



DOMESTIC VIOLENCE: COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Dr. Rinku Mukeshbhai Darji

Assistant Professor, Shree P. M. Patel P.G. Institute of Law and Human Right, Anand, Gujarat.

ABSTRACT

For generations, males have used their entitlement to violence against women with impunity, justifying it as vital for women's "well-being." Domestic abuse in India is shrouded in shame and silence. It encompasses all forms of violence perpetrated against a person by a biological related, but is most frequently used to refer to violence perpetrated against a woman by male members of her family or relations. Females are socialised in such a way that they internalise the notion of reliance, which results in marital violence; the husband perceives his wife as subordinates and begins controlling them. This sort of indoctrination is directly accountable for women's misery. Domestic violence is constantly mentioned in relation to women. Domestic violence is one of the most underreported crimes worldwide, affecting both men and women equally. Domestic violence has a detrimental effect on not only an individual's life but also on the lives of their innocent children; it makes no difference whether the violence is directed at a male or female; violence is violence, and as such, the law must be strict for both genders, not just men; anyone who commits this heinous crime must be punished.

KEYWORDS: Domestic Violence, Women, Impact of COVID-19, Domestic Violence Act, 2005, IPC.

INTRODUCTION:

Every individual needs to feel secure and protected from danger. However, for some, home is not always a secure place to be. Domestic Violence, in its strictest sense, refers to any aggressive or coercive behaviour occurring within the household. Women's violence is a legitimate privilege that males have practised with impunity for ages. Men view this conduct as a privilege, which is reflected in the principles of religion, philosophy, and law across the world. Physical violence against women was justified as required for women's "well-being." It was trained in terms of reprimanding and chastising erring spouses.

Domestic violence, or intimate partner violence, as defined by the United Nations, is a pattern of behaviour used in any relationship to obtain or retain power and control over an intimate partner. Abuse is defined as intentional physical, sexual, emotional, economic, or psychological acts or threats of actions that have an adverse effect on another person. This includes any behaviour that is designed to fear, intimidate, terrorise, manipulate, harm, humiliate, blame, or wound another person. It is possible for anybody, regardless of colour, age, sexual orientation, religion, or gender, to become a victim. It may occur in a variety of relationships, including those between married couples, cohabiting couples, and couples who are dating. Domestic abuse affects people from all social and educational backgrounds.

Domestic abuse is a global problem. Domestic abuse disproportionately affects women worldwide, with one in every three women experiencing it over their lifetime. The international community has increasingly identified the eradication of such violence as a priority. Domestic violence is constantly mentioned in relation to women. Throughout history, man has been viewed as the culprit.

Domestic violence, however, is not restricted to women alone as a result of recent socioeconomic developments impacting the family structure. Men are also subjected to verbal, physical, emotional, psychological, and sexual abuse. Men are silent victims of these harmful behaviours since they do not report them. Due to the fact that our society's laws favour female victims of abuse, these unlucky males do not receive justice for their pitiful state in the family and society. Men are more likely to be neglected as a result of the societal stigma associated with male victimisation.

Women are more likely to encounter intimate partner violence if they have a poor level of education, have been exposed to moms who have been mistreated by a spouse, have been abused as children, and have attitudes that condone violence, male power, and women's subservient status. Men are more likely to commit violence if they have a low level of education, a history of child maltreatment, have been exposed to domestic violence against their mothers, engage in harmful alcohol use, adhere to unequal gender norms, including attitudes toward violence, and a sense of entitlement over women. Domestic violence is one of the most underreported crimes in the world, affecting men and women equally.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT:

Some historians think that the history of violence against women is intertwined with the history of women being treated as property and assigned a gender role that is subordinate to males. If we look at India's lengthy history, we may see hundreds of examples of women giving everything for men, as well as tolerance and great characteristics, such as Sita, Savitri, Kunti, Draupadi, and others.

A woman was not only considered as her husband's lifetime companion in good times and bad, but also as the mistress of his household and a true participant in all of his actions, including religious sacrifices, in ancient times. Women were considered to have bad tendencies in traditional times, and that because of these inclinations and birth, they should be kept under the authority of males at all phases of their life.

Family is highly essential to women in their lives; in other words, marriage is the gateway to a family. Marriage is more important for a woman than for a man since there are no stigmas associated with being unmarried for a man, but there are many stigmas associated with being unmarried for a woman. According to one of the most well-known sociologists, Neera Desai, women have been considered to be dependent on their husbands since the dawn of time since they are passionate and unfaithful by nature. Women who do not seek to overcome these chains of control are ideal. Women's salvation and happiness are based on their chastity and virtue as daughters, wives, and widows. A man was always known as the seed provider of man supplies the seed and essence for the formation of the children or the seed defines the type and the child's identity was also derived from the father for group placement.

In the late 15th century, a Christian scholar promoted Rules of Marriage. When you see your wife do anything wrong, don't come at her with insults and physical punches. Scold her harshly, bully and scare her, and if that doesn't work, beat her with a stick. It is preferable to punish the body while correcting the soul than to harm the soul while sparing the body. Then beat her up freely, not out of wrath but out of charity and care for her soul, so that the thrashing will be to your benefit and hers.

Domestic violence is allowed in various nations and is frequently justifiable, particularly in situations of real or suspected adultery on the side of the woman. There is a clear and significant link between a country's level of gender equality and incidence of domestic violence, according to research. The common-law idea that a husband had the right to "physically discipline an errant wife" was abolished in the United States in the 1870s. In 1891, a husband's customary right to inflict moderate physical punishment on his wife to keep her "within the boundaries of duty" was abolished in the United Kingdom.

Domestic abuse is not a new idea or issue that is becoming more prevalent as the world becomes more modernised, westernised, and globalised. It is something that has existed throughout history. Because Indian females are socialised in such a way that they internalise the notion of reliance, which in turn leads to domestic violence, the husband perceives his wife as subordinates and begins to dominate them. This sort of indoctrination is directly accountable for women's deplorable circumstances.

ABUSE AND VIOLENCE IN INDIA:

Domestic violence involving intimate partners has been recorded in a number of nations throughout the world, including Australia, France, Brazil, the United Kingdom, the United States, China, and others. India, which is well-known for its gender-based violence, is exhibiting similar patterns.

Domestic violence and abuse were detected in India in data supplied by the

National Commission of Women (NCW) in mid-April, which projected an approximately hundred percent rise in domestic violence during the Covid-19 shutdown. Between March 23 and April 16, the National Commission for Women (NCW) received 239 complaints via e-mail and a dedicated Whatsapp number during the first 25 days of the lockdown. In contrast, 123 complaints were filed in the previous 25 days, which is over double the number of complaints received before to the lockdown. During this epidemic, women's health has deteriorated and has become a major concern for the country. The primary cause of this increase is shelter in place and widespread shutdown of Covid-19-related organisations. Other contributing reasons to this problem include stress, risk factors such as unemployment, frustration, reduced income, restricted resources, a lack of alcohol, and a lack of social support.

The reopening of liquor stores in many states has added to the partners' difficulties. Alcohol, according to the World Health Organization, can contribute to an increase in the frequency and intensity of aggression and may result in harm. Alcohol impairs self-control and makes people less capable of resolving interpersonal conflicts. In the past, women in India have spoken out in favour of a liquor prohibition, claiming that male alcohol use leads to domestic violence and rape, as well as a waste of family wealth. The governments of Gujarat and Bihar have prohibited the selling of alcoholic beverages in their respective states. Despite the fact that some women in Bihar claim that the 2016 Prohibition has helped to reduce domestic abuse,

GOING FORWARD:

Former Pakistani Human Rights Commission Chief suggests government, NGOs, and people unite against Covid-19 and other threats. Domestic abuse has to be aggressively publicised in India, with several avenues for reporting. Use national radio, news networks, and social media. When consumers are unable to register complaints via messages, postings, or calls, critical service providers like grocery shops, pharmacies, and hospitals must push their customers to do so. In France and Spain, pharmacists are trained to detect customers who are victims of domestic violence using code phrases such as mask-19.

Hundreds of non-profit organisations operate to provide medical, legal, and counselling services. To combat Covid-19, the government should enable civil society organisations, mental health organisations, and counsellors to assist victims of domestic abuse. Courts have also addressed this topic. During the lockdown, the High Court of Jammu and Kashmir took suo moto notice of domestic abuse complaints and directed the creation of a special fund and reporting of instances in grocery shops, pharmacies, etc.

It also inquired about the state's hotline members and response to domestic violence reports. The state government provides 24-hour helplines, counsellors, and refuge houses for victims of domestic abuse. Following an NGO's plea, the Delhi High Court has ordered the Central and State governments to safeguard women from domestic abuse. The Centre, State Governments, and Women Commissions have reported on actions taken against domestic abuse, including publicising helplines, shelters, and protection officers.

THE IMPACT OF COVID-19:

The methods taken to combat the COVID-19 epidemic confined people at home, increasing the likelihood of domestic violence as victims and perpetrators spent more time together. Domestic abuse reports in India have surged 2.5 times since the national lockdown began, according to official statistics from the National Commission for Women. According to statistics given by an NGO called Swayam, there were 22 complaints per month on average prior to the lockdown, which jumped to 57 complaints per month on average via emails and helplines during the lockdown. The situation has deteriorated significantly during the lockdown.

This problem is exacerbated during a lockdown, as the sufferer is unable to seek assistance from friends or relatives. The lockdown has heightened the victims' vulnerability and exposure. Each country is addressing domestic abuse in their own unique way. In the example of Italy, the government launched an app called 'YouPol' that allowed victims of domestic abuse to seek assistance without speaking on the phone. The software allowed victims to transmit pictures and messages to state police operators in real time. If women were too shy to seek for aid openly, they used the code phrase 'Mask 19.' Gender-based violence services have been considered necessary in nations such as Spain, Portugal, and the United States. This has become worse as a result of the lockdown. ASHA workers, or Accredited Social Health Activists, are also active in frontline Covid prevention efforts. These women employees are critical to rural India's health system. They are frequently the first to come into touch with victims of domestic abuse when seeking health care. They are critical and can potentially mean the difference between life and death for vulnerable women who are unable to seek help owing to a lack of access to mobile phones.

Domestic abuse has a detrimental effect on women's emotional, physical, and reproductive health. Given that ASHA workers are a major portion of the village's healthcare network, they can assist victims by reacting immediately. Additionally, if some women who reported through these workers are successful in obtaining help, more women will come out to report such situations over time, reducing the stigma. As a result of their role as a community resource person,

these workers bear some duty for assisting domestic abuse victims. Additionally, the benefit of employing ASHA workers is that they are village inhabitants who are familiar with village life. When ASHA employees are educated in an effective method of identifying and communicating with victims of domestic abuse, they may help society change. As a result, ASHA employees must speak up and prioritise women's safety, sensitivity, privacy, and secrecy.

CONCLUSION:

There is now a need for people in society and lawmakers to recognise that using force against women constitutes torture. This includes verbal assaults as well as physical and mental abuse committed within a person's home. Violence against women is unaccepted all around the world. While modernity and new technologies have brought violence to the forefront, it has always been a part of society. However, we are evolving, and violence is also evolving and emerging in new forms, kinds, magnitudes, and so on and so forth.

No matter if the violence is against men or women, if it is violence, the law must be strict for both, not only for men. Anyone who commits this horrible crime should be punished, regardless of gender. For the time being, laws are solely in place to protect women from violence, but we must remember that women are not the only ones who are affected. This is a problem that almost everyone on the gender spectrum has to deal with, and they all should be covered by legislation to address it. Because of this, men face discrimination for exercising their constitutional rights in the face of such acts that favour women. So to sum it up, progress has been made in banning violence against women, but more has to be done. The promises made under jurisprudence must be implemented in national legislation and initiatives aimed at changing social norms about violence on the ground.

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