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Domestic Violence In India: Causes, Consequences And Remedies**Dr. Kaneez Fatima**

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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 legacy 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 intrinsic 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 flare 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 influence also add to the vehemence. The present essay deals with the various forms of domestic violence prevalent in India. Their causes of occurrence in households have been analyzed categorically. The variation in the intensity of the forms with change in the geographical location and culture has also been addressed. The after effects of different kinds of domestic violence and the possible remedies have been highlighted. Finally, a conclusion has been drawn after the complete analysis of the topic with the juxtaposition of facts and figures at hand.

Different Forms of Domestic Violence in India and their Causes**Domestic Violence Against Women**

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 affirming 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 diversified 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 stalking and battering 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.

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 coerced 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.

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 curtailment of their rights to self-expression and curbing the freedom to associate with the natal family and friends.

Domestic Violence Against Men

There is no question that domestic violence directed against women is a serious and bigger problem, but domestic violence against men is also increasing gradually in India. The supremacy of men in the society makes one believe that they are not vulnerable to domestic violence. Battering of men by their spouse and family members has become a concerned issue and is another form of domestic violence under purview of judiciary. In India, compared to violence against women, violence against men is less frequent but it has already taken a deadly shape in many of the western countries by now.

Males have reported incidences of assault against them like pushing, shoving, slapping, grabbing, hitting which are intended to harm them and also take their lives on many occasions. Recently, hundreds of husbands gathered in Chandigarh and Shimla to voice their opinion for men's rights and protection against domestic violence subjected to them by their wives and other family members. It reflects the need for a special law for curbing domestic violence against men in present times.

If we contemplate over the reasons behind this form of domestic violence we would find some of the possible causes such as not abiding by the instructions of the wives', inadequate earning of men, infidelity towards wives, not helping the partner in household activities, not taking a proper care of children, abusing the spouse's family, infertility of men, spying the activities of partner, doubting the partner all the time and not trusting her, revolt by the wife when asked to look after in-laws etc. On many occasions, the spat between men and women becomes public thereby influencing the society around especially in the villages. In urban areas such forms of violence may go unreported because of greater privacy. Also the families find their reputation at stake in urban areas.

Domestic Violence Against Children/Teens

Children and teenagers in our society are not spared from the evil of domestic violence. In fact, this form of violence is second in terms of number of reported cases after the 'violence against women'. There is a lot of variation in the form of its occurrence in urban and rural areas and in upper/middle class and lower class families in India. In urban regions, it is more private and concealed within the four walls of homes. The possible reasons could be disobeying parental advises and orders, poor performance in academics or not being at par with other children in neighbourhood, debating with parents and other family members etc. In addition to this, factors like not being socially intelligent or as active as the parents expect them to be, abusing the parents or speaking ill about other family members, not returning home on time are some other factors.

In rural areas the reasons could be harassment for child labour, physical abuse or harm for not following family traditions, forcing them to stay at home and not allowing them to go to school etc. Domestic violence against girls is in fact, more severe at homes. As the common mob mentality of India prefers to have at least one male child after marriage, the girls in most of the occasions are cursed and assaulted for having taken birth in the home. This kind abuse is prevalent both in cities and villages but is more common in latter case. Then there are cases of paedophilia causing sexual harassment of children in homes by family member themselves. In fact, the number of rape cases of pre-matured girls has been rising since last few years. A survey of teens and college students found that rape accounted for 67 percent of sexual assaults in girls. Apart from sexual abuse and rape, pushing, slapping, punching, stalking and emotional abuse are other forms of domestic violence against children.

Adding to the above mentioned causes, there are also instances of abuse against children who are physically and/or mentally challenged. Instead of providing them proper health care and treating them politely, these children are beaten and harassed for not cooperating and attending to what family members ask them to do. They are even emotionally abused by cursing them having been in such retarded or handicapped state. In fact in poor families, there have been reports of selling body organs of the retarded children for getting money in return. It reflects the height of cruelty and violence against innocent children.

To some extent media is also responsible for contributing to all the above forms of violence. The exaggerated news coverage of reports of domestic violence, the daily soaps screening the torture of a daughter-in-law at the hands of family members, the films portraying an element of violence against people of all age groups etc. are some of the menaces which media is causing. It is influencing the mindset of the viewers strongly. The problem arises when instead of taking a lesson from those news clippings, films, and television shows, people start enacting the same in their homes. Comparatively, the visual media is far more influencing than the print and electronic media in these cases. Illiteracy and mob mentality of majority of Indians misguides them in all these cases.

Consequences of Domestic Violence

There are varied consequences of domestic violence depending on the victim, the age group, the intensity of the violence and frequency of the torment they are subjected to. Living under a constant fear, threat and humiliation are some of the feelings developed in the minds of the victims as a consequence of an atrocious violence. The consequences of the domestic violence in detail can be broadly categorised under – the Effect on the victim himself/herself and the family, Effect on the society and the Effect on nation's growth and productivity. The 'Effect on the victim' has been further subcategorized for women, men, children and olds.

Effect on the victim and the family

Consequences of Violence Against Women

Battered women have tendency to remain quiet, agonised 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 victimised 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 ill-treatment 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 atrocious 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). Some of them who leave their homes are forcefully involved in women trafficking and pornography. This results in acquiring a higher risk of becoming a drug addict and suffering from HIV/AIDS. Some of course do it by their choice.

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. They get used to such happenings at home, and have a tendency to reciprocate the same in their lives. It's common in especially in rural homes in India which are victimised by the evil of domestic violence.

Consequences of Violence Against Men

The consequences against violence against men in India, is largely emotional and psychological in nature. The physical harassment resulting from domestic violence, also affects their lives and productivity but it is still more inclined towards the emotional problems which men face in India. It is largely because many such cases go unreported, as compared to cases of physical assault of women. An emotionally harassed and depressed man may lose interest in the occupation he is associated with. If he is the only bread-earning person in the family, the family may find it difficult to survive. There has been a spate of farmers' suicide in recent years in Karnataka. Several farmers have committed suicide not only because of indebtedness but also because of discord in family and depression resulting out of it. According to statistics of Save India Family Foundation (an NGO), around 1.2 lac harassed husbands have committed suicide in the country in the last four years.

Consequences of Violence Against Children/Teens The consequences in case of children are far more drastic and its effect is long lived. Children are sensitive to issues related to violence of any kind as they are not mature enough to comprehend them. In their growing years they try to imitate things which they see happening around them. In the process of following their parent's advice or instructions they become firm in their opinion and approach towards life. Now if the approach of parents itself is negative, children are bound to get influenced by it. They may adopt the negative traits of the ill they see around them or develop a hostile approach in life because of the ill-treatment they are subjected to. If a child is beaten badly for under performing in school, he may do the same to his children, thinking it might be the only possible way of making a person to work hard.

Whenever a child is dropped out of school because of poor financial condition or when he is engaged in some form of child labour, there is a sudden leap which the child tries to take from his childhood to the manhood. In this process he misses out the values and morals a person should inculcate in him as a good human being. He fails to develop a vision to see things from an unbiased point of view. All these factors make a child insensitive towards the society and the societal needs. Every instance of child abuse causes a callous indifference to suffering.

However in the process of comprehending the wrong being done to them, many children are traumatised and psychologically disturbed. They find it unsustainable and may lose out their mental soundness. Children who are victimised by physical violence may become handicapped as well. In some cases children prefer to run away from home and try to become self dependent. Some commit suicide. Some indulge in malpractices because of improper education and bad company they become a part of after leaving the home. Some even reciprocate the violence they are subjected to by harming the family members.

Girls also develop a feeling of insecurity in their homes when they are sexually exploited. They lose their self-confidence and desire for living. A girl child from violent home can withdraw from society and become completely depressed. Children from violent homes become disobedient and violent — and start using aggression to solve their problems. Adolescents may succumb to drugs and alcohol when treated harshly. Some helpless and abandoned children are picked up gangs who sell their organs for making huge amount of money. In most of the cities, the group of beggars at traffic lights or railway platforms are the abandoned children who are physically deformed forcefully for begging. The children who escape being a part of this vicious circle are looked after by children welfare organizations like, Indian Child Welfare Association (ICWA), Child Relief and You (CRY) and ChildLine etc.

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.

Remedies for Domestic ViolenceWhat exactly do we want?

A very important question in wake of domestic violence remedies is that what exactly we are looking for in the process of minimising their occurrences. Is it so that we want to gather more information about such cases for just expressing our concern over this issue with more accuracy, having facts and figures at hand? Or instead of just raising our voices, we want to clean up the mess with sheer force and determination?

Fighting the 'Domestic Violence' 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 governmental agencies are seen making huge efforts 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.

Need for Stringent Laws

In 1983, domestic violence was recognised as a specific criminal offence by the introduction of section 498-A into the Indian Penal Code. This section deals with cruelty by a husband or his family towards a married woman. The main legislative measures at the national level for the children who become a victim of child labor include The Child Labor Prohibition and Regulation Act -1986 and The Factories Act -1948. The first act was categorical in prohibiting the employment of children below fourteen years of age, and identified 57 processes and 13 occupations which were considered dangerous to the health and lives of children. The factories act again prohibits the employment of children less than fourteen years of age.

The Government of India passed a Domestic Violence Bill, 2001, "To protect the rights of women who are victims of violence of any kind occurring within the family and to provide for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto." An act called Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005 [DVA, 2005] also has been passed". This Act ensures the reporting of

cases of domestic violence against women to a 'Protection Officer' who then prepares a Domestic Incident Report to the Magistrate "and forward copies thereof to the police officer in charge of the police station within the local limits of jurisdiction..."

Unfortunately, at present there is no single law in the Indian Constitution which can strictly deal with all the different forms of 'Domestic Violence' as discussed in this essay. There is an urgent need for such a law in the country. In fact, there has also been misuse of section 498-A and DVA, 2005 because of restricted definition of cruelty subjected to married women.

Police and Health Care

Police plays a major role in tackling the domestic violence cases. They 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, government agencies/departments. Gender training should be made mandatory in the trainings of the police officers. 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.

Authorities should take steps to recognize Domestic Violence as a public health issue. A crisis support cell needs to be established in all major Government and Private Hospitals with a trained medical social worker for provide appropriate services. Training programmes must be organized for health professionals in order to develop their skills to provide basic support for abused people. Documentation on the prevalence and the health consequences of domestic violence should be undertaken by the concerned government departments, health care institutions, NGOs and counselling centres. A nodal agency should also be set up for the annual consolidation of the documented work and publish the same for wider publicity among the masses for increasing awareness.

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 analysed 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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