

CRIME AGAINST WOMEN (1987). By Ram Ahuja. Rawat Publications, Jaipur. Pp. vi+216. Price Rs. 160.

AMELIORATIVE LEGISLATIVE measures have been adopted in favour of women in our country after independence but they still continue to be the subjugated lot in the wake of some institutional practices and behaviour patterns. But the implementation of laws granting rights to women has been slow, cumbersome, and haphazard. Women are relegated to drudgery and maltreated in a number of ways. The aggressive violence against women is on the increase. As the cases of wife battering, rapes, kidnappings and abductions, intra familial murders and dowry deaths are more and more reported since the 1960's, the issue of violence has become more apparent. However, unlike the sociologists and criminologists in the West, the academics in India have yet to undertake their academic responsibility in this regard.

The book under review<sup>1</sup> is an empirical study of the different types of violence-related crimes against women, e.g., rape, kidnapping, abduction, dowry deaths, murder and wife battering. It is divided into eight chapters. In the first chapter, the reader is introduced to the scope of the study. Several broad objectives have been projected ranging from the types of victims to ways and means for prevention/reduction of crimes against women.<sup>2</sup> While highlighting the universe of the study the author states that the four cities of Rajasthan, viz., Jaipur, Ajmer, Kota and Udaipur were purposely selected on the assumption that the number of cities collectively would enable the researcher to interview 150 to 200 cases so that generalisation may have a validity.<sup>3</sup> The data was collected both from primary and secondary sources. The personal interviews were conducted in cases reported between June, 1983 and September 1984. The data collected from courts, police and rescue homes' records was listed for three years, namely, middle of 1981 to middle of 1984. In all the author has studied 189 cases of crimes against women, using mainly the case study method for collecting data. Four separate structured schedules have been prepared for victims, criminals, neighbours and victims' parents.

Chapter II of the book relates to rape. Seven variables have been adopted by the author to analyse the background of the victims, e.g., marital status, age, residence, social class, education, religion and caste.<sup>4</sup> It is revealing that the top risk age group for victims is 15-20 while the age group to which a large majority of the offenders are involved is 22-33.<sup>5</sup> The ecology of crime has remained in terms of three variables: the residence of the offender, the residence of the victim and the place where the offence was com-

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1. Ram Ahuja, *Crime Against Women* (1987).

2. *Id.* at 15.

3. *Ibid.*

4. *Id.* at 20-21.

5. *Id.*, Table 16 at 46.

mitted. The study reveals that there is a significant association between the planning of rape and use of physical violence. Violence occurred more often in those cases where rape was fully or partially planned than in those cases where it was situational.<sup>6</sup> In the end the author stresses upon a holistic approach towards the problem.

Chapter III relates to abduction and kidnapping. The author has done a study of 41 victims admitted by the police during a two-year period from September 1982 to September 1984. The cases have been selected from rescue homes, police records, courts and through the showball method. Along with the causes and consequences of kidnapping and abduction a study of constitutional processing has also been made. The main sources of data were schedule and interview. The author concludes that abduction is definitely related to the absence of control over the victim and non-harmonious relations within the family.

Chapter IV of the book examines the problem of dowry from violence point of view. Thirteen cases of dowry deaths were undertaken for the study. Various variables were used to reach at the causation of the problem of bride burning e.g., education, occupation, crime, caste, family composition, dowry, ill treatment and humiliation. It is quite revealing that in 12 out of 13 cases, the victims were living in joint families from the time of marriage till they were murdered.<sup>7</sup> The author finds that in dowry death cases before the act of murder the victims were harassed and humiliated in different ways. The analysis of these goes to prove the hypothesis that killers in dowry deaths are brutal and authoritarian and the murder (of the daughter-in-law) is only one expression of the offenders' personality, maladjustment and abnormality. However, the author's suggestion<sup>8</sup> that law should be amended by giving recognition to oral dying declaration also loses sight of the traditional values and cultural conditioning of an Indian woman who despite the constant oppression at the hands of her husband and in-laws would not like to expose them and speak out the truth even at the last hour. In the final analysis the author very aptly remarks that banning dowry is unrealistic but some structural changes need to be brought about to reduce the victimisation of young brides.<sup>9</sup>

Chapter V deals with wife battering. The author has taken a sample of 60 self-identified battered women and on the basis of his analysis finds marital maladjustment as the main cause of wife beating. The maladjustment may arise both because of the personality characteristics of the husband and wife as well as the environment in which their marriages function. Towards the end of the chapter the author examines whether battering is the result of victim's own provocation or her helplessness or lack of personal resource

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6. *Id.*, at 101-05.

7. *Id.* at 104.

8. *Id.* at 121.

9. *Ibid.*

factors. The author seems to conclude,<sup>10</sup> erroneously, that as the women put up with these violence and do not leave home, there seems to be no danger to family life. Such a conclusion is assailable on the basis of humanistic values and altruistic goals. Just because women are tolerant for a variety of reasons and thereby family life is not endangered does not mean that such exploitative practices should continue.

In chapter VI the author's focus is on murder i.e., interpersonal violence. Attention is restricted to situations in which victim is a woman. The data for the study of this phenomenon was collected from prisoners in jail, court and police records. In all, 33 cases were studied. It is quite interesting to find that the offender and victim were closely related to each other as members of the same family in 93.9 per cent cases and knew each other as acquaintances in 6.1 per cent cases. While coming to theoretical explanation the author states that he does not consider the instinctive aggression theory or frustration aggression theory or the theory of subculture of violence as adequate explanations for explaining the murder of females in one's own family, particularly of wives. While highlighting the implication of the sociological perspective the author states that if women adjust in certain situations while dealing with domineering, aggressive and authoritarian males and if in certain other situations instead of acting as submissive and passive, they act as efficient and active females, most of the murders would not occur. The author's analysis would have been quite just and unbiased if he along with stressing the adjustment of females, had suggested some reformation and correctional devices for aggressive males as well.

Chapter VII deals with the theory of violence against females. Various theories advanced by socio-psychologists, sociologists and criminologists have been analysed but the author presents<sup>11</sup> a new theoretical approach to explain crime against women. This theory takes into account the three factors in offender's behaviour, viz., adjustment, attachment and commitment and how a lack of these factors lead to status frustrations.

Chapter VIII, which is the final chapter focuses on depersonalisation, humanistic approach and policy planning. Firstly, the author concretises the main findings of his study in different types of crimes and then adopts the "need for new measures", wherein he suggests redefining of violence, strengthening women's organisations and the need for a humanistic approach.

The author has done a yeoman's service in presenting a book which is indispensable for all the ardent readers and activists in women causes. The book is highly informative and full of new insights. It makes new additions to the knowledge about criminology and sociology. The author has done a great deal of labour in writing the book. It can be of immense use to the teachers, researchers and students.

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10. *Id.* at 146.

11. *Id.* at 180

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