweden, Holland, Germany, Italy, Yemen, India and many more (Yazmin, 2008). Between 25 and 40 women are estimated to be killed each year in Jordan in the name of honour (Becker, 2004). A report published in the year 2000 reported that 10% of the murders committed in Egypt in 1999 were ‘crimes of honour (sharaf)’ (Riziq, 2000). 605 women were murdered in the name of honour in Pakistan in 2011 (Bhanbhro et. al., 2013). In India, honour killings have been reported from the northern region, mainly from the states of Punjab, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh; the victims married without their family’s consent. Sometimes they were killed for marrying outside their caste or religion (Basha, 2016).

Some other forms of crimes against women like rape, sexual harassment, trafficking in women have also registered an alarming increase around the world.

Witch hunting is one of the worst of all forms of crimes against women in many societies around the world. A witch is a person who is believed to be in possession of supernatural power with which he or she causes harm to an individual or a community, thus posing himself or herself as a threat to the society. It is also believed that a witch does not use his or her black art for material gain; it is used maliciously out of jealousy. It is therefore, believed to be something plainly evil or to be in the grip of evil (Ronald, 2006). Witch-hunting is the 'search' for suspected
Witches in the community who can bring disaster to it or some individual by means of
witchcraft, black magic or sorcery, in the form of drought, diseases, epidemics,
earthquakes, crop failure and untimely death.

Witch hunting is a highly gendered crime. Although, there are victims of
witch hunts who are men, the vast majority of the witches are women. If a woman is
suspected to be a witch, she is subjected to inhuman torture; she forcefully stripped
naked, beaten, abused and made an outcast. Often she is lynched by mob. Witchcraft
was a widespread practice even in Europe some centuries back before it came to an
end in the 18th century. In certain developing countries, it still exists (Shrestha, 2004).
Ghana and Nepal often make their way to the media for incidents of witch hunting.
Some other countries where the practice still goes on are: India, Papua New Guinea,

Rape means forceful sexual intercourse by a person by means of threat or
violence with someone who is unwilling to do so. The violence may be perpetrated by
one person against another or by many persons against another. Rape can involve
sexual intercourse or other forms of sexual penetration. Rape victim may include
those who are not in a position to give valid consent; for example, one who is
unconscious, drunk, asleep or has physical or mental disability. Moreover, the victims
of rape may face harmful physical, psychological and mental consequences. It often
results in physical injuries to the victim along with severe mental trauma. Rape
victims are exposed to sexually transmitted diseases such as HIV/AIDS. In the
opinion of Obasi (2007), ‘Rape leaves painful memories and lifelong consequences
on the victim’.

Rape is one of the heinous crimes committed primarily against women. An
estimated 20% (one among five) of the world’s women have fallen victim to rape or
attempted rape in the course of their life (Sean and Senehi, 2012). However, it is very difficult to get the actual number of rape cases since significant numbers of rape cases go unreported. Rape cases go highly unreported because the victims are stigmatized. The word ‘rape’ has such deeper ramification that it is not only the victim alone but also her family and even the community she belongs to, feel dishonored. Consequently, rape victims very often hesitate to file a report with the police. Even if a case is reported, the offender is rarely arrested; if it is done and the perpetrator is produced in the court, efforts are made to get his release by casting aspersion on the victim’s character who is always more sinned against than sunning. It is the only crime against women where the victim is often charged with provoking the perpetrator to commit the crime. That is the reason why most victims of rape maintain silence to get rid of public humiliation and social stigmatization.

Rape is a widespread problem affecting millions of women all over the globe. A national survey conducted in the United States of America revealed that 14.8% of women over 17 years of age had been victims of rape in their lifetime; another 2.8% had experienced attempted rape (Tjaden and Thoennes, 2000). A survey made on representative sample in the Czech Republic of general people over 15 years of age revealed that 11.6% of the women had experience of forced sexual contact in their life time (Weiss and Zverina, 1999). The height recorded rape rates are reported from Southern Africa, Oceania and North America (Harrendorf et al., 2010).

Sexual harassment is an unwanted sexual behaviour affecting the dignity of a person. It involves putting force or coercion that is sexual in nature, or unwelcome or inappropriate promise made for rewards in exchange for sexual gratification (Paludi and Barickman, 1991). There are different terms in different countries to mean ‘sexual harassment’. In Malaysia, the terms ‘gatal’ and ‘miang’ are used; in France, it
is referred to as ‘droit de cuissage’; in the Netherlands, they speak of ‘unsolicited or undesired intimacies’ and in India, the word ‘eve-teasing’ is often used to describe sexual harassment. It can come in different forms: verbal, non-verbal, physical or visual and may be committed by a person known to the victim or by a stranger. Verbal or visual harassment are more common than physical harassment. In fact, sexual harassment can cause harm to one’s mental as well as physical health. It is associated with increased risk of anxiety, depression, and posttraumatic stress disorder as well as diminished self-esteem, self confidence, and psychological well-being.

Sexual harassment occurs at all levels of the society and in a variety of circumstances. In this connection certain datum are enlightening. The number of American girl students experiencing sexual harassment at public school is as high as 83%. In Nairobi, 20% of women have been harassed sexually at workplace or school. In the countries of European Union, 40-50 percent women have been subjected to unwanted sexual advances, physical contact or other forms of sexual harassment at work. In Asian countries like Japan, Malaysia, the Philippines and South Korea present a similar picture. Studies done in these countries have brought to light that 30 to 40 percent women in these countries face sexual harassment at work place (UNIFEM, 2011). In sharp contrast to these countries, India presents a much higher figure. According to a survey conducted in New Delhi, the capital of India, an alarming 92% of women confessed to have been victims of sexual harassment of some form or other in their lifetime in public spaces. Women who have faced forced sexual harassment of verbal kind including unwelcome comment of a sexual nature, whistling, leering or making obscene gesture in their life time constitute 88%. (UN Women, 2013). It can, therefore, be come to the conclusion that most sexual
harassment cases happen in the public sphere like educational institutes, workplaces, streets and other public places.

Human trafficking, especially in young girls and women, is a serious global problem. It is a crime in which every country is involved because trafficking passes from a country of origin, through a transit country to a destination country. However, human trafficking often involves transit from less developed countries to more developed countries. The United Nations Protocol to Prevent, Suppress, and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children (the so-called Palermo Protocol) adopted in 2000 defines human trafficking as the ‘recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation which includes exploitation through prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs’.

Human beings are trafficked for a variety of purposes but the majority of trafficking specifically takes place for the purpose of sexual exploitation. Human trafficking for the purpose of sex is the most common type of exploitation of women. It may take place within the national boundary or go beyond it. The principal purpose behind it is to supply workforce to the huge sex industry which does not simply means prostitution; it also include pornography, exotic dancing and sex tourism. The sexually exploited human trafficking victims can be of any age and of either sex but the majority are women and young girls. Women are vulnerable to sex trafficking for a numbers of reasons like poverty, lack of education, inadequate employment
opportunities, weak legislation and lack of law enforcement. There are certain factors which keep fuelling this phenomenon. One such factor is finding foster parents for children which necessitate sending children to wealthy relatives or friends across borders. Another factor is that most girls are ready to go to any extent and make sacrifice in order to help their needy families economically; ignorance of parents which lead them to handover their children to unknown persons; the huge profits that transnational criminals can make and corruption in government machinery. The girls and the women who are trafficked for the big sex industry find themselves in the most pitiable situation and condition. They are exposed to severe traumatic experience. The trafficker subject them to inhuman torture, threat, assaults to keep them intimidates so that they can be enslaved easily. Basic necessities for decent human life like security, food, hygiene, medical care are kept out of their touch. Forced and excessive sex leaves a devastating impact on them both physically and psychologically. Exposure to Sexually Transmitted Diseases like HIV/AIDS is another life threatening affect that they suffer from.

Thus, crimes against women in its various forms are prevalent all across the globe. It is an intentional act associated with a number of short- and long-term problems, including physical injury and illness, emotional distress and death as well. Therefore, prevention and elimination of violence against women and girls have become one of the most serious concerns for the international system, governments and civil society worldwide.

2.3 Crimes against Women: Global Scenario

Crimes against women are global phenomena. It strikes countless women in epidemic proportions across the countries. Women have been the victims of violence since innumerable centuries, although for many years, a huge culture of silence was
associated with the acts of violence of against women. It is due to the efforts made by
the feminists and women rights groups especially through campaigns that the problem
of violence against women was able to get international attention. The voice of
protest against men’s violence and sexual assault, gradually become louder and
stronger by the end of the ninetieth century. The world becomes aware of the gravity
of the situation because of movements launched by the feminists. This ultimately
resulted in taking up the issue by the United Nations Organisation (UNO) which
adopted a number of strategies and programs to eliminate the problem. The support of
the world body to the rights of women began with the signing of the United Nations
(UN) Charter in 1945. One of the purposes declared by the UN is found in Article 1 of
its Charter is ‘To achieve international co-operation … in promoting and encouraging
respect for human rights and for fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as
to race, sex, language, or religion’ (UN Charter, 1945). A landmark proclamation was
the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR, 1948) which declared that ‘All
human beings are born free and equal in rights and dignity’. Women’s organizations
were also successful in establishing the UN Commission on the Status of Women
(CSW) which aimed ‘to raise the status of women, irrespective of nationality, race,
language or religion, to equality with men in all fields of human enterprise, and to
eliminate all discrimination against women in the provisions of statutory law, in legal
maxims or rules, or in interpretation of customary law’ (Agorin, 2003). Subsequently,
the massive women’s movement (feminist movement) of the 1960’s and 1970’s that
created an ambience for international support to the women’s cause made way for the
United Nations to declare the decade from 1975-1985 as the UN Decade for Women
(Thomas & Beasley, 1993).
The issue of violence against women was taken up on a global level by the United Nations Decade for Women (1976-1985) and UN conferences held in Mexico City (1975), Copenhagen (1980), Nairobi (1985) and Beijing (1995) respectively. All these conferences were held in the last three decades of the twentieth century. These conferences committed the promotion of such national and international laws that would check violence against women. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination (1979) was another milestone in the protection of Human Rights of women. It recognized violence as a part of discrimination against women in recommendations nos. 12 and 13. This was followed by the passing of the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against women (1993) by the General Assembly of the UN which gave the first comprehensive definition of violence against women. The Declaration states that the family, the community and the state inflict different forms of violence against women causing them physical, sexual and psychological harm. The Declaration also carries global implication on analyzing, categorizing and addressing the problems in various situations. In 1999, the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against women was adopted by the UN which declared November 25 as the International day for the elimination of violence against women.

In the new millennium too, there has been considerable attention on the issue of violence against women. One major study was conducted by the World Health Organization (WHO) in 2005 titled ‘WHO’s Multi-country Study on Women’s Health and Domestic Violence against Women’ which surveyed over 24,000 women in 10 countries from all regions of the world. It particularly studies the Intimate Partner Violence, how far it prevailed and how deep was it extent. It also highlighted how it impacted women so far as their health and well being are concerned.
Moreover, it documented some strategies and services on how to tackle Intimate Partner Violence. The UN Secretary General UNiTE to End Violence against women (2008) is a major global campaign launched with a view to raising awareness among public and initiate action to redress and eradicate violence against women which is a global scourge, from the face of the earth. A special feature of this campaign is that it has emphasized the role of man in the fight against violence against women. UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon, therefore, expounds that ‘All of us - men and women, soldiers and peacekeepers, citizens and leaders - have a responsibility to help end violence against women’. In 2013, the 57th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women which was held at the UN Headquarters in New York, adopted the ‘Elimination and Prevention of All Forms of Violence against Women and Girls’ as its priority theme. The UN General Assembly passed its first resolution in 2013, on protecting those who defended the human rights of women. Some other UN organizations such as UNICEF, UNFPA, UNDP, UNHCR and WHO, too, are working towards reducing, preventing and combating violence against women over and above their mission. The question of violence against women, therefore, came to be recognized at the global level in consequence of the relentless efforts made by those behind the feminist movement, the women’s rights groups’ activists as well as many other international organizations.

In spite of such high level of activities at various international forums, the menace of violence against women has not shown perceptible decrease in any part of the world. It is prevalent in every part of the world and affects millions of women regardless of class, caste, ethnicity and culture. Large numbers of researchers from North America, Europe, Africa, Latin America, the Middle East, and Asia have found extremely high rates of sexual assault, stalking, trafficking, violence in intimate
relationships, and other physical and psychological violation. (Htun and Weldon, 2010). Data on violence against women reveals the high prevalence of both physical and sexual violence against women in Europe. Around 20% to 25% of women in Europe have experienced acts of physical violence at least once during their adulthood and over 10% have suffered sexual violence where force was used (Hageman, 2008).

Violence against women is also a major problem in South Africa. A study conducted among workers in the South African city of Cape Town found that 42% of them confessed to have used of physical violence and nearly 16% did about the use of sexual violence against an intimate partner with whom they had a relationship in the last ten years (Abrahams et.al, 2004). In fact, South Africa has recorded the height number of rape cases in the world. A survey done on 1300 women respondents in three provinces of South Africa revealed that 42% of them had been raped by strangers, 20.8% by an acquaintance, 9.4% by someone from school, 8.5% by a relative, 7.5% by a partner and 11.3% by others (Jewkes and Abrahams, 2002).

In the United States, where women have equal rights and status, violence against them has not stopped. The report of the National Center for Injury Prevention and Control and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2010) brings to light that around 1 in 3 women in the United States have been victims of some forms of physical violence inflicted by an intimate partner within their lifetime; those who have been raped at some time in their lives constitutes nearly 18.3%; such rapes includes completed forced penetration, attempted forced penetration, or complete penetration facilitated by alcohol/drug and 51.1% of the rape victims that they had been reported being raped by an intimate partner and 40.8% by an acquaintance.
The rates of violence against women are also similarly high in the Middle East and Asia. A survey done by the Egyptian Center for Women's Rights in 2008 on more than a thousand women in Cairo, Giza, Qalubiya found that 83 percent of the Egyptian respondents have experienced sexual harassment in their lifetime (Shoukry, 2008) and in a field study of 140 females conducted in the Governorate of Sohag; 66 percent of the respondents admitted that they had been sexually harassed at work (Ebada, 2007).

Several studies even reported that violence especially perpetrated by a woman’s husband is widely prevalent in Bangladesh, although women face many forms of violence ranging from wife abuse to rape, dowry killings, acid throwing, sexual harassment, and sexual slavery through trafficking in women. Bhuiya et al. (2003) made a study on 190 rural women to examine some attitudes that lead to wife-beating in Bangladeshi families. The women reported that they had faced violence for the reasons as follow: when the wife questions the husband on day-to-day matters (29%), when the wife fails to perform household work (11.5%) or take proper care of children (10%), when the wife does not conform to veil the face or follow other expected behavior (3%); the wife’s refusal to bring money from natal family (3%), and day-to-day frustrations suffered by the husband (2%).

Women victimised by violence in their lifetime were more likely to have poor physical and mental health than non-victimized women. They may get immediate physical injuries or long term impact such as chronic pain, depression, eating disorders, post-traumatic stress disorder, difficulty with sleeping and activity limitations as a result of violence. Many global studies have also revealed that women who are found dead as a result of homicide are mostly killed by their current or former husbands or partners. In a study conducted by the United Nations (2009), in
Colombia one woman, in every six days, is killed by her partner or former partner. In Australia, Canada, Israel, South Africa and the United States, around 40%-70% of female victims of murder were killed by their partners. There are no countries where women can live free from such violence and no class or group of women are exempt from its destructive effects.

2.4 Crimes against Women in India

Crimes against women are a massive problem in India. The incident of violent crimes directed towards women including domestic violence especially spousal abuse or wife beating, rape, kidnapping and molestation are increasing at an alarming rate in the country. The National Crime Records Bureau reveals that a crime is committed against a woman every third minute, a woman is raped every 29th minute, a dowry death occurs every 77th minute and one case of cruelty, committed by either the husband or relative of the victim, every ninth minute. (The Hindu, 2013). This study has concluded that crime against women is the fastest growing crime endangering the safety of women in India.

The Constitution of India has granted equal rights to both men and women. The rights available to woman in India can be classified into two categories such as constitutional rights and legal rights. The constitutional rights are those which are provided in the various provisions of the constitution. Articles 14, 15(1), 15(3), 16, 39(a), 39(d), 42, and 51 A (e) of the Constitution are of specific importance in this regard. The Indian Constitution guarantees to any person equality before the law and the equal protection of the laws within the territory of India (Article 14), prohibits the state to make discrimination against any citizen on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex, place of birth or any of them (Article 15(1)), empowers the state to make special provisions in favour of women and children (Article 15(3)) and provides equality of
opportunity for all citizens in matters relating to employment or appointment to any office under the State (Article 16). In addition, it directs the state to secure for men and women equally the right to an adequate means of livelihood (39(a)), to secure equal pay for equal work for both men and women (Article 39(d)), to ensure that the health and strength of women workers are not abused and that they are not forced by economic necessity to enter avocations unsuited to their strength Article 39(e) and to make provision for securing just and humane conditions of work and for maternity relief (Article 42). Most significantly, Article 51(A) (e) states that it shall be the duty of every citizen of India to renounce practices derogatory to the dignity of women.

The legal rights, on the other hand, are those rights which are provided in the various laws and acts of the Parliament and the State Legislatures. The Government of India has enacted several women-specific legislations to uphold the constitutional mandate and to protect women against social discrimination, violence and atrocities and also to prevent social evils like child marriages, dowry, rape, practice of sati etc. In this connection, Section 498 A of the Indian Penal Code is a very significant Section in the context of Indian laws protecting women from 'cruelty by husband or relatives of husband'. The Section states that ‘whoever being the husband or relative of the husband of woman, subjects such woman to cruelty shall be punished with the imprisonment for a term which may extend to three years and also be liable to fine’ (Mishra, 2007). This Section belongs to one category of laws on crimes identified under the Indian Penal Code (IPC). The Sections are Rape (Sec. 376 IPC); Kidnapping & Abduction for different purposes (Sec. 363-373); Homicide for dowry, dowry deaths or their attempts (Sec.302/304-B IPC); Molestation (Sec. 354 IPC); Sexual harassment (Sec. 509 IPC) and Importation of Girls (up to 21 years of age). Secondly, the crimes identified under the Special Laws (SLL) which are though not
gender specific, but some do have special provisions to safeguard women and their interests. It includes Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act, 1956; Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961; Indecent Representation of Women (Prohibition) Act, 1986 and Commission of Sati (Prevention) Act, 1987. Moreover, the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act (2005) was also enacted by the Parliament of India. For the purposes of this Act, any act, omission or commission or conduct of the respondent shall constitute domestic violence in case it - (a) harms or injures or endangers the health, safety, life, limb or well-being, whether mental or physical, of the aggrieved person or tends to do so and includes causing physical abuse, sexual abuse, verbal and emotional abuse and economic abuse; or (b) harasses, harms, injures or endangers the aggrieved person with a view to coerce her or any other person related to her to meet any unlawful demand for any dowry or other property or valuable security; or (c) has the effect of threatening the aggrieved person or any person related to her by any conduct mentioned in clause (a) or clause (b); or (d) otherwise injures or causes harm, whether physical or mental, to the aggrieved person. For the purposes of this section,-

(i) "physical abuse" means any act or conduct which is of such a nature as to cause bodily pain, harm, or danger to life, limb, or health or impair the health or development of the aggrieved person and includes assault, criminal intimidation and criminal force; (ii) "sexual abuse" includes any conduct of a sexual nature that abuses, humiliates, degrades or otherwise violates the dignity of woman; (iii) "verbal and emotional abuse" includes- (a) insults, ridicule, humiliation, name calling and insults or ridicule specially with regard to not having a child or a male child; and (b) repeated threats to cause physical pain to any person in whom the aggrieved person is interested. (iv) "economic abuse" includes- (a) deprivation of all or any economic or financial resources to which the aggrieved person is entitled under any law or custom
whether payable under an order of a court or otherwise or which the aggrieved person requires out of necessity including, but not limited to, household necessities for the aggrieved person and her children, if any, stridhan, property, jointly or separately owned by the aggrieved person, payment of rental related to the shared household and maintenance; (b) disposal of household effects, any alienation of assets whether movable or immovable, valuables, shares, securities, bonds and the like or other property in which the aggrieved person has an interest or is entitled to use by virtue of the domestic relationship or which may be reasonably required by the aggrieved person or her children or her stridhan or any other property jointly or separately held by the aggrieved person; and (c) prohibition or restriction to continued access to resources or facilities which the aggrieved person is entitled to use or enjoy by virtue of the domestic relationship including access to the shared household. For the purpose of determining whether any act, omission, commission or conduct of the respondent constitutes "domestic violence" under this section, the overall facts and circumstances of the case shall be taken into consideration. The Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act is another legal act passed by the Indian Parliament that came into effect on December 9, 2013 to provide specific protection of women form sexual harassment in workplaces. Therefore, the Constitution of India not only guarantees equality, freedom, opportunity and protection to the women but also provides them several exclusive rights. However, in spite of these efforts, women are still vulnerable to various forms of violence in the family as well as in the society. In fact, in this country where non-violence has been preached as a way of life for thousands of year and where women have been worshipped in the image of Durga, Saraswati and Lakshmi, it is shocked to observe
the brutal reality of women’s existence (Singh and Singh, 2008). This horrible reality is experienced and clarified by the following tables:

**Table 2.1: Total Crimes against Women in India, 2008-2013**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>IPC</th>
<th>SSL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rape (Sec. 376)</td>
<td>Kidnapping &amp; Abduction (Sec. 363 to 373)</td>
<td>Dowry Death (Sec. 302 to 304)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>21,467</td>
<td>22,939</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>21,397</td>
<td>25,741</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>22,172</td>
<td>29,795</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>24,206</td>
<td>35,565</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>24,923</td>
<td>38,262</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>33,707</td>
<td>51,881</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1,47,872</td>
<td>2,04,183</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source:** National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB)

Table 2.1 shows that domestic violence appears to be the most widespread form of violence against women across the country. Approximately two-third of the married women are victims of domestic violence; as many as 70 percent of them between the age of 15 and 49 fall victims to beating, rape or forced sex (UN, 2005). The patriarchal ideology that guides the Indian society leads to a situation where women live in a brutal atmosphere of terror and violence at the hands of their family
members. The National Crime Records Bureau (2013) reveals that cases of cruelty by husbands and relatives are the highest reported crime committed against women in India. In 2013, cases registered under cruelty by husbands and in-laws accounted for 62.33% of total crimes against women in the country. Most of these cases were reported from West Bengal (18,116 cases) followed by Rajasthan (15,094 cases) and Andhra Pradesh (15,084).

Many researchers have come out with the result that man’s vices such as smoking, alcoholism and drug addiction promote them to commit domestic violence (Leonard, 1992; McKenry et al., 1995; Rao, 1997 and Bhatt, 1998). Certain studies have also revealed that the violent attitude (Straus et al., 1980 and Martin et al, 2002) is more likely abuse his intimate partner. Recent studies have also suggested a link between domestic violence and dowry demands. Wife abuse has been found to be higher when a husband and/or his family believe that dowry payments are inadequate, (Banerjee, 1999; Bloch and Rao 2002). Dowry related harassments and deaths have become a part of Indian culture. The ‘Dowry Prohibition Act’ (1961), has not been able to stop dowry. The ‘give and take’ policy is practiced widely throughout the country, irrespective of caste and class (Ghansham, 2002). The data from NCRB (2013) show that the cases registered under this Act increased by 17.9% during the year 2013: (10,709 cases) as compared to the previous year (9,038 cases). Odisha reported the highest number of such cases (2,014 cases) followed by Bihar (1,893 cases). In the case of dowry deaths, a decrease of 1.8% was observed during the year 2013 (8,083 cases) over the previous year (8233 cases). It is to be noted that 28.9% of the total such cases registered in the country were reported from Uttar Pradesh (2,335 cases) alone followed by Bihar (1,182 cases). Dowry related violence and bride burning (dowry-death) are peculiar to India where besides the husband, his kith and
kin are also involved in persecuting the bride as the dowry and other related customs provide them with excuse to humiliate, insult and even beat up of woman (Haveripeth, 2013).

Molestation is a serious issue in modern Indian society. According to the NCRB (2013), cases of molestation which were reported under section 354 of Indian Penal Code increased by 56.0% during 2013 over the previous year (45,351 cases). Molestation of women, euphemistically called eve-teasing in India, takes place mostly at the public transports, streets, parks, educational institutions and workplaces. In a study conducted in Srinagar district of Kashmir, 20% of the respondents said that eve teasing took place outside the schools; 40% are of the viewed that it took place outside the tuition centers and 20% of the respondents said that they were victims of eve teasing take place in botanical gardens (Suri, and Sanjeeda, 2013). The NCRB (2013) reveals that Andhra Pradesh has reported 4,702 cases which accounts for 37.2% of total such cases during the year 2013, under section 509 of Indian Penal Code which deals with sexual harassment. Even rape and murder have followed several instances of sexual harassment. Rape is the fastest growing crime against women in India. An analysis of reported rape cases between 2001 and 2013, done by the Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative (CHRI) shows 2, 64,130 rapes were reported in 28 states which means an average of almost 56 incidents of rape per day. In the seven Union Territories, the average is almost two rapes per day. (The Times of India, 2014) The NCRB (2013) stated that 12.9% of the rape cases were reported in Madhya Pradesh (4,335 out of 33,707 cases), 9.8% in Rajasthan (3,285 cases), 9.1% in Maharashtra (3,063 cases) and 9.1% in Uttar Pradesh (3,050 cases), while the highest crime rate of 18.6 was reported from the Union Territory Delhi as compared to national average of 5.7. According to the latest data released by the Home
Ministry, India stands third, leaving behind countries like Sri Lanka, Jordan and Argentina, when it comes to rape cases (Times of India, 2008).

Kidnapping and abduction of women and young girls has also increased considerably in India. According to the NCRB (2013,) these cases have reported an increase of 35.6% during 2013 as compared to the previous year 2012 (38,262 cases). It is the third highest crime which has accounted for 27.20% of total crimes committed against women across the country in 2013. The highest incidence of kidnapping and abduction in 2013 was reported from Uttar Pradesh (9,737 cases). The NCRB (2013) reveals that in the period 2008 to 2013, the cases registered under Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act, Indecent Representation of Women (Prohibition) Act and under the category of Importation of girls were the lowest reported crimes against women in India with 15209, 3721 and 321 cases respectively. In fact, only 2 cases were registered under Sati Prevention Act, 1987 in these six years. From the available data on the incidence of violence against women, it can be concluded that violence against women in India is widespread and the numbers of reported cases is quite high. However it is not the highest in the world (UN Women, 2011).

2.5 Crimes against Women in Assam:

Women in Assam, a state in North East India, are usually believed to enjoy a better social status than the women of other states of the country. The Assamese society is a mosaic of various ethnic groups and tribes where women have enjoyed higher status and much independence. It has been predominantly a rural society that has been characterized by powerful sentiments of Kinship, locality, caste, and community. The Assamese women have never been kept under the total subordination of man disdainfully. (Dhar, 2004) Moreover, when the custom of ‘sati’ was widely practiced
in many parts of India Assam had a few stray instances. Till a couple of decades back, the concept of dowry was also practically unknown in Assam. Recently, though some of the cases of dowry have been reported, the demand for dowry is not a custom in Assam. It started as a result of migration of people from other parts of India. Table 2 clearly indicates that the dowry system is now prevalent in Assam and demand for dowry has led to increase in the rate of dowry related violence in the state. During the period (2008-2013), 11 cases were registered under the Dowry Prohibition Act(1961) in 2008, 40 cases in 2009, 37 cases in 2010, 19 cases in 2011, 41 cases in 2012, 40 cases in 2013 and the majority of such cases were reported from Tinsukia with 96 cases, Sivsagar with 18 cases and Dhubri with 15 cases. ‘Unheard: Domestic Violence in Rural Assam’, a study conducted by North East Network in 30 Panchayats and 10 Village Council Development Committees in 8 districts of Assam (2015) found 27% of the women reported that they had faced dowry demands and related harassment (NEN, 2015).

The evil of ‘dowry culture’ had also taken many lives of women in the state. Over these six years (2008-2013) 879 dowry deaths were recorded in Assam and among all it districts, Nagaon with 89 cases reported the maximum number of dowry deaths followed by Cachar with 86 cases, Barpeta with 83 cases, Dhubri with 74 cases and Sonitpur with 68 cases. Therefore, cases of dowry related violence and dowry death are widespread in many parts of the state now.
Table 2.2: Total crimes against women in Assam, 2008-2013

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Crime Head</th>
<th>Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rape (Sec. 376 IPC)</td>
<td>1438</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kidnapping &amp; Abduction (Sec. 363 to 373 IPC)</td>
<td>1789</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dowry Death (Sec. 302 / 304 IPC)</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cruelty By Husband and Relatives (Sec. 498-A IPC)</td>
<td>3478</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Molestation (Sec. 354 IPC)</td>
<td>1272</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual Harassment (Sec. 509 IPC)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Importation of Girls (Sec. 366-B IPC)</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sati Prevention Act, 1987</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act, 1956</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indecent Representation of Women (Prohibition) Act, 1986</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>8122</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Office of the City Superintendent of Police, Guwahati (C.S.P.O)

Table 2.2 reveals that the highest numbers of cases are reported under section 498-A of the Indian Penal Code that relates to domestic violence is cruelty by husband or his relatives. During the period 2008-2013, a total number of 33576 cases of cruelty by husbands and relatives were registered in the district which has accounted for 46.70% of total crimes against women reported in the district. Over these six years, Nagaon tops the list with 4562 cases followed by Dhubri with 3982 cases, Cachar with 2785 cases, Barpeta with 2633 cases, Greater Guwahati City with 1785 cases, Darrang with 1662 cases, Sonitpur with 1604 cases and Goalpara with 1423 cases. A study conducted on married women in Boginadi Block of Lakhimpur district of Assam reveals that 95% of the respondents experienced physical violence in the family, 87% with sexual violence, 80% with emotional violence and 70% with economical violence (Borah and Konwar, 2014). Spousal violence appears to be the
most widespread form of domestic violence against women in the state. 40 percent of the women who have ever married, have experienced spousal physical or sexual violence from their current husband or if currently not married, from their most recent husband (NFHS-3, 2005-06). Dowry is found to be the common cause of spousal abuse against women in different districts of Assam. In a survey conducted in Gobardhana Development Block of Barpeta District, 54.40% of the respondents cited dowry to be the main cause of spousal violence; 44.80% reported the second most common reason to be the alcoholism of the husbands (Karmakar, 2015). Those women whose husbands drink, get drunk often are more likely to experience spousal violence than women whose husbands do not. Therefore, domestic violence is a serious problem which is increasing at an alarming rate across the entire state. From table 3, it is observed that the incidents of cruelty by husband or his relatives in the state have increased from 3478 cases in 2008 to 8636 cases in 2013 showing an average increase of 14.83% over these six years. A study conducted by the Law Research Institute, Guwahati, covering police stations in the 23 districts in Assam which reported 10,423 registered cases of violence against women including rape, dowry, molestation and kidnapping in the 10 years preceding the survey (Devi, 2008) justifies that the rate of domestic violence in Assam is quite high.

The incidents of Kidnapping and abduction have also registered high increase in the State. Nagaon with 1867 cases reported the highest number of such cases between 2008-2013 followed by Guwahati City with 1666 cases, Dhubri with 1428 cases, Sonitpur with 1119 cases and Barpeta with 1098 cases. A total number of 17442 cases were registered in the state showing an average increase of 16.99% during the period 2008-2013. The reported cases of Kidnapping and abduction have continuously increased during 2009 - 2013 with 1789 cases in 2008, 2092 cases in
2009, 2767 cases in 2010, 3192 cases in 2011, 3360 cases in 2012 and 4222 in the year 2013.

Rape is the third most reported crimes against women in Assam. Dhubri with 953 cases reported the highest number followed by Nagaon with 950 cases, Barpeta with 667 cases, Goalpara with 527 cases, Sonitpur with 525 cases and Darang with 509 cases. An increasing trend in cases of rape has been observed during 2007-08. Although a slight decrease of 1.23 % in 2011 (1700 cases) and 0.29% in 2012 (1716 cases) over 2010 (1721 cases) has been noticed, these cases have shown an increase of 11.83 % in the year 2009 (1631 cases) over the year 2008 (1438 cases), an increase of 5.22 % in the year 2010 (1721 cases) over 2009 (1631 cases), with further increase of 11.40 % in the year 2013 (1937 cases) over 2012 (1716 cases).

Molestation is also another widely prevalent crime committed against women in Assam. A total number of 9456 cases were recorded in the state over these 6 years (2008-2014). Although a slight decrease was noticed in 2011 (1193 cases) over 2010 (1400 cases), these cases have continuously increased during 2008 – 2013. 1272 cases of molestation were reported in 2008, 1342 in 2009, 1400 in 2010, 1840 in 2012 and 2409 in 2013 and the majority of such cases were reported from Dhubri (1372 cases), Darrang (1120), Guwahati City (862 cases) and Nagaon (784 cases).

During the period (2008-2013), 158 cases were reported under the Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act of 1956 and 59 cases in the category of sexual harassment, 7 cases in importation of girls and 7 cases in Indecent Representation of Women. However, no case of ‘sati’ was recorded in Assam during this period.

Another form of crime affecting women in endemic proportions in some of the districts of Assam is that of witch hunting. A report by the North-East India Studies, states that there were more than 65 cases of witch hunting in Assam alone in
the year 2007-2012 (Chakraborty and Borah, 2013). Witch hunting is a highly
gendered crime because it is mostly the women who are alleged of practicing
witchcraft to harm others. Many of those accused of witchcraft are the widows, single
women, elderly or the mentally ill women and they are usually identified as witches
by the local folk healers (Ojhas). Once a woman is detected as a ‘witch’, she is
subjected to merciless treatment by the community in which she lives; in. she is
beaten, tortured, dragged out of the locality and in extreme cases killed brutally by
the community. This practice of killing people on allegations of practicing witchcraft
is known as ‘witch hunting’ it is widely practiced in some of the remotest areas of the
districts such as Kokrajhar, Bongaigaon, Baksa, Goalpara, Darrang, Sonitpur,
Tinsukia, and Dhemaji.

2.6 Crimes against Women in Kamrup Metropolitan District of Assam
Kamrup Metropolitan District is one of the most developed districts in the state of
Assam. The available data reveal high incidence of crimes against women in this
district. During the period 2008-2013, an increasing trend has been observed in the
reported crimes against women. Over these six years there has been an increase of
20% on the average in crimes against women in the districts. The head-wise incidents
of crimes against women reported in the district during the year 2008 to 2013 are
presented in Table 2.3.
Crime against Women: Global, National and State Perspectives

Table 2.3: Total crimes against women in Kamrup Metropolitan District, 2008-2013

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Rape (Sec. 376 IPC)</th>
<th>Kidnapping &amp; Abduction (Sec. 363 to 371 IPC)</th>
<th>Dowry Death (Sec. 302 / 304 IPC)</th>
<th>Cruelty By Husband and Relatives (Sec. 498-A IPC)</th>
<th>Molestation (Sec. 354 IPC)</th>
<th>Sexual Harassment (Sec. 509 IPC)</th>
<th>Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act, 1956</th>
<th>Sati Prevention Act, 1987</th>
<th>Indecent Representation of Women</th>
<th>Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>197</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>252</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>173</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>345</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>147</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>313</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>152</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>379</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>227</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>474</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>358</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>919</td>
<td>501</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1960</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Data collected from the police stations of Rani, Bezeria, Dimoria, Chandrapur, and Guwahati City

Table 2.3 shows that a total of 1960 cases of crimes against women were reported in the Kamrup Metropolitan District during 2008 to 2013. Although a slight decrease of 10.22% in 2011 (313 cases) over 2010 (345 cases) was noticed, there has actually been an increasing trend in such cases as the data reveal. An increase of 21.82% in the year 2009 (252 cases) over the year 2008 (197 cases), an increase of 26.95% in the year 2010 (173 cases) over 2009 (252 cases), with further increase of 17.41% in the year 2012 (379 cases) over 2011(313 cases), an increase of 20.04% in 2013 (474 cases) over 2012 (379 cases). The details of crimes against women reported under various sections of IPC and SLL in the district are presented in tables below:
2.6.1 Cruelty By Husband and Relatives (Sec. 498-A IPC)

Table 2.4 : Cruelty By Husband and Relatives (Sec. 498-A IPC), 2008-2013

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Rani</th>
<th>Bezera</th>
<th>Dimoria</th>
<th>Chandrapur</th>
<th>Greater Guwahati Urban Area</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
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<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>37</td>
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<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Data collected from the police stations of Rani, Bezera, Dimoria, Chandrapur, and Greater Guwahati Urban Area

Table 2.4 clearly reveals the high occurrence of the cases of cruelty by husbands and in-laws in the district. Among the crimes reported under various heads across the district, the highest numbers of cases in the period 2008-2014 was found to be reported under Section 498A of the Indian Penal Code which deals with domestic violence and cruelty towards women by the husband or his family. The total number of 919 cases was reported in the district that accounted for 46.88% of total crimes committed against women over these 6 years. These cases have shown a mixed trend during the period (2008-2014). Although a slight decrease of 15 % in 2011(147 cases) and 12% in 2012 (152 cases) over 2010 (173 cases) has been noticed, these cases have shown an increase of 31.5 % in the year 2009 (125 cases) over the year 2008 (95 cases), an increase of 38.4% in the year 2010 (173 cases) over 2009 (125 cases), with further increase of 49.3 % in the year 2013 (227 cases) over 2012(152...
cases). From 2008-2013, All Women Police Station recorded the highest number of cases (581) of cruelty by husband’s relatives in Greater Guwahati Urban Area. Next to this, 100 cases were registered in Azara Police Station followed by Sonapur Police Station with 68 cases and Garchuk Police Station with 58 cases. Khetri Police Station registered 47 cases, Noonmati Police station registered 22 cases and Pragjyotishpur Police Station had 21 cases. A very few cases were recorded in Basistha (7 cases), Jalukbari (5 cases), Satgaon (4 cases), Amingaon (4 cases), and Kamalpur Police Station (2 cases).

2.6.2 Molestation (Sec. 354 IPC)

Table 2.5 : Molestation (Sec. 354 IPC), 2008-2013

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Rani</th>
<th>Bezera</th>
<th>Dimoria</th>
<th>Chandrapur</th>
<th>Greater Guwahati Urban Area</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
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<td>2010</td>
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<td>2012</td>
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<td>1</td>
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<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Data collected from the police stations of Rani, Bezera, Dimoria, Chandrapur, and Greater Guwahati Area

Table 2.5 shows that molestation is another major crime committed against women with 501 cases reported over these 6 years (2008-2013). It appears to be the second highest crime which has continuously increased during 2008 - 2013 with 42 cases reported in 2008, which increased to 62 cases in 2009, which further increased
to 65 cases 2010 and 78 cases in 2011 and 123 cases in 2012. The average increase in the reported cases of molestation is 11.32%. During the period (2008-2013), Greater Guwahati Urban Area recorded the highest number of molestation cases (105) which constitute 20.95% of the total of such cases recorded in the district. Azara Police Station reported 98 cases, Garchuk Police Station (63 cases), Pragjyotish Police Station (56 cases), Sonapur Police Station (56 cases), Khetri Police station (37 cases), Noonmati Police Station (29 cases), Satgaon Police Station (21 cases) and Jalukbari Police Station (18 cases). The lowest number cases of molestation was registered in Basistha Police station (8 cases), Kamalpur Police Station (7 cases) and Amingaon Police Station (3 cases) respectively.

2.6.3 Kidnapping & Abduction (Sec. 363 to 373IPC)

Table 2.6 : Kidnapping & Abduction (Sec. 363 to 373IPC), 2008-2013

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Rani P.S.</th>
<th>Bezera P.S.</th>
<th>Dimoria P.S.</th>
<th>Chandrapur P.S.</th>
<th>Greater Guwahati Urban Area P.S.</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>9</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Data collected from the police stations of Rani, Bezera, Dimoria, Chandrapur, and Greater Guwahati Urban Area

Table 2.6 shows an increasing trend in the incidence of kidnapping and abduction from the period 2008 - 2013. In the category of kidnapping and abduction, 32 cases were registered in 2008, 41 cases in 2009, 67 cases in 2010, 66 cases in
2011, 69 cases in 2012 and 83 cases in 2013. Kidnapping and abduction is the third highest crime committed against women in the district which accounted for 18.26% of the total of such cases reported in the district during 2008-2013. Although, in the period 2008-2012, All Women Police Station recorded the maximum number of cases in Greater Guwahati Urban Area under the category of cruelty by husband and relatives and molestation but in case of Kidnapping and the abduction, the highest number of cases were found in Sonapur Police Station (69) followed by Azara Police Station with 62 cases and Garchuk Police Station with 56 cases. Moreover, 43 cases were reported in Khetri Police Station, 36 cases in Noonmati Police Station, 27 cases in Pragjyotishpur Police Station, 16 cases in All Women Police Station, 15 cases in Basistha Police Station and 13 cases in Satgaon Police Station. A very few cases were registered in Jalukbari Police Station (10 cases), Amingaon Police Station (9 cases) and Kamalpur Police Station (2 cases).

2.6.4 Rape (Sec. 376 IPC)
Table 2.7 : Rape (Sec. 376 IPC), 2008-2013

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Rani</th>
<th>Bezera</th>
<th>Dimoria</th>
<th>Chandrapur</th>
<th>Greater Guwahati Urban Area</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Azara P.S.</td>
<td>Garchuk P.S.</td>
<td>Kamalpur P.S.</td>
<td>Amingaon P.S.</td>
<td>Jalukbari P.S.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Data collected from the police stations of Rani, Bezera, Dimoria, Chandrapur, and Greater Guwahati Urban Area
Table 2.7 reveals that in the period 2008-2013, 141 cases were registered under the category of rape. These cases have shown a mixed trend during the period 2008-2013. In the district, 25 cases of rape were reported in 2008, 16 cases in 2009, 25 cases in 2010, 21 cases in 2011, 29 cases in 2012 and 25 cases in 2013. The highest number of rape cases in the district was found in Sonapur Police Station (42 cases), All Women Police Station (26 cases), Khetri Police Station (24 cases) and Azara Police Station (18 cases) which constitute 47.88% of total of such cases during 2008-2013. The lowest incidents of rape cases are reported in Garchuk Police Station (8 cases), Basistha Police Station (6 cases), Pragjyotishpur Police Station (5 cases), Amingaon Police Station (4 cases), Noonmati Police Station (4 cases), Jalukbari Police Station (3 cases), Kamalpur Police Station (1 case) and Satgaon Police Station (1 case).

2.6.5 Dowry Death (Sec. 302 / 304 IPC)

Table 2.8: Dowry Death (Sec. 302 / 304 IPC), 2008-2013

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Rani</th>
<th>Bezera</th>
<th>Dimoria</th>
<th>Chandrapur</th>
<th>Greater Guwahati Urban Area</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
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<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Data collected from the police stations of Rani, Bezera, Dimoria, Chandrapur, and Greater Guwahati Urban Area
Table 2.8 shows the presence of dowry death cases in Kamrup Metropolitan District of Assam. A total number of 9 cases of dowry death were registered in the period 2008-2013. There were no cases of dowry deaths in 2011 and 2012, although 3 cases in 2008, 3 cases in 2009, 2 cases in 2010 and 1 case in 2013 were found to be reported in the district. Moreover, among the crimes reported under various heads during the period 2008-2013, the lowest number of cases was reported under the category of dowry death which constitutes 0.45% of total reported crimes against women in the district. Out of 9 cases of dowry death during the period 2008-2013, 4 cases were reported in Sonapur Police Station, 2 cases in Azara Police Station, 1 case in Kamalpur Police Station, 1 case in Noonmati Police Station and 1 case in Pragjyotishpur Police Station. Significantly, not a single case was registered in Garchuk, Basistha, Amingaon, Jalukbari, Khetri and Satgaon Police Station.

2.6.6 Sexual Harassment (Sec. 509 IPC)

Table 2.9 : Sexual Harassment (Sec. 509 IPC), 2008-2013

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Rani P.S.</th>
<th>Bezera P.S.</th>
<th>Dimoria P.S.</th>
<th>Chandrapur P.S.</th>
<th>Greater Guwahati Urban Area</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
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<td>0</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
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<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>0</td>
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<td>0</td>
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<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Data collected from the police stations of Rani, Bezera, Dimoria, Chandrapur, and Greater Guwahati Urban Area
Table 2.9 reveals that during the period 2008-2013, 13 cases were registered under section 509 of Indian Penal Code in the Kamrup Metropolitan District of Assam. No cases was identified in 2008, while 3 cases in 2009, 3 cases in 2010, 1 cases in 2011, 3 cases in 2012 and 3 cases in 2013 were reported under the category of sexual harassment in the district. During the period 2008-2013, a total number of 7 cases were recorded in All Women Police Station, 4 cases in Sonapur Police Station and 2 cases in Satgaon Police Station. Cases of sexual harassment were not found in Azara, Garchuk, Basistha, Kamalpur, Amingaon, Jalukbari, Khetri, Pragjyotishpur and Noonmati Police Station.

2.6.7 Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act, 1956

Table 2.10 : Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act, 1956, 2008-2013

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>10</td>
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<td>2011</td>
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<tr>
<td>2012</td>
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<td>Total</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Data collected from the police stations of Rani, Bezera, Dimoria, Chandrapur, and Greater Guwahati Urban Area

Table 2.10 reveals that during the period 2008-2013, minimal number of cases were registered under the Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act of 1956. In fact, no cases
were registered under this crime head across the district during 2008 and 2011. However, 2 cases in 2009, 10 cases in 2010, 2 cases in 2012 and 4 cases in 2013 were reported in the district. Out of the total number of 18 cases, 13 were reported from All Women Police Station, 2 from Azara Police Station, 1 from Sonapur Police Station, 1 from Noonmati Police Station and 1 from Satgaon Police Station. Moreover, Garchuk, Basistha, Amingaon, Jalukbari, Khetri and Satgaon Police Station have not registered any case under Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act, 1956.

Thus, the above analysis clearly reveals the high occurrence of crimes against women during the period 2008-2013 across the Kamrup Metropolitan District of Assam. Although, the majority of cases are reported under various sections of IPC which accounted for 99.08% of the total reported crimes against women, the minimal number of cases is reported under various sections of SLL which constitute 0.91% of the total reported crimes against women. In fact, over these six years, no cases was registered under the section of Sati Prevention Act, Indecent Representation of Women (Prohibition) Act and Importation of Girl in the district.

To conclusion, crimes against women are serious human rights abuse affecting the lives of millions of women of all sorts of socio-economic and educational background, races religions and rationalities. Acts of violence against women which occur within the family (domestic violence), within the community and others may also be perpetrated or condoned by the state are included in this category. The underlying cause of violence against women lies in the discrimination to which women are subjected in all spheres of life. Women face different types of violence across their lifespan including sex-selective abortion, female infanticide, child marriage, female genital mutilation, dowry related violence, bride burning, honour killing, witch hunting which are more specific to particular cultures; other types of
violence like intimate partner violence, rape, workplace sexual harassment, trafficking in women and forced prostitution are seen all over the world. Therefore, no country, no region, no class and no culture are spared from the evil of violence against women.

The present study of crimes against women traces its root to patriarchy – the ideology that bestows power and authority on men over women within the family and outside in the society. In the next chapter, therefore, the conceptual understanding of patriarchy along with its origin and development will be incorporated. It also examine the various structures of society that perpetuate and reinforce the ideology of patriarchy and explore the relationship between patriarchy and crimes against women.
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