

Domestic violence against women

Manpreet Kaur¹, Dr. Lavjit Kaur²

Research Scholar, Assistant Professor

Guru Kashi University Talwandi Sabo, Bathinda

ABSTRACT

Domestic violence is a very well known and most frequent towards women's in India. Domestic violence against women is understood as a situation supported and reinforced by gender norms and values that place women in a subordinate position in relation to men. Domestic violence is one of the most common crimes against women which is inextricably linked to the perpetuation of patriarchy. Domestic violence refers to violence against women especially in matrimonial homes. Domestic violence is recognized as the significant barrier in the path of women empowerment and also skews the democratic set up of the polity. India has specifically legislated Domestic Violence Act in 2005 to reduce the violence against women but the same has bore mixed result as of now. The paper examines the domestic violence in multi-dimensional perspective. In conclusion recommendations were made to eradicate this menace from the society.

Keywords: *Domestic Violence, Judiciary, Government, Police, NGOs, Health care support, Counselling.*

INTRODUCTION

Domestic violence is a global issue reaching across national boundaries as well as socio economic, cultural, racial and class distinctions. This problem is not only widely dispersed geographically, but its incidence is also extensive, making it a typical and accepted behaviour. Women from all kinds of backgrounds are affected by Violence every day. Sometimes, they are attacked by strangers, but most often they are hurt by people who are close to them. Domestic violence against women is a matter of serious public health concern in most of the communities and culture.

Indian society is also not far from this reality. The condition of women is same as the other nations of the world. The gender inequality is faced by them in every sphere of their life. The most important form of gender inequality is revealed through domestic violence faced by the Indian women. The domestic violence against women is perpetrated by their partners. It can be in the form of physical violence, psychological harassment or sexual violence. This violence contributes to their bad health status and limits their primary roles in the society. Thus, domestic violence against women is not only the issue of rights of human beings especially the women, but, it is also considered to be a major factor concerning the health status of the women. Domestic violence is not considered seriously unless it involves homicide or serious physical injury to the victim. But from medical point of view long standing domestic violence results in more psychological disorders as compared with physical health problems.

NATURE AND CHARACTERISTICS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Domestic violence can also be seen as a violation of the fundamental right to live with dignity, and of the right to equality and equal protection of the law guaranteed under the Indian Constitution. Domestic Violence is in the majority of cases, violence against a woman by the members of the house where she resides. It can be the husband, his parents, or siblings or any other resident who has the overt or covert latitude for actions that can cause physical or mental agony to the woman. But, the most important aspect of this kind of violence is the fact that "it happens behind the closed doors" and is most often denied by the very woman who has been the victim of violence. It is this aspect of the crime that segregates itself from all other kinds of social violence. A woman may of any age, she may be a girl child, unmarried, married or elderly woman including a widow or such women with whom men have marriage like relationship. Violence can be both physical and psychological. It indicates threats or aggressive behaviour towards her not only to her physical being, but towards her self-respect and self-confidence.

Domestic violence against women may be psychological, physical or sexual. Psychological violence is carried out with psychological weapons (threats, insults, humiliating treatment, denial of human existence) rather than physical attack. Physical violence includes all types of aggressive physical behaviour towards the woman's body . Sexual violence could include both passive or active violence. It will also include cases of perversion. Victimiser of domestic violence may be husband or his family members. Domestic Violence knows no age, socio-economic, religious, racial, gender or educational, barriers. It is a myth that only the poor or uneducated are victims of domestic abuse.

Most studies indicate that there is also a high incidence of spousal abuse in the more affluent neighborhoods. Although a poor victim has the terrible problem of not having resources available, the more affluent spouse may also be in an equally desperate trap due to social stigmas, greater economic pressures and the increased societal position and power that the partner may have at his or her disposal. Family and friends are indirect victims of abuse. The isolation and terror that victim lives with deprives those closest to him or her from meaningful and fulfilling relationships. The victim is frequently forbidden to see trusted friends and family and is denied the opportunity to go to school or work outside the home. There is little or no access to or control over finances, in the midst of this terrible isolation, the abuser employs "brainwashing" tactics, and with no input to the contrary from anyone outside the relationship, there will be no way for the victim to test reality.

EFFECT OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE ON THE SOCIETY

All the different forms of violence discussed in this essay adversely affect the society. Violence against women may keep them locked in homes succumbing to the torture they face. If they come out in open and reveal the wrong done to them for help and rescue, it influences the society both positively and negatively. At one hand where it acts as an inspiration and ray of hope for other suffering women, on the other hand it also spoils the

atmosphere of the society. When something of this kind happens in the society, few families may witness the evil of domestic violence

knocking their door steps. Some families try to imitate what others indulge in irrespective of it being good or bad for the family.

EFFECTS ON THE PRODUCTIVITY

As mentioned earlier, domestic violence affects the productivity level of the victim negatively. Men and women lose interest in household activities. If they are employed they fail to work with full capabilities in workplace. Children are found to concentrate less on studies. They drop out of school and do not get the education which otherwise they might have got if they were not tormented and thus the country loses a productive asset. Therefore, the nation's productivity altogether gets affected because of domestic violence in homes.

SUGGESTIONS

The recommendations highlighting the roles/services of various sections for reducing the occurrence and prevalence of domestic violence are scripted below under the major heads: Judiciary, Government, Police, NGOs, Health care support, Counselling, Awareness Generation and Sensitization etc.

JUDICIARY

- Strict enforcement of the laws regarding Drug addiction should be made for reducing the occurrence of domestic violence.
- Measures should be taken to deal severely with the Alcoholics who perpetuate domestic violence.
- Special courts must be set up for cases of violence against women and children with upto- date technological support like video graphing of statements of rape and child abuse victims.
- Domestic Violence cases should be taken up promptly and completed without delay avoiding unnecessary imposition of strains and stress on them.

GOVERNMENT

- Efforts should be made for the proper and effective enforcement of existing laws related to women.
- Government Agencies/department should made use of the assistance of NGOs to create awareness on Domestic violence among the public.
- All police stations should be equipped with special legal aid cells to provide assistance to victims of domestic violence.

POLICE

- Police need to be sensitized to treat domestic violence cases as seriously as any other crime.

- Special training to handle domestic violence cases should be imparted to police force.
- They should be provided with information regarding support network of judiciary, Govt. agencies/departments, and NGOs handling domestic violence, to make their work more effective and efficient.
- There should be a separate wing of police dealing with women's issues, attached to all police stations and should be excluded from any other duty.
- Women police officials should handle all crimes against women

NGOs

- NGOs working in different fields should be made proactive to the issues of Domestic Violence so that prompt assistance could be rendered to the victims.
- Non- Governmental agencies and private institutions need to be a part of any initiative that seeks to address the issue of Domestic Violence.
- Information regarding all agencies dealing with domestic violence should be made available to all health care institutions for their reference resulting in the provision of services as and when required.
- Facilities like short stay homes for women in distress should be provided and emphasis should be laid on vocational training to rehabilitate them.
- Children of affected women should be given special care and attention to enhance their education and social functioning

HEALTH CARE SUPPORT

- Authorities should take steps to recognize Domestic Violence as a public health issue.
- Special Care should be provided to women seeking medical help following an episode of violence.
- Gender based violence; its impact on health and care of abused women should be integrated into the medical and nursing curriculum.

COUNSELLING

- More counselling centres with professionally qualified counsellors should be started at the rural/urban areas focusing more on domestic violence victims.
- Vulnerable communities should be identified and services like counselling, legal aid etc. should be made easily accessible and free of charge.
- Mobile counselling should be introduced as an effective strategy to provide consolation to the victims of domestic violence.

AWARENESS GENERATION AND SENSITIZATION

- Gender sensitization and awareness generation programmes on domestic violence should become a part of the school and university curriculum.
- This would help to bring about a change in the mind-set of the coming generations.
- List of NGOs and other governmental organisations dealing with women's issues should be made known to the public.

MEDIA

- Media should bring women issues to public domain in a forceful manner. They can play an important role in spreading awareness. They can provide a platform to speakers and panelists from different fields, eminent personalities responsible for decision-making to share their views and conduct an in-depth study on various gender issues, and view it holistically touching various aspects of the problem. Views of some of the victims of atrocities should also be taken to understand their unpleasant experiences and the manner in which they came over the agonies they suffered because of inhuman acts.

AT FAMILY'S LEVEL

- Family is the first and foremost institution, where children learn first lesson of humanity and social relationships. Family is the best place to inculcate positive values – like honesty, simplicity, modesty, sense of responsibility and respect for elders – amongst children and youth of both the sexes.
- Childhood is the most formative, educative and impressionable time in a human's life and most appropriate time for inculcation of such values, as it remains permanently and firmly embedded in their delicate psyche throughout their life.
- Training for gender sensitization should be imparted within the family. Right from the beginning, all the children should be treated equally, without any gender-bias.

ON WOMEN PART

- Instead of silently bearing all the atrocities perpetrated against them, women should raise their voice against injustice; create awareness amongst women about their rights and channelize their efforts by writing articles, organizing seminars, workshops etc.
- Irrespective of their social status in society, they should join hands, and work in a spirit of unity. They should raise their voice boldly against social evils like dowry, bride-burning, female infanticide, etc.
- Women should exercise utmost vigilance both at the mental and physical level to ensure their safety and security, so that no one could exploit them when placed under adverse circumstances in life. They must always be prepared for self-defense by getting training in Karate etc.

CONCLUSION

Having looked at a sensitive topic of “Domestic Violence in India”, we can sense the importance of discussion of such a topic. The varying causes which can spark the violence within the four walls of homes need to be analyzed carefully and a wise study of the factors causing the violence may prevent a family to suffer from the menace of domestic violence. The domestic violence may have a far wider and deeper impact in real life than what has been covered in this essay. What is required is to see closely the association of the factors provoking a particular form of domestic violence. If these factors can be controlled then more than one form of violence can be prevented from harming an individual or our society and India would be a much better place to live in.

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