

Violence against Women: Challenges and Future Trends

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Abstract: This paper focuses on the violence inflicted upon the women in the society. We have analysed the trajectory of variation of violence against women and try to seek out solutions to extirpate the violent attitude of male in the society.

Violence against women in all its forms, physical, sexual and psychological, prevails all over the world. It is the purview of all the social and economic classes, of all the religions and races all over the world. It is an abuse of human rights as it takes a toll on their health and on their being socially and economically strong.

However, violence against women can be reduced significantly by the combined efforts of law, society and women herself. First and foremost, she should not deem herself inferior in any way and from anyone and should not in any case tolerate abusive behavior. Society can also play considerable role by comforting the victims and standing in their support and providing the best solutions to end violence. Men, in particular, must stand alongside women in this fight against violence. Stringent Laws as Domestic Violence Act 2005, UN Charter for Women Empowerment and many others have already been enforced. But the need of the day is that laws should be implemented promptly as it is rightly said “justice delayed is justice denied”. When the women are empowered they equally participate in the growth and ultimately in the prosperity of the nation and subsequently this will make the world a better place to live in.

Keywords: Violence, Trajectory discrimination, abuse, gender equality, human rights, perpetrators, implementation of laws.

1. INTRODUCTION

Violence against women in all its forms, physical, sexual and psychological, prevails all over the world. It is the purview of all the social and economic classes, of all the religions and races all over the world. Year by year lives of millions of women get devastated by the violence that she bears and faces at home and in the community. Violence against women is ingrained as a global norm that promotes discrimination between genders and rejects equal rights with men. It is rightly said:

Violence against women happens to the women we love, the women with whom we work and worship, our neighbours and our friends. Violence knows no boundaries, not economic status, sexual identity, rural or urban residence, race or religious affiliation, age or gender. (Claire M. Renzetti, Jeffrey L. Edleson, Raquel Kennedy Bergen, Sourcebook on Violence Against Women. XII).

It is an abuse of human rights as it takes a toll on women’s health and on their being socially and economically strong. Violence against women has spread globally and has become a pandemic. In many societies round the world, women are still discriminated in the political, social, cultural and economic spheres. As per a recent analysis of over 80 countries, World Health Organisation in association with other prominent organizations have reported that globally, on an average 30% of women in any form of relationship have experienced physical or sexual violence by their intimate partner and this intimate partner violence excels among other violence. As many as 38% of women are killed by their own intimate

partner. Thus, by declaring violence against women as human rights violation, United Nations defines violence against women as:

“any act of gender based violence that results in, or is likely to result in physical, sexual or mental harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life.”(UN General Assembly 1993, <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs239/en/>).

2. VARIOUS FORMS OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

It is rightly said that women is never safe anywhere. She could be the easy prey in the public as well as private places. She can encounter the violence anytime, anywhere, in any form and from any one: whether known or unknown. A woman faces it at every step in various forms and ways. It ranges from domestic or intimate partner violence to sexual harassment and assault, rape, trafficking, sexual violence in conflict and gender-related killings. With the advancement in science and technology, this field has also progressed and another form of violence like female foeticide has developed.

Broadly speaking, violence against women can be classified into two categories: Social violence and Domestic violence. A women faces social violence by strangers at public places in the form of eve teasing, harassment in offices, trafficking, abduction, acid attacks and in its gravest form, being raped. According to Dekeseredy and Macleod (1971) :

Women abuse is the misuse of power by a husband, intimate partner(whether male or female), ex-husband, or ex-partner against a woman, resulting in a loss of dignity, control and safety as well as a feeling of powerlessness and entrapment experienced by the woman who is the direct victim of ongoing or repeated physical, psychological, economic, sexual, verbal and /or spiritual abuse. Woman abuse also includes persistent threats or forcing women to witness violence against their children, other relatives, friends, pets and /or cherished possessions by their husbands, partners, ex-husbands, or ex-partners. (Claire M. Renzetti, Jeffrey L.Edleson, Raquel Kennedy Bergen, Sourcebook on Violence Against Women, 5).

Domestic violence also known as Intimate Partner Abuse and Family violence is the one that almost every women faces once in her lifetime. It occurs in households and most of the time between relatives. That is why it is said that a woman is most unsafe in her marital house. She could be tortured by anyone, be it her husband, mother-in-law or any distant relative. Most painful is torture by her spouse as she confers all her faith on him.

Too many women, for too long, silently fought what some advocates have called, “the war at home.” (Claire M. Renzetti, Jeffrey L. Edleson, Raquel Kennedy Bergen Sourcebook on violence Against Women, IX).

3. IMPACT OF VIOLENCE ON WOMEN

Violence against women ire its wrath across the world in most of the societies. Every women, undergoes this most pervasive and widespread human rights violation. It has been declared a pandemic that is affecting one in every three women globally. Due to this, families, communities, state and all the more, countries are paying massive human, social, and economic costs.

The true extent of violence against women can never be estimated, as such violence in many cultures is mainly treated as a normal occurrence in a household, where it is regarded as a private matter and is considered a part of male chauvinist society. Such violent acts breaches women’s fundamental human rights to bodily integrity and freedom from fear. Violence makes them vulnerable to carry out things according to their capabilities and undermines their participation in the economic, political and social life of their society. Consequently their children also had to suffer and this becomes a major hurdle to achieve the goal of unbiased, equitable and sustainable human growth.

Violence against women is a serious breach of human rights that has immediate to long term impact on their physicality, psychology, sexuality, and it is the foremost cause of fatality (either homicide or suicide) and disability among women. It hampers women’s participation in the culture by negatively impacting their general well-being. Consequently, violence affects their families, the community and ultimately the country’s overall development.

4. ENDING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN: A COOPERATIVE CHALLENGE

Combating violence against women has become a major challenge for the countries around the world. Years of women movements have instigated the civil societies to end gender based violence and it has become the major agenda to be resolved at the international level. Most of the prominent countries of the world have made stringent laws against domestic violence, sexual assault and other forms of violence. But until they are implemented forcefully women will remain unsafe. When some untoward incident with a woman happens, it goes unreported and the convicts roam around freely. An unbiased gender society is must at all levels and across all sectors while recommending some policies.

The aim is to empower women by providing them the environment that encourages gender equality and building healthy relations. For some time now, Feminist movements have been carried by the activists to bring this burning issue to the political map of the world and to upheld governments to implement improved laws and policies. It has reached to an alarming extent still no country has by far been able to eliminate this grave breach of human rights. Though up to some extent there has been some improvement in regard to gender equality at the regional, national, and international level but still there is a long way to go to overcome these gaps and challenges. To encourage the human rights of women, ongoing and new sets of challenges gets impeded largely due to the lack of a holistic attitude at the individual, institutional and structural level. Laws and policies must engage the countries, state, the community and all individuals to take courageous steps to hasten change and bring hope to women across the world.

5. PREVENTION OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Its primary prevention is to stop it from happening at its roots. To achieve effective change, policies and legislation should be enforced to develop such cultural norms that fosters equality between both the genders and support women without discriminating them as weaker sex. UN Women, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women was formed in July 2010. The motive was to accelerate the organisation's goal on gender equality and women empowerment. The main roles of UN Women are:

- To support inter-governmental bodies, such as the Commission on the Status of Women, in their formulation of policies, global standards and norms.
- To help Member States to implement these standards, standing ready to provide suitable technical and financial support to those countries that request it, and to forge effective partnerships with civil society.
- To hold the UN system accountable for its own commitments on gender equality, including regular monitoring of system-wide progress. ("About UN Women" <http://www.unwomen.org/en/about-us/about-un-women>.)

World Health Organization has been also very active in this regard and has taken many actions regarding this issue collaborating with a number of partners. It has initiated supporting actions in many countries as per their magnitude and gravity of the problem to resolve this global pandemic. The first and the foremost is to find out the cases where intervention is required and to provide technical guidance and strengthen the health sector responses. WHO is also supporting the efforts of many countries to globally eliminate violence against women. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that :

"Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, color, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status. Furthermore, no distinction shall be made on the basis of the political, jurisdictional or international status of the country or territory to which a person belongs, whether it be independent, trust, non-self-governing or under any other limitation of sovereignty."(The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 2. www.un.org/en/documents/udhr/).

To combat violence against women, efforts need to be done at both individual and public levels. Individual measures include empowering women to handle violence effectively. Another measure should be to challenge male chauvinism that promotes such violent acts. The need is to promote right thinking and right norms among men towards women so that Gender Equality could be achieved and male chauvinism could be checked.

Another measure to stop it happening at the first place is the introduction of compulsory sex and relationship education at the school level so that people at tender age only could learn about relationship norms and by the time they grow up, it should be embedded in their mindset that no form of violence could ever be acceptable in a relationship.

Moreover, efforts at the societal level must include effective implementation of legal reforms to criminalize violence against women, whether it occurs in public or private. The police, judges and social workers must ensure their key role in supporting victims and prosecuting perpetrators by taking the help of media, the educational system, voluntary organisations and women's helpline to carry out the revolutionary task of transforming societal attitudes which tolerate or overlook violence. Government must ensure that victims voices are being heard. Different departments and public sector agencies must ensure to work effectively to witness prevention, early intervention and improved access to justice.

Violence against women cannot be tackled by politicians. It requires united efforts of every citizen from all the groups as police, teachers, parents, children and young people, doctors, nurses, women's groups – to really challenge a society in which violence against women is not left unheard and everyone is their to support her. The cooperative movement must now stop more women from becoming victims of violence. Worldwide, rape and domestic violence crimes go unreported because a woman feels socially insecure to report such crimes.

Police, the courts and the public used to consider domestic violence a private family matter. It is not surprising that domestic violence was the most underreported crime in the world. (Claire M. Renzetti, Jeffrey L. Edleson, Raquel Kennedy Bergen, Sourcebook on violence Against Women, IX).

She knows that she would be targeted back by unpleasant questions by the police and law.

“Despite cultural training teaching that female victims should not be blamed for what happens to them, some of the most telling questions about crimes of personal violence committed against women continue: of a rape victim, “Did she know him? What was she wearing? Or of a battering victim, “What did she do to get him so mad? Why did not she just leave?” This knee-jerk reaction reflects a deep-seated ambivalence in how we think about fault and responsibility. Surely it is the perpetrator who just deserves our scorn and blame. But if this is so, then why do victims' behaviours and /or appearances remain under scrutiny? Are the lines between victim and offender more complicated than this suggests? (Michelle L. Meloy, Susan L. Miller, The Victimization of Women: Law, Policies and Politics, 3.)

If, howsoever she musters the courage and goes to lodge a report there the officials are unwilling to file a complaint. If somehow, the case is lodged, the investigative procedures are cumbersome and the conviction rates are very low. This strengthens the impression that there is no advantage in reporting the crime. Women could be more comfortable in reporting cases of violence, rape or harassment to a women police officer so the demand is to employ more and more women as officers, so that they could rescue their fellow mate.

6. FUTURE TRENDS

To end violence against women, laws and policies need to follow a comprehensive approach based on international standards. Their motive should be to check the violation of human rights and the safety of survivors. Policy makers at national level while making action plan and legislation must follow internationally agreed norms and standards. They must acknowledge the relation between violence against women and gender inequality and discrimination. Until the gender relations are transformed, the real progress could not be made towards a violence free world for women. women's right to live violence free life is advocated by international agreements such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), mainly through General Recommendations 12 and 19, and the 1993 UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women. UN Women is working globally, having ties with all the major countries to move forward with the international normative framework by providing support to inter-governmental processes, such as the General Assembly and the Commission on the Status of Women, in adopting and enacting legal reforms of international standards.

The Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) is the principal global intergovernmental body exclusively dedicated to the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women. The CSW is instrumental in promoting women's rights, documenting the reality of women's lives throughout the

world, and shaping global standards on gender equality and the empowerment of women. (Commission on the Status of Women, <http://www.unwomen.org/en/csw>.)

The U.S. government long ago in 1994 waged its war against this global issue by passing a legislation called the Violence against Women Act and it was again revised in 2000 to strength the existing Act. The aim of this act was to severely punish the guilty as per the laws of a national crime and cannot be bring to justice by state or local jurisdiction. . The United Nations also has marched ahead in this issue by implementing a set of laws and policies to be followed by the countries in the UN so that women could be protected. To attend to all forms of violence against women, UN Women, UN-Habitat and UNICEF has collaborated and has implemented the Safe Cities Initiative with major 15 world cities that includes New Delhi, Rio de Janeiro, Cairo, Kigali, Port Moresby, Quito, Dublin and Sakai. The objective is to reach 35 cities by 2017 and end this world epidemic.

7. VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN INDIA

India, known as Bharatmata where women is worshipped as Goddess and also the land of apostles of peace and non-violence faces the irony that its women has to face various forms of violence to a great extent and in a large number. She is still considered a miserable creature at the mercy of her man. In our country, violence against women has reached at an alarming proportion and it is assumed that there are about thirty specific forms of violence against women which begins from her pre-natal stage and continues till she dies.

The violence begins right from the womb, when if detected a girl the foetus is eliminated. In many societies if she is born then killed as an infant. If lives to grow a little then malnourished. If grows young then she has to bear the burnt of dowry system and is killed by burning. So this way the atrocities continues. The common forms of violence which Indian women have to face are foeticide, infanticide, providing un-nutritious food, medicine neglect, deprivation of educational opportunities, child marriages, sexual abuse of the girl child, forced marriages, rapes, prostitution, sexual harassment, pregnancies at small intervals, wife-battering, bride-burning, cursing the widows, witch-hunting, neglect of the old women, etc.

Of late, though the condition of women have improved and their participation in public life have increased and to safeguard them even the laws have been amended and some stringent laws with quick judgment have been enforced. Still violence against women continues to be at its zenith as it is uprooted in societal norms and economic dependence. Living in a male-centric society, Indian women have always been discriminated, as men is considered all powerful and someone who has a control on them. Despite all the measures to curb violence against women, India still has mile to go before it could claim that now its all the citizens are equal. Most of the time the challenges faced by Indian women are outdated misogynist concepts and sometimes governance structures that suppress them, ineffective judiciary, and male-centric social and political structures. As Indian women undergoes many forms of atrocities among which dowry is the biggest challenge to overcome. It is more a pandemic for Indian women. To defeat this stigma of dowry, Indian government had imposed the Dowry prohibition Act and the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act and cruelty under Sec 498A of the Indian Penal Code. For rape also many stringent laws have been made especially after 16th December 2012, Nirbhaya Gang Rape case.

8. CONCLUDING OBSERVATION

Many things are said and done but the problem still persists and women continue to become the victim. The foremost need is to prevent this problem from happening at its root. As it has been an international issue so a comprehensive blueprint for global progress through the post-2015 agenda is being developed. It aims at focusing on the empowerment of women and the special emphasis has to be on ending violence against women. It is the responsibility of the countries to provide adequate safety to their women from being the victim and to make sure that there could never be violation of any human rights. Preventive measures include implementation of stringent laws and policies with full political support and adequate resources that ensures full execution. Right thinking men with right attitude needs to be a part of this movement against violence so that women can be saved from the atrocities of the men and she too can live in a fearless world as an individual. As Katz (2006) notes in his analysis of men who abuse women:

Most men who assault women are not so much disturbed as they are disturbingly normal. Like all of us, they are products of familial and social systems. They are our sons, brothers, friends, and coworkers. As

such, they are influenced not only by individual factors, but also by broader cultural attitudes and beliefs about manhood that shape their psyches and identities. And ours. (P.28). (Claire M. Renzetti, Jeffrey L. Edleson, Raquel Kennedy Bergen, Sourcebook on Violence Against Women, 10).

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