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Domestic Violence: A Curse Against Women Empowerment In 21st Century

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Abstract

Domestic violence remains one of the most pressing challenges to women's empowerment in the 21st century. Despite legislative frameworks such as the *Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2006*, women continue to face abuse in physical, emotional, psychological, and economic forms. This paper examines domestic violence as both a social and cultural construct deeply rooted in patriarchal traditions, gender inequality, and economic dependence. It highlights how lack of education, financial insecurity, social stigma, and cultural taboos perpetuate silence and normalize violence within households. Drawing on secondary sources including books, reports, and scholarly articles, the study analyzes the causes, manifestations, and consequences of domestic abuse while emphasizing the need for awareness, education, and empowerment to break the cycle of victimization. The paper argues that eradicating domestic violence is essential not only for safeguarding women's dignity and rights but also for fostering healthier families and a progressive society. It advocates a multi-pronged approach involving legal interventions, social reforms, education, community participation, and the strengthening of support networks for victims.

Keywords: Domestic Violence, Women Empowerment, Patriarchy, Gender Inequality, Intimate Partner Violence, Marital Rape, Social Stigma

Introduction

We have observed that in the sector of women empowerment, domestic violence has always been a dominating problem that has stood up against women in the path of their progress. The biggest barrier for women is being dependent on their partner for everything from necessities to luxuries. Thus, even when they get mistreated, they are forced to ignore and bear with it. We

must try to stop violence on women. Necessary precautions should be taken to prioritize women's safety, at least in their own houses. Domestic violence in India has been a discouraging problem since ancient times in India. Women never spoke about this issue, than much later, which was addressed even later. It is very shameful, that we need to discuss about this issue in the 3rd decade of 21st century. Where many part of the world has made remarkable progress in all the other fields, women still suffer in the hands of their supposedly most trusted life partner. It is such a loss of our dignity that we are residing in a society that still views women as sex objects and baby producing machines. This gigantic issue was never taken in considerations it was about the women and more over spoken about, by the women. In 2006 an act of "Protection of Women from Domestic Violence" was passed. Unfortunately, even after so many eras we still live in a patriarchal society where neither women are taken seriously nor are their problems. All we are trying is just to establish a country that is safe for women and they can live worry free.

Objectives of the Study

The following objectives are considered for the study –

1. This paper is to spread awareness about domestic violence.
2. For the male partners to reconsider their behaviour towards their wives.
3. For the women to recognize their husband's wrong behavioural patterns.
4. For the men to learn to ask for permission before taking any action involving their better half.
5. To reduce domestic violence as much as possible.
6. To give women a better life with abundance of love, sympathy and understanding.
7. To provide for healthy lifestyle for the children.

Methodology and Data Sources

This paper is based on the secondary information collected from different books, articles, newspaper reports, websites, documentaries etc.

Meaning of Domestic Violence

Domestic Violence is any kind of violence that is caused by the very intimate partner. Thus, is also called Intimate Partner Violence. This takes place in those relationships where there is a misbalance of power and control and lack of love, sympathy and empathy for his partner. Violence can be of any kind and in any measure. It can consist of physical, emotional and economical abuse. Domestic abuse generally starts from calling names and then escalating to physical assault. Therefore, as soon as we realize that we are being mistreated in any way, we must take precautions against further abuse. Just as physical abuse brings limitations to our healthy life, in the similar way emotional abuse can lead us to anxiety and depression and many other mental illnesses.

Recognition of violence

Most of the time women fail to recognize the ill behaviour and intentions of their partners. Thus they cannot protest or try to stop them no matter how uncomfortable they feel.

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Therefore, it is very important to identify the inappropriate behaviour of the people with evil intentions. To recognize them, few observations are given below -

- Insulting by demeaning the other person or calling names.
- Restricting from education, work, or perusing their hobbies.
- Taking decisions on behalf of their better halves about their clothing.
- Not allowing them to meet their friends and family on their own.
- Body shaming and racism.
- Hurting with sharp objects.
- threatening to kill or hurt her and her close ones if she opens her mouth in the intention of complaining about him.
- These kinds of behaviours are a sign of abuse and violence that should not be tolerated.
- Inflicting burns on her body on refusing to do something of his wishes.
- Shouting or terrorizing their wives.
- Treating her in a rough or vulgar way after consuming alcohol.
- Forcing her to do house chores when she is physically ill.

Causes of Violence

Some of the victims accept all sorts of assaults to save their marriage. Keeping this in mind that if their marriage breaks and they part their ways then they will be shamed by society and everyone else. They have to bear the baggage of a broken marriage wherever they go. Not only that, they will not even be supported by their parents as their parents will also be shamed by their neighbours, in the name of not being able to bring up their child right.

The sufferer chooses to tolerate sufferings sometimes also for the sake of her family members. As they explain her to bear with it. They establish the fact that the male is superior and in power. They make her realize that being angry, fall under the natural characteristics of being the male partner. Also that, it is her duty to avoid mistakes and tasks that are not appreciated by her partner.

Some of them even choose to keep on suffering quietly, keeping it to themselves because they are not financially independent. The majority cases of domestic violence are witnessed in the interior villages. There, girls are not allowed to educate themselves. They do not even get to see the face of schools and other educational institutions, even though their brothers are allowed to pursue education. Due to lack of educational knowledge, they do not get any jobs and naturally depend on their in-laws for livelihood. Some in-laws even ask the working women to resign their jobs as a condition to get married. Some in-laws even provide for food and clothing to the wife's family. In any case, if she gets divorced or get thrown out of her in-law's house, then her family and she cannot carry on with their lives due to poverty.

In many states of India like Kerala, Haryana Gujarat, there is the stark prevalence of dowry marriage. After marriage the assailants keep on asking for more money. If they cannot

provide for the desired amount, the mistreatments begin, which can include everything from forcing, insulting to physical abuse.

In remote areas women even face critical situations when they are menstruating. They are not permitted to sleep on the same bed with their spouses or even to share the same room. They are not allowed to participate in any family gatherings or any other functions and festivities. They are kept completely secluded and deserted. They are not even given the same food as the rest of the family eats.

Even gender disparity is noticed in domestic violence. The number of females being victimized is much higher than the number of males being suffered. It has been found that the localities having low rate of gender inequality witness low rate of domestic violence. Likewise, localities having high rate of gender inequality experience higher rate of domestic crimes.

Marital rape is another abuse that is kept such a taboo, that most women do not even realize when they face it. Marital rape is the act of having sexual intercourse without the partner's consent. The abuser treats his wife as his property and believes that he can do whatever and whenever he feels like doing. He cannot understand or believe that his wife can have a say on things related to her or their marital life. The husband has no right to touch her body or create any kind of mental pressure on his wife without her being interested in the same. Even some women believe her husband has right over her own body. However, marital rape is a form of domestic and sexual abuse that the husband has no right to inflict.

Gas lighting is another frightening mental abuse that is very hard to recognize. It makes a person question his own sanity while provoking no doubt towards the person by who she is being gas lighted. Most of the time the woman questions her point of view in the situation when she is hurt. She tries to find out the wrong moves she has made to frustrate her husband or to displease him. She will never try to think that maybe it is her husband who is wrong to treat her in such a mean way, that she too just like any other human being deserves to be respected and shown consideration.

For most of the victims of domestic violence, their upbringing played a major role in their mental state and ideologies. When they were small they have witnessed their fathers to treat their mothers in rough way. They have seen their mothers to walk on egg shells around her fathers. They already had the knowledge in their sub conscious mind that they can also be treated like that and thus they never called for help or expected understanding from others.

Things that should be remembered when victimized:

- To try to stay near a door or any exit in case they need to flee.
- Ask their children to keep a safe distance from the attacker and call for help in case of emergency.
- Keep a small sharp object under-covered to be able to fear away the terrorizer.
- Remember themselves and make the children memorize the emergency numbers so that they can call whenever they feel the need.

- Try to keep proof of the abuse they are going through by clicking pictures of the harm incurred such as injuries. They can even try to take videos of the husband's misbehaviour. It becomes easy to prove their point with visual materials.
- Keep the neighbours informed about their helplessness, so that they can take necessary measures when they hear screams or sounds of things breaking.
- When the attacker approaches, instead of getting afraid and crying, they should try and change the topic of discussion or try to deviate the attacker's attention to something else. This time will be used to take defensive strategy.
- While getting beaten they should try to cover their eyes, ears and head as those are always at high risks of being damaged that can cost a life. They should also have a lookout towards the sharp corners of furniture or other things as those can hurt a great deal.

Precautions to be taken to stop domestic violence

Whenever they find out that their son is misbehaving with their daughter in-law they should do everything to stop him. They should not protect their son or support him just because he shares the same blood. They should remember that the girl who is suffering was sent by her parents not to tolerate such unacceptable behaviour but to lead a happy life. They should be strict with him and ask him to stop and if he is uncontrollable, they should take legal step.

People should raise their children right. They should know how to behave and pay respect to everyone in spite of gender and age and social status. They should treat others just the way they want to be treated. Now, girls especially should learn to identify the wrong behaviour they are expected to accept and cooperate with. And in turn should learn to say "NO".

There are hotlines and help lines available for helping out women in need of protection from domestic violence and abusive relationships. There are some psychologists who treat the male partners who dominate their wives, for free. Women should just come forward and stand up for themselves. They should not fear the lack of support and suspicious eyes. Even if their family does not stand by them, there will always be women who will come forward to support them. They should just start fighting the war, armies will follow.

There are a large no of NGOs and communities that work for women welfare. If there is ever the need of any kind of help, women can always contact them.

To ensure that the girls take education, no matter what barriers they have to cross. Parents should always keep in mind that to give their children a safe life is the most important thing they can do for their children's future. Husbands should encourage education or any kind of job their wives may want to do. They can also try to impart any vocation their wives may be interested in.

Children should learn the difference between different behaviours. If they witness any intolerable behaviours, they should try to stop it. They should not become the spitting image of their father, rather learn to stand up for women.

Conclusion

Domestic violence has a strong negative impact on women and their morals. They start thinking of themselves as incompatible and insufficient. Everyone should do their bit of responsibility by trying to help victims – giving moral support, provide them strength to move out of the abusive relationship, help them take their own responsibility, find them a job, anything that we are capable of, will do them great help. We should never allow or tolerate any kind of injustice towards anyone. Everyone deserves to live their life to the fullest. No matter who the person is, a man, woman, a child in spite of gender, a person of whatever cast or creed or financial status deserves to be respected and valued.

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