

WOMEN & HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS IN INDIA:

Focus on Manipur and Odisha

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The French Historian Michel Foucault highlights sexuality as a construct and presents its genealogical history. For him, sexuality is a mode by which one understands the exercise of power and how a certain kind of 'sexual' subjectivity encourages the disciplinary mode of power. By crafting a certain kind of imagery for the female body and its sexual desires the woman is absorbed into the normative structure of society that is defined by patriarchy. Patriarchy is an endemic historical and cultural practice that exacts an all-encompassing hegemony. Moreover, Sylvia Walby defines Patriarchy "as a system of social structures and practices in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women". When Walby uses the term social structures she is implying that this system of control, domination and oppression is not biologically determined. Contextually 'Patriarchy' is based on a system of power relations which are hierarchical and unequal where men control women's production, reproduction and sexuality. Acceptance of traditional masculine gender roles in a patriarchal society is closely connected with escalating violence towards women. Several complex and interconnected institutionalized social and cultural factors have kept Indian women vulnerable to the violence directed at them, all of them manifestations of historically unequal power relations between men and women actors. Coming to north-eastern region there is an ongoing struggle by people trying to establish their right to autonomy which has led to political instability, strife and outright violence in the region. Ethnic conflict, arm conflicts, insurrection movement and issue of poverty and injustice is inextricably interlinked and have its impact on status of women. Although women in North-East India enjoy greater mobility and visibility than women of other communities in the country data collected by the North East Network suggests that violence against women is on the rise in the North-east. The ongoing armed conflict situation prevalent in the North East India has intensified the violence faced by women which takes the form of sexual, mental or physical abuse, killings and clashes. The region under the shadow of conflict has witnessed a resurgence of patriarchal values and norms which have brought with them new restrictions on the movement of women, the way they dress and more overtly physical violence such as rape which is systematically used as a tactic against a particular community. In this paper an attempt has been made to make a comparative study with the scenario in Odisha where the onset of liberalization has not helped the larger cause of gender sensitivity in any way. The National Crime Records Bureau has reported 6249 cases of violence against women including 799 rape cases, 547 abduction cases, 334 dowry deaths and 1671 cases of cruelty by husband and relatives of women in Odisha.

Keywords: Sexuality, Vulnerable, Unequal Power Relation

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