



## SOCIOLOGICAL ANALYSES OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN INDIA WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

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### **Abstract**

*Violence against women has been occurring since time immemorial in various forms. Some are legally wrong while some do not come under the preview of law, thus going unnoticed and ignored. But the structural setup goes a long way to support the patriarchal features existing in our society. Domestic violence takes place within the four walls of houses and is completely a private affair hence outside the preview of public discussion. This is why the abuse on women continues on a large scale without letting the matter out and taking the appropriate steps to solve it.*

*Domestic violence in India has come under a lot of legal discussion and its social ramification is focussed on recently. However, it has only become a social issue in few years back. Taking it from an individual problem to a wide social issue, it is now a matter to be resolved so that society can develop in the true sense of the term. This paper revisits domestic violence from perspectives of sociological imagination and important theories that throws light on the causes of violence. The paper concludes with the understanding of the structures and individual dilemmas that disables the women to get out of the abused relationship.*

### **Introduction**

Human civilisation has witnessed a variation in the socio-economic, cultural setup across the world. Each phase of development is associated with specific cultural, technological, scientific and rational advancement of temperament. However we also have witnessed the presences of certain constant phenomenon which are socially accepted and have been handed down through generations with little or no modification. Some of these are the reflections of conservatism and unfortunately advancement in material civilisation has not been able to remove these narrow and prejudiced socially justified evils. Some sections of the population suffer from this narrow and restricted perspective. Women belong to this category against whom there are continuous attempts to reinstate the gender bias through various process .The tools adopted by the societal authority is numerous and violence against women at home or outside is one of such tool. The consequences are severe at the individual, societal level and the overall development of our country is affected.

Violence is denial of basic human right. Violence against women which is rampant in society unfortunately goes intentionally or unintentionally unnoticed. Modern society has of course witnessed many struggles against social evils and has successfully been able to curb these menaces through measures such as improved education, spread of awareness of one's rights through legal supportive mechanism etc. But sometimes when this violence is silently accepted, this becomes like termite, slowly but steadily destroying the social fabric and creating a situation of unbalanced power.

### **What is domestic violence?**

“Domestic violence is a pattern of abusive behaviour in any intimate relationship that is used by one partner to maintain a sense of control over the other. Domestic violence is further defined as physical or sexual violence within the family. This includes sexual abuse of children and physical abuse of elderly parents “. (Etter & Birzer, 2007).

Domestic violence was not consider a social issue but an individual problem as this crime occurs within the four walls of the house and the societal structure is such that it latently suppresses the acknowledgment and reporting of the issues in public. The complex institution of marriage and family is highly valued and respected and deeply embedded within the cultural fabrics of Indian society. In India, they are crucial especially for a women thus, leaving her with limited alternatives. As so women are less privileged in terms to accessibility to various opportunities and resources, violence against her in her important and socially considered sole domain makes her very helpless and scared to come with it in open. Thus the stigma and sensitiveness associated with domestic violence prevented it from being reported this has led to underreporting of such crimes which has deeply affected the quality of intervention. (Heise et al.1994)

According to Michael Johnson, domestic violence is intimate terrorism where husband try to control their wife through various methods. Out discussing the continuous debate of Battered men vs. Battered women, ,this paper deliberates violence against women as being the vulnerable section amongst the both .Taking forward the feminist stand for increasing public awareness along with an increase inclusive and exclusive network of rehabilitation measure for the victim along with protective discriminatory legislative measure.



Violent situation consists of action and reaction and when there is reaction there is chances of subdue of the event in due course but when is less reaction there is enjoyment in doing it more which Johnson calls intimate terror. (Johnson Michael.2006)

According to Randall Collins, for violence to be successful, there are five pathways which individual follow or not follows for any violence to occur or not occur. Attacking the weak is the first and foremost path and this also happens in case of domestic violence. At the same time if it is from one side, then only violence can be successful. Physical assault is the later form of violence with initial as Collins calls subservience with constant moral degradation in the beginning which gives to a situation which Veblen calls trained incapacity. The second relevant pathway is audience oriented, staged and controlled fair fights, where these types are encouraged and held in prestige; similarly violence against women is culturally accepted because it reinforced the norm of low position or keeping in control the women in her place. Two paths are discussed in linked with domestic violence for its occurrences. It has informal support society that prevents women or victim from opening up. (Collins Randall.2009)

### **Rethinking Domestic Violence through “Sociological Imagination”**

Using C. Wright Mills’s sociological imagination to get to the solution of any problem, or the precondition for the present situation is through the linkage of our present position with an understanding of the historical perspectives; domestic violence can be rethought through this perspective. He suggested that there are a lot of instances and situation when individual is a mere spectator and observer of things happening and cannot do anything. But a new world of understanding opens for us if we analyse our situation, if we understand the life and the structures of the society and its interplay.

Using Mills definition of trouble and issue, it can be said that the situation of domestic violence is not a personal trouble rather it is a social issue .Domestic violence is a “trouble” where the values cherished by an individual for the right for safe and a dignified life is threatened or shaken. When domestic violence in occurring on a large perspectives i.e. when we are aware of many such individuals who are going through the same situation irrespective of class and caste, religion or race we understand that it is a social ”issue” and can be grasped by understanding the larger structure of social, political, cultural and economic history of the society .Mills through the sociological imagination calls for a opening up the personal troubles to an overwhelming public discourse of social structures.

Certain questions are put forward by Mills that would do justification to the in-depth analysis of sociological imagination. By answering the question in specific to the occurrence to domestic violence in India, it is an attempt to discuss the process of sociological imagination of domestic violence.

#### **Question 1**

Structure and component of the society and how it varies from other social order and the presences of certain feature for its continuances and change.

Domestic violence is a form of violence that occurs within the four walls of the house. The important structural composition of our country is tilted towards men .Looking from historical point of view the textual view or book view shows women not at par with men. The prevalence of gender bias through patriarchy has led to the perpetuation of this power play on women which is supported or gets sanctioned by societal norms.

#### **Question 2**

The present position of the society and what is the dynamic element and how it affects the structure.

The rate of violence against women is high. The domestic violence is high yet the figure usually is not the exact figure as most of the cases are unregistered for the fear of losing the honour of the family, again the weakness of the support system in this type of cases further demoralises them and they bear the pain and atrocity silently. The modern factors such as accessibility to education have improved the rate of reporting thus it paves the way for curbing this menace and we see it through the Domestic Violence Act 2006.

#### **Question 3**

What are the various types of people and the ”various ways they are selected and formed liberated and repressed, made sensitive and blunted”.(Mills C.Wright.1959)

Gender socialisation plays an important role in the development of personality as appropriate to the society. Boys learn to be strong or stronger than girls and girls learn the opposite .This learning takes place throughout the growing ages through various processes. This gets reinforced with violence against women whether inside or outside home.



Person on whom woman trusts and confides in become the perpetrator of violence at home. The home which is considered the safest place with unconditional love and support of family becomes the most unsafe place. Women playing the role of daughter, wife, daughter-in-law, sister become the primary victim and for the sake of maintaining privacy and honour, violence against them in home are not discussed nor disclosed. In this way the gender stereotyping through violence gets restated more deeply.

### **Causes of Domestic Violence**

Social science theories are scientific and systematic understanding of situations and some way they are the reflections of the mindset and mentality of the society across time and across space. There are various theories that deal with the causes of domestic violence. Theories point to the fact that the real cause of violence against women lies within the socio cultural milieu of the society added by individual personality type. Theories have pointed that that violence operates at a greater level which gets reinforced through cultural and social interactions, hence it is not a psychological problem (Murray A. Straus.1973). Further the subculture of violence theory says that the presence of value system in some society encourages violent ways. (Wolfgang and Ferracuti.1967) The feminist view that patriarchy that is inherent in the structure and the resultant unbalanced power is the primary cause of domestic violence.

Women are not homogeneous category similarly there are various intensity of violence against them. The cultural and social organisation that forms the social structure is often the layers within which the causes of domestic violence gets nourished and sustained. Difference between the private and public sphere with marriage and family within this private space makes it close for negotiation, bargaining and wellbeing of women. This has led to the growth of an unequal relationship and power in the hands of some.

### **Place of Women in Ancient Literature.**

The great Hindu epics, the Mahabharata and the Ramayana has many instances where women are subjected to violence. For example the disrobing of Draupadi in front of the husbands and the king who were the protector yet for them the honour of women was less important than the honour of their words. Similarly the disowning of Sita by Rama because of her stay with Ravana which questioned her chastity and loyalty. All the instances reflect that women were the possession of men and they can use her object. Similarly Manusmriti which is consider the guideline for Hindu dharma, a holistic approach towards code of conduct for all, which has 2690 verses has prescribed a particular code of conduct which was demeaning for women. Manu is of the opinion that women should be under the care of father when they are small, under the husband when she gets married and under the care of son if she becomes a widow. Her only duty is to obey and please her husband and it is the duty of a husband to have control over their wives. (Patwar Hirday N.2011).

Similarly Chanakya in his famous Chanakya Niti, an unparallel book of administration speaks low of women. The book says that everyone should be aware that she is a symbol of greed, impurity and cruelty. Women has no contribution to the development of the society. According to him, a woman is lost without her husband which shows how much she is dependent on men throughout her life and needs their protection. He says that that a good woman is one who is always takes care of husband in the morning like a mother, loves him in the day like a sister and pleases him at night like a prostitute. Presentation of a particular picture as ideal by mass media in any form lempphasis on something as morally correct is accepted easily when there is less alternative to challenge it similarly the ideal character of any person as prescribed by Chanakya for any man is accepted and look up to and this is carried forward by the society. This way certain trait gets associated with the prominent feature of the people of the society through the books and it has an impact in the mindset of people. Thus, social adaption further reinstates the present precarious situation. (Thakur Pallavi.2014).

### **Effects of Domestic Violence**

When women become the victim there is a greater chance of increased intensity of danger as women are more vulnerable. Violence against women is the explicit reflection of the implicit cultural sanction of the inferior positioning of the women in family. Marriage further gives the uncontested unchallenged right to man to continue this tradition of domination through the various assaults on women. Violence against women is not a personal problem affecting any particular individual but since she is confined at home the children are also affected by witnessing such violence. Violence can be assessed in terms of personal safety, morally wrong whether it involves physical or bodily harm. The sphere of bodily harm is most relevant in case of domestic violence but other than physical harm, there is moral and psychological assault on women which goes on unnoticed or consciously neglected.

Researches have proved that domestic violence causes various problems including physical injuries and other psychological problems. (Garcia-Morena.2005). They suffer from various health problems. Their reproductive health is also affected. Not

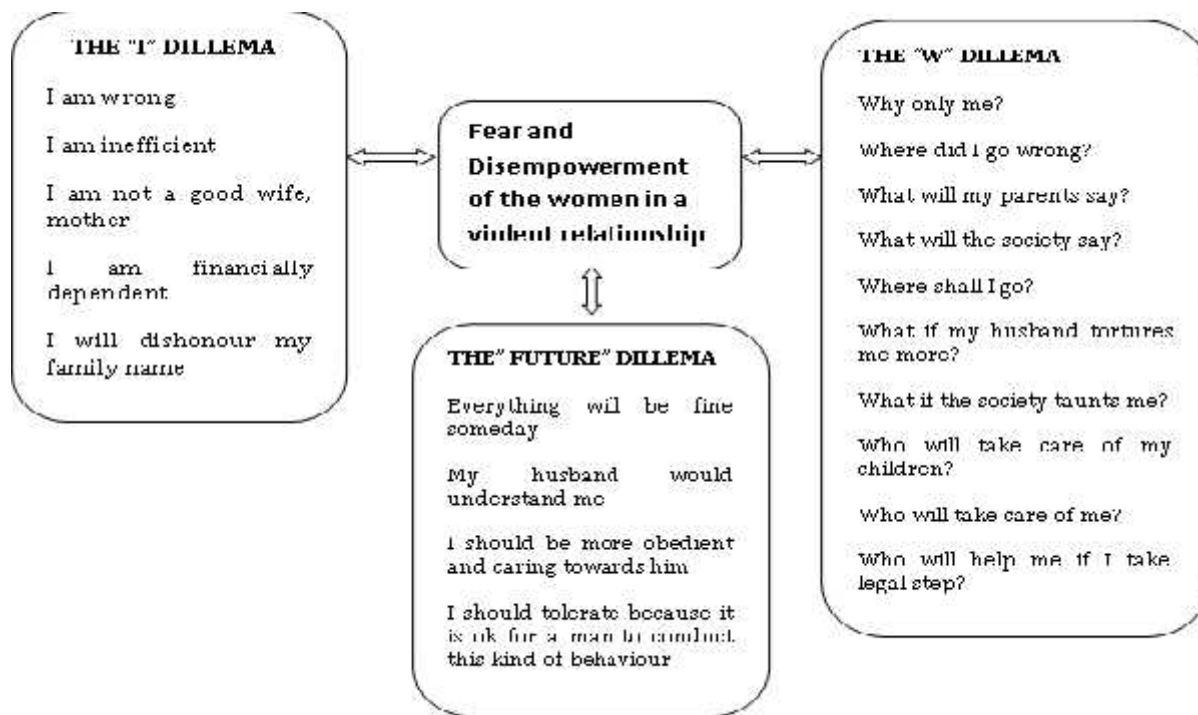


only individual problem of the victims, their children are found to have less immunization. (Butchart,Alexander,Claudia Garcia-Moreno and Christopher Mikton.2010) and also can lead to behavioural problems as when a child sees violent in his growing stages, he is likely to accept it as a method of conflict resolution.(Unicef Innocenti Research Centre.2000), domestic violence at home tends to have severe effect on education( Butchart,Alexander,Claudia Garcia-Moreno and Christopher Mikton.2010) Ultimately the total wellbeing of the family is affected.

### Why do Women Continue to Stay and Endure Domestic Violence?

Domestic violence is usually underreported.(siliconindia.2012).Negotiation of the victims with their situation will vary according to the culture and legal structure of society. If the structure is in favour of equality then violence against any section of the society will be suppressed at the very beginning. Its mechanism ensures the implementation of legal support in identifying and solving them. The earlier disturbing indifference of society to this problem has been sort out by gender specific law which are pro women. However, in spite of this there is continuing evidence that still a long way to go in stopping this social problem.

Women have been gender socialised to be meek and submissive and very often becomes the silent acceptor of the violence. They live in constant fear that if they try to end the relationship, violence will aggravate more (Newton .C.J.2001). Other than fear, the distrust in getting support of family, friends and even the legal authorities have prevented her to get out of the relationship. Further the constant worry of the custody of children further demoralises the victim. The chart below shows the dilemma of a victimised woman has in an abused relationship that prevents her from making it open or coming out of it.



### The Fear and Disempowering Model

These are some of the questions that constantly pinched the women without any solutions. The dilemmas that are associated with her, the society at large and the fear of future or insecurity prevent her from taking a decision of walking out of the relationship.

### Conclusion

Domestic violence is the most hidden and ignored form of violence yet the most prevalent. In 2003, the number of cases was 50,703 which have gone up to 118,866 in 2013. (BBCNEWS.INDIA.2014).This increase in the numbers reflects that numbers of victims are reporting more and seeking help. The reason behind increase in reporting is because awareness has increased because of accessibility to education and increase in financial independency.



The legal support through Domestic Violence Act 2005 is a welcoming step but the problem is that there is lack of awareness of the act as a result so many women are not able to take the benefit of it. There should be awareness of it at college level and should be part of syllabus so that there is complete awareness of it. Then there should be appointment of protection officers and service provider more in number so that at they become easily accessible to women anywhere and at any time. The most important clause of this act is that the third party who informs the violence cannot be legally implicated for providing the information, this is a very path breaking clause which can be used in maximum for reporting of such mater as many a time victim themselves shy away from reporting.

Trained capacity as opposed to untrained capacity is fully realized when battered women are rehabilitate by the society. Powering these women would certainly give them the chance to lead a normal life once again. The younger generation should be trained in equality and avoid teaching them the ways and behaviour of boy and ways of girls. The stereotyping that boys like blues and girls like pink should get reversed and boy can like Barbie dolls and girls can like batman and superman and enjoy playing footballs as much as boys do. There should be gender reversal in every aspect slowly yet steadily then only a just and equal society can take over. All work should be done according to one's likeness or necessity and this necessity should not be defined by gender dictation. Domestic violence is a shadow on the society which not only reflects a gloomy picture of the status of women but also hinders further development .Thus the future generation can be guided or misguided by our own ways and thinking and behaviour and accordingly spread the message of equality of all.

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