

ANNEXURE –III

PUBLICATIONS

**Media Content
Freedom and Democracy**

Edited By
Dr. Ambrish Saxena

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KANISHKA PUBLISHERS, DISTRIBUTORS
4697/5-21A, Ansari Road, Daryaganj
New Delhi -110 002
Phones : 2327 0497, 2328 8285
Fax : 011-2328 8285
E-mail : kanishka_publishing@yahoo.co.in

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Foreword

I am happy to note that Vivekananda School of Journalism and Mass Communication of VIPS, affiliated to Guru Gobind Singh Indraprastha University, is organising three-day national seminar on Media Issues and Social Transformation – MIST 2014 on January 10-12, 2014. It is further heartening to know that this academic activity will reach to its logical conclusion by five publications being taken out with the proceedings of the seminar.

The mass media in present day context acts as catalyst in the social transformation of any country. The pace of communication and dissemination of information through mass media channels determine the scale of transformation in the society. The transformation has to encompass all areas of development be it social, political or economical. While the conventional media play a significant role in this process, the growing important of the social media has also to be taken into account.

The issues of democracy, governance, transparency and accountability are important on the road to social transformation. The status of human rights, the well-being of the people, and the freedom enjoyed by media also determine transformation. The quality of media content and the mode of transmission by making use of the new technologies need to be tackled for the purpose of development. I hope all these issues will be deliberated in different sessions of the seminar.

I believe that the freedom enjoyed by media with a sense of social responsibility is a major determinant in the process of social transformation. Media must take up the issues of vulnerable sections of society with a more serious approach; particularly a higher degree of sensitivity is required while reporting about women and children. At the same time, the state must ensure freedom to media. I have

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CHAPTER-22

Media and Human Rights of Women

SAKILA NONGMEIKAPAM

In today's world, the vibrant media constantly reminded us of human rights and its related issues. Human rights embrace all human beings equally and are clearly mentioned in Indian Constitution. It is universally promoted and protected. But how far it is truly applicable in any society, for instance, in Manipuri society, a conflict-ridden area where women have to confront every sort of violence and crime every now and then? Be it under the shadow of Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA); domestic violence; rape or trafficking of women and children.

As per data released by the National Crime Records Bureau, Manipur ranks 2nd in violent crime rates in 2012. The degree of crime and violence against women shows a significant increase. The main factor is due to the persisting patriarchy in state, law and society. Unless there is no respect for women's bodies, we cannot have a society where there is equality among men and women. Media tends to give more emphasize on men's world, and hence, more space for men in media. On the other hand, most of the news stories related to women have tagged women as the victims of the so-called patriarchal system. This tag of women as victims is a reality since the level of violence against women increases.

There should be balance in news presentation. Media needs to showcase the courage of women by giving more attention on their

achievements, not by blindly glorifying them. Women's rights are very much co-related with human rights. Unless, women participate actively in political arena and decision-making process, they cannot come out of the clutches of patriarchy.

Introduction

The state of Manipur is distinguished for vibrant cultures; picturesque beauty and distinctive way of struggle for women empowerment has given a birth to many women who are celebrated in their field and are inspirations for many women across the state. The celebrated writer and playwright MK Binodini, boxing champion Mary Kom, the Iron lady Iron Chanu Sharmila, who has been fast unto death over the last 13 years for the repeal of Armed Forces Special Powers Act, 1958 are some of the notable individuals that have changed the society to a certain level with courage and determination. However, the stories of these celebrated women are not the end of the story. We cannot ignore the stories of many women who are the victims of patriarchal society and are adversely affected with the fact that they are a part of conflict-torn region. This is the time to tell the stories of women who have raised their voice and step towards the entire state to stand up together and fight for their rights and justice.

Crime and inhumane act against women have become a part and parcel of a sensitive news story on newspapers, magazines, radio, television and the Internet. Women are depicted as victims of patriarchal system and are submissive to this so-called system of 'obey and disobey'. If a woman obeys the system, she is considered as well-behaved woman and if not, she herself is creating problems for herself and when she is in trouble, people disowned her and her deeds. There is always a linkage between men's perception of women and the rights enjoy by women. From the records of history, men have always defined certain social conditioning for women, the dos and don'ts for them and hence women are subjugated to men with or without questioning the reasons as to why they are treated in this fashion. Women continue to be victims of socio-economic injustice and exploitation; they are also the victims of development itself especially of patterns of social change and economic growth. In a male dominated society, the customary obligations acted as mechanisms sources of economic and social security for women.

In a recent study undertaken by the International Centre for Research on Women (ICRW) covering seven states of India has given its preliminary findings based on the studies relates traits of masculinity with son preference and violence against one's partner. The report says around two in five men in India nearly 40.7% were found to hold rigid and discriminatory ender views. This segment believes that women are to be inferior, and so they are refrained from decision-making. Such traits were found highest in Uttar Pradesh (64%) and comparatively lower in Rajasthan (22%) and Maharashtra (25%).

The degree of crime and violence against women shows a significant increase. An NGO viz. Women Action for Development also stated that 28 women were raped and 14 murdered in Manipur during January 2005- October 2005. During 2005, The National Crime Records Bureau reported 140 cases of violence against women in Manipur, including 25 cases of rape, 69 cases of abductions, 25 cases of molestation. In 2009 the registered incidence of total cognizable crimes was 2852 and consistently declined in 2010 with 2715.

According to the official data released by the National Crime Records Bureau for 2012, the year 2012 saw severely increase in the incidence of total cognizable crimes (IPC) that stands to 3737 and contributes just about 0.2 per cent of all-India total. There were about 3517 cases under human trafficking, 83 cases of murder, 223 cases of kidnapping and abduction in which 133 are women and girls. About 43 cases of cruelty by husband or his relatives were registered. In 2011, the incidences of registered cases on rape were 53; in 2012 it mounted up to 63 with a variation of 18.9. However, there was no case on custodial rape.

Manipur State Commission for Women (MSCW) constituted in 2006, to safeguard the interests of women and their development, is equipped with special power of a civil court for speedy trial. In 2007 to 2010, MSCW received 130 cases. In 2011, there were 124 cases filed at MSCW. The number of cases filed dropped in 2012. MSCW received only 96 complaints. This year, the number of complaints drastically dropped. The Commission received only 60 cases till 20th October 2013.

Methodology and Objective of Study: The objective of the study follows.

- To understand the nature and degree of human rights violations on women and children in Manipur
- To understand the representation of women in media in Manipur
- To examine how state forces and central forces commit human rights violations against women in Manipur

The research intends to study the nature, degree and characteristics of violations of women's rights in the conflict-ridden state of Manipur with support of secondary data, news stories and editorials published in local newspapers and other major national newspapers.

Representation of Women in Media

In this male dominated society, women are subjected to all sorts of disparities and discrimination from all four corners of their existence. Everywhere they go they are likely to victimize sexually, politically, socially and economically. In case of Manipur, many accounts of inequality, crime, violence, abuses are reported and recorded. Portrayal of women in media is plain biased. Media tends to give more emphasize on men's world, and hence, more space for men is provided in media. On the other hand, most of the news stories related to women have tagged women as the victims of the so-called patriarchal system. This tag of women as victims is a reality since the level of violence against women increases.

According to several studies on women in media, women in media itself are seldom occupying higher positions. As the MacBride Commission has pointed out that Journalists dealing with serious issues and political events are seldom women. In British media, sexist bias is a prominent feature and they have been accused of biased presentation of women and sex discrimination in hiring. A number of findings in media research conclude that the general effect of representation of women in media is to reinforce, rather than reduce, prejudices and stereotype. This distortion tends to justify and perpetuate existing inequalities. Many debatable questions are still raised on the portrayal of women in advertisements as advertisements create the impression of women being as mere sex symbols and use as tools to sell products and services.

Recently, the media reports on the issue of sexual harassment at workplace occupy a significant news stories and it has become a great concern for women working in media houses. For example the recent sexual harassment charges against Tehelka Editor Tarun Tejpal by a young journalist and also the sexual harassment of law intern by Justice AK Ganguly, which came to light in media. However, in Manipur, there has not been a single report of sexual harassment at workplace till date. Is it so because the victims are not comfortable confronting about it due to fear of sheer rejection from the co-workers? Or the stories are being forcefully buried not to distort the reputation and power of individuals? In response to this issue, Chief Secretary of the State and PC Lawmkunga has told the Sangai Express "I have received a file for implementation of Sexual Harassment (Prevention) Act. Though there have been no official cases of sexual harassment in the work place, I have a plan to work out some measures." Vishakha guidelines may be adopted with local adjustment and such an endeavour will be taken up in consultation with the Social Welfare Department".

Chitra Ahanthem, Editor of Imphal Free Press said that representation of women in media itself is biased. The news gives more importance to the gender when there is negative news that involves women which further damages the position of women. For instance, when three men are caught with drugs, the news simply put the story in simple manner. But there is always imbalance way of presenting the news when a news story involves a woman; the headline itself highlights the term 'woman' which merely draws different meanings to the news. Chitra emphasizes that there should be balance of news.

Most of the editorials are based on contemporary issues or events, about gender related issues and women activism. When she was asked about ethics they follow in her newspaper. Chitra Ahanthem confidently says their newspaper uphold ethical principles while reporting any news on crime. For instance, if there is case of rape, the change of names of the accused and victims are inevitable. The May 13, 2013 news report on Times of India, Guwahati Edition headlined "Two women caught with 140gm heroin in Manipur". It is to note that a crime is a crime whether a man or woman commits it. But the emphasize on gender is often seen in media. Surprisingly,

news story (dated 24 August 2013) on drug smuggling by a woman headlined with a nondiscriminatory note "Drug Smuggling" in Sangai Express did show some neutrality in presentation of such news.

Secretary of Women Action for Development (Manipur), Sobha Mangshatabam conveyed serious concern over recurrent episodes of rape and murder in Manipur and the failure of the State police to initiate investigation into such cases for arresting and punishment of the culprits. She stressed on the need for setting up of a separate special investigation team in Manipur Police to handle crimes committed against women and children in Manipur.

Major forms of human rights violations against women are trafficking, rape, murder, torture, forced isolation, victimization economically and socially after becoming widows under AFSPA. People in Manipur bleed in the shadow of AFSPA as it has given nothing but taken the lives of many civilians. The most chilling fact is that AFSPA has given widowhood to several dozens of women, which has left them socially and economically handicapped. An organisation of widows and family members of those killed in 'encounters', the Extra-judicial Execution Victim Families Association, Manipur (EEVFAM), with over 100 members is a notable example. Manipur police commandos who branded him a terrorist killed, Neena Ningombam's husband Michael on November 4, 2008. However, after an investigation by a district judge appointed by the Guwahati High Court has found that Michael was not guilty of initiating the firing as claimed by the Manipur police commandos. Neena Ningombam is now the secretary of EEVFAM and many other widows have taken proactive role in fight against AFSPA.

According to the Annual Report 2012-2013 published by the Ministry of Home Affairs, Incidents of human trafficking registered under various heads have shown a steadily declining from 2007 to 2009, however increases in 2010 and 2011. A total of 3,517 cases under different heads of human trafficking were reported during the year 2011 as compared to 3,422 during the year 2010, indicating an increase of 2.8% in 2011 as compared to 2010.

However, among the Northeast states, Manipur is the highest in human trafficking. Beginning from 2008 till 2011, the state has witnessed 246 cases of child trafficking, many cases are seemingly

still unreported. At least nearly a hundred children were rescued from other states like Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Delhi and Jaipur. On November 27, 36 children from the state were brought back home who were rescued from Bangalore. Out of the 36 children, 11 were from Ukhrul district, 15 from Senapati, two from Bishnupur and eight from Churachandpur. Minister of Social Welfare Ak Mirabai said around 300 children from the state have been brought back from various parts of the country since 2008 and most of the unfortunate victims hailed from remote parts of hill districts.

The main causes for trafficking of children are due to unaffordable education system, ineffectiveness of the education sector of the state and lack of unemployment. Families who lives below in poverty are mostly fall prey to trafficking. Their children are taken away in lure of free education and employment in other cities of India. As per the record available from Manipur State Commission for Women, In 2010, about 78 women were rescued, 13 of them were rescued from Chennai and Goa. Most women hailed from different hill districts of Manipur.

Men in Uniform in Violating Women's Rights: Worst Scenario

Police are the law enforcement agencies and their powers include the legitimized use of force and are authorized to exercise the police services of a state within a defined legal or territorial area of responsibility. It occupies an important place for maintaining and ensuring law and order in society. However, they are also the evident as law-breaker due to their legitimate power. In Manipur, police force is brutal and corrupt and is the main culprit of human rights violations. There are many evidences that local police are involved in many crimes including drug smuggling, sexual harassment, even rape cases and notoriously involved in fake encounters.

In recent news report, the findings of National Human Rights Commission states that it is the state police that has been involved in gross human rights violations in Manipur, rather than the central forces particularly Assam Rifles. The commission investigated the 44 sample cases of extra-judicial killings that took place in Manipur between 2005 and 2010 and 30 were found to be fake encounters. It is evident from the fact that the November 2009 Khwairamband

Bazaar incident where Manipur police commandos staged 'fake' encounters in broad daylight in which Thockchom Rabina Devi (23) and Chongtham Sanjit (25) were killed.

Many civilians' lives have lost their lives in the name of conflict. However, history speaks the truth, security forces are infamous for rape and sexual assault against women in Manipur, be it the rape of Manorama Devi in 2004 or that of Miss Rose in 1974. The security forces were also responsible for sexual assault. On 17 January 2005, Kongbraiatpam Kiran Devi, wife of Bimol Sharma, was allegedly molested by a jawan of 11th Garhwal Rifles, B Coy, after entering her house on the pretext of asking for water at Ngankha Lawai under Moirang police station.

The men in uniform continuously commit crime against women. On September 21; a 20 year-old woman was allegedly gang-raped by six personnel of the village defence force (VDF) in the Tamenglong district of Manipur, while the woman was returning to her village Disland. The drunkard VDF personnel, attached to Noney Police Station, passed lewd remarks at the victim and then allegedly raped her in a nearby jungle. In another widespread incident where a tribal woman U-mnok (Ghost Chill) seller from Khoupum Tampak was brutally rape on the night of March 22 at Keinou in Bishnupur district in which two IRB personnel Chibomcha and Ksh Kennedy were allegedly involved. It may be noted here that along with Rojit, the other three accused rapists namely Chungkham Ibomcha of Thongiu Boro Makhong, Salam Bijen Singh of Uripok and Kshetrimayum Kennedy of Kongpal Chanam Leikai were arrested and lodged in Saijiwa Jail. Fortunately, due to the cooperation of the individuals and organisations the case saw the fastest trial in all rape cases reported in Manipur so far. The four accused were pronounced guilty and were awarded life imprisonment.

Prosecution Director Advocate Ngangom Tejkumar said the Criminal Law Amendment Act 2013 passed after shameful Delhi rape case, a rapist can be awarded 20 years to life imprisonment and rape cases must be completed within three months. He further added the rape case of the U-Morok trader witnessed the fastest trial in all the rape cases reported in Manipur so far.

There is an increasing report of drug trafficking in the state, where cases of involvement of state forces are highly evident. Despite

the stringent laws to combat drug smuggling in Manipur, the state has become a breeding ground for such crime as it shares border with Myanmar. On February 24, Manipur police arrested a Colonel-rank Defence PRO Ajay Chowdhary and five others after they were caught allegedly carrying illicit drugs valued at an estimated Rs15 crore. In a similar incident, 10 Manipur Police personnel, including two officers, a sub-inspector and a jamadar, have been caught red handed while transporting drugs worth approximately Rs. 3.6 crore to the Manipur-Myanmar border town of Moreh.

Police on the other hand, in an attempt to clear the air of mistrust and fear between police and public and most importantly with an intent to educate the masses about the growing concerns of crime. State justice that is happening in the state during incidents of crime. State police have taken initiative in organizing workshops and have participated in many public forums. On 28 July 2013, one-day Police-Media seminar-cum-workshop on the theme 'How police & media can work in tandem to deliver better justice to the people was jointly organized by Manipur Police Department & All Manipur Working Journalists' Union. Several notable police personnel and journalists took part in the seminar, keeping their purpose before the public. The forum was more of police having intent to deliver their difficulties during investigation and how media and other organizations hamper the process of investigations.

M. Rajen Singh, MPS, Additional SP/Imphal East, said 'mob taking the law in to their hands is crime. Mob burning down the homes of accused or suspects of a crime is injustice. This is completely against the concept of Right to Life given in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Justice must be delivered through fair trial by law. Mob justice aggravate the incident of crime, they merely kill a person under cloud of suspicion, which is against the law. Notable example of mob justice was seen in Satyabhama case, 2013, JAC was formed and acted as jury. They burnt down the houses of the accused without any fair trial. Punishment is given by the mob. Mob acting as prosecutor or jury is against law. Justice delivery system in Manipur is extremely slow. One of the reasons for slow in justice delivery is due to uncooperative nature of the public. Public have no awareness of how to tackle a crime scene.

Conclusion

Women are victimized in all spheres of their existence and thus media regularly depicts the story of women as victims. Crime against women is increasing significantly. Implementation of stringent laws and policies is the need of the hour. Most importantly, respect for women is the key to solve all the problems and to earn respect from their male counterpart. Men, on the other hand, need to change their mental set up and be more co-operative with women in their pursuit of social, political, economic developments. Women must come in the forefront and fight against the injustice, inequality, and victimization. What is the take of Manipuri society the curb this menace? Now, what is the role of police, lawyers, media and judiciary? Police must perform their duty with responsibility and dignity and must remind themselves that the uniform cannot overpower them. Media need to more balance in their news presentation and given more space for women to reflect their aspirations, needs and problems, struggles and achievements.

In an upbeat and positive spirit Prof. H. Nandakumar, Vice Chancellor, Manipur University spoke at the inaugural function of the 2-day National Seminar on Social Exclusion and Inclusion Development in the North East organized by Centre for Study of Social Exclusion and Inclusive Policy (CSSEIP), Manipur University, pointed out that rate of female students enrollment in the Post Graduate courses of Manipur University is 51 percent while that of male students is 49 percent. This higher percentage of females enrolled in higher studies in the state clearly indicates the rising status of women in Manipuri society. If we agree that education can bring a change to alter the system; then yes, there has been huge urgency for the need for participation of women in decision-making process in every sphere, be it in education, politics, or in profession.

Media need to highlight the position of women in real sense and change the way of depicting women as mere victim. Now that Women's Reservation Bill is effectively implemented in the state and the notion of Empowerment of women is likely to be seen in Manipur, where the husbands and father-in-laws nominate their wives or daughters as candidates for Pradhans and members of local self-government. At least due to this reservation policy, men are doing their part in bringing women to the forefront of decision-making.

But how far women take her own stance and reflect their viewpoint on her decision-making? Are men still a domain role in every decision taken by women? The rights of women needs to be heard and respected only then we can have a society based on equality.

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