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# How Safe are Women Today? Crimes against Women in India

## Abstract

The present paper tries to critically evaluate the seriousness of crime against women in India Analyzing the major crime trend over the years, the NCRB comes up with an alarming feature, which is that crime against women has seen 873 per cent rise since the last 40 years. The present study gives the statistical analysis and is based on different types of gender crime/violence perpetrated against women in India by taking help from secondary sources like National Crime record Bureau, National Commission for women etc.

The introductory part of the paper throws light on NCRB data on crime against women in India. The second part discusses some of the major causes and concerns for increase in crime against women and its consequences. Finally the last section will focus on the conclusion part by giving recommendations.

**Keywords:** Crime, Safety of Women, Gender, Violence, Patriarchy. **Introduction** 

Crimes against women have more than doubled over the past ten years, according to latest data released by the National Crime Records Bureau.

As many as 2.24 million crimes against women were reported over the past decade: 26 crimes against women are reported every hour, or one complaint every two minutes based on the last decade's data. According to a Thompson Reuters poll from just this year, India is the  $4^{th}$ most dangerous place in the world for women.<sup>2</sup> Clearly, the extent to which India has attained success in guaranteeing the safety of and providing a sense of security to its women remains highly debatable. The position of women in politics is weak, though at top level there were and are remarkable exceptions. Son preference is expressed in deep rooted cultural more. Some females fall prey to violence before they are born, when expectant parents abort their unborn daughters, hoping for sons instead. From cradle to grave there is a systematic discrimination against women. Nutrition, health care, education are all withheld or provided grudgingly to daughters. In other societies, girls are subjected to such traditional practices as circumcision, which leave them maimed and traumatized.

## **Objectives of the Study**

To analyze the recent National Crime Record Bureau report and to know the factors of violence against women.

#### Method

For the purpose of the present study, secondary data's like recent reports of Crime in India 2010 and 2011-National Crime Record Bureau, New-Delhi Government of India, Books, Journals, Magazines, Web Sites and internets have been extensively used.

The present study raises a moot question is how safe are women in their homes in the state? According to police reports, nearly half of the women in the state suffer at the hands of their own relatives and family members. The number of cases relating to various atrocities against women — including molestation and domestic violence — has reached alarming proportions. Despite decades of concerted efforts by NGOs and civil society, the overall status of women and their legal entitlements still call for long struggles. Even today, women occupy a devalued position in society. This is manifested in different forms of grave human rights violations

A recent study concluded that in every 26 minutes a woman is molested, every 34 minutes a rape takes place, and every 43 minutes a woman is kidnapped, according to the Home Ministry's National Crime Records Bureau. Women's groups claim only a small percentage of rapes are reported. According to latest data furnished by the National



Sangita Laha Deputy Director, Amity Law School, Amity University, Lucknow

Commission for Women (NCW) Uttar Pradesh registered the highest number of crime cases against women followed by Delhi and Rajasthan respectively. These states emerged the worst offenders against women for the second year in a row. In a disturbing trend, the cases of domestic violence against women have been rising in the country over the past few years.

The total number of cases reported during 2006, 2007, 2008 and 2009 under the *Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005*, were 1,868, 4,908, 4,688 and 5,329 respectively, according to statistics given by the National Crime Records Bureau. The cases of rape also saw an increase from 20,737 in 2007 to 21,396 in 2009, while those of molestation recorded a slight dip from 38,734 in 2007 to 38,711 in 2009.

The National Family Health survey data show, that, in the age group of 15-49, 35.4 per cent of all women and 40 per cent of ever married women experience physical or sexual violence while 6.7 per cent experience both physical and sexual forms of domestic violence. As per the figures, a total of 5,623, 5,555 and 5,650 cases under the *Dowry prohibition Act* and 8,093, 8,172 and 8,383 cases of dowry deaths were reported in 2007, 2008 and 2009 respectively.<sup>3</sup> The data, however, shows that there has been no perceptible change in the cases registered under the Dowry Prohibition Act, 2005.

Not even a single state has witnessed decline in number of cases against women during 2010-11.The annual report (statistics updated until February) of the National Commission for Women said that Uttar Pradesh recorded 6,703 crime cases against women. The State's record on women's rights is very poor. Nearly half of all reports of human rights violation filed with the National Human Rights Commission are from Uttar Pradesh. In addition, the State accounted for the largest number of crimes against women in the country.While Delhi recorded 2,188 cases and Rajasthan 1,357. Delhi has the distinction of nearly doubling of cases of crime against women during 2010-11 as it registered 1,405 cases in 2009-10. Rajasthan, too, witnessed a jump in cases during the year moving up from 884 in 2009-10. The growth in UP, however, is much less with the state recording 6,302 cases in 2009-10. The National Commission for Women data showed that in 2010-2011 14,151 cases were registered out of which 544 (376 in 2009-10) complaints were for rape, 2,944 for domestic violence, 465 for dowry death (357 in 2009-10) and 505 cases were registered for police harassment.4

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Violent crimes against women are both a continuation of the systematic discrimination against women and its results. The violator feels his acts are socially sanctioned; the evidence is manifest in all that he has witnessed since childhood. These forms of violence result in the negation of equality rights of women.For hitherto, crimes, or other forms of harassment faced by women were handled by the normal police stations along with other crime and law and order issues. Moreover, as it became increasingly clear that there were many forms of domestic abuse which might not end in the death of the wife and might not strictly arise out of demands for dowry. Women complainants and victims, therefore, needed specialized attention for offences other than dowry harassment and domestic violence, for example rape and sexual abuse. For e.g., in Madhya Pradesh, women constitute 48 percent of the total population, yet crimes against women account for only 10 percent of all the crimes reported According to the report prepared by National Crime Records Bureau, Madhya Pradesh accounted for 35.8 percent (18,315) of total complaints followed by Delhi (6,031) and Uttar Pradesh (6,015).<sup>5</sup> Women should therefore have equal representation in the police and be given mainstream duties. Corruption and abuse of power is prevalent in society. Society needs policing both for men and women.<sup>6</sup> Women's organizations had been lobbying for a more humane approach to crimes against women for some time and had even taken their protests to the streets on several occasions. In particular the pernicious influence of Dowry had been receiving vociferous condemnation from these nongovernmental groups and considerable media support had also been built up. Looked at in this context an emergency response from law enforcement is almost mandatory.

What women victims frequently seek from the police is the immediate cessation of violence and protection against further harassment. At this stage they experience a feeling of betrayal, conflicting loyalties and ambivalence. The sense of powerlessness, filial loyalties and the lack of options contribute to this feeling.<sup>7</sup> National Crime Record Bureau data for 1998 showed a 90 per cent increase in cases recorded under the Dowry Prohibition Act over the previous year. As India celebrates the emergence for the first time of four woman chief ministers, expectations on major improvement in the lot of fairer sex in the country abound. But if one were to go by the track record on this count, the performance does not really impress.

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Table -I
Crime Head-wise Cases Registered under Crime against Women during 2011 - 2015
and Percentage Variation in 2015 over 2014

		Year			Percentage		
	Crime Head	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	Variation in 2015 over
1.	Rape#	24,206	24,923	33,707	36,735	34,651	-5.7
2.	Attempt to Commit Rape*	-	-	-	4,232	4,434	4.8
3.	Kidnapping & Abduction of Women	35,565	38,262	51,881	57,311	59,277	3.4
4.	Dowry Deaths	8,618	8,233	8,083	8,455	7,634	-9.7
5.	Assault on Women with Intent to Outrage her/their Modesty	42,968	45,351	70,739	82,235	82,422	0.2
6.	Insult to the Modesty of Women	8,570	9,173	12,589	9,735	8,685	-10.8
7.	Cruelty by Husband or His Relatives	99,135	1,06,527	1,18,866	1,22,877	1,13,403	-7.7
8.	Importation of Girl from Foreign Country	80	59	31	13	6	-53.8
9.	Abetment of Suicide of Women	-	-	-	3,734	4,060	8.7
Α.	Total IPC Crime against Women	2,19,142	2,32,528	2,95,896	3,25,327	3,14,575	-3.3
10.	Commission of Sati Prevention Act	0	0	0	0	0	0
11.	Indecent Representation of Women (P) Act	453	141	362	47	40	-14.9
12.	The Dowry Prohibition Act	6,619	9,038	10,709	10,050	9,894	-1.5
13.	Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act	-	-	-	426	461	8.2
14.	Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act	2,436	2,563	2,579	2,070#	2,424	17.1
В.	Total SLL Crime against Women	9,508	11,742	13,650	12,593	12,819	1.8
	Total(A+B)	2,28,650	2,44,270	3,09,546	3,37,922	3,27,394	-3.1

<sup>\*\*</sup>Newly included crime head; <sup>+</sup>#' Exclude child rapes registered under the section 4 & 6 of Protection of Children from Sexual Offence Act 2012 which published separately in Chapter-6.

Andhra Pradesh has reported the most crimes against women (263,839) over the past 10 years.

The state ranks first in crimes reported for insult to modesty of women (35,733), second in cruelty by husband and relatives (117,458), assault on women with intent to outrage her modesty (51,376) and fourth among dowry-related deaths (5,364).<sup>8</sup> The crime rate of sexual offences was highest in Delhi (43.6 percent) according to the daily news analysis published on 28th March 2010followed by Odisha (22.2 percent) as compared to national rate of 21.4 percent.<sup>9</sup> A total of 1, 30,195 such cases were registered under sexual offences during 2015. The share of these crimes to total IPC crimes at the national level was 4.4 percent during the year 2015. The percentage share of these crimes to total IPC crimes was highest in Lakshadweep (14.0 percent ) followed by Tripura (13.0 percent) and A & N Islands (11.4 percent) as compared to national average of 4.4 percent of total IPC crimes.

An analysis of official data shows that on three major counts-gender ratios, female literacy and crime against women-Uttar Pradesh and Delhi have underperformed and states show at times to be even below the national average. West Bengal and Tamil Nadu present today no better picture.

Table - II

Proportion of Crime against Women (IPC) towards Total IPC Crimes

S.No.	Year	Total IPC Crimes	against	Percentage to Total			
			Women (IPC	IPC Crimes			
			cases)				
1.	2011	23,25,575	2,19,142	9.4%			
2.	2012	23,87,188	2,44,270	10.2%			
3.	2013	26,47,722	2,95,896	11.2%			
4.	2014*	28,51,563	3,25,327	11.4%			
5.	2015*	29,49,400	3,14,575	10.7%			
(*) Number of arime boards hours also							

""Number of crime heads have also increased from 11 to 14 in 2014 & 2015 in the revised preformat.

These findings are more or less confirmed by looking to the overall picture of human rights violations in the State of Uttar Pradesh. According to recent figures tabled in Parliament, Uttar Pradesh continued to lead in the number of cases registered under the Scheduled Caste and the Scheduled Tribe (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989, followed by Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat, Bihar, Orissa, Karnataka and Maharashtra.

West Bengal (239,760) is second, leading in crimes related to cruelty by husband and relatives (152,852), second in kidnapping and abduction (27,371) and fifth in dowry-related deaths (4,891).

Uttar Pradesh (236,456) ranks third, followed by Rajasthan (188,928) and Madhya Pradesh (175,593).

These five states account for almost half of all the crimes committed against women across the country over the last decade. Kidnapping and abduction of women is up 26.4 percent (a more than three-fold increase) over the past ten years, from

15,750 cases in 2005 to 57,311 cases in 2014. Uttar Pradesh is the worst-affected state, with 58,953 cases reported.

Police investigations have found that in places like Delhi, Agra, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan, DE notified tribes (also known as criminal tribes), such as Bedia, Nat, Kanjar and Banjara, are involved in kidnapping minor girls according to a report by the United Nations. These tribes raise kidnapped girls as their own daughters, and then send them to Mumbai and Middle East to work in dance bars, brothels and escort services. Madhya Pradesh (34,143) reported the highest number of rape cases in the last decade followed by West Bengal (19,993), Uttar Pradesh (19,894), Maharashtra (19,177) and Rajasthan (18,654). Madhya Pradesh (70,020) also reported the most cases of assault on women with intent to outrage her modesty. Around 35 percent of women globally have experienced either physical or sexual intimate partner violence or nonpartner sexual violence. Some national violence studies show that up to 70 percent of women have experienced physical or sexual violence in their lifetime from an intimate partner according to a global review by UN Women.

The overall disposal rate of cases by courts in the country was about one-fifth the total numbers of registered cases, while the conviction rate was just 1.14 per cent. In regard to crime against women, the politically sensitive state of UP, has a poor track record. As per 2009 official (National Crime Records Bureau-NCRB) data, Uttar Pradesh recorded about 23, 254 cases against women, contributing singularly about 11.4 per cent of total cases of violence against women in the country. The incidence of crime against women in Delhi is about 2.1 per cent of the total case against women, but these statistics fail to capture the overwhelming sense of fear among women in Delhi on their safety. Both these states present an alarming scenario on women related crucial social indicators. In West Bengal accounted for about 11.4 per cent of all cases recorded against women in 2009 Cases of crime against women. In regard to crime against women, Tamil Nadu accounted for about 3 per cent of all crime committed against women in 2009.

## Factors Affecting

## Abuse of Power and Authority

Most of the time individual violence of men against women are disturbing facts and are used as an instrument of repression. It then becomes a potent

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instrument for the intimidation of whole sections of people in which women are specifically the victims of a peculiarly brutal and dehumanizing form of violence. Violence by individual men on individual women is itself a serious violation of women's rights but in the context of civil liberties it is important to highlight the growing incidence of custodial rape by agencies of the State such as forest officials, army personnel, and especially by policemen.

## Social Ostracism towards the Victim of Sexual Offences

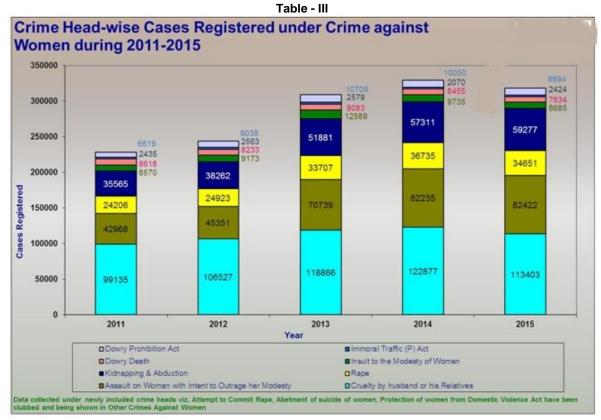
Where we are talking about change at macro level to prosecute perpetrators of sexual crime, ground reality for victims is entirely stunning and shocking. Young victims find themselves moving from well - meaning anonymity to be turned in to nonentities at the behest of social ostracism.. Society don't accept them and due to the deep engrained chauvinism victim of sexual crimes are the worst sufferers.

## Lack of Initiation by the Police

In the case of rape, the study found that in three police stations, 51 cases had been registered and in 34 per cent of the cases the victims had named the accused. Yet no arrests were made in 47 per cent of the cases. Also, almost half the victims in the sample were under the age of 20. It was also found that in 92 per cent of the cases registered under Section 354 of the IPC (outraging the modesty of a woman), the victims had named the accused. Yet, in nearly half of the cases, the police had not even initiated an inquiry. A significant point that emerged was the virtual absence of State intervention, the police in particular.<sup>12</sup> According to this data in last three years i.e. from 2011 to 2013 there is 120 percent rise in rape crimes, but conviction rate is miserably low and lack of evidence is generally cited as reason for this. But basic cause for this is that investigations into crimes against women continues to be shoddy and slow and, at times, are deliberately botched.13 For years, rape victims in India were too afraid to speak out, traumatized by the assault and fearful they would be blamed themselves. Many don't trust the police.

Molestation, especially on crowded public transport, is rampant, particularly in northern India. Activists say there are two rapes every hour across the country. Instead of providing protection, the police are sometimes the perpetrators.





The National Crime Records Bureau had termed rape -India's fastest growing crime. Rape has increased by 1255.3% (from 2,487 cases in 1971 to 33,707 cases in 2013)According to a Report, there are reported cases of one rape every 54 minutes, a molestation every 26 minutes; and an act of cruelty every 33 minutes. National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) statistic says -every 20 minutes, a woman is raped somewhere in India, not to mention the countless number of cases of molestations or rapes going unreported. Child rape cases have increased by 336% in the last 10 years. Government data shows crimes by juveniles -especially rape and abduction of women -has seen exponential rise in the past decade -from 48.7 percent in 2002 to 66.5 in 2012. Crimes against women in particular are under-reported throughout India as a largely conservative society often blames the victim. Only 6 percent of cases of rape and molestation involved strangers, the accused being known to the victims in the rest. 60% of sexual assaults are not reported to the police. 15 of 16 rapists will never spend a day in jail. Number of dowry-deaths is quite alarming in the country -a dowry death every one hour forty two minutes. There is dire need to address the issue of rape in a more powerful manner.

#### Less Number of Mahila Police Stations

Despite growing cases of crime against women, State governments have failed to open women's police stations. As per the latest government data, 13 States and Union Territories have no women police stations, including Delhi. According to the Bureau of Police Research & Development (BPR&D) data, there were just 442 women police stations across India as on January 1, 2011. Tamil Nadu had the maximum number of women police stations (196) followed by Uttar Pradesh (71), Andhra Pradesh (32), Gujarat (31), Rajasthan (24), Jharkhand (22), Madhya Pradesh (9), Punjab (5), Chhattisgarh (4) and Haryana (2).<sup>14</sup>

In another instance, there were no women police stations in the state of Bihar, only women cells existed that were formed from the year 2015 to look into their grievances.Special women cell had been set up in 23 police stations of Patna district only for counseling.<sup>15</sup>

In the state of Orissa, there are only six women Police Stations working.<sup>16</sup> In West Bengal, 157 police stations have no separate lock-up for women. Out of 432 police stations in districts, 153 do not have a lock-up for women while in the city there is no lock-up for women in four out of 48 police stations. According to the report, there is no separate police lock-up in New Market, Jorabagan, Girish Park and Maidan police stations in Kolkata. Many of the women lock-ups in police stations under Kolkata Police were not used for a long time. Most of the women prisoners requiring a night's detention are brought to the central lock-up at Lalbazar where there are two lock-ups with a capacity to accommodate 68 women.<sup>17</sup> The state government has set a target of setting up 65 allwomen police stations across the state to tackle crimes against women across 20 state districts.<sup>18</sup> The government plans that the officer in-charge and all guards would be women in these police stations. In the first phase, 20 such police stations will be set up for which 1,100 women police personnel would be recruited. The government has approved the

establishment of 330 posts under various categories for the new police stations. A woman police officer will head each of these police stations and majority of the other ranks will constitute of women also.

Table-IV-PoliceDistrictsRegisteringabove2,000casesunderCrimeagainstWomenduring2015

SL	State/UT	Police District	No. of Case No
1	Maharashtra	Mumbai Commr.	4,803
2	West Bengal	South 24 Parganas	4,073
3	Karnataka	Bengaluru City	3,079
4	Telangana	Cyberabad	2,994
5	West Bengal	Murshidabad	2,984
6	Delhi UT	South	2,712
7	West Bengal	North 24 Parganas	2,690
8	Assam	Barpeta	2,682
9	Telangana	Hyderabad City	2,405
10	West Bengal	Nadia	2,331
11	Delhi UT	Outer District	2,284
12	Assam	Dhubri	2,021

While, the state of Jharkhand has also started several departments as a response to counter violence against women. The police department has initiated to start Family Counseling Center and Women Cell in nine selected districts in the first phase. Mahila Thana and Dowry Advisory Cell have also been running in all districts attached with Superintendent of Police Office. In addition to, there are certain other institutions such as Mahila Battalion Head Quarter, State Women Commission, etc. which are in the process. Unfortunately, except for a few major cities, women's police stations in Jharkhand are being manned by male police officers.<sup>19</sup> However in spite of affirmative policies and programmes by the government and initiatives by NGO's, it is evident that systematic and sustained work is required at various levels to minimize gender discrimination and end gender based violence in the state.

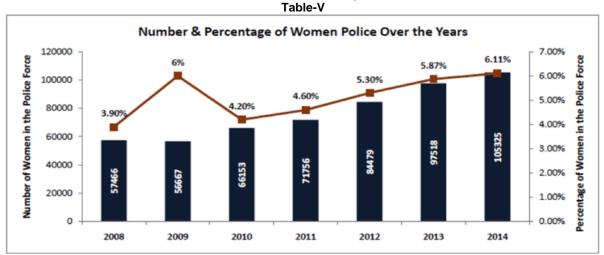
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Women police personnel's should be specially trained in tacking issues of violence against women. Hence, providing women victims with comfortable environments via all-women police stations, equipping women and men in the police force with better facilities to tackle gender based violence, and endeavoring to make wider and more long-lasting change through gender sensitisation of police officers will have to go hand in hand to transform India into a country where crime victims of all genders access and receive justice.

## Less Number of Mahila Police Officers

Women police now form a part of the police force of all states and Union Territories, except Daman & Diu. Some states/cities have experimented with setting up police stations managed and run exclusively by women police personnel. On 1.1.2001, the total strength of women police in states/Union Territories was 26,018. Two of them were holding the posts of IGP, 7 of Dy. IGP, 29 of SP and 79 were functioning as ASP/Dy. SP. There were as many as 255 Inspectors, 1343 Sub-inspectors, 777Assistant Sub-Inspectors, 2649 Head Constables and 20, 877 Constables. None had risen to the post of the head of the police force in any state. In fact, since the first entry of a woman in the Indian Police Service occurred in 1972, none had matured to occupy the highest rank in the police force. Though the strength of women police has increased to 26,018, even now they constitute only 1.79 percent of the total police strengthen states/Union territories.<sup>2</sup>

In India, of the 1,722,786 Police Officers in country today, only 105,325 are women across all ranks. This amounts, on an average to a mere 6.11 percent of the total police force in India, as of 1<sup>st</sup> January 2014( as per the date with Bureau of Police Research and Development, Ministry of Home Affairs). The numbers have grown, albeit marginally, in the last 5 years. In 2008, women made up 3.9 percent of the total police officers, which has grown to 6.11 percent in 2014.



Within the South Asia region (the report covers Bangladesh, India, Pakistan and Maldives), Maldives ranks higher than India, with women comprising 7.4 percent of the police force. Bangladesh (4.6 percent) and Pakistan (0.9 percent) fare poorer within the countries researched in the report.

A UN Women report of 2011 estimates that, "globally, women average just 9 percent of the police, with rates falling as low as 2 percent in some parts of

the world. On average, women do not make up more than 13 percent of the police force in any region". In most developed countries, women make up to 25 percent of the total force, with Scandinavian countries having around 30 percent.<sup>21</sup> So how would a less number of women in task force handle crimes against women?

Gender sensitisation is an ongoing and gradual process, with the final product impossible to perfectly determine ahead of time. So while all-women police stations don't address the root causes of inequity, they are likely one vital component of a more inclusive, long-term strategy toward ensuring women receive the justice they deserve. Not to mention that these stations are deeply affected by patriarchal institutions and therefore affect women to pursue careers in the police. Many state police forces continue to have separate cadres for men and women at state-level entry points, which means that very few vacancies for a particular rank are reserved for women, which affects their career growth upwards, as greater number of seniority and promotion lists are apportioned to male officers. Women police are utilised mostly in performing specialized tasks of dealing with women and children. In this context, the National Police Commission (NPC) has stated that women police have not been given an equal share in various areas of police work and recommended that they be more actively and directly involved in police investigations.

Though women's police stations had been set up, their undefined jurisdiction, lack of staff and inability to handle cases often led to the victims being referred back to the regular police stations. Consequently, the cases dragged on and more often than not evidence was destroyed.

# The Recommendation Focuses on Reform in Indian Police System

Low enforcement should be well trained to react swiftly and with sensitivity towards the women and children cases. Neither the Centre nor States have been proactive in improving the quality of Policing. Official records shows that only 14 states have either enacted the New Police Act or amended their existing laws to incorporate SC's suggestion.

Hence, there is a great need for a gender-specific police reforms due to the following reasons:

- The sensitiveness of the average police officer when dealing with a harassed and frightened woman left much to be desired. They are particularly insensitive to women feelings and sentiments.
- In the largely patriarchal Indian society, most women still consider discussing personal or sexual matters with a stranger—especially a man—improper.
- The traditional police response of registration of an offence, investigation, arrest and prosecution left something to be desired in many instances where women do not want to send their abusive husbands to jail, but only want them to stop the abuse.
- 4. Many women experience a greater degree of comport in talking to women officers.

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- 5. Women police deal better with women complaints.
- Police attitude towards women should change drastically and women should be made to feel safe in police presence. This is because the police do not always honour the integrity and dignity of women.
- The police are generally very rude, especially towards women who emphasize to register the F.I.R and to give them a copy of the same.
- 8. Every police stations must have women officers whose duties are concurrent i.e. crime against women and regular policing.

## To Increase Reporting of Rape and Assault Cases

To increase the reporting of such cases at first we need to empower the women and children. They must be educate on their rights and encourage them to come forward to register the cases. There are many violent cases but due to stigma in the society very few are reported.

## **Exemplary Punishment**

Punishment of every culprit need to be exemplary. Campaigning of **"Zero- tolerance**" of sex offenders. More and more fast track court should establish.

#### Proper Planning of the City

Infrastructural up gradations and modifications, especially in public spaces Every city should be planned in a very specific manner. CCTV, panic button in buses, digital apps like Himmat of Delhi police must be used. Introduction of women friendly public transport systems with sustainable development to the poorest can help in reducing crimes to an extent. So, urban planning can help in curbing crime.

### Conclusion

However, rooting out violence against women in India as a whole requires sustained effort on the part of the actors of society.

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