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Domestic Violence against Women : their social and health issues related the problems.

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Introduction:

Dignity of women and their equal participation in economic, social and cultural development in contemporary world scenario – for centuries past, women all over the world have not only been denied full justice, social, economic and political, but as a “weaker sex” they have been used, abused, exploited and, then discarded to lead immoral, street vagrant and destitute life till death. Women constitute about one-half of the global population, but they are placed at various disadvantageous position due to gender difference and bias. They have been the victims of violence and exploitation by the male dominated society all over the world.

Ours is a tradition bound society where women have been socially, economically, physically, psychologically and sexually exploited from time immemorial, sometime in the name of religion, sometime on the pretext of writings in the scriptures and sometimes by the social sanction.

The most prevalent form of violence against women worldwide is domestic violence. World health organization (WHO, 1997) has defined domestic violence as “the range of sexuality, psychologically and physically coercive acts used against adult and adolescent women by current or former male intimate partners”.¹

The percentage of women who are exposed to violence by their husband is 45% in India.² Despite this widespread prevalence, such violence is not customarily acknowledge and has remained invisible. Social background conditions of women and economic factors of families are found to play a

significant role in domestic violence, it covers physical, sexual, social and psychological violence occurring in domestic sphere.³

Social Factors of Domestic violence:

Domestic violence against women is a serious social & health concern in every society and culture. It has drawn attention from the medical community because it has a negative and harmful impact on the mental, physical and social health of females and human rights problem in the world today. Domestic violence is often not restricted to the current husband, but may extend to boy friends, former husbands, and other family members such as parents, siblings and in-laws. A study suggested that 23.4% women were exposed to domestic violence in the past year.⁴

Domestic violence against women is highly prevalent in India and women usually try to hide it, particularly wife beating or physical mistreatment is a very common phenomenon in many Indian families. Domestic violence refers to violence emanating from the household and within relationships covered by familial or emotional attachment. Economic, social, cultural and psychological factors are the most prevalent cause of domestic violence. A study reported that families with low income level showed a higher rate of violence and the rate of domestic violence decreased as the annual income level increased.⁵

The reasons of violence are various factors such as power, employment, and male dominant society structure. Domestic violence is associated with illiteracy of the women. Illiterate women tend to accept violence as something normal. Most of the female are not aware about their rights. This might be related to the fact that men culturally possess women; that manhood is associated with violence and that violence is widely accepted as a form of behavior. Husbands justify this act that they have all rights to beat his wife, and It is told to the girls before the marriage that they should adjust to whatever happens after marriage. The Indian culture, which prescribes obedience for women, may also contribute to this, since women consider opposing their husband as a sin. Besides that, domestic affairs are something that is usually kept a secret.

The underlying other reasons of domestic violence are disobeying elders, not having a child, unemployment herself or her husband, insufficient dowry, poor family income, joint families, not approving relationship with wives parents, mismatch pair, relationship with another women, extra

marital relationship, egoistic behavior, drug addiction, drinking, smoking etc. Sometime refusing sex is another major cause of domestic violence.

Slapping, kicking, fist blow and beating with a stick or rod are the specific acts of physical assault . A study showed that 35% of the female had ever experienced domestic violence in the past year slapping was reported by most of the women as the specific act of physical assault⁶

An Another study showed that slapping 80%, kicking, Punching or hitting 74%, pulling the hair or dragging 27% and forced sex 27% were the types of reported physical abuse. The victims were mostly wives 78% and perpetrators were their husbands. Frequent physical violence was much use reported than verbal and psychological harassment. ⁷

Married women found more exposed to domestic violence than unmarried adult women low level of education was found to be risk factor for domestic violence. Women, who are economically independent on husband income more exposed to domestic violence.

The concept of violence in India culture, where violence against women is tolerated and considered as a means of discipline or punishment. It is a common thing for most men to speak rudely and act aggressively most probably, women do not protest or retaliate against the harassment, out of their concerns for social prestige, lack of economic and social support and for the sake of their children.

De addiction of assailant and changing behavior her self would be helpful and obeying elders might be a solution to scope with the act of violence women should try to convince the assaulter, if fail to convince the assaulter they should take help of relatives or neighbor or social workers .

Health problems of women due to the Domestic Violence

It is identified as a major contributor to the global burden of ill health in terms of female morbidity and mortality as leading to psychological trauma and depression, injuries, sexually transmitted diseases, suicide and murder.

The global health burden from violence against women in reproductive age group is about 9.5 million disability adjusted life years. ⁸

It is often difficult to conduct study on domestic violence against women, since most female are reluctant to disclose information they consider confidential and intimate. For eliminating domestic

violence against women, it is critical to understand the context of violence and social constructs, which support its perpetuation. The mental and health consequences of domestic violence are alcohol & drug abuse, depression, anxiety, eating and sleeping disorders, feelings of shame and guilty, phobias and panic disorders, physical inactivity, poor self esteem, post traumatic stress disorder, psychosomatic disorders, smoking suicidal behavior and self harm and unsafe sexual behavior .⁹

The effect of violence on health, effect of ever physical or sexual violence is often cited as the most hurtful form of violence.

Suicidal tendencies to be found more common in women who had experienced violence than those who had never experience violence. A study revealed that abused women were significantly more likely to have higher scores on instrument for depression, anxiety and sommatization. They were also more likely to have attempted suicide.¹⁰

An Indian study found a significant association between exposure to violence and unhealthy mental status.¹¹ A report suggested that statistically significant association between abuse and anxiety and depression.¹² In another Indian study conducted in five different states, 34.01% of the women suffering from domestic violence, they reported 29.3% mental stress, , 26.4% depression, 21.8% disturbed sleep, 15.1% anxiety and chronic headache.¹³

Legal Remedies

The preamble of the Constitution, which is the supreme law of the land, seeks to secure to its citizens including women folk, justice-social economic and political, liberty of thought, expression, beliefs, faith and worship, equality of status and opportunity and promote fraternity assuring the dignity of the individual. See section Cri LJ (Journal Section) at P.I (1999)¹⁴

Domestic violence is undoubtedly a human rights issue and serious deterrent to development. The Vienna Accord of 1994 and the Beijing Declaration and the platform for Action (1995) have acknowledged this. The United Nation's Committee on Convention on elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in its general recommendation No XII (1989) has recommended that State parties should Act to project women against violence of any kind especially that occurring within the family. These rules may be called the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Rules 2005 (43 of 2005)¹⁵

Conclusion:

Justified female empowerment and enlightenment in the form of education, culture and economic productivity may help reduce this social evil as well as public health problem. In order to effectively address this problem, multidisciplinary approach to formulate fundamentally sound public health measures is essential. There is a need for sustained educational campaign to bring change in the community's attitudes of the community. Similarly, educational programs to target boys and girls are necessary to prevent violence from being perpetuated generation after generation. Opportunity of education, being economically productive and better family income would help them to overcome the situation. There is also a need for organizations that would support and help adult and adolescent females who are victim of domestic violence in the community with shelter, legal aid and awareness increase. Economic and social empowerment of females will enable them to fight for rights and rebuild their life. Panchayat members, village elders, health workers, teachers, existing women's organization and mass media exposure should play a more active role in preventing and reducing domestic violence problem. They can take help for proper counseling from the court legal aid clinics or public health councilors.

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