

Domestic Violence: A Social Evil

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'Domestic Violence' is the most burning issue of today's world. There for an attempt has been made in this paper to highlight this burning issue and a gentle endeavor to awaken our inner sense to remove this social devil from our society. We ever see that the social crimes like wife-beating and sexual-harassment are highly increasing day by day. We all are talking about 'Domestic Violence', but we never try to go in deep to understand it properly. I have tried my level best to elaborate the particular topic.

"Bride tortured to death for dowry", "School going kid succumbs to his injuries after beaten by father", "A seventy year old man killed over property dispute", "A girl was brutally raped by a gang", "Harassment of men in Chandigarh..."

All these and what not, turn to any newspaper randomly and you would find the reports of such kind of violence all over the country. These are all what we come to know through different forms of media. In our society, violence is bursting. It is present almost everywhere and nowhere is this eruption more intense than right behind the doors of our homes. Behind closed doors of homes all across our country, people are being tortured, beaten and killed. It is happening in rural areas, towns, cities and in metropolitans as well. It is crossing all social classes, genders, racial lines and age groups. It is becoming a tradition being passed on from one generation to another. The term used to describe this exploding problem of violence within our homes is Domestic Violence. This violence is towards someone who we are in a relationship with, be it a wife, husband, son, daughter, mother, father, grandparent or any other family member. It can be a male's or a female's atrocities towards another male or a female. Anyone can be a victim and a victimizer. This violence has a tendency to explode in various forms such as physical, sexual or emotional. Since times immemorial, domestic violence has been an essential part of the society we are living in. The contributing factors could be the desire to gain control over another family member, the desire to exploit someone for personal benefits, the passion to be in a commanding position all the time showcasing one's supremacy so on and so forth. On various occasions, psychological problems and social influences also add to the violence. Yet there are various types of Domestic Violence such as... 'Domestic Violence against women', 'Domestic Violence against men', 'Domestic Violence against children/teens', 'Domestic Violence against olds', etc. But, I mainly focus on 'Domestic Violence against women' in my research paper.

Domestic Violence Against Women:

Domestic violence that is any act of physical, sexual, or psychological mistreatment, or the threat of such mistreatment, imposed against a woman by a person intimately connected to her through marriage, family relation, or acquaintanceship is universal and has its root in the socio-cultural set up of the society. In ancient India, we find many times women's rights and

dignity are honoured. In the *Shri Brihadaranyakopanishat* – ‘Gargi is honoured as the spiritually advanced woman.’¹ Even Manu, the first lawgiver of Hindus has insisted to honour the women:

“Women must be honoured and adorned by their fathers, brothers, husbands, and brothers-in-law, desire (their own) welfare.”²

“Where women are honoured, there the gods are pleased; but where they are not honoured, no sacred rite yields rewards.”³

It means where women are praised, there is always happiness. But today unfortunately women are being seduced or beaten instead of praised. It is all due to Domestic Violence against women.

Looking at the domestic front, starting from Vedic age to twenty first century, women in India perhaps have never experienced equal rights and freedom compared to their male counterparts. The concept of ‘*Ardhangini*’ [half of the body] seems to be restricted only in literatures and have never implemented in practical life. In addition to this, extracts from ‘*Ramcharitamanas*’ of Tulsidas like ‘*Dhol, Gauwnaar, Shudra, Pashu aur Nari; Sakal Tadan ka Adhikari*’ [drums, uncivilized illiterates, lower castes, animals and women are all fit to be beaten] besides other indicators like *Pardaha* system [hiding the face in veils], *Sati* system [self immersion of the lady in husband’s pyre] that are subject to women only; is a reflection of the history of women’s subordinate status. In short, it is always the women who have to be in the tight rope, subject to inequality and looked down as an inferior sex. Starting from childhood to the end of her life she has to be under the control of father or husband or son. The subordinate status of women combined with socio - cultural norms that are inclined towards patriarchy and masculinity can be considered as an important factor determining the domestic violence. This form of domestic violence is most common of all. One of the reasons for it being so prevalent is the orthodox and idiotic mindset of the society that women are physically and emotionally weaker than the males. Though women today have proved themselves in almost every field of life asserting that they are no less than men, the reports of violence against them are much larger in number than against men. The possible reasons are many and are expanded over the length and breadth of the country. According to United Nation Population Fund Report, around two-third of married Indian women are victims of domestic violence and as many as 70 per cent of married women in India between the age of 15 and 49 are victims of beating, rape or forced sex. In India, more than 55 percent of the women suffer from domestic violence, especially in the states of Bihar, U.P., M.P. and other northern states.

The most common causes for women pestering and beating include dissatisfaction with the dowry and exploiting women for more of it, arguing with the partner, refusing to have sex with him, neglecting children, going out of home without telling the partner, not cooking properly or on time, indulging in extra marital affairs, not looking after in-laws etc. In some cases infertility in females also leads to their assault by the family members. The greed for dowry, desire for a male child and alcoholism of the spouse are major factors of domestic violence against women in rural areas. There have been gruesome reports of young bride being burnt alive or subjected to continuous harassment for not bringing home the amount of demanded dowry. Women in India also admit to hitting or beating because of their suspicion about the husband’s sexual involvement with other women. The Tandoor Murder Case of Naina Sahni in New Delhi in the year 1995 is one such dreadful incident of a woman being killed and

then burnt in a Tandoor by his husband. This incidence was an outcome of suspicion of extra marital affairs of Naina Sahni which led to marital discord and domestic violence against her.

We have another recent example of Domestic Violence in the case of Rahul Mahajan and Dimpy Ganguly. We all know *Old habits never die*. Rahul Mahajan, was married to Shweta Singh after knowing her for 13 years. Shweta stood as a pillar of support during those days when Rahul Mahajan lost his father and was facing a court case. They got engaged in July, 2006 and divorced on August 1, 2008. Reason is domestic violence and wife-beating. Rahul Mahajan then married Dimpy Ganguly in a reality show in March, 2010. On 29th July early in the morning at 4:00 a.m. Dimpy had to run away in a friend's car when she could not take any more violence from Rahul. The fight started from a trivial thing – a SMS in Dimpy's phone which Rahul could not open. A wife-beater and abuser by core, Rahul Mahajan is leading a signified life. Media is sensationalizing the story of Domestic Violence. But there is no one who comes forward to punish him. Even his wife and ex-wife are so involved about their own well being that they are not taking any measures to cage this demon.

In urban areas there are many more factors which lead to differences in the beginning and later take the shape of domestic violence. These include – more income of a working woman than her partner, her absence in the house till late night, abusing and neglecting in-laws, being more forward socially etc. Working women are quite often subjected to assaults and coercion sex by employees of the organization. At times, it could be voluntary for a better pay and designation in the office.

Violence against young widows has also been on a rise in India. Most often they are cursed for their husband's death and are deprived of proper food and clothing. They are not allowed or encouraged for remarriage in most of the homes, especially in rural areas. There have been cases of molestation and rape attempts of women by other family members in nuclear families or someone in the neighbourhood. At times, women are even sexually pressurized by their partner themselves against their will. They are brutally beaten and tortured for not conceiving a male child. Incidents like, ripping off a woman's womb for killing the female foetus when she disagrees for abortion have also come to light especially in rural areas. Female foeticide and female infanticide continue to be a rising concern. Also as expressed by Rebecca J. Burns in the following lines,

“When I am asked why a woman doesn't leave abuser I say: Women stay because the fear of leaving is greater than the fear of staying. They will leave when the fear of staying is greater than the fear of leaving.”⁴

A common Indian house wife has a tendency to bear the harassment she is subjected to by her husband and the family. One reason could be to prevent the children from undergoing the hardships if she separates from the spouse. Also the traditional and orthodox mindset makes them bear the sufferings without any protest. Other forms of physical abuse against women include slapping, punching, grabbing, burdening them with drudgery, public humiliation and the neglect of their health problems. Some of the other forms of psychological torment against them could be restriction of their rights to self-expression and curbing the freedom to associate with the natal friends and family.

Consequences of Violence:

Battered women have tendency to remain quiet, agonized and emotionally disturbed after the occurrence of the torment. A psychological set back and trauma because of domestic violence affects women's productivity in all forms of life. The suicide case of such victimized women is also a deadly consequence and the number of such cases is increasing. A working Indian woman may drop out from work place because of the illtreatment at home or office, she may lose her efficiency in work. Her health may deteriorate if she is not well physically and mentally. Some women leave their home immediately after first few dreadful attacks and try to become self-dependent. Their survival becomes difficult and painful when they have to work hard for earning two meals a day. Many such women come under rescue of women welfare organizations like Women Welfare Association of India (WWAI), Affus Woman Welfare Association (AWWA) and Woman's Emancipation and Development Trust (WEDT).

Negative Impact of Violence on Children:

One of the severe effects of domestic violence against women is its effect on her children. It is nature's phenomenon that a child generally has a greater attachment towards the mother for she is the one who gives birth. As long as the violence subjected to the mother is hidden from the child, he/she may behave normally at home. The day when mother's grief and suffering is revealed, a child may become upset about the happening deeply. Children may not even comprehend the severity of the problem. They may turn silent, reserved and express solace to the mother. When the violence against women is openly done in front of them since their childhood, it may have a deeper and gruesome impact in their mindset such as:

- (1) Children can themselves get physically abused or hurt.
- (2) Witnessing violence actions can be mentally damaging.
- (3) Children often try to intervene to protect the adult victim, which puts them in a dangerous situation.
- (4) Children can copy the violent behavior they witness, both as children and as adults.
- (5) They may develop stress-related problems in health.
- (6) They can lose self-confidence, be afraid/angry, and blame themselves for what is happening or feel guilty.

It's common especially in rural homes in India which are victimized by the evil of domestic violence. In cases of Intimate Partner Violence (IPV), violence against women leads them to maintain a distance from their partner. Their sexual life is affected adversely. Many of them file for divorce and seek separation which again affects the life of children. Some continue to be exploited in lack of proper awareness of human rights and laws of the constitution.

Fight against 'Domestic Violence', the Evil:

A recent study has concluded that violence against women is the fastest-growing crime in India. According to a latest report prepared by India's National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), a crime has been recorded against women in every three minutes in India. Every 60 minutes, two women are raped in this country. Every six hours, a young married woman is found beaten to

death, burnt or driven to suicide. The response to the phenomenon of domestic violence is a typical combination of effort between law enforcement agencies, social service agencies, the courts and corrections/probation agencies. The role of all these has progressed over last few decades, and brought their activities in public view. Domestic violence is now being viewed as a public health problem of epidemic proportion all over the world – and many public, private and government agencies are seen making every possible effort to control it in India. There are several organizations all over the world – government and non government – actively working to fight the problems generated by domestic violence to the human community.

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 hazard of domestic violence. The domestic violence may have a far wider and deeper impact in real life than what has been covered in this paper. 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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