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VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN RURAL BIHAR: A CASE OF FOUR VILLAGES

Shivani Satija*

I. Introduction

Though violence against women is well understood and transcends country, class and religion, it remains strongly pronounced in developing country contexts such as India owing to factors such as poverty, illiteracy, lack of good governance, infrastructural deficit and socio-cultural norms that support discrimination against women and girls.

Women belonging to all identity and socio-economic groups experience some form of violence in the country, although the way violence is experienced by these groups may be qualitatively different. In the Indian context specifically, the way upper caste women or Hindu women experience violence may be different from the way women belonging to socio-economically weaker groups like Scheduled Castes (SC), (also known as Dalits), Scheduled Tribes (ST), other backward classes (OBC), and women from minority communities experience violence. Women belonging to these groups experience multiple and overlapping social, political, cultural and economic discrimination as they are at the intersection of caste, class and patriarchy (Programme on Women's Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, (PWESCR, n.d)). Moreover, women in rural and urban areas also experience different kinds of violence. Women living in rural areas suffer on account of infrastructural deficit and social discrimination, stemming from stronger adherence to societal norms, particularly those rooted in caste.

Dalit women tend to face additional deprivations and vulnerabilities in terms of the nature of occupations they are involved in; as well as lack of access to basic public amenities such as drinking water, toilets and health services. In addition, Dalit women and children tend to suffer from anemia and high mortality rates as compared to the rest of the population. As a result of their low socio-economic status, Dalits remain poor, uneducated, unemployed or involved in low-wage labour and under-represented in professional and political spheres according to a Human Rights Watch report (HRW, 2007). While most of them are primarily involved in manual work, many are forced to work indehumanizing and hazardous occupations like manual scavenging, cleaning drains and disposing dead animal carcasses. In addition, they lack access to dignified employment, social protection and health services. Moreover, the scourge of 'untouchability', chronic and humiliating - although constitutionally banned – is rampant, particularly in rural areas.

In recent years, there has been an increase in violence against SCs, particularly women in the country according to both media reports and the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB)[1]. This, coupled with their low social and economic development, renders them one

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of the most vulnerable communities in the country. Moreover, the fact that a high percentage of Dalit families are headed by females makes them extremely vulnerable to exploitation and violence. According to the HRW (2007) report, Dalit women face violence not just at the hands of the upper caste groups, police and others in public spaces, but also by their husbands or other male members of the same caste group in private life. Thus, the atrocities and resultant deprivation experienced by weaker caste women on a daily basis get amplified. Further, low strata women are also vulnerable to sexual abuse, rape, including gang-rape, forced prostitution, femicide (female foeticide) and infanticide, abduction and child abuse. Women belonging to higher income groups or upper caste groups in villages also suffer violence, particularly in the private realm as they are mostly confined to their homes, which is in itself a restriction on their mobility. The kinds of violence women from across caste and class groups are subjected to in the private realm range from domestic violence, forced sex selective abortions, intimate partner violence, restrictions in mobility, lack of nutrition and timely health interventions, and psychological abuse perpetrated by spouse and in-laws, for not bringing enough dowry or not bearing children, especially sons.

1.1. The Context of Bihar

Bihar is a caste-based society with strongly entrenched semi-feudal structures and a large rural economy. Scheduled Castes constitute over 20 per cent of the population while OBCs comprise over 60 per cent (calculated from NSS 64th round, as cited in India Human Development Report, 2011). Bihar has had a long history of caste wars between upper caste armies such as *Kuer Sena, Ranvir Sena, Brahmarshi Sena*, representing the interests of land-owning upper castes; and the former Maoist Communist Centre (MCC), Communist Party of India-Marxist Leninist (Party Unity) or CPI-ML (Party Unity) and CPI-ML (Liberation), which were engaged in mobilising cadres in the 1990s. Since the 1960s, political and social movements, canvassing lower and backward class interests, had been occurring in the state. As a result, the upper castes lost their political hold on weaker caste groups, thus changing the entire political landscape of the state (Rodgers and Satija, 2011). Moreover, a militant peasant-based resistance, known as the Naxal Movement whose origin can be traced to the late 1960s, is also prevalent in the rural areas of the state.

Further, Bihar has a history of high crime in the 1990s, and was viewed as an extremely unsafe state. Although, much of this has reportedly changed with the political transition in 2005 and decreasing crime levels (Rodgers and Satija 2011), crime levels according to official sources have begun rising again. Bihar's record of high crime in the 1990s led to the state being viewed as extremely unsafe. The political transition in 2005 may have somewhat improved the situation but women in Bihar still feel insecure, particularly in the private realm. This is reflected in the perceived increase in domestic violence against women in Patna (Rodgers and Satija, 2011) as well as in the cited villages, which have witnessed an increase in dowry-giving and other social practices that place females in a disadvantaged position.

According to NCRB, crimes against women in Bihar have been on the rise since the last decade, as shown in the table below. Rate of total cognisable crimes[2] against women in Bihar peaked in 2004 and then again in 2008 and 2011. The contribution of crimes against women to total crimes in Bihar has also been increasing from 6.1 per cent in 2001 to 7.5 per cent in 2012. The contribution of crime against women in Bihar to all India total of crimes against women has also been increasing, with crimes against women in Bihar constituting 4.7 per cent of all India total of crimes against women in 2012. The rate[3] of cognizable crimes against women in the state has also been rising consistently and was close to 11 per 100,000 in 2012, the highest in the past decade. The percentage contribution of crimes against women in Bihar to total crimes in the state has also increased.

Table 1: Crime Trends in Bihar (2001-2012)

Year	Total Cognisable Crimes under Indian Penal Code (IPC)[1] in Bihar	Total Cognisable Crimes under IPC in Bihar against Women	Rateof total Cognisable Crime against Women in Bihar	Contribution of Crime against Women to total Crime in Bihar (%)	Contribution of Crime against Women in Bihar to all India Total of Crime against Women (%)
2001	88,432	5,356	6.5	6.1	3.7
2002	94,040	5,743	6.7	6.1	3.9
2003	92,263	5,900	6.8	6.4	4.2
2004	1,08,060	8,091	9.2	7.5	5.2
2005	97,850	6,019	6.7	6.2	3.9
2006	1,00,665	6,740	7.4	6.7	4.1
2007	1,09,420	7,548	8.1	6.9	4.1
2008	1,22,669	8,662	9.2	7.1	4.4
2009	1,22,931	8,803	9.2	7.2	4.3
2010	1,27,453	8,471	8.7	6.6	4
2011	1,35,896	10,231	9.9	7.5	4.5
2012	1,46,614	11,229	10.8	7.7	4.7

Source: National Crimes Records Bureau (NCRB)

According to Kashyap and Pandey (2011), which quotes data from the women crime cell of Bihar police, the number of cases of violence against women has increased significantly. From a total of 4,974 cases registered in 2006, the number swelled to 6,790 cases in 2010. The highest increase has been noted in cases of kidnapping, whose numbers rose from 925 in 2006 to 2,552 in 2010. Cases of dowry deaths have also seen an upward trend, from 1,006 in 2006 to 1,307 in 2010. According to the National Family Health Survey (NFHS) III conducted in 2005-06, almost 60 per cent of the women (married or recently separated), surveyed between the age group of 15-49 years, reported having experienced physical and sexual violence, which was the highest among all states in the country. The national average for violence against married women is 37 per cent. According to the survey, although more women who were illiterate were subjected to domestic violence, a significant number of women who had ten years of education also reportedly experienced domestic violence. Women with spouses who consume alcohol were more likely to experience violence as compared to those whose husbands did not drink, although half of these women also reported domestic violence. Among women who experienced domestic violence, almost 80 per cent reported an abusive family history. Only 20 per cent of these women sought help, mostly from family, while 2 per cent approached the police and 1 per cent approached an organisation.

According to Chaudury (2012), the State Commission for Women said that more than half of the women in Bihar suffer domestic violence and pregnant women suffer the most. Chandramukhi Devi, member of the State Commission for Women, stressed on promoting awareness among women regarding legal provisions and arranged for counselling of men who indulge in violence. Moreover, in 2008, the Patna High Court directed the state government to begin the process to enforce the Domestic Violence Act (2005) (*Times of India*, 2008). The court also directed the state to appoint protection officers and service providers in every district of Bihar, and make available one 'safe shelter' in each district for women affected by domestic violence, besides arranging programmes to train the police officers to handle cases relating to domestic violence. *Times of India* (2013), reported that the government launched a women's helpline number for 35 districts in Bihar, which aims to assist victims to directly contact protection officers of Women Development Corporation. A 'State Policy for Women Empowerment' (SPWE) is also in the process of being formulated. There are currently 35 women helplines and 21 short-stay homes in Bihar under the Mukhya Mantri Nari Shakti Yojana.

Besides domestic violence, women in Bihar are also subjected to caste-related conflict and violence. According to the NCRB, Indian Penal Code (IPC) crimes against SCs and STs in Bihar constituted over 10 per cent of all crimes against SCs and STs in the country. This is a high record. The recorded crime rate in 2012 was 4.6 per 100,000 as compared to 3.5 per 100,000 in the previous year. Untouchability and other forms of degradation are still practised in the state, particularly in rural areas as indicated by the current study.

Women face other restrictions in physical movement, as well as in social and political participation. Women's mobility in Bihar is found to be closely associated with caste. According to Rodgers et al (2013), women from higher castes experienced more restrictions in terms

of mobility as compared to the lower caste groups. This has been confirmed by current research. Muslims were seen to experience most restrictions in mobility, as confirmed by the study. Dowry-giving has increased in the last decade in terms of the number of households engaging in the practice, with a spike in the value of dowry (ibid), again confirmed by current research.

The paper begins with the description of the research scope, methodology and research tools, followed by research findings and conclusions. It covers various kinds of violence in the private and public spheres faced by women in the four villages. It concludes with issues for further research and some policy suggestions.

II. Research Scope, Objective and Methodology

The main aim of this study to was to understand the nature of violence against women and its socio-economic dimensions, which includes different kinds of violence affecting SC, OBC and Muslim women in rural Bihar. Research was carried out in four villages, the details being provided below. The study explores the following kinds of violence:

2.1. Conceptual Framework:

- **Direct inter-personal violence** at the micro level, such as domestic and other forms of violence (physical, sexual and psychological) both in the private and public realms (i.e. in the home as well as work place). These can range from violence against women by husbands, kin, and in-laws as well as by employers or other employees in the work space.
- **Indirect violence** at home include restriction in mobility, not being allowed to work, not having any say in the decision-making processes in the house or lack of any control over household income. Indirect violence at the work place, related to the deprivation of wages, payment of inadequate wages, lack of good conditions of work and inadequate rest and leave were also be studied.

Other aspects of violence such as structural violence, stemming from unequal power relations, characterized by patriarchy and poverty (historically rooted socio-economic and political oppression and inequality); symbolic violence[5], arising from internalisation of gender-based, caste and other social inequalities and resultant humiliation as well as neglect by state and non-state institutions will be recorded in order to get an in-depth understanding of violence in rural Bihar. The study also attempts to explore the dynamics, transformation and changing nature of caste, gender and class-based violence in the selected villages. It will help understand the interaction of structural factors such as class, patriarchy and caste with social and economic changes, hinging on migration, changing and expanding labour marketsthe impact on social relations and violence against women.

2.2. Methodology

Two villages were selected from the northern districts (Belabadan in Purnia and Khangaon in Madhubani); and two from the southern districts (Rupaspur-Salempur in Gaya, Chandakura in Nalanda). In all four villages, IHD has conducted detailed longitudinal research since the 1980s. The four villages are located in the north and the south and have different socio-economic and occupational characteristics and demographic composition. Research was carried out over a period of one month from December 2012 to January 2013. Secondary information on the villages had been compiled by IHD[6], which was used to prepare the base for the field research. This was followed by rigorous field visits to each village to collect qualitative information from various stakeholders, as discussed below.

2.3. Research Methods

The study was entirely qualitative in nature, and involved the use of participatory methodological tools such as focus group discussions (FGDs) with relevant groups (both men and women of different age groups and caste groups) and key informant interviews with relevant stakeholders (local leaders, community-based organisations, non-government organisations, primary health care centre (PHC) and police station wherever possible). A detailed list is included as Annexure 1.

The main tools that were used were:

1. Transect walk
2. Community Schedule
3. FGDs/Interview Schedule

A community schedule was designed to obtain some overall socio-economic information about the village, information on status of women, social conflict and tensions, safety and security perceptions as well as social traditions of the village from the village head or other informed persons. Community-level discussions and enquiries were followed by FGDs and interviews with multiple socio-economic and identity groups, and personal in-depth interviews with informed persons and relevant stakeholders. Although much of the community-level information was confirmed, some of it, particularly on status of women, conflict, and safety and security issues emerged as mildly to starkly contrasting. Thus, a combination of tools helped enhance the research and obtain a holistic understanding of the concerned issues.

An attempt was made to cover as many perspectives of both men and women, belonging to different social and economic groups within each village, such as dominant caste groups, vulnerable and weak caste groups, mixed caste groups, old and young and migrant families. In addition, relevant stakeholders such as Primary Healthcare Centres (PHCs), police personnel from the police station as well as well-informed individuals such as anganwadi sewika (basic health care provider)[7],and *mukhiya* (village head) were interviewed. The main aim was to understand perspectives of different groups and individuals regarding violence against women, its causes and consequences as well as coping mechanisms. The rationale for interviewing groups and persons from varying socio-economic and identity brackets was

to understand how violence against women is understood and experienced by them, how it impacts them and how it is dealt with. It also helped provide a holistic picture of violence, which would otherwise not have been possible.

III. RESEARCH FINDINGS

3.1. Social Profile of the Villages

The village of Chandakura is located in the southern district of Nalanda. It is a medium-sized village with a total of over 300 households. It is divided into the eastern part, called Khalsa, and the western part, called Mulki, although, officially it is called Chandakura. The village is predominantly Hindu and the dominant caste group in this village is Kurmi (OBC II) (Schedule of castes in Bihar, is included as Annexure II). The Ravidas and the Beldar caste groups were considered weaker because they were illiterate and landless.

The village of Rupaspur-Salempur is located in the southern district of Gaya in Tikari. According to the community level interactions, the village has six tolas, namely, Salempur, Rajasv, Rupaspur-Pokharpur, Rupaspur-Mandiya and Rupaspur-Belband. Rupaspur-Salempur actually consists of two separate villages, which are proximately located. It is a medium-size village with about 400 households. The village is predominantly Hindu and Bhumihars are the dominant socio-economic caste group, followed by the numerically dominant Koeris. Musahars among the Scheduled Castes were regarded as the weaker socio-economic caste group because they were uneducated, poor and landless. To quote one of the respondents, "even in the way of thinking, they were weak", which could be indicative of their internalisation of the sense of inferiority, rooted in the caste system. Bhumihars and Kushwaha caste groups were considered dominant as they were wealthy, landed and had a source of livelihood.

The village of Khangaon is located in the northern district of Madhubani. The village is split into two parts, namely, North and South Khangaon. It is a big village with over 650 households. Rajputs were numerically as well as socio-economically dominant, while the Ravidas and Muslims were considered weak because they were illiterate and landless.

The village of Belabadan is located in the northern district of Purnia. Community-level enquiries revealed that this village is Muslim-dominated. Sheikhs are upper strata Muslims and are socially and numerically dominant, while Ansaris are considered weaker as they are poor. Musahars are also considered to be weak, owing to their social and occupational status. There are four tolas in this village: Rahmanpur, Dhobiya tola, Purab tola, Paschim tola, Teen tola.

3.2. Occupational Profile of the Villages

In all the four villages, the occupational rigidity associated with the caste system seemed to be gradually eroding, although, a few occupations such as '*jhoothan uthana*' (picking

up used plates after meals), disposing animal carcases, pig- rearing and cleaning residue after child birth, were still considered 'lowly'. Ravidas and Musahars, who have gradually disassociated themselves from these occupations, are still called upon to take care of such work when required. Most of the poorer households were involved in agricultural labour on other people's farms; and animal husbandry. In Chandakura, the *mochis* (Ravidas) and *Musahars* are now mostly involved in agricultural labour. During the community discussion, there was a debate about the status of these occupations. Some people including the *Mukhiyapati*[8](husband of the village head), who belonged to the Ravidas caste group, said that they were not 'lowly'. He said, "We also get together and clean drains. However, many consider the practice of cleaning others' dishes bad."

In Rupaspur-Salempur, some people from the Ravidas caste were reportedly engaged in government jobs. Community discussions revealed that most households were involved in agricultural work and labour and public development works, and some were engaged in government jobs and animal husbandry. In Khangaon, most caste groups were involved in agricultural labour and animal husbandry. Another occupation considered most 'lowly' was begging, although this study did not come across any. In Belabadan, migration was high and the youth of the village were reportedly living in Delhi and Punjab for employment opportunities. Musahar men were reportedly involved in agricultural labour, at a daily-wage rate.

3.3. Government Policies in the Villages

Overall, the Integrated Development Scheme (ICDS), Accredited Social Health Activist (ASHA), Mid-day Meal Scheme (MDMS), Indira Awas Yojana (IAY) and Balika Vivah Yojana were considered successful. Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) was reported to be successful in all villages barring Rupaspur-Salempur. Policies meant for women and girls such as Janani Suraksha Yojana and the Balika Vivah Yojana were reportedly functioning well across the villages. Balika Cycle Yojana was functional and cycles were given to girls, according to the community,but the roads were not good enough to cycle to schools for higher education. Schools were located at a distance. Some groups reported that many schemes were not availed of, owing to lack of education and awareness among the people.

3.4. Status of Women and Girls

The condition of women was seen to be improving by both men and women overall, although some discriminatory practices such as differential treatment towards sons and daughters, early marriages, restricted mobility and decision-making ability regarding household and reproductive matters, the prevalence of branding some women as witches (*dayan*) and unfair treatment of widows were in existence. However, most girls across the villages were reportedly completing secondary education, and some groups of younger women seemed to believe in gaining control over decision-making. Most women reported being part of a

Mahila Samooh (women's collective), which provided a forum for socialising as well as a financial safety net in times of need. Many groups, both male and female, seemed to think that the status of women was improving over the years.

3.4.1. Education and Marriage

Research findings revealed that most girls across the villages went on to complete their secondary education, but dropped out mainly to get married. Another factor influencing them to drop out was the fact that schools offering higher education were located very far from the village. In Chandakura, girls go to school, and generally complete class 8. However, they are not able to continue their education, owing to social pressures such as marriage or because the school facilities are poor. Moreover, it is generally not considered good to study after marriage. According to community-level interactions, girls were married between 18-25 years, although during interviews and FGDs, it was learned that most of girls had been married in their early teens, while women from the older generation were married off at an even earlier age of 7-8 years. In Khangaon, community-level interactions revealed that though girls did go to school, Muslim girls were not allowed to do so and were married between the ages of 15-18 years. In Rupaspur-Salempur, most girls are free to pursue education, but it depends on the families' intention. Most girls are married at the age of 15-16 years, particularly of the weaker caste groups. In Belabadan, most of the girls reported going to the school in the village except for a few non-Muslims, who felt that they would not get attention as they were a minority. Most of the girls get married between 15-18 years. Few of them reportedly continued their education after marriage.

3.4.2. Physical Mobility

Overall, women, particularly younger girls and unmarried females, faced restriction and social control, and could not go out without being accompanied by men or their mothers. Many men and women felt that young girls should not go out alone, because if something were to happen, the family's honour might be harmed. Another issue that was seen emerging was that the upper caste women faced more restrictions on their mobility as compared to the poorer women. Muslim women in other villages were seen to be restricted, but in Belabadan, they were seen to be relatively more mobile. This could be attributed to their being in a majority in the village. In Belabadan, women and men felt that women were more mobile, which could be attributed to male migration.

In Chandakura, women across caste groups said that they were not allowed to move independently and had to be accompanied by their husbands. Young women said that they never left the house without permission and they even went to the toilets with their mothers and went in groups to school. Women from the mixed caste groups said that they often went with their husbands, but some women never left the house. Kurmi men said that women over the age of 30 years could sometimes go without permission, but school-going

girls and young girls did not go out without permission of their family members. Ravidas men said that women were allowed to move out to the market alone without any need for permission. Women and girls felt safe in public spaces such as temples, *gram sabhas* (local self-government) and at annual fairs. There were no spaces that were considered particularly unsafe (though they mentioned that women travelled in groups, which could be indicative of some insecurity while moving about in public spaces). Men and women reportedly sat together in the community hall.

However, during discussions with the anganwadi sewika some contradictions emerged. She said, "At night no one should go to the outside areas. Near the railway line, it is secluded, and bad elements roam around there. It is not safe for men or women." In Rupaspur-Salempur, the Kushwaha caste women felt that girls should go out to study. One of them said, "Young girls who go out do not necessarily acquire a bad character. That can happen even inside the house." Women from the Musahar caste group said that they used to go to the market unaccompanied as and when they wanted, and did not ask for their husbands' permission. This was in contrast to the Bhumihar women, who said that they could not get out of the house without the permission of men or without being escorted by a male family member. They said, "Our husbands scold us if we go out or talk to anybody unknown. We are not allowed to move out of the house to go to the market without an escort of a male member of our family."

Muslim women talked about the increasing use of the *pardah*, attributing this to the fact that more women were going out to work in the fields, and felt compelled to use it. This is interesting as more mobility seems to be accompanied by more social control. According to the anganwadi sewika, girls in this village study till class 8 in the school, and then go to the high school, which is located further in Datyana. It is a positive development. She also said that although other women move around in the village fairly independently, Bhumihar women are relatively less independent and have to take permission from their male kin or elders. Discussions with young women revealed that while older women do go to the market alone, younger girls and daughters-in-law cannot go out without permission.

Interestingly, Musahar men reported the same view as the Musahar women in Chandakura. One of them said that he had no problem if his wife went out of the house. Men from the Bhumihar caste group said that they did not have any problems with their women going to the market, which was in contrast to what the Bhumihar women had been saying. One of them said, "Women are free to move out to the market as they do not like our choice of shopping. Therefore, we let them go to the market on their own. However, we do not let our women go to the agricultural field alone as negative elements may be there and might harm them." They said that girls are responsible for upholding the honour of the family. This may be juxtaposed with Muslim Ansari men's perceptions: "Women of this village are confined to their homes and are not allowed to move out of the house alone. Women have the freedom to go out for shopping or to meet somebody but only with husbands, not alone. It is not essential for a woman to step out as she has to take care of the house. Due to religious and societal pressures, freedom cannot be given to women even if the men wish

to give it." Similarly, men from the OBC I and II (refer to Annexure II) groups also said that women cannot go out without permission or unaccompanied.

In Belabadan, the Sheikh women, who belong to the upper strata of the Muslim community, revealed that they were not allowed to step out of the house alone and that they could only go out with their husbands for a family wedding or for someone's death in the family. Sheikh men admitted that if their wives ever went out alone without telling them, they beat them. In contrast, Musahar men claimed that they gave full freedom to their women to go out alone. One reason that they cited was that most of them were working in the city, far away from the village, and so, had no choice but to let their females manage and move about freely. This brings into focus the potential impact of male migration on women. In Khangaon, most women, except Rajputs, seemed to have mobility in terms of going out to work, which reiterates the role and perception of caste in women's mobility.

3.4.3. Decision-making

By and large, women did not have control over decision-making regarding finances, and many times was not considered responsible enough to handle money and spend it judiciously. Incidents of physical and verbal violence were also reported if a woman spent money without consultation with her husband. There was variability in perceptions about this issue across caste, with Musahar women and migrant households reportedly being relatively more independent in these matters.

In Chandakura, while the women felt that they could spend their household incomes without consultation, men felt that consultation was essential. Ravidas women felt that both men and women should give an account of what they spent to each other. In Rupaspur-Salempur, Muslim women said that in matters of household expenditure, both women and men consult each other. Musahar women said that they would deal with household expenses as the men drank and wasted the money. Women from migrant households said that they alone took care of the expenses as husbands were not there but sent money. They said that they would still consult the husbands while spending money. There was a clear difference between male and female perceptions. Musahar men felt that women needed food items and that was sufficient. One of them said, "We earn and give what is essential, and do not allow her to spend money on her own. If the woman of the house spends money on her own, we beat her up."

Bhumihar men said that women in their homes had full freedom to spend the money that men earned. One said, "Women are not allowed to spend money without the consent of their husbands." Men from OBC I and OBC II felt that if a woman spends money without asking her husband, she gets scolded by him. In Khangaon, Rajput women said that their husbands did not consult them in any household matter, but they provided them with whatever was needed. The men also confirmed this. Ravidas men said that women are not allowed to spend money without their permission, as they might buy 'unnecessary' things. Rajputmen also said that women might waste money. One said, "Women are not so independent. They still

have to depend on males of the house. We provide them with whatever they need. Therefore, they do not need money. If we allow them to spend money, they waste all our resources as they do not know how to spend it judiciously. If they spend money without asking us, we scold them. Money possessed by women is spent by them only on their own clothes and make-up." In Belabadan, Musahar women said that they could spend household income on their own without consultation with their husbands. As most of their husbands are working in the city, they claim that their husbands cannot do the decision-making regarding household expenditure. Sheikh men admitted that they did not give any money to the women as they did not trust them with money. Their view was that women were not competent enough to spend money judiciously. Barahi men said that women were allowed to spend money only with husbands' consent.

As far as decision-making regarding birth control or child birth is concerned, women did not have much control and very few reported to have undergone an operation. None were employing birth control measures. Regarding sex selective abortions, groups across villages denied it, saying that children are gifts from God and that richer people opted for this. Upper caste men and women denied this. Muslims reported not practicing family planning. Women were considered responsible for bearing sons, and if they failed to do so, were subjected to mistreatment and ridicule by their in-laws, husbands and others.

In Chandakura, Ravidas women said that child birth stopped naturally (possibly referring to menopause). Young women felt that men were responsible for multiple children and should therefore undergo an operation. One Kurmi woman said, "My husband was against my getting an operation but I underwent one behind his back. When he got to know, he beat me so badly that my stitches split." According to her, "We have been telling women to get operations and women have begun to understand, but the men do not understand. Once a woman got it done, and the husband really abused her and did not let her move out for three days. In the past, men did not even let the children get inoculations. Men feel they can do whatever they want with women, whether they feed them or not, keep them healthy or not. They earn, so they think they can do whatever they like with women."

Women across groups denied ever undergoing or being forced to undergo sex selective abortions as it was illegal, besides being immoral. They felt that, "*Baccha bhagwan ki den hai aur hum unko nahi maarte*." (Children are gifts from God and we do not kill them). The anganwadi sewika said that sex selective operations were usually opted for by richer households as the poor could not afford it, whereas poor people kept having children in the hope of getting a son. In Rupaspur-Salempur, Kushwaha and Muslim women said that though they did know of medical procedures and medicines, child birth stopped naturally. Bhumihar women said that men were also opting for birth control procedures. Musahar women averred that some of them had undergone an operation with the husband's consent and that the men were in charge of family planning. One woman said, "Men will never get an operation as they feel that they might want to produce when they are old."

Muslim men said that this was not practised in their community. Sex selective abortions seemed to be more commonly admitted here than in Chandakura. Kushwaha women claimed

that female foeticide occurred as a result of excessive pressure from the family. "The husband forced his wife to abort the child, and if we do not do so, he beats us. They say that a woman is responsible for the birth of a girl child or a boy child." Bhumihar women stated that if a woman kept bearing girl children, she was often made to abort the foetus if it was female. Muslim women claimed that sex selective abortions were not practiced in their community. Women from migrant households found this practice abhorrent and did not patronise it. They also voiced the view that rich people who could afford such an operation opted for it, rather than poor people like them. Muslim men said that if a woman bore only girls, her husband threatened to marry again. Bhumihar men claimed that this was not practiced as it was not legal.

One man observed, "It is alarming that this happens, as the ratio of girls to boys is falling rapidly. However, women who have multiple daughters do suffer at the hands of the in-laws."

Musahar men testified that if women do not produce a boy, they are treated badly, and often denied basic amenities. OBC I and OBC II men also said that women who could not have a boy were looked down upon and made to bear psychological abuse from the in-laws and other people. "This is because a lot of financial obligations accompany the birth of a girl child, and it is considered a curse (referring to dowry)."

In Khangaon, no women in the village had control regarding decisions on family planning. Paswan women said that if they tried to take control, there were fights. No Muslim women reported using contraceptives as it is not permitted in their religion. Men from different caste groups said that if women bore girls repeatedly, they were considered unlucky, and had to bear psychological abuse from their husbands and in-laws. They added that women were not given money to spend on themselves. Most women denied that sex selective abortions were occurring in the village. However, if they did occur, the primary reason was to avoid the impending expenses of marriage and dowry. They stated that if sex selective abortions happened, a woman had no say in the matter. Muslim women said that they did not undergo sex determination; they accepted any gender. Ravidas men attributed sex selective abortion to poverty and the inability to support another child. All the men said that if women bore multiple daughters and were not able to produce a son, they were subjected to taunts from family members and others in the community.

In Belabadan, the decision regarding the birth of a child is only taken by men as 'women have no role to play'. Very few females have adopted family planning measures, as most husbands do not approve of it. However according to Public Health Care Sub Centre records, over the past two years, 240 women and 24 men have adopted family planning measures in Belabadan.

3.4.4. Discrimination between Sons and Daughters

Discrimination between sons and daughters was prevalent in all villages and was reflected in food intake, mobility and education, although some of the men admitted that educating

girls was important. Most of the women felt that girls should be educated as they might be able to contribute to the household income. However some men felt that it might make them strong-headed and difficult to control. Discrimination against girls was found to be rooted in the patriarchal practice of the family inheritance being passed on to sons and giving of dowry by the girl's family, a social obligation.

In Chandakura, women from the mixed FGDs felt that their husbands discriminated between sons and daughters. Ravidas women averred that daughters should get educated so that when they went to their marital homes, they would not be dependant and be able to do some remunerative work. Young girls felt that they were scolded more than their brothers and they had to work in the kitchen, while the brothers were not asked to do so. Kurmi men claimed that the discrimination between boys and girls was often because of food, whereas Ravidas men felt that discrimination was reflected in denial of education to females and the custom of celebrating a son's birthday and not so observing a daughter's. They attributed this to the fact that daughters got married and left the parents' house. Kurmi men believed that a daughter should be made to study and take advantage of government policies that favoured her. "An educated girl will be able to contribute positively to her household as well as raising children."

In Rupaspur-Salempur, Kushwaha women said that they would want their daughters to study, as that helped in getting her married. However, they said that getting boys educated was more important. Bhumihar women conceded that there was some degree of discrimination, which was reflected in the provision of food and gifts. In Khangaon, Muslim men said, "The difference in the treatment of boys and girls is necessary because if girls are given too much freedom, they will become strong-headed. They could later embarrass us in our community. Therefore, it is necessary to maintain a difference between a boy and girl." Both men and women felt that sons were preferred as they carried on the family name and earned money. Daughters, however, were a liability as parents/guardians had to arrange money for her dowry. In Belabadan, the majority of women claimed that they preferred a son to a daughter, except for Shiekhs, as they thought that boys and girls were the same for them, being "*Allah ki den*", gift of God. Discrimination manifests via denial of education and parity in food and clothes. The main reason for this, they said, was because sons were the heirs of family property, whereas the girls did not inherit parental property. Moreover, girls got married and moved to their husband's house while sons continued to stay with them.

Condition of Widows: Most people said that though widows were respected, they were not allowed to participate in any auspicious occasions as their presence was considered negative. Moreover, many women felt that widows could remarry if they were young and did not have children. There was a slight indication of some widows being considered evil (dayan, witch, signifying the practice of branding some females witches, which is discussed in detail later)

In Chandakura, Ravidas women stated that widows were not allowed to participate in any auspicious events as their presence was considered negative. Young girls felt that the condition of widows was bad and that they should be allowed to remarry if they had no

progeny. In Rupaspur-Salempur, young girls and women from migrant households also felt that the condition of widows was quite bad and they should be allowed to remarry if young and without children. Kushwaha women averred that widows were gradually being allowed to remarry. Musahar women said that widows were not allowed to remarry, although there were remarriage cases. The anganwadi sewika said that widows were treated with respect and sympathy. She was a widow herself and claimed that there was no mistreatment. Kushwaha women said that people troubled those widows, who were interested in other men, intimating the practice of *Dayan*, which is discussed in the latter section. In Belabadan, widows were well accepted in the village but they were not allowed to participate in any auspicious ceremony as they were considered inauspicious. They were allowed to remarry only if they had no children. Most of the time, they got married to husbands' younger brother. In Khangaon, men and women across caste groups said that widows were not allowed to participate in auspicious occasions. They also said that widows could remarry only if they were without children.

3.5. Violence against Women

This section discusses violence in its various forms, ranging from physical, sexual,verbal and psychological violence in the private and public spheres; direct violence that is rooted in social norms such as caste and patriarchy, to indirect violence such as its normalisation and acceptance; and violence that is being perpetuated through social practices and beliefs. Some focus is also on the varying forms of coping mechanisms that people, in particular women, resort to.

3.5.1. Domestic Violence

Domestic violence was widely prevalent across socio-economic groups in the villages, and had been normalised to an extent that both men and women, particularly women, not only justified this violence but were ready to fight with anyone, who tried to intervene. Such normalisation was rooted in patriarchy as well as helplessness on the part of women who felt they had no means of redress and nowhere to go. Most women felt that one of the main factors that reportedly led to domestic violence was the inability of men to provide for the house and their children, while the main trigger was the consumption of alcohol. Most men felt that they beat their wives as the latter nagged them about finances, while others admitted using violence as a way to control their wives. Interestingly, some women averred that men beat them because the wives did not earn and contribute to the family income. Migrant women reportedly experienced domestic violence on a much lesser scale, but at the same time, they did support it. It was observed that the economically better-off women supported domestic violence more than their poorer counterparts. During some discussions, it was revealed that women were resisting atrocities in ways ranging from not cooking and going to their mother's house, to reacting verbally. Some men reported being abused by their wives,

although this was rare, while others believed that they were at fault.

In Chandakura, the mixed caste FGD, which included women from different age groups and caste groups such as Paswans, Beldars, Ravidas (Chamar), Mahto (Kurmi), admitted that domestic violence was prevalent and that alcohol primarily triggered it. They said that most such cases among Ravidas and Beldar caste groups could be attributed to the effect of alcohol as they indulged greatly in consuming liquor. Domestic violence, according to them, ranged from physical and sexual abuse to husbands throwing their wives out of the house in the middle of the night and never being apologetic about it. They perceived the inability of women to have a male child as one of the main reasons for domestic violence. As per their testimony, women felt insecure if they were not able to bear a son, and felt that their husbands would leave them. One of the women said, "The husband is God, so we have to take care of him." Ravidas females also admitted to the prevalence of domestic violence, even stating, "All husbands beat their wives, although some beat them more and some less." They felt that usually the women were at fault. The prevalence of dowry was reported among both rich and poor families. It was said that no marriages take place without the giving of dowry.

The anganwadi sewika belonging to the *Ravidas* caste in Chandakura said that men often beat their wives because of their own inability to work, earn and provide for the children. Such assaults were usually contained within the privacy of the home. However, among poor and illiterate people, the fights spilled outside. Sometimes husbands beat their children if they were not able to earn. She said, "Men marry again for dowry and also for male children. Marriages have become a joke. So many people keep marrying again and again. If a husband loses his wife, he can marry again. But if the husband dies, the wife is not permitted to marry again."

Young girls between the ages of 13-16 years across caste said that domestic violence did exist, and it was deplorable. They felt that alcohol was the main reason for domestic violence. According to them, men beat their wives if they were not obeyed, or if the wives were to do or say something that the former did not like. Another issue, they added, that caused domestic strife was the expenditure on children. According to the anganwadi sewika, "Men have alcohol as they are tired from work. They also spend all the money on alcohol. Musahar ladies also drink along with their husbands. They do dirty work, cleaning drains and the like, so they drink. They also remove animal carcasses." This might be indicative of the perception other caste women have of Musahar women, although the latter did not admit to drinking with their husbands.

Among the male groups, Kurmi men said that domestic violence existed and anger was the main cause. The other reasons for domestic violence cited by them were women spending money without consulting them, or nagging them about expenditure on alcohol. The men from the Ravidas group attributed violence in general and domestic violence in particular to the problem of alcoholism in the village. They also attributed acts of violence to arguments between husbands and wives over expenditure on children and wives complaining over how much more work they did in the house as compared to the men. They, however, felt that

neither the man nor the woman were at fault. Both the Kurmi and Ravidas groups felt that domestic violence had a negative impact on family dynamics, particularly on the children. Women who had been subjected to violence reported going to their parents' house or not cooking for a few days in some cases. Men and the children consequently suffered as the wives did not cook for some days, which emerged as an interesting coping mechanism among many women.

The anganwadi sewika said, "Domestic violence occurs in front of everyone, and no one intervenes. If someone does, then the husband will tell the intervener to mind his or her own business. No one helps." During an interview with a couple of Kurmi women, it was revealed that if some third person tried to intervene in a domestic fight and blamed the perpetrator, wives did not tolerate it and beat the person who tried to intervene. This reflects the depth of normalisation of domestic violence among women in the community.

An extreme form of domestic violence

Another form of gender-based violence was the practice of men mortgaging their wives. The anganwadi sewika said, "Ravidas men leave their women as mortgage in the *inth bhatti* (brick kiln) or the money-lenders' place till they can return the money. I don't know how these women behave so normally after that with their husbands, *Aaram se khanawana banati hain* (They continue to cook and clean for them normally). I could not have done that. These *inth bhatti* people are outsiders. They give loans."

In Rupaspur-Salempur, the phenomenon of domestic violence was widespread and admitted openly by all the socio-economic and identity groups. Young girls said, "There are a lot of fights between a mother-in law and a daughter–in-law of the house, and sometimes the mother-in-law tells her son to beat his wife." Kushwaha caste women said that domestic violence occurred and they were angry about it. They said that the reason for such acts was that women did not work, and men terrorised them in order to make them pay for not contributing to the household income. They thought that if they got employment, husbands might not beat them. During discussions with the Bhumihar caste group women, one woman said that her husband used to beat her and called her demented. She also said that her father-in-law tried to molest her. "Once my father-in–law tried to molest me, then in self-defence, I bit his hand." Muslim women said that while women from other communities were beaten by their husbands, who consumed alcohol, this did not happen among them.

A Muslim woman said, "If a man beats his wife, it is alright because he is superior to her." One of them said that husbands love their wives more than before. Musahar caste women reported widespread domestic violence, mainly owing to the effect of alcohol, but they admitted reacting against it and abusing them. One Musahar woman said, "Sometimes in great rage, my husband picks up anything and hits me with it." Women in migrant households hardly reported any domestic violence because the men visited home only once in six months or during festivals. The men had been away for 10-15 years. However, the women justified it, saying that women were meant to be beaten and it was the husband's right to beat her. One woman said, "It is okay if a husband scolds or beats us up as he has a right

on us. And if we hit back, they will throw us out of the house. Then where will we go?" They also felt that during domestic strife, women were at fault. But some men, who were hearing the discussions, indicated that women were beginning to react to domestic violence, and were, in fact, indulging in it themselves. They said, "Men say that these days women beat their husbands up. Women these days follow their own mind. They do not listen to us."

Kushwaha women said that a woman should never beat her husband, even though a husband can beat his wife. Men from the Musahar caste group admitted that domestic violence existed, and said that alcohol consumption was a primary reason. They said that men were usually at fault, but women "are stubborn by nature and this leads to fights." Triggering factors, according to them, was inadequate food in the house or incomplete household chores, which make husbands angry. Kushwaha men said that domestic violence was verbal and not physical. Bhumihar men said that sometimes inadequate dowry and money triggered domestic strife. Fights occasionally broke out over the issue of giving gifts. However, the fights were verbal. "Domestic violence in our community is rare."

The OBC I and II groups, comprising Kahars and Yadavs, attributed domestic violence to economic conditions. Domestic violence was also reportedly caused by women and their constant nagging about how much more work they did in the house as compared to men. "They insult and shout, which leads to a fight." Many in that group felt that women would often cross their limits and had to be controlled. They said, "Most of the fights occur due to a woman's mistake as she is unable to understand anything. Then she starts screaming and shouting. That's why we have to scold her and *do char jhapad marne parte hai* [One or two slaps have to be given]. Therefore, it is essential for men to scold and beat women, so that they remain in their limits and don't start to control us."

A woman, who had been listening to this discussion, said that men were irresponsible and wasted money on their personal pleasures such as consuming alcohol and chicken, while women did not even have proper clothes to cover themselves. Other reasons given by the group for domestic strife was the custom of demanding and giving dowry.

In Khangaon, domestic violence was reported by all groups of women. Paswan women reported being physically abused by their husbands, but never so badly that they had to be admitted to hospital. They felt that most fights occurred over family issues and when men drank. Rajput women also reported physical abuse, and said that they had no option but to live with it. In the young girls group, some reported that their fathers would beat their mothers, but they could not do anything to stop it. Most of the times, the men were drunk. Muslim women said that men had the right to beat them and women could not react as it was unacceptable. Men across groups admitted that domestic violence existed. A Muslim man said, "Sometimes in a fight, men start physically abusing their wives. Most men think that women are also culprits whereas some men think that men are at fault."

A Ravidas man from Khangaon said: "In a fight, a woman is beaten and abused, and sometimes she is even dragged outside her house, being pulled by her hair." Rajput men felt that men were at fault. One of them said, "When women and men fight, men are the culprits as they do not give women importance and force their decisions on them. The most

extreme way a man would react in a fight is by shouting at the women." Most men cited money-related squabbles and a woman's 'stubborn' nature as reasons why fights broke out. Other reasons cited were issues over children and men's ego. Discussions with Rajput men revealed that fights occurred because men quashed women's aspirations and needs. There were very few men who physically abused women during fights. In Belabadan, the mixed caste group FGD, which consisted of Musahar women, Sheikh women and young girls, admitted that they were victims of domestic violence. The reasons varied for different caste group. Sheikh men beat their women for saying no to unwanted sex, and sometimes alcohol triggered rage in them. Musahar women complained that their husbands beat them when they had an argument over money. Young girls told us that they were beaten up by their fathers frequently when they tried to protect their mothers from fathers. OBC men admitted that inadequate dowry was also one of the very common reasons for fights between men and women. According to them, they were promised an amount before marriage but did not get it after they got married.

Few of the women thought that being beaten up by their husbands was a daily routine. According to the visiting doctor at the PHC, few pregnant women were thrashed by their husbands to an extent that they had a miscarriage. Anganwadi workers revealed that they had spread awareness in the village that women should approach the police if their husbands physically abused them.

While speaking to the police at Chandakura, it emerged that cases of domestic violence were rarely reported, and those reported were usually false, where the women wrongly accused the husband and his family of abusing her. These cases involved women who were apparently facing difficulty adjusting with the family of the husband. And because the situation did not match her expectations, she resorted to accusing the family of harassment. This was a reflection of the perception of the police.

3.5.2. Sexual Violence

Although there was not much mention of sexual violence in public spaces, there were some interesting perspectives that emerged. It was clear that if a woman was sexually assaulted while roaming around unaccompanied, the dominant patriarchal notion was that it was usually her fault. However, in a situation where she was travelling with her husband or some family members and was attacked, it was considered an accident. In Chandakura, the mixed caste women FGD, which included women from different age groups and caste groups, indicated that there were other kinds of gender-based violence, such as rapes in the public space. This referred to a recent incident. But when asked who was at fault, most of them felt that the woman was at fault for roaming around freely. Incidents such as these were not reported due to fear of harm to the woman's reputation. Incidentally, women from migrant households felt insecure while moving around in public spaces, as their husbands were away.

Responsibility for sexual assault

The *anaganwadi sewika* from Chandakura said, "In rape cases, most people blame the woman for the rape. Particularly those women who dress up, put lipstick, and *thumak kar chal rahithi* (sway their hips while walking). Even husbands of women who have been raped are mistreated; they are accused of being pimps. It is very bad. If a girl gets delayed at school and is harassed on the way, the family is blamed. The family is told, Why did you send a young girl out to study? No one will understand that this is not her fault." She narrated one rape case. "There have been three to four cases of rape. One such incident occured a couple of months ago, when a single woman of 35-40 years was raped. She also registered a complaint. In this case, the men and most people will support the man and blame the woman. Many times, women who are victims are seen as do *numbari* (bad character)."

The Mahila Samooh narrated another recent incident of rape, "The area around the village is unsafe, especially at night and for women. There was a couple that was returning to the village. They were attacked and the woman was kidnapped, raped and hurt, so much so that she took three weeks to recover and her uterus was damaged. It was an accident." Later, when the anganwadi sewika was asked to comment, she too said that it was an accident and hence the woman was not blamed as she was travelling with her husband. Had she been alone, then perhaps she would have been blamed.

In Rupaspur-Salempur, the young girls did not report any incidents of sexual harassment in public spaces. Women from migrant households said that the women were subjected to sexual harassment when they went to the fields to work. They reported feeling insecure as their husbands were away, but they had learned to cope with it. Bhumihar men reported that "four to five years ago, when the Naxalite influence was strong, they used to harass women of the lower castes. Lower caste groups had to provide food to the Naxalites in return for security and occasionally, the Naxalites used to sexually abuse other people's wives. However, this does not happen anymore." They did not report any other kind of violence against women of their community. In Khangaon, women did not report any incidents of sexual harassment or abuse. One incident of rape was reported by the group of young women, which had created fear in their parents and resulted in restriction on their mobility. In Belabadan, women who participated in the FGD and in-depth interview said that they did not face sexual violence from the opposite sex. The police inspector in-charge mentioned that there were several rape cases in the village but they were sorted out by the respective families, who thought that their women's name would otherwise be sullied in the village.

3.5.3. Caste-based Conflicts

Although caste-based violence was not reported at a large scale, caste-based discrimination was widely prevalent. The practice of untouchability existed in numerous forms, ranging from the use of separate utensils for those belonging to lower castes, to upper caste people not going to attend weddings and other occasions, hosted by lower castes, or to the homes of people of lower castes. As lower caste groups refused to do work such as disposing off animal carcases or cleaning used utensils, which were traditionally meant for them, new caste-based tensions had begun to emerge.

In Chandakura, caste-based tension between the Ravidas and Paswan groups was reported, which sometimes took violent forms. Ravidas men said that there were no caste-based fights

specifically, although fights over mundane issues such asuse of roads and water did occur and acquired caste undertones. Ravidas men said, "There is still caste-based discrimination in our village. The upper castes will not drink a glass of water from our hands although we are allowed to eat and drink in their houses." Kurmi men observed: "Women who belong to the richer households are actually weaker than those who are of lower caste, the reason being that these feelings of shame and vulnerability to hurt and insults, and fear of social perception is much stronger in them, as compared to lower caste women."

According to the anganwadi sewika, who was a Ravidas, "Mahto people go to weddings of Bhumihars and Rajputs, but we do not go. Rajputs and Brahmins stay separately. We don't go to their place. There is no caste-related violence, but there is chhuachhut [untouchability]. For instance, if a lower caste group goes to work in an upper caste person's house, he or she does not touch their things. Lower castes are not invited to upper caste weddings. They go just to see the weddings but they don't eat or participate in the celebrations."

According to the anganwadi sewika, there was some tension among the caste groups, particularly between the Ravidas and other caste groups, as the former began refusing to do their traditional work such as removing animal carcasses, owing to improvement in their economic situation and attainment of education. Moreover, because of hospitals in the villages, they stopped performing the role of birth attendants and cleaning the residue. Because of their refusal, other caste groups fought with them, did not let them go to the temple and did not let Ravidas women go to the fields belonging to upper caste families. Currently, Musahars were reported to be doing this work.

In Rupaspur-Salempur, the anganwadi sewika averred that no caste-based tensions existed in the village. Other groups seemed to indicate that caste-based conflicts did exist, even if they did not spill over into violence. Young girls said that there was conflict between different caste groups, particularly, between the Beldar and Pasi groups. Kushwaha caste women said that other caste groups did not socialise with Bhumihars. No violence was reported over use of toilets or water. In Khangaon, although no caste or communal violence was reported, there was some caste-based discrimination. Paswan women reported that women from higher caste groups did not come to visit them, though they went over when invited. Rajput women reported that caste-based discrimination had reduced as compared to earlier times. One said, "Earlier there was a lot of discrimination in our village but now this does not happen. Earlier lower caste men were not allowed to come inside upper caste men's homes with their slippers on. Lower caste women are now allowed to come to our house. However, we are not allowed to go to their house." Men across caste groups admitted that there was discrimination. They said that the 'upper caste groups' were in a privileged position as they were educated, while the weaker caste groups suffered from poverty and lack of education. Rajput men said that the practice of 'untouchability' was not prevalent, though they did not eat food in the homes of lower caste groups.

3.5.4. Infrastructure-related Violence

Defecation in the open was common throughout the villages, and this engendered insecurity in women. There were no reported incidents of fights over water and toilets breaking out.

In Chandakura, some incidents of violence during open defecation were also reported by women of the mixed caste groups. They said that they used to go to their employer's fields but they were often driven away and even pelted with stones. One woman said that barbed wires were erected so that they could not go there to defecate. Although the group did not perceive this violence to be caste-based, it might be a reason. In Khangoan, Muslim women complained about being harassed and verbally abused during open defecation. Paswan women said that they could go to the fields at night to defecate but felt scared during the day. In Belabadan, the young girls complained that they felt scared going to the fields for defecation as people watched them.

3.5.5. Coping Mechanisms

Domestic violence was normalised across caste and age groups. However, findings reveal that lower caste women were seen to react in some way or the other, while the upper caste and Muslim women did not. Similarly, the former were more likely to discuss it with other women, while the latter would keep quiet as they felt it would harm their family's reputation. Women across caste groups were seen to be resisting domestic violence by stopping work in the house, which would make life for their husbands very uncomfortable, thus forcing them to make amends. Interestingly Muslim women throughout said that domestic violence was justified and they were meant to do nothing about it. Very few women took the case to the Panchayat.

In Chandakura, Ravidas women felt that females did not have the courage to fight back against domestic or other forms of violence as they were weak and their husbands would abuse them. They remarked that, "Husbands were like God, and so we have to take care of them." This was in contrast to what young women felt. They averred that the husbands should be taken to the police and that women should not tolerate domestic violence. Women from the mixed caste group said that they approach the Sarpanch (village head) in case of domestic violence.

In Rupaspur-Salempur, women claimed that they did not involve the police in their personal affairs, fearing loss of reputation. Thus, they generally tried to sort out matters among themselves. Some Musahar men reported that occasionally women did not tolerate physical abuse and threatened to go to their mothers' homes and even to take the matter to the Panchayat (village council). Sometimes men were also known to go to the police station to complain against wives. Discussions revealed that Muslim men were of the view that their women did not react to domestic violence while Hindu women were seen more likely to do so. Discussions with men from the Bhumihar and OBC I and II caste groups revealed an interesting coping mechanism. They reported cases, where abused women would stop working and go to their mother's house. Consequently, the men would not get any food and the house would not get cleaned. The men would then be forced to go and bring their wives

back. They also said that lower caste women were known to go and complain about their husbands to other women. In Khangaon, Rajput women observed: "If a man beats us, we have no option but to live with it. If a woman is able to go to her parents' place, it is good as she is able to save her life." Muslim women admitted that men had the right to beat them. One Rajput man reported, "Most of the men create ruckus after drinking in their homes. The government has opened liquor shops in the village and they are freely selling it. This is ruining the youth of our village as people are getting addicted to alcohol."

Men across caste groups claimed that they took care of their wives when they fell ill by taking them to the doctor, giving medicines and even taking loans for their treatment. However, Ravidas men said, "Sometimes women pretend to be unwell to get attention and to get a break from their household chores. Then we do not take care of them."

Ravidas and Rajput men said that women, when angry, would stop cooking and go to their mother's house. The family then had to remain hungry. In Belabadan, the various coping mechanisms of women seemed to differ for different caste groups. The young girls claimed that they tried to save their mothers from their aggressive fathers but mostly failed as they themselves got beaten up by their fathers. Musahar caste men said that women reacted by not cooking food for two or three days and not eating themselves. They also threatened to leave the house and go to their parent's house. Sheikh men admitted that women did not have the courage to reply to them or react to domestic violence. The OBC group alone said that women sometimes went to the Panchayat to complain. However, it was clear that responses were different among different socio-economic groups.

3.6. Social Practices

3.6.1. Superstitions

All groups said that '*dayan pratha*' (tradition of branding some women as witches) was widely prevalent, and that the 'evil eye' cast by a *dayan* affected men, children and livestock. Interestingly, besides the fact that the victims were men and children and never women, these dayans were always female as reported by the respondents. A distinct fissure between the sexes is thus found, where men are victimised and women are demonised, which is again rooted in patriarchy. The tradition attempts to cast out women who are single, living alone, widows or unconventional in a way that does not conform to socially defined roles for women. Discussions across villages revealed that spirits were known to enter some women, who were either weak-willed, young, unclean, widowed or in some way noticeable, which transformed them into dayans. They were then cured by being cleansed through various ritualistic processes, often painful and humiliating.

A Kurmi man in Chandakura said, "Some women have an evil eye, and whatever they see turns bad. Mostly this affects men, children and animals. Sometimes it affects food also. For instance, if a woman is carrying a child and a dayan pays a compliment or looks at the child, the child falls ill. Or when one is cooking and a dayan passes by, the food goes bad. It is believed that if a *dayan* casts an evil eye on someone's cattle, the cattle can fall ill and die." A Ravidas man said, "There are at least ten women in this village who are considered to be *dayans*. *Ek mahila to apne pati ko kha gayi hai*."(One woman in this village ate up her own husband, meaning she finished him. "It is said that whatever comes out of witches' mouth becomes true. If a woman is suspected to be a *dayan*, she is made to undergo '*jhar phook*' [cleansing rituals]. If one comes across a *dayan*, one just changes one's path and moves away. No one talks to them."

In Rupaspur-Salempur, both men and women of different age and caste groups believed in *dayan pratha* (practice). A young girl said, "In our village, spirits come and bother people and everybody believes in it. My sister, who was pregnant, died because of a dayan in the village." A Kushwaha caste woman said that there were spirits that haunted the village and jhaarphook had to be done. Other Kushwaha women felt that this was a negative tradition and was a way to make women fight. Bhumihar women also said that there were spirits that were usually attracted to younger girls. These spirits entered the girls and jhaarphook had to be performed so as to free them of the occult influence.

Women who are under the influence of these spirits or are hexed are seen acting loud and hysterical. The *ojha* (exorcist) then puts turmeric and chilli powder in her ears and beats her with a broom to remove the hex. Muslim women said that they did not believe in *dayans* although they knew that other communities believed in and feared them. But their men averred that the tradition of *dayans* did exist, and that many men were known to be affected by it. It was believed that if someone spoke to a *dayan*, male members in the family fell ill. Musahar women revealed that if they realised that someone was a dayan, they would beat her and scare her off. One Bhumihar man said that spirits often catch women who remain unclean and are weak-willed. A man from the OBC caste group narrated a personal incident when he became seriously sick after speaking to a woman who was considered a dayan. He was taken to numerous doctors, but his condition did not improve. Finally, someone told him that this woman may have caused his sickness, and she should be called to do jhaarphook. It is believed that if the *dayan* herself does *jhaarphook*, the negative effects recede. After that he became better and never ventured near that woman again.

Men and women across caste groups in Khangaon reported that *dayan pratha* existed and that men were the targets of their evil eye. Men and women from the Rajput community felt that this tradition, along with that of spirit-possession was more common among lower caste groups. Rajput women believed that widows were often considered *dayan* and to be responsible for the death of their husbands. They then proceeded to cast an evil eye on other men. People in Belabadan felt that the only women are dayans and not men. Women from mixed caste FGD group claimed that a *dayan* comes to the village only during the festivals such as Durga Puja. All of them mentioned that a moulvi (priest) helps in removing the '*dayan atma*' (spirit) from the body. OBC caste groups mentioned that remedies to cure women vested in putting red chilli powder in their eyes and ears. People in the village

averred that they badly humiliated women who were considered dayans by verbally and physically abusing them.

Rituals of exorcism
OBC I men in Khangaon narrated an incident when a spirit entered a woman's body and she began to display very strange mannerisms. Her face showed signs of anger, eyes widened, hair was dishevelled, and she began to run around and took her clothes off. She shouted and threatened those around her. The *ojha* then did some chanting and proceeded to put raw turmeric in her ears. He also burnt chillis and sulphur around the woman to drive the spirit away.
Interestingly, Ravidas men said that sometimes young men were also targeted by spirits. These dwelt in certain areas in the fields, forest or in peepal trees. If frequented, could bring spirits upon the concerned persons. Those afflicted began to behave in a strange way, laughing and crying for no reason, or displaying other abnormalities. Rajput men said that the affected persons were made to breathe in the chilli and sulphur smoke that could cause them to faint. If they still continued to behave in ways considered abnormal, they were beaten with sticks.

3.6.2. Dowry

In Chandakura, the practice of bestowing dowry was widespread, and the group of mixed caste women said that many men engaged in multiple marriages in order to receive dowry. In Rupaspur-Salempur, young girls felt that dowry was a negative social practice, but society demanded that a girl's parents give dowry for daughters' marriage.

Kushwaha women felt that the practice of giving dowry was increasing as was the pressure on a girl's parents. "Initially, any amount in dowry was acceptable, but now one has to give more and more. It has also become a sort of public display. If the in-laws feel that the dowry was not enough, they proceed to torture the daughter-in-law psychologically and physically."

Bhumihar women admitted that in-laws would harass them for dowry, but they insisted it was verbal and not physical. Muslim women said that the phenomenon was in existence, but people gave dowry according to their financial standing. Women from migrant households said that if a woman was educated, less dowry was demanded.

Among men, there were differences in opinion. While Musahar men said that dowry increasingly became a bone of contention between husband and wife, Bhumihar men said that this was not the cause of fights. OBC I and OBC II men said that fights occurred when the girl's parents gave less than what was expected. But they added that they did not fight with their wives because of it. In Khangaon, the practice of giving dowry was widely prevalent. Women across caste groups said that dowry had to be given; otherwise, their daughter would be able to get married. If the husband's family felt that they did not get enough dowry, they proceeded to torment the daughter-in-law. However, no one reported physical abuse. Men felt that insufficient dowry was a major cause for domestic strife. Interestingly, Bhumihar men said that neither did they do anything offensive if their daughter-in-law did not bring dowry, nor did it lead to domestic strife. It is one of the most common issues among the women of Belabadan. They think that nobody marries any girl without getting sufficient dowry. As mentioned above, inadequate dowry is also a reason for fights between husband and wife.

Musahar caste women said "*Dahej ke bina to kutta bhi shadi nahi karta*." Even a dog will not marry without a dowry.

Restrictions during menstruation: Observing restrictions during menstruation was common in all the villages. Most women from all socio-economic groups and across ages felt that this was justified as it was a "dirty and impure process". Interestingly, in one village, Musahar women claimed that they did not observe any restrictions during menstruation.

In Chandkura, women of various caste groups reported being subjected to a range of restrictions during menstruation, such as not bathing, not offering prayers, not entering the *Devisthan*, place for worship, and not wearing new clothes. The young women said that they did not even wear nail polish in this period. One Ravidaswoman refused to participate in the FGD, which was held at the *Devisthan*. Upon enquiry, she admitted that she was menstruating and therefore did not want to enter the temple. She listed other restrictions such as not touching pickle during menstruation as it was believed to go bad and not wearing new clothes. She said, "Menstruation is an impure time, when all the dirt from the woman's body is being flushed out."

Women across caste and age in Rupaspur-Salempur were subjected to menstruation-related taboos. Young women said, "Menstruation is very bad, and during this time, we have to follow some rules, set by elderly people of the house. Entering the temple, wearing new clothes, cooking or touching pickle are prohibited. If we plant a sapling at this time, it dies."

Bhumihar women and women from migrant households felt the same way. They said that they did not wear new clothes or wear *sindoor* (red powder, smeared in a married woman's hair parting) in this period. Kushwaha women stated that they did not participate in any auspicious occasions while menstruating. Most women used cloth, which is distributed by ASHA, to absorb the discharge. According to the anganwadi sewika, women from richer households were not allowed to cook, and scolded by the elders if they defied the taboo. She also seemed to justify these restrictions, menstruation being considered unclean. She felt women in general agreed with these restrictions. Khangaon, women across caste groups said that they were subjected to restrictions such as not performing prayers. Paswan women revealed that they were not allowed to touch cow dung, as it was believed to give them tetanus at this time. Rajput and Muslim women reported using sanitary pads and cloth. In Belabadan, Muashar women claimed that they observed their usual daily routine, and there were no restrictions. Muslim women averred that they were not allowed to do *namaz*, offer prayers ritually, or have intercourse with their husbands during menstruation.

3.6.3. Inter-caste Marriage

Inter-caste marriages were prohibited across villages, caste and age groups. Interestingly, while young women have been prone to challenge conventions in other aspects, they seem to accept and even defend the taboo against such marriages quite strongly. In Chandakura, all the groups were unanimously against the concept of inter-caste marriages. Ravidas women felt that it was not right while the young women felt that they would only marry according

to their parent's wishes and not according to their own choice. In Rupaspur-Salempur, inter-caste marriages are not accepted across groups, and those who do marry outside the caste groups are not accepted by their families. Musahar women feel that this practice may threaten to finish off their community. Young girls were quite firm about marrying within the caste, no matter "how good or bad the groom is, even if he is a beggar." Discussion with the Kushwaha caste group revealed that one Bhumihar boy had married a girl from another caste group and the parents did accept it, although they are not living in the village. In Khangaon, Ravidas men said that if their sons got married out of their caste, they would ask the daughter to perform the rituals. However, if the daughter married outside the caste, they would disown her. Muslim women said that if any girl married outside her caste, she would not be accepted by her family.

3.7. Role of Institutions

The role of self-help groups (SHGs) was considered positive across the villages, by women and most men too. Women constantly engaged with the Mahila Samooh, which proved to be a cause for discussions as well as saving and lending money. The institution of the police was not seen to be very positive and people rarely approached them owing to fear of loss of reputation. The role of the Gram Panchayat was viewed differently by men and women. While the former felt that women participated and voted freely, women felt that they were not able to do so, and many said that the Gram Panchayatwas not convened regularly. Despite this, it was clear that women were becoming increasingly assertive through their involvement in the SHGs.

Men from the Kurmi and Ravidas groups felt that the role of SHGs such as the Mahila Samooh in the village was positive as it afforded space for women to congregate and discuss issues that were important to them. Ravidas men felt that women should participate in political discussions and give suggestions. However, Kurmi men felt that without education, women's political participation would not be useful as they would be mere rubber stamps. They said that women did not participate in the Gram Sabhas as they were never convened. Ravidas women reported voting freely.

In Chandakura, the anganwadi sewika said, "Sometimes men leave their wives because they don't get enough dowry, and in such cases, the Panchayat is asked to intervene. The husband says that he will not stay with her. The Panchayat frequently supports women." She said that incidents of rape or other forms of violence had occurred and the police was called during one incident. But the police took the side of the wealthy party. "They don't help women, they help wealthy people."

The Mahila Samooh members told us that the group had been set up recently and provided a way to save money. Each woman paid Rs 10 per week to the samooh, and when someone needed money for an emergency, she was given the money. They paid two per cent interest. They said that women had found their support helpful, especially as many of them did not have other ways to save money and had little control over the household income. They also

said that women did not go to the Gram Sabha and that men were the ones who participated in Sabha work. In Rupaspur-Salempur, there was no SHG in the village, and women had no institutional recourse. According to the anganwadi sewika, women did not participate in the activities of the Gram Sabha, and voted for the person that their husbands were voting for. Other caste groups also confirmed this.

Upon visiting the Primary Health Care Sub Centre in the village, it was learned that generally women from the lower classes come for treatment for ailments ranging from extreme weakness to child birth. They also underwent operations to prevent conception. Women came for delivery without any prior check-ups. There were a couple of cases where women came with injuries, and although they did seem like cases of domestic violence, one could not confirm. There was one burn case that was reported. A visit to the Sub Primary Health Care Centre at Chandakura revealed that most of the cases were of women with anemia. The doctor on duty reported that no cases of domestic violence or abortions came to him.

In Khangaon, there is reportedly an SHG in the village. However Muslim women are not able to avail of it as it has not begun operating in their tola. Most women felt that the SHG was helping them save, but Muslim women felt deprived and had to go to other sources to take loans. Paswan women said that SHGs helped them with financial matters, but did not intervene in personal matters. Rajput women praised the ASHA workers as being very efficient. The workers went and gave relevant information to everyone's house. Men from the Ravidas and Rajput caste groups felt that women should participate in political and social life as they had skills to understand things better. They said that many men did not allow females to participate. However, women needed to get empowered and make decisions without depending on men. Belabadan SHGs had a vital role in the village as most of the women were of the view that these has enabled them to learn and widen their horizon in gaining general awareness. Musahar caste women also found them a financial support as SHGs gave money loans.

During elections, Sheikh women voted as per their husbands' wishes, assuming that men had more knowledge than them. While Paswan women and Rajput women said that they voted freely and were not influenced by their husbands or other male family members, young girls said that they voted according to their parents' wishes. Muslim men felt that women should not participate in local politics as it would require them to step out of their homes, talk with male members and remove their veils, which would make men stop respecting them.

The police official from the police station, located at Chandakura, revealed that a lot of parties in cases of domestic strife approached them, and the police usually tried to make them sort out matters informally rather than registering an FIR. The women were usually not able to adjust to the marital homes and ground reality, and many times out of frustration, accuse in-laws of harassment. They said that caste and religion-based cases were not usually brought to police notice.

IV. Policy Suggestions and Scope for Future Research

In Chandakura, Ravidas women felt that women should be given employment under MGNREGA. They also felt that if the male members helped them out in their household work, their lives would improve. Women from the mixed caste group said that the government should provide financial assistance in their daughters' weddings and their sons' education. They also averred that alcohol should be banned as the men wasted their hard-earned income on alcohol. Kurmi men felt that women's opinions should be heard by men and women should be allowed to participate in the decision-making process of the household. They suggested that a separate community hall and library be constructed for women's exclusive use. Ravidas men said that women should get employment and men should encourage it. According to the anganwadi sewika, the condition of girls had improved as they were sent to school, although they were still married off by 15 years. In Rupaspur-Salempur, young girls felt that girls should not marry before the age of 18 years. There needed to be a high school in their village as much time was spent on travelling outside the village for higher education. The absence of electricity in the village made it difficult for them to study. They also stressed the need for a hospital in the village. Other women felt that schools, hospitals, electricity, means of entertainment and employment and vocational training were needed. Some assistance was also required for women to start their own businesses. Improvement in roads was necessary so as to facilitate accessibility to schools and hospitals. Men suggested that community centres be built for women, and conceded that the male mind set needed to change.

Khangaon women across caste groups said that home-based work would benefit them financially as well as socially as they would become independent and would be able to move about without men's permission. Rajput women stated that government jobs would be beneficial for women. Young girls demanded a high school in the village, so that they could continue with their education and improve their future prospects. Men across caste groups, except Muslims, felt that women should form leadership groups and work towards the betterment of the community. This would be beneficial for them, their households and the community. Rajput men proposed that the government should provide vocational training - painting, tailoring, etc. - so that women could get empowered socially and economically. In Belabadan, the SHGs have a vital role in the village as most of the women in the village believed that these had enabled them to learn and widen their horizons in terms of gaining general awareness.

In addition to incidents of overt physical violence, there exist undertones of covert forms of violence and caste-based discrimination among women across caste and age groups. Such acts have become normalised and have been accepted over time through daily experience and cultural and social practices. These are reflected in the constant justification of domestic violence by both women and men; acceptance of denial of freedom of mobility or right to choose one's partner; acceptance of denial of basic rights to widows; restrictions observed during menstruation; and acceptance as well as justification of the practise of branding some females as dayans. Discrimination has serious connotations in the case of females who have been molested or raped as they are accused of inviting such violence upon themselves.

It is the same when females perceived as dayans are accused of causing harm to others. Dayans are usually women, who have lost their husbands, live alone or are unconventional in some way, thus being feared and avoided. They are accused mainly of targeting men and children, thereby demonising them and victimising men. Upon speaking to a local in a village in Bihar, it was revealed that branding widows as *dayan* has a deep connection to property owned by these women, who are usually widows. Thus branding a woman as a witch, an exercise that is often orchestrated by in-laws or other relatives, would allow for her to be ostracised and driven away, leaving the property to be usurped by interested parties.

Although this link between inheritance of property and *dayan pratha* did not come up during the discussions, it needs exploration and in-depth research. Nathan et al (1998) explores the prevalence of dayan pratha among the Santhal and Munda groups in Jharkhand; belief in Pippa (evil spirits) by the Dai in Xishuang-banna, Yunnan Province of China; and the existence of Chao Pu Xi (keepers of demons) among the Naxi, and Du (evil spirits) by the Mosuo in Lijiang, also in the Yunnan Province of China, to understand their role in establishing processes of social control, and control over land and property in order to strengthen patriarchy. It is thus important to locate this and other social practices in the social, economic, political and cultural context, in order to gain a nuanced understanding.

As noted repeatedly, domestic violence was rampant across villages, communities and castes, with most women justifying it. Significantly, younger and lower caste women expressed anger and displeasure, although they felt they could not do much about it other than stopping household work. The idea that many would support their husbands if someone tried to intervene is reflective of the deep-rooted justification of male-perpetrated violence against women. This 'normalisation', of violence against women needs to be studied in more depth, in order to better understand why violence against women exists despite the existence of legislation protecting women.

While most issues of violence were common across caste, such as restrictions during menstruation and ill-treatment of widows, others such as the practice of dowry, female mobility, lack of decision-making ability and caste-based discrimination seemed to vary with caste and age. While upper caste women were less mobile, other women were found to be relatively more mobile. Muslim women were seen to be less mobile and independent. Similarly, the upper caste groups did not talk openly about dowry and domestic violence, while weaker caste women were more open about it. Young girls seemed to react strongly against domestic violence as compared to older age groups. But they seemed to adhere strongly to the convention of same caste marriages. Some differences emerged between Hindus and Muslims regarding education of girls and mobility, with Muslim females taking the brunt of regressive customs. Perceptions of men seemed to be variable across castes and villages, although Sheikh men were seen to be open about how women should behave and how they should be reprimanded.

Political and social institutions seemed to be having an empowering effect on those who had access to them. However, outside of these, bodies such as Mahila Samooh, females continued to face discrimination and oppression. Research in understanding the role of these

institutions in violence reduction could be explored further.

It could be said that all forms of violence against women have common inter- related causes, rooted in patriarchy, class and caste, and thus need to be seen as a 'continuum of violence' (Bourgois, 2004) and future research could be designed keeping this in mind. This may be important while designing policies, and also to gain a better holistic understanding of violence against women.

Notes

1. The NCRB collects data on cognizable crimes from police stations in the States and Union Territories and compiles them into annual reports.
2. The Indian Criminal Procedure Code(Cr.P.C), classifies crimes into cognizable and non-cognizable offences. In the case of the former, an arrest can be made without the permission of the magistrate, i.e. without a court order, while in the latter, a court order is required to make an arrest.
3. Crime per 100,000 population, calculated on the basis of total population of the state.
4. IPC crimes include violent crimes. These include crimes against the body like murder, attempt to commit murder, culpable homicide not amounting to murder, kidnappings, hurt, causing death by negligence and crimes against property like robbery, preparation and assembly for dacoity, dacoity, robbery and burglary and theft; crimes against public order like riots and arson; crimes against women like rape, dowry deaths, kidnappings and abduction of women and girls, molestation, sexual harassment, importation of girls and cruelty by husbands and relatives; crimes against children which includes rape, infanticide, kidnapping and abduction of children, foeticide, procurement of minor girls, buying and selling of girls for prostitution, abetment to suicide exposure and abandonmen; crimes against SCs and STs which include murder, rape, robbery, burglary, arson, crimes under the Prevention of atrocities against SC/ST act; economic crimes like criminal breach of trust, cheating, counterfeiting; and other IPC crimes
5. Symbolic violence is rooted in the cultural psyche of society, resulting in normalisation of violence
6. See Rodgers et al (2013)
7. An anganwadi sevika is appointed by the government as part of the Integrated Child Development Scheme (ICDS)
8. Despite seats reserved for women in certain village tolas, male relatives, particularly husbands are seen running the office on behalf of the elected women.

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Annexure I: List of FGDs, interviews and case studies conducted in the four villages

Khangaon	Belabadan	Rupaspur-Salempur	Chandakura
Females 1. FGD with Rajput (dominant caste) group 2. FGD with Paswan (SC group) 3. FGD with Ravidas (Chamar/SC) group 4. FGD with Muslim women 5. FGD with young women	**Females** 1. FGD with young Musahar girls 2. FGD with Musahar women 3. FGD with upper caste Muslims 4. FGD with mixed caste group 5. Interview with lower caste/*jaati* Muslim women	**Females** 1. FGD with young girls 2. FGD with Kushwaha caste 3. FGD with Bhumihar caste group (dominant caste) 4. FGD with Muslim womrn 5. FGD with Musahar caste group 6. FGD with wives of migrant workers	**Female** 1. Mixed caste (Kurmis and Paswan and Ravidas) group FGD 2. FGD with young school-going girls 3. FGD with Ravidas (Chamar group) 4. FGD with Musahars 5. Interview with two Mahtos, and Kurmi (dominant caste groups) 6. Interview with one Ravidas lady 7. Interview with Rajput family
Male 1. FGD with OBCI group II. FGD with Rajput group (dominant caste group) 2. FGD with Ravidas (Chamar) group **3.** Interview with lower caste Muslim man	**Males** 1. FGD with OBC II (Barai) 2. FGD with upper caste Muslims (dominant caste group) 3. FGD with OBC I group (Dhanuk) **4.** FGD with Musahar caste group	**Males** 1. FGD with Mixed caste group 2. FGD with lower caste Muslims 3. FGD with dominant group (Bhumihar) **4.** FGD with Musahar group	**Males** 1. FGD with OBC 1 Kurmi (dominant group) 2. FGD with Ravidas (Chamar group) 3. Interview with an older Musahar man
Interview with Stakeholders 1. Interview with Anganwadi worker 2. Interview with Mukhiyapati (husband of Sarpanch)	**Interview with Stakeholders** 1. Interview with Mukhiyapati (husband of Sarpanch) 2. Interview with PHC (Primary Health Care Centre) 3. Interview with police sub-inspector	**Interview with Stakeholders** 1. Interview with Mukhiyapati (husband of Sarpanch) 2. Interview with police sub-inspector 4. Interview with PHC (Primary Health Care Centre)	**Interview with Stakeholders** 1. Interview with Sarpanch and her husband. i.e. Mukhiyapati 2. Interview with the police sub-inspector 5. Interview with PHC (Primary Health Care Centre) 3. Interview with Anganwadi Sewika (Ravidas) 4. Interview with Mahila Samooh members

Annexure II

Caste Name	Category
Brahmin	Upper
Rajput	Upper
Bhumihar	Upper
Kayasth	Upper
Baniya	OBC II
Teli	OBC II
Sundhi	OBC II
Yadav	OBC II
Kurmi	OBC II
Koyari	OBC II
Barhi	OBC II
Lohar	OBC II
Gaderia	OBC II
Sonar	OBC II
Kumhar	OBC II
Kanu	OBC II
Mali	OBC I
Nai	OBC I
Kahar	OBC I
Mallah	OBC I
Kewat	OBC I
Dhanuk	OBC I
Bind	OBC I
Hharwar	OBC I
Rajwar	OBC I
Mandal	OBC I
Nonia	OBC I
Beldar	OBC I
Chamar (Ravidas)	SC
Dusadh (Paswan)	SC
Dhobi	SC
Pasi	SC
Musahar	SC
Dom	SC
Bhuiyan	SC
Upper caste Muslim like Sheikh	Upper Muslim
Lower Caste Muslim like Ansari	Lower Muslim
Scheduled Tribe	ST

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