

Gender, Peace and Security in South Asia: A Case Study of Violence against Women

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There has been of late, a great deal of discussion on issues concerning women, peace and security in South Asia with reference to the innumerable global resolutions, especially UNSCR 1325, the landmark resolution on women, peace and security that is due to celebrate its fifteenth anniversary on October 30, 2015. Yet, the main focus of these discussions on women, peace and security has largely remained on women in conflict and post conflict zones.

What remains largely unattended is serious examination of routine violence that women undergo in regions that do not fall strictly under either of the above two zones (of conflict and post conflict) i.e. the family, the society and of course the civic space. My paper will attempt to cover this gap and explore the everyday violence that routinely takes place in these spaces and the various initiatives that have been taken to mitigate such violence and bring justice and security to the quotidian lives of women.

My paper will also focus on the tools adopted by the state and society to make the society safer for women. The bearing that global declarations and conventions have on the lives of women will be examined too. In particular, protest as a tool for ensuring women's security and empowerment will be analyzed and the various strategies and stages of such movements will be highlighted. The formation, development and impact of these measures will be assessed and their frequency and popularity across states in the region will be traced. However the relative selectivity of the protests made against such violations will be analyzed too. Where as in India, there is a long history of protests against unfair treatment of women, be they against a court ruling in a custodial rape, or a bride burning or more recently sexual violence against a young paramedic, in Nepal it could be the robbery and rape of a tribal returnee, and in Bangladesh, protests against the violence that was perpetrated on the 'Beeranganas'. Does this phenomenon imply that there is a certain blurring of the state boundaries when it comes to women and security, or there is still a long way to go before the personal could become political, as there are yet innumerable episodes where similar events occur across south Asia with virtually no consequence whatsoever. The lack of identification that mostly a 'well educated', middle class, urban, younger generation has with women sufferers who come from diverse religious, caste, class and rural groups will form the final segment of this paper.

I will attempt to formulate some policy perspectives for initiatives that would address the needs of the most marginalized women's groups in society. Thus, I will examine the inter sectionality of gender, caste, class and religion with conflict, violence and security and attempt to bring it from the margins of academic theorizing, to the centre of policy priority and practitioner perspective in South Asia.

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