

THIS CHOCOLATE IS NO MORE SWEET

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Abstract:

Child sexual abuse in India is a serious problem. Though not unique to India, the country does have characteristics that add to the complexity and severity of the problem. A problem that is only beginning to come into light in India, rape, sexual abuse and sexual harassment are worldwide issues of gender violence. Bitter Chocolate is a book deals with Child Sexual Abuse in India. Pinki Virani's work seamlessly blending her journalistic and writing skills places her among the few international authors whose writing results in rendering direct service towards Indian citizens, sometimes one at a time.

Key-words: Sexual abuse, domestic violence, stalking, sexual assault, federal legislation, perpetrator, intimidation.

There is in every true woman's heart, a spark of heavenly fire, which lies dormant in the broad daylight of prosperity, but which kindles up and beams and blazes in the dark hour of adversity"-Washington Irving.

Child abuse constitutes a violation of the most basic rights of children and adolescents, which are enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. All persons under the age of 18 have the right to physical and psychological integrity and to protection from all forms of violence. A problem that is only beginning to come into light in India, rape, sexual abuse and sexual harassment are worldwide issues of gender violence. There is very little research done in this area in India, and only a few books have been written, keeping the subject even further from the consciousness of the country. However, the problem persists with staggering incidence and India's unique profile adds to the complexity of an already difficult subject.

There is no difference at all in how little girls and boys react, and how they subsequently feel when they are victims of Child Sexual Abuse. Perhaps the one and only difference would be that little girls are a traumatized when men and women sexually abuse them, boys see this activity with older women; unless they are related as all right. Boys with early homosexual inclinations also tend not to see it as sexual abuse by adult males.

Children, especially girls, between a few months (like the Mumbai infant Vaishali) and sixteen years old, face sexual abuse, sometimes, extremely violent; from grand-parents, parents, relatives, friends, neighbours, household workers, teachers, peers, etc. As with sexual abuse worldwide, the perpetrators are usually known to the victim. Parents rarely accept that their children have been sexually abused. They hardly report it either to the police or the media even if the perpetrator is not a family member. This scares and confuses the child and encourages the wrongdoer. Sometimes, multiple 'bastards' as Virani brands them prey on these innocent lives. Victims exhibit withdrawal, hysteria, depression, anxiety and other emotional and psychological disturbances that could last lifelong. Additionally, some have

bleeding, pain and injured sexual organs. Some have even committed suicide. Because unfortunately, just as in many incidents of sexual violence, mainly against women, the police and other government agencies are insensitive to children suffering sexual abuse, despite the law's provisions.

The author cites instances where regressive families alienate and hound courageous mothers who intervene on behalf of their young daughters who experience sexual abuse from male elders. Virani's unique and stirring work lists ChildLine (1098), NGOs and individuals that are intervening to warn children and their caregivers about the CSA evil and assisting its victims. However, unless parents, teachers and others close to children take the initiative, the disturbing truth that over 53% of children in India are subject to CSA may prevail or worse still, perpetuate.

"Violence is abuse, punishment, violence at home, not taking care of girls, forced labour, killing, fighting, threats and discrimination for being a girl." Throughout this paper, the terms "victim" and "survivor" are used interchangeably to refer to victims of domestic violence. Sexual assault and stalking are distinct crimes but frequently occur in conjunction with domestic violence. Thus, we address them collectively in this publication.

Sexual violence long has existed in our homes and our communities. Beginning in the mid 1990s, studies of victims' work experiences have helped shape our understanding of the employment-related effects of domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking. Over the last ten years, much local, state, and federal legislation has been introduced and enacted to address the effect of this problem on employees who are victims and on their workplaces. There has also been a dramatic increase in education about and awareness of the impact of domestic violence on the workplace and in the development of workplace policies by employers and unions. In some cases, current or former employees who were victims of domestic violence have brought suit against their employers.

Domestic violence is a pattern of behaviour in which one intimate partner uses physical violence and/or sexual or economic abuse to control the other partner in the relationship. It is not defined by physical acts alone; it includes conduct and patterns of behaviour such as threats, intimidation, isolation; and other coercive and controlling acts. In all forms, domestic violence affects families, communities, and workplaces. It knows no economic, racial, ethnic, religious, age, gender, sexual orientation, or gender identity limits. As Patricia Meyer Specks remarks, "There seems to be something that we call a women's point of view on outlook sufficiently distinct to be recognizable through the countries."

Traditionally, the work of Indian Women Writers has been undervalued due to patriarchal assumptions about the superior worth of male experience. The factors contributing to this prejudice is the fact that most of these women writers have observed no domestic space. The Indian women's perceptions of their aspirations and expectations are within the framework of Indian social and moral commitments. Indian Women Writers in English are victims of a second prejudice vis-a-vis their regional counterpart's. Proficiency in English is available only to writers of the intelligent, affluent and educated classes. Writer's works are often therefore, belong to high social strata and cut off from the reality of Indian life.

Pushpa Achanta writes about Pinki Virani's first of its kind book on Child Sexual Abuse in India – Bitter Chocolate. The book is brutally honest and graphic, bold, heart rending in places and gut wrenching in others. Definitely not for the faint hearted.

Sex, being led by sex. So much easier than working on one's intellect or real self-worth where one's thinking and consequent actions are refined to the point where they become like burnished gold, lustrous, elegant.

Fortunately, the issue of child sexual abuse is slowly becoming a more recognized issue, and for this reason, this paper will focus much on sexual abuse against minor children: the laws, victims and perpetrators. Several movements have been started to persuade amendments to the penal code

adding specific crimes for sexual abuse. Though this has not yet been achieved, the issue has been raised and is being debated.

The sickest of all factors mentioned in the previous point is that the child is often abused by the very person who the child is totally dependent on. That's the irony. In many cases, the abuse does come to the notice of the family members of the child. But they often do nothing about it.

First, and often considered most important, are women's rights in general. Women in India are often treated as second-class citizens, kept in the home, sometimes silent and uneducated. Women face discrimination on many fronts, and this includes young girls as well, who are kept from attending school, and treated as more a burden than a blessing due to the need to produce a dowry to marry the child off. In marriage, women are a commodity to be sold and purchased. It is not hard to compare this to child-prostitution, where women too are sold and purchased, only in this case in a practice not sanctioned by tradition and religion. This does not appear to account for boys being raped. However, subjugating women may lead to subjugating other weaker members of society, including young boys and girls.

Damn it, so much power abused, so much trust betrayed where are the parents of these children? The politics of domination, the vulnerability of a woman, the girl's very gender being a liability to herself as a human being: damn, damn, damn, a young woman can never really say what she wants to, wear what she wants to, go where she pleases; she cannot feel complete sexual freedom because she is always, always in sexual threat.

Virani points out "patriarchy, power and penetration" as possible reasons for India's child sexual abuse excesses and summarily dismisses them, in favour of a simpler and more universal conclusion; there is not "a single thread which binds them all" and she writes, "Adult men who sexually molest children are bastards".

To sum up, rape and sexual abuse of children in India is a large problem without an easy solution. Though the issue persists worldwide, India's culture which traditionally keeps women below men, makes talk of private matters such as such unallowable, and a corrupt and weak legal system when it comes to rape makes the problems even larger. However, the situation could be improved by appropriately educating children and adults on sexual abuse, and educating police and strengthening laws. Further, women's empowerment may lead to healthy changes as well.

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