

Making sense of Violence against Women in India: Towards an Analytic Framework

Namrata Shokeen
Independent Researcher

Abstract

Violence against women (VAW) is deeply entrenched in the everyday lives of women in India as well as around the world. With reference to Bourdieu's notions of conservation of violence and theory of symbolic violence, recently a growing body of literature on VAW acknowledges violence as a continuum spread across the everyday lives of women. However, limited progress has been made to identify the patterns of transmission of violence and depict the actual workings of violence against women as a series of continuous events in the everyday lives of women.

Drawing from instances of honour-based violence in India, the paper explores the continuous/recurring patriarchal synergies of violence that reconstruct, reproduce and mutate its manifestations in terms of meanings and incentives (M), instances (I), schemes (S) and, forms of violence (F). Such continuous reconstruction and transmission of violence creates a vicious cycle of everyday violence against women that banalizes, misrecognizes and conserves violence to further deter women to go against the structures of patriarchal domination and control. Regardless of these everyday maneuverings against women, VAW is still seen as a singular event by formal and informal systems of support in India. Hence, there is a need to change the framework to investigate VAW as an everyday normative process rather than an extreme episodic event. This paper extends our current understanding to analyse and investigate VAW by providing a framework called MISF. This framework will help in highlighting the everyday continuum of VAW and will further strengthen institutional support for women.

Keywords: Continuum of Violence; Honour based abuse; Transmission of violence; Violence against Women; Women in India.