

VIOLENT MENTALITY AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN INDIA: CAUSES AND PREVENTIVE MEASURES

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ABSTRACT

Humans possess the great capacity for love and altruism. However, they engage in violent behaviour also. Violence has persisted throughout time for evolutionary reasons which help in survival but, when it leads to aggressive acts, it becomes a serious matter of concern. There exists a violent mind behind violent behaviour. Violence is supposed to be the result of feelings of frustration combined with negative cognitive processes. Nowadays, violence is being observed worldwide. Mainly women are the main victim of violence. Violence is thought to be embedded in the mentality of the so called patriarchal society, where gender disparities and bias exist since the inception of mankind. Violence against women is witnessed, irrespective of culture, caste, class, education, ethnicity, income and age. Women constitute half of the world population, and, if they face violence then their growth gets hampered. This leads to the hampered growth of any nation also. The epidemic of violence in India is closely related to both familial and social conditions. Any violent act that is committed against woman by a man is referred to as violence against woman. It has many forms, as physical abuse, sexual assault, rape, murder, acid attack, dowry killing, forced prostitution of young girls, domestic abuse. In India, the incidence of domestic violence is higher which takes the form of physical, sexual, psychological, emotional and financial abuse. Threat and control, are two key aspects of such violence. Domestic violence manifests as physical harm, coercion, humiliation, degradation and lack of resources as food and money. Due to domestic violence, a woman may feel overall discomfort, fatigue, loneliness, depression and fear. Sometime she may develop a pleasure-seeking personality. Women suffer silently and become an easy prey to male domination which is supported by prevalent patriarchy. Domestic violence is supposed to be deep rooted in Indian society, both at urban and rural levels. Mostly, Indian women are unaware of their rights and freedom as an individual. Violence impedes their growth and expression, making their life equivalent to hell. It is a matter of serious concern for all human beings.

Key words: Patriarchy, Domestic, Violence, Abuse, Sexual, Assault, Prostitution, Cognitive

Violence refers to any physical force for, or any damage or injury to person or property. Oxford dictionary defines, *"violence as behavior involving physical force intended to hurt, damage or kill someone or something."* WHO (2002) defines violence, *"the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, which either results in, or has a high likelihood of resulting in, injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment, or deprivation."* Thus, the use of force to hurt, damage, abuse or kill, can be termed as violence. Violence is usually the product of primal, unconscious rage. Child's early experiences, parental traits and child rearing practices can provide insight into how the traumas of childhood and the resultant shames are internalized in the form of hostile thoughts and attitudes toward others, which can later culminate in acts of violence. Thus, violence can be conceptualized as a reactivation or acting out of the internalized aggression. Dissociation and impaired brain functioning that occur under stressful circumstances, as, witnessing violence and, or being a victim of physical child abuse, predispose aggression and violent acting-out behaviour in adolescents and adults. Hence, the violent mentality can be understood by exposing the mind of the violent individual and identifying and verbalizing the destructive thought that drive the acts of violence. People who act out violent impulses, justify their actions as being rightfully deserved by their victims. *"Violence against women is a manifestation of historically unequal power relations between and women. which have led to domination over and discrimination against women by men and to the prevention of the full advancement of women..."* (UNICEF, 2000). A global review of available data, 2013, shows that 35% of women worldwide, have experienced either physical and, or, sexual intimate partner violence or non-partner sexual violence. However, some national violence studies show that upto 70% of women have experienced physical and, or, sexual violence in their lifetime from an intimate partner (Narwadkar, et.al., 2014). Violence against women, in India, is deeply rooted in the strengthened system of sexism and patriarchy that permeate Indian culture. Gender disparity and bias are observed since childhood, in getting access to education and good diet. In India, girls are informed more about the inequalities they would face in life whereas, boys are not taught about gender equality and paying respect to the opposite gender. As young girls become adolescents and adults, they experience the inequalities about their gender in family and society. Thus, gender inequality contributes to the prevalence of violence against women. Married women, in India, perceive violence as a routine aspect of their married lives. Women

subjected to gender based violence often face victim-shaming. Social and cultural beliefs exert immense pressure on them and thus many cases of violence remain unreported. Gradually, in such scenario, men develop a violent mentality towards women, thinking them to be a second-grade person. Since childhood, young boys observe gender inequality everywhere, so on becoming adults they develop a dominating attitude towards women. They use threat and fear towards controlling them. In India, violence against women can be witnessed in the form of domestic abuse, sexual assault, murder, in the form of dowry death and honor killing, female infanticide, rape, molestation, human trafficking, forced prostitution, acid attack and perpetuation of violent thoughts and behaviour. Thus, in Indian society, vulnerability of women towards violence is a common phenomenon. If gender-based violence is reported by a woman, access to adequate support is not guaranteed by family and society. So, violence against women, form a vicious circle which seems difficult to break. Statistical data show an increase in crime against women by 15.3% in 2021 as compared to 2020 (NCRB, India, 2021) NCRB reported in 2011, crime against women to be 228,650 whereas it increased to 428,278 in 2021. A survey revealed that 65% of Indian men believe women should tolerate violence in order to keep the family together and, women sometimes deserve to be beaten.

Domestic violence is the most prevalent form of violence in Indian society. It is seen as the major social and psychological problem at the present time. Domestic violence poses challenge to the very existence of humanity in general and, female population in particular. Psychological abuses, physical assaults or tortures and verbal assaults are the different forms of domestic violence, seen in India. Since domestic violence is considered to be a very personal or familial issue, so most of the times, it remain ignored or unnoticed. Thus, silently and rapidly it has become an epidemic in Indian society, ranging from physical assaults, psychological, sexual, spiritual and economic abuses to female infanticides dowry deaths, and honor killings.

Domestic violence is defined as, *"One intimate partner's attempt to control, dominate and humiliate the other partner through a variety of means, i.e., physical, sexual, psychological, spiritual and economic abuses."* (Jaffe et. al, 2003)

Domestic violence is violent victimization of women within the boundaries of family, usually by men. It is a major, social and complicated issue, deep rooted in societal standards,

economic concerns and gender based power relations. In order to understand the nature and gravity of domestic violence in India, it needs to be referred to contextual and cultural variations. In every patriarchal culture, domestic violence appears to be a common behavior for men. Men who batter or assault women, have stereotypical beliefs about male and female roles. Because of such over identification, they feel that they have the right to control anyone with less power or status, especially women. When a man hits a woman he has not lost control of himself, rather he achieves and maintains control over his partner. Not only does he achieve and maintain control, rather, he reminds the woman of her subordinate status in the family. Battering may be done intentionally to inflict suffering or battering may be done simply to establish control in a conversation, without intending harm. Regardless of the intent, violence has the same impact on the victim and on the relationship. It establishes a system of coercive control. (Ganley 1989). Men who batter, not only believe that they have the right to commit violence but receive a reward for behaving in this manner by means of obedience from their partners. Battering exists because the man 'wins' disputes and that the status quo in the relationship is maintained. Moreover, it has been observed that the victim responds to domestic violence by changing something about herself in an effort to accommodate the perpetrator. Frequently this involves, restricting her choice, ending relationships with family or friends or even quitting the job. Meanwhile, the victim attempts to soothe and please the controlling man, complying with his demands, agreeing with his opinions and criticizing his enemies. She accepts blames for things that are not her fault, suppresses her anger for fear of igniting his. Jones & Schecter (1992) are of the view that, *"when a woman tries to keep a partner calm by pleasing him, he gain exactly what he wants. He exercises his power over her and gets his way on a daily basis. It is ironic that she thinks she is 'managing best' when in fact she is most under his control."*

A survey indicated that substantially 86% of Indian women who experiences domestic violence, choose not to disclose their ordeal, refraining from sharing it with friends or family members. This silence is intricately tied to the victims' internalization of social norms, leading them to believe that they are inadequate for their roles and consequently deserve the inflicted punishment. A survey indicated that in Southern States of India – Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Telangana, 85% of wives expressed agreement that their husbands are justified in resorting to physical violence. Domestic violence as found to be acceptable among women may be due to different social and cultural reasons. Moreover,

male dominance and projecting women, as the property of males, brings down the status of females. They see them as an ideal 'role model' and have high expectations from them, thus, making them vulnerable and subject to discrimination and all sorts of victimization of violence and subordination.

Domestic violence takes the form of not only physical and sexual abuse, but also, emotional and psychological abuse which is gaining recognition in recent years. Threats, verbal abuse, degradation and blaming stalking and isolation, are all related to emotional and psychological abuse. Such abuse can erode a woman's sense of self-worth and can be incredibly harmful to overall mental and physical well-being. Domestic violence leads to emotional distress in women which can create suicidal thoughts. Studies show that, in India, suicidal attempts are correlated with physical and psychological intimate partner violence. In a study, education and urban living was found to reduce the risk of domestic violence whereas alcohol intake increased the risk of physical and sexual abuse (Kimuna et. al, 2013). Higher socio-economic status was found to reduce the risk of domestic violence (Koenig 2006). A study by Babu, et. al., (2009) found that the overall prevalence of physical, psychological, sexual and any other form of violence among women of Eastern India were 16%, 52%, 25% and 56% respectively. Husbands were mostly responsible for violence in majority of cases and some women reported the involvement of husband's parents. Some serious physical health consequences of domestic violence are bone, tendon and ligament injuries, chronic headaches, undiagnosed hearing problems, vision concentration problem and stress related problems. Abuse during pregnancy may lead to premature child birth, infections and miscarriages. Depression and post-traumatic stress disorder, are serious mental health consequence that occur. Moreover, feelings of anger and helplessness, self- blame, anxiety, phobias, panic disorders, memory loss and nervous breakdown are other mental health consequences, observed. Domestic violence can also give use to unhealthy behavior, as, smoking, alcohol and drug abuse, sexual risk taking and physical inactivity. Domestic violence can also keep victims from looking for work or leaving the house, resulting in financial and social isolation. Children who witness domestic violence are at risk of developing anxiety, depression and behavioral problems. As they get older, they could become more prone to act violently.

Causes of Domestic Violence

The patriarchal character of Indian society is one of the main reason for domestic violence. In Indian culture, it is common for women to be considered less valuable than men. As a result, men believe that they have the right to control their relationships and will resort to violence to maintain that power. Women frequently internalize these attitudes and think they deserve to be mistreated.

There is no one single factor to account for violence perpetrated against women. Several interconnected social and cultural factors have kept women particularly vulnerable to the violence directed at them, all of them manifestations of historically unequal power relation between men and women. Numerous socioeconomic forces, family, where power relations are enforced, fear of and control over female sexuality, belief in the inherent superiority of males are the factors contributing to unequal power relations between men and women. Moreover, legislation and cultural sanctions that traditionally deny women an independent legal and social status is an important factor for domestic violence. Poverty is a crucial element that fuels domestic violence. Since women from low-income households are frequently dependent on their partners, they are more likely to experience domestic abuse. A study conducted in Uttar Pradesh among men reported, low educational level and poverty as important causes of domestic violence (Gerstein, 2000) Murthy et al (2004) noted that number of family members, type of marriage and husband's education, are significant causes of domestic violence. Men raised in patriarchal family structure that encourages traditional gender roles are more likely to abuse their intimate partners (Fagot, et. al., 1998; Malamuth et.al., 1995). Many researchers found that alcoholism promotes men to commit domestic violence (Leonard, 1992; Mckenry, et. al., 1995, Rao, 1997; Bhatt, 1998). Dowry and extramarital affairs also lead to domestic violence.

Preventive Measures

Domestic violence is a sensitive issue and it needs a sensible approach to be prevented and solved. Woman of any age, child or aged, all are vulnerable to domestic violence. The reason behind why women become vulnerable needs to be understood deeply. Attitudinal change is needed among the society. The patriarchal structure of a male dominated society needs a change in the attitudes between men and women to overcome the victimization of

violence. Promoting gender equality and contesting patriarchal notions, is one of the most critical steps to prevent domestic violence. Media can play a positive role in promoting favourable attitudes towards women. Educational projects can be utilized to teach kids about gender equality and healthy relationships. Enhancing women's access to education and employment prospects, can help prevent domestic violence. Financially independent women are less likely to experience domestic violence. Microfinance programs and vocational training can help women to become financially independent and reduce their risk of facing domestic violence. Providing support for victims of domestic violence is also essential. Access to counseling, legal aid and safe. shelters for women who need to escape an abusive relationship are important steps to be taken in this direction. Raising awareness about the issue is also crucial and encouraging victims to speak out about their experience is also vital.

The most effective way to stop domestic violence is to hold the abuser accountable. The way to accomplish this is a co-ordinated, comprehensive community response that relies on a consistent response from all institutions of the community. In its review of developments in the law in response to domestic violence, the *Harvard Law Review* describes a coordinated community response to controlling assailants through. "*stringently enforced protection orders and vigorous prosecution, combined with community education*". ("Development in the Law", 1993). In counseling sessions, the aversive consequences of domestic violence must be highlighted, especially arrest, accompanied by court- mandated counselling and sometimes lose of job, separation from family or time in jail. Ganley (1981) is of the view, "*Court-mandated treatment is necessary for many who batter. Due to their personality characteristics of denial, minimization, externalization and impulsivity, many better will either avoid or fail to complete voluntary treatment programs.*" Court-mandated treatment imposes a degree of accountability that allows for monitoring the batterer's commitment to change, support for his efforts to change and provides consequences if he does not change.

In India, the Protection of women from Domestic violence Act was enacted in 2005, to provide victims with legal protections. At present, where a woman is subjected to cruelty by her husband or his relatives, it is a crime under Section 498A of the Indian Penal Code, 1860. As a result of that, a law is proposed keeping in view the rights guaranteed under Articles 14, 15 and 21 of the Constitution to grant for a remedy under the civil law which is intended to protect women from being sufferers of domestic violence and to prevent the

incidence of domestic violence in the society (The Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005) The Act provides appointment of Protection Officers and NGOs to provide help to the woman with respect to medical check-up, legal-aid, safe asylum etc. The Act is landmark legislation in Indian history but, the Act is sometimes being misused by wives to unnecessary harass their husbands and relatives. This needs to be checked. Internalization of Legal Norms with public consensus, domestic violence in India is yet held to be 'interfamilial affair' and disallow any intervention. The real effective implementation of any legislation has to undergo a security of strong public consensus and acceptance in domestic processes. The strong legal mandate prescribed for officers and stake holders, the officers and institution is responsible for the more effective implementation of Act.

It is needed to wipe out the gender discrimination, traditional relation of patriarchal society and male dominance. Gender perspective training should be made mandatory by the law and is crucial for changing the typical mind set of patriarchal society. Police, service providers, medical practitioners, protection officers, magistrates, all should be trained in gender equality. Counseling should be provided by experts at the pre litigation stage. Counselling is also required for the aggrieved person to restore self-esteem and provide emotional support.

Conclusion

In India, domestic violence seems to be a part and parcel of women's lives. Poverty, alcoholism, illiteracy, dowry, extramarital affairs are the major causes of domestic violence. The patriarchal Indian society and its inheritance from one generation to the next, makes domestic violence, a deep rooted problem in our culture. The society seems habitual of torturing women in the family and society. Due to gender based inequalities, women are not aware of their rights. They silently face discrimination and injustice. Women's right are human rights. Their experiences go unnoticed and unheard in both, family and society. No nation can develop if the rights of women are ignored, since women constitute 50% of the world's population. The awareness camps can ensure the awareness of women's rights. For this, panchayats and local police should work in collaboration. Primary health care system must collaborate with education, judicial care and social support, to give proper assistance to the victims of domestic violence. Only laws can't help in preventing domestic violence but,

the change of mindset towards women is much required. Domestic violence is primarily a social-cultural problem and it has long term effects on family life, women's health and children's lives also. Domestic violence goes beyond the boundaries of race, caste, class and religion and, thus, it is a problem faced worldwide. Woman is the foundation of family and society who gives birth, nurtures, shapes, and strengthens life on this earth. She is the protector and transmitter of our culture from one generation to the next. By nurturing a child, she nurtures the nation also. Domestic violence is a serious injustice to her. There is an urgent need to address domestic violence in all forms to protect women, the pride of our country.

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