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“Conflicts – interpersonal violence” – “ Domestic violence”

Half horizon is bright

Announcement:

This is the National Channel of All India Radio. We now bring you the feature “Half horizon is bright”, written and produced by Melanie Matthäus and Smita Deb Mishra, assisted by Anil Gupta and Rajni Dutta. This is an international co-production by All India Radio and Deutsche Welle, the German International Radio and TV – Station.

Music

According to United Nations Human Development Report India is the country which has legislated the largest number of laws against violence on women, yet it is the country which has the largest number of girls as street children, a large number of girl child prostitutes, a large number of girl child dropouts from schools and the largest number of crimes against women.

According to statistics a criminal offence or torture or cruelty is committed every 33 minutes against a woman in India.

One of the most important factors which militates against the dignity of women and results in practices derogatory to their rightful status – **Domestic Violence**. A violence that is committed behind closed doors – the women are attacked, where they should feel safe and protected.

Music

Indian society is a patriarchal society, it is the rule of the father where the women are confined to the household.

But if you turn the pages of Indian history to the very beginning of Indian knowledge and civilisation, to the time of the Indus valley Civilisation and from the time of vedant - Indian society was very rich and strong and varied in prosperity. The position of women was a privileged one.

Music

Nirmala Shivani, a scholar in vedant, tells about the position of women in the vedic period.

SoundBits Nirmala Shivani:

“In the vedic period, women were equally independent as men, if men were allowed to reside vedic mantras, Lupa Mundra and Gahradi , two vedic scholars, were allowed to reside vedic mantras, as well as conduct rituals and fire- worship.

A woman gives birth to a child in complete totality and still maintains her own totality. This honour is only bestowed on a woman.”

Music

The opulence and grandeur of Indian culture attracted the foreign invaders, who were amazed at the advanced art, architecture and music. After the Muslim rule, Britishers came, and this period still remains the darkest period in Indian history. India lost its freedom with this, it gave a greatest blow to the rights of women.

But when the question of freedom struggle came, the illiterate, ordinary women showed their fearlessness, when they participated in the civil disobedience and the “quit India” movement.

Music

1947 India became independent, but what does this independence mean to the Indian woman. Did the free India make the Indian woman really free?

Music

SoundBits health Voice from a girl telling her rights!:

“Right to life is my birth right, right to education is also my birthright, right to health is also my birth right.”

SoundBits D.R. Karthikeyan, former Director General National Human Rights Commission :

“Basics rights are - right to survival first. Many are killed, when they are in the womb, it’s called infanticide. Mainly particularly the girls are killed, when they are born. Female children are not wanted in certain societies in certain areas. It’s called female infanticide. So first is the right to survival, than to food, than to shelter, nutrition, health, education, recreation, security and also opportunity to develop.”

The former Director General of the National Human Rights Commission D.R. Karthikeyan stresses the constitutional right on the girlchild, but in spite of the fact that the Indian Constitution has given her equal status with man – in real life the social system differs from the Constitution.

SoundBits Babli, victim of domestic violence in the shelter house of AIWC: „ My name is Babli. I am married at an early age in 1993 and I have two daughters. A nine year old, and a seven and a half year old. But my marriage is in ... I am beaten and tortured at the hands of my husband for small, small things. And so I have tried to adjust in my marriage, but to no

obey. My father did come over to fetch me home. I expressed my desire to study, but though he agreed at first, he then refused after a week, saying: how long could he carry my burden. My mother then decided to bring me to my brother's place in Delhi. His attitude towards me was ok, but my sister in-law became abusive and started ill-treating me. I am really exhausted with life. But I am still trying to accept it. When I think of the past it only brings tears into my eyes."

Music

Babli is a skinny, small girl, with a beautiful face. Her outward appearance is almost fragile – nobody can imagine, how much the 20 year old mother of two daughters has suffered so far. She and her children are staying in a short stay home, a shelter house controlled by the All India Women Conference – a Non Governmental Organisation.

About 30 other girls are sharing the small dormitory. Normally there is only enough place for 20 women. Most of the girls are under 18.

Babli's case is not special – torture because of dowry is a well known fact to the counsellors in the short stay home. The same reason brought Sima to this place:

SoundBits Sima, victim of domestic violence in the shelter house of AIWC: "My name is Sima Gupta. After marriage my in-laws showed up their greedy side. They wanted to extort money from me. They started torturing me mentally and physically, so I finally left for good. I have only one son. I am going to make his life."

They are allowed to stay three years in the shelter house- a possibility, that most of them use, to go to school and attend to one of the various handicraft courses of AIWC. But if there is any possibility, the All India Woman Conference, who are controlling this house, tries to reunite the broken families again.

SoundBits Counsellor shelter house: "And once the shelter is giving to them, we look into the problem. After a week or so, we let the women relax here. If she needs some medical attention, we give them the medical attention. And after a week or so, we start counselling her. Then we try to call her parents, or her husband, or her in-laws – who ever is the reason for her problem. We call them up. And then we either try to patch them up. Again – everything depends up on the woman. Nothing is imposed on her what she wants. And then we try to do the best for her."

Music

Most of the cases do not happen in metros. Women in rural areas are the most to suffer, as Vimel Thorat knows. Her interest is a special research on Dalit women, who are known as the lowest social group in Indian society.

SoundBits Vimel Thorat, Dalit expert:

„Woman who belongs to lower class in the patriarchal society are subject to a lot of exploitation, simply because she is poor. Yet she has to maintain her homefront as well as contribute to the family economy for the upkeep of her children and family. She can't escape her suffering in the male dominated society. Besides, she is less educated. 99 percent of the women, who are raped belong to the lower class of the society.“

Alcohol plays a major part of that problem. Not only lower classes are affected, but also other parts of the Indian society, like the middle class and upper class. Women are beaten by their drunken men, some cases are reported- but most of them go unreported, as Lalitha Balakrishnan a social activist says:

SoundBits Lalitha Balakrishnan, AIWC:

“Alcohol- you know whether it is a rich family or a poor family, from the cases which come to us, we see, that behind all this problems alcohol is playing a big role. Because of this, the men also forget themselves, they beat them and they now abuse them and ask for the money and all that. ”

SoundBits police siren

The Women Cell, a special department by Indian Police for female victims. One of the pioneers in the Delhi police department, who tries her best to stop this violence against women, is Vimla Mehra, joint commissioner of Indian Police.

SoundBits Vimla Mehra Police commissioner Delhi Police:

“We are dealing with matrimonial problems, women who have been victims of domestic violence and other problems at home, they come to us with their problems. Women write to us and talk to us about issues relating to dowry and domestic violence and drunken husbands and problems relating to their children, husband not giving enough money to the wife for day to day maintenance of the family and children and extra marital affairs.”

The Women Cell started a 24 hour helpline , if victims give a call, the police immediately can reach them. A special car is provided for that service. Everyday more than 200 phone calls reach the Women Cell of Delhi.

Sound Bits Sima, victim of domestic violence at the Women Cell:

”I’ve been married for six years. But my in-laws have put a condition, that only if I get dowry, will I be staying in the house, otherwise I have to leave. My husband used to bring other women in the house and used to beat me up in front of them. My brother in-law as well as my sister in-law used to beat me up as well. I still bear the bruises. I went through hell, and could not take it any longer, so I finally decided to file a case against them. ”

Music

Sima has decided not to go back to her family. She will remain with her father.

Music

Vimla Mehra, joined commissioner Delhi Police:

SoundBits Vimla Mehra Police commissioner Women Cell:

“The problem is not confined to one class or one category of people. It is prevailing in upper classes, it is in middle classes, and it is in the lower middle classes, lower classes. The problem is in each class and each category.”

Music

But do young educated women, who are taking their higher education in Delhi University really experience this problem?

Even if they haven’t faced domestic violence in their own homes, the male dominated society around them affects their psyche:

SoundBits two IP College students :

“I am Monica Rhana, doing psychology honours and I am in the third year. I think you will be amazed to listen that I belong to an area which has the lowest sex ratio in India – Haryana. So there have been many problems regarding domestic violence. So, when I was born – I was the first girl born after 14 boys. So still, nobody was happy, because I was born. So I was a bit ..like.. discriminated against my brothers. They were all allowed to play outside. My first cousins. But I was never let out. And even the dressing, my room, everything was supervised by my mom. I was forced to behave in a very specific gender role. I was not allowed to – naturally I take my role of identification. So finally my dad – he is a kind of idealist, he doesn’t have the viewpoint as my extended family. Then we have a lot of dowry death in our family.”

Music

“My name is Judhi Shekar. I am doing my graduation third year. I was born in Bangalore. My parents are from Bihar. In spite of all the huddle, I managed to come out to study. It was my willpower and desire and efforts to do something, that helped me. Today I am so independent, that I can move around on my own. But still I have to face a lot of problems, like eve-teasing. Everybody is educated, understand terms like domestic violence, gender bias. They can talk on it, but how serious are they about it?”

The professors, who are giving higher education to these young students, they are also not escaping from the agony of male dominated society.

SoundBits Prof. Manjula Saxena, Indraprasthra College:

”My name is Manjula Saxena and I am teaching in IP College. One violence, which is commonly prevailing in our society is “marital rape”. It is believed, that on the first night of the wedding, the marriage should be consummated, whether the woman wants it or not. Indian marriage, as it is, is very tiring and lendy. But everybody wants the marriage to be consummated on the first night itself. And this kind of violence goes on in a marriage throughout the life.”

Even with help of the woman cell, even with higher education given to society, by turning the pages of the newspaper, you will find rape cases nearly every day. Because of the growing figure of sexual assaults in the capital of India, Delhi police decided to offer young student girls a special service.

SoundBits ATMO Self defence

Right in front of their hostels, 40 female students are attending a self defence course. Four officers from the Delhi Police are teaching the girls the basics of self defence.

SoundBits Kalyani Ray, Member in Charge of All India Women Conference:

“Delhi Police is training them basically to handle any situation with what ever is available in their hand, like a book in their hand or their dupattas, like the schal, which they wear, or a handbag or pen, or whatever, whatever they have in their hand, how to defend themselves with the readily available equipment in their hand – so this is a very practical approach.”

SoundBits 2 Girls at the Self Defence Course:

“ I am Jayanti, I am 17 years old, I am studying homeopathy. It’s a very good course for building up this self-esteem and it is very good in a city like Delhi, where we see day to day eve-teasing and cruelty done on women. It is

very good for improving our self-confidence and everything related to woman security.”

Atmo selfdefence

“ My name is Nujia . I join this course, because I feel that it is a good opportunity for anybody to defend themselves. And once you defend yourself and you are able to counter any situation that comes up, not only will that sort of bring about a fear in the men, who are doing something like this. The other women will also be benefited, because if they see some women countering it, they will probably expect the same sort of an attitude from another women, who they try to trouble like that. So that way that it not only will decrease the fear, it’ll also increase our confidence in dealing with such a situation.”

Music

Domestic violence begins at home, it is directly incidental to inequality. The public interest to this theme is growing, more and more Non Governmental Organisations are doing their best to stress the attention on that problem. The latest Census 2001 has revealed that the female population is declining because of the society’s craze for a son. There are some states like Punjab, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh, where there is a sharp decline. With the help of advanced instruments of scanning it is possible to know the sex of the unborn. If it is a girl the pregnancy is terminated.

Soundbits Anuradha Rajan ICRW, International Research Centre for Research on women:

“The underline factor amongst all these is really the undervaluing what women are, women’s capacities, their abilities. What they are capable of doing, their productiveness so to speak, so to me the preference of sons over daughters, valuing sons more than daughters, because they are seen as more productive, because they are seen as culturally valuable to the society, the family line goes through son to son to son, it does not pass on from daughter to daughter to daughter. So the family lineage is also identified by males within the clan. So all of this factor’s are very important in undermining women’s situation. And then there is a vicious circle, that starts. Because you are less valued, you have less access to resources, you have less access to education, you have less access to opportunities, you are less mobile and most importantly there is this whole self-concept, which develops : I am not as important as a men.”

Anuradha Rajan is the Country Representative of the International Centre for Research on Women. One year ago the Institute started a TV campaign, which ran on air to most of the satellite channels all over India.

SoundBits Atmo TV-Spot, mutmachender Song

SoundBits Anuradha Rajan, ICRW:

“ All the Aid spots had one message, that violence against women is not acceptable. Domestic violence within marriage is not as if it is something that is normal. It is not normal. It is not ok. You can stand up and protest against it. You don't have to put up with it. So, in that campaign, what we did, was- we actually had real survivors, women who had gone through abuse of marriages, but who had emerged us - survivors, with agency. Women who showed that they could come out of it. So we had four spots out of those eight, where we had women speaking out and saying, I faced this , it is wrong, it is not your fault, if you are being beaten. It is nothing to be ashamed of, it is society which should feel ashamed, because they are keeping quiet about it.”

Music

Law is for the welfare, law is for the development, and law is also for protection. The Indian government established a Law against Domestic Violence. But when the justice delayed, is justice denied. For that the Lawyers Collective, another non governmental organisation is working day and night to uphold the rights of women. Asmitha Basu emphasises on some points, which generally the society does not count as a crime committed against women.

SoundBits Asmitha Basu, private Lawyer and member of the Lawyers Collective :

„Now – when the government of India Bill came, it was absolutely unacceptable to us. It was not sufficient, because first of all the definition of domestic violence. It says habitual beating of the women. Now what is habitual beating, we do not understand it. If a woman is being slapped once and by that slap, she bleeds profusely or it causes grieves injury, would that not amount to domestic violence, just because it happens once and not habitually? That's the first thing. Second of all, this law does not recognise the right to residence. Now under Indian law the women does not have the right to residence, either in her matrimonial home, which is the home in which she goes after she is married, or in her parental home, which is where she is born. She does not have a right to reside. As soon as she makes a criminal complaint, she is out of the road. So we wanted that right to

residence, so that in the case of domestic violence, it is not the women which has to move out of the house.

Thirdly, what we found absolutely unacceptable was a right to private defence. So why should a man have the right to hit the woman back, if she is just trying to walk out? What this provision specifically needs is, that a man is not guilty or cannot be culpable under this law, if he has hit her to protect his property or himself.”

Music

If victims are planning a divorce or want to get justice, but cannot afford to go to court, then they try to contact the members of the Lawyers Collective. They want to help those victims, who otherwise could not afford it.

More and more Indian women become self confident and fight for their rights. Time in India is maybe changing, but it will takes ages for the society to change their attitudes towards old customs, like for example dowry. And a woman who is going for a divorce might even suffer the worst social punishment. But the empowerment of women has started. Education can change the thinking of the upcoming human beings – and for that co-education schools are so important.

Lata Vaidyanathan, Principal of a famous co-education school.

Soundbits classroom public school New Delhi

SoundBits Lata Vaidyanathan, Principal of Modern Public School Delhi :
“We are a co-education school, and therefore we don’t believe in gender bias. I would think, it is very healthy for a society to grow naturally. You can’t isolate any group, we are just the two wings of the society and it should function normally. I don’t think it is very wise idea to isolate the two, because more curiosities, more excites lead to more problems rather than solutions. Children normally growing together grow up with a very healthy psyche.”

SoundBits pupils co-education school (small boy, small girl, small boy)

“I am there in a co-ed school – I like it, because – see, we can share information, like – if they know something more, so we can also share with them our information. And it is nice... just boys it’s a little bit boring only.”

“I am studying in a co-ed school. And here, if I had gone to a only girls school I would not have got so many challenges with the boys.”

“School in which there are boys and girls – then we can share information with each other and become more intelligent then.”

The most important remedy for domestic violence is education.

According to Mahatma Gandhi: “You educate a man, you educate an individual, you educate a woman, you educate a family!”

The horizon of Indian society, like any other society, belong half to men and half to women. When we think to brighten up the whole horizon, we must brighten up the whole and not the half.

The woman of India is like a fire , if you try to hit her, she will consume you.

The same can be said about Domestic Violence or any violence against women, if the legislation and the social pressure have failed, let the Nani Shakti- the Woman Power – manifest itself for a brighter India and also a brighter tomorrow of the world.

Nani Shakti Verse (women is like a goddess of power = sanskrit)

“Half horizon is bright” – you just heard an international co-production by All India Radio and Deutsche Welle, the German International Radio and TV Station. Narration was by Kakoli Banerjee and the other voices being of Manasi Kapur and Nitya Franco. The program was written and produced by Melanie Matthäus and Smita Deb Mishra, assisted by Anil Gupta and Rajni Dutta.