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Violence against Women: Types and Responsible Factors

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Abstract:

The root cause of violence against women lies in the gender-based discrimination. Gender discrimination is based on the practice of unfairly treating a woman (Oxford Dictionary). Discrimination based on gender and treating them (women) differently is censurable and morally wrong. This leads finally to violence against women. There are also roles of social mores and rituals played behind this. India is a place where people worship Goddess. But in the same land women are not safe even in the womb of mother. Though it's said that women are never and nowhere safe. However, in this paper I am intended to highlight these from the feminist perspective.

Keywords: Abusing, coercion, abortion, feminism.

Introduction

India is a Goddess-worshipping country. In India, people worship woman in the form of Goddess. Women have a special position in society. They are inseparable part of creation. Even women in Vedic period were enjoying a higher status and value. Then women were the center of the domestic work. However, the real picture is very different. They did not get equal freedom and rights what men enjoyed. Even in Vedic era, women were oppressed and tortured but they tolerated in silence. Actually, these cases remained unreported and suppressed by showing fear to the victims (women). Women are never and nowhere safe, even in the womb of mother. Violence against women is increasing day by day. The types of violence against women are also various and different in nature. Most of the cases are unimaginable and unthinkable. Now-a-days violence affects the lives of innumerable women and girls in all socio-economic classes around the world. The number of violent cases is innumerable but it may seem least in number, as 50 percent of women abused by their partners have never informed the police ("Domestic").

Types of Violence against Women

Rape and Sexual Coercion

In present situation, 'Rape' is the most happening heinous case. In recent time, girl children in the age group of 6-12 years have been victimized severely. They are even gang-raped brutally being allured by some cheapest but attractive things like chocolate. It is the most tearful and hurtful

case when this happens to girl child of below 3years. Now a day it becomes very common to read the headline or sub headline titled after the term 'rape' in any newspaper. It is extremely abominable when offenders are guardians of law. This is custodial rape. In that case, none dares to testify against offenders who are in power. Men in positions of authority (teacher, priests, police officers etc.) are involved in this type of heinous violence. Physical and non-physical (blackmail) are associated with this type of violence. No way, women are safe; they have no escape from the dirty hands of their own father-brother-uncle and so on. Women even at the age of 80 are now victims of rape. Recently a 63 years old man has been arrested for raping his daughter repeatedly over a period of five years in Vadodara, Gujarat on 26 April 2017 (Deccan Chronicle, 2017). What a hell situation!

Physical Harassment and Eve teasing

The women, who are working in different private or govt. sectors, are facing this problem. They are sometimes bound to be engaged in physical relations with the higher authority or boss of the office against their own free will. Women workers are low-paid and ill-treated but they do not go for leaving the job because of increasing unemployment. These cases are also unreported mostly. 70% women said they did not report sexual harassment by superiors because they feared the repercussions, according to a survey conducted by the Indian Bar Association in 2017 of 6,047 respondents (Chachra). Eve teasing may be defined as molesting women in public. Abusing publicly by men (here macho men) also comes under this section. Sometimes this leads woman to commit suicide. It includes pornography, sexual touching etc.

Dowry and Similar types of Violence

The practice of this barbarous system has been prevailing since many centuries. Death by burning is a result of this cruel system. Young brides, who are unable to satisfy the greed of her in-laws, are facing this outrageous torture. In most of the cases, brides are either killed by their in-laws or forced to take decision of suicide or made to think about divorce forcibly. The National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) states that in 2015, as many as 7,634 women died in the country due to dowry harassment. They were either burnt alive or forced to commit suicide over dowry demand. Data further reveals that after registration of dowry deaths, police have charge sheeted around 93.7 per cent of the accused, of which only 34.7 per cent have been convicted. Some dowry deaths are reported across the country every day (Sharma).

Domestic Violence and Sexual Abusing of Girls

Subordination of girl child in a family is the root cause of domestic violence. It is one of the greatest obstacles to gender equality as child starts learning from home. Home is supposed to be a safest place of girl child. But now-a-days it becomes most unsafe place where more or less every girl child undergoes ill and one-eyed treatment. Even girls children tolerate inhumane torture. Girl child has no escape from the dirty hands of her own father-uncle-brother and so on.

This type of violence is less known publicly beyond the family. This is why the reporting rate of domestic violence is very poor. Offenders (here the father-uncle-brother of girl child) suppress most of the cases. Violence by husband (sexual violence or physical tortures) is mostly prevalent than the violence by others. Sometimes women are beaten up for going out without asking permission from husband or others in-laws, neglecting the house or children, and not cooking properly. More or less 10% to 50% of women have suffered this kind of violence. Child sexual abuse is a most unrevealed vile practice performed by her male family members as well as family relatives, religious leaders, teachers and childcare workers. It also includes rape, pornography, sexual touching or forcing a girl child to touch one's private parts of the body.

Prostitution and Women Trafficking

The trafficking of women and girls for prostitution and labor is very alarming now and a matter of highly concern. Women are forced to do above these as they can be paid low than what they deserve. Internal or external war, social and economic inequalities, demand for low-wage laborer and sex worker are the causes of driving this illicit trade in society. Women from Asia, central and Eastern Asia are being trafficked across international borders. Sometimes women are tortured physically and sexually by the personnel of border protection force also when trafficking. In these cases, women are raped or gang-raped many times before and after selling or buying. Very recent time, a fundamentalist-terrorist group named ISISI is using these trades to fetch money for running its activities well.

Rape in War

Rape is very traditional result of war since ancient era. It is also used to undermine a community that is defeated in war. It's the fact that women and children are protected at the time of war. War situation is opportune to those men (involved in war) who regard women as inferior to them and treat unaccompanied women as 'fair game'. In this situation, women are afraid to go out and walk around the camp even. Victims get frightened to report sexual assaults by the men. It includes also violence against refugee and migrated women. People throughout the entire world have witnessed the miserable situation of women in Syria. Syrian refugee allows smugglers to rape their wives as payment for trafficking family to Europe. This happens for the crisis in the Middle East. Husbands, who had run out of money, compelled wives to participate in the daily rapes for payment (Khan).

As there are different types of violence against women, there are also different types of responsible factors that are working in favor of the violent activities against women. Here are some important factors or causes.

Traditional Customs or Mores

Most of the traditional cultures go against women's rights. Female genital mutilation (over 130 million women and girls have experienced FGM in the 29 countries in which it is concentrated),

sex-selective abortion or female infanticide and neglect of girl child are the result of traditional practice (“Female genital mutilation”). These types of traditional practices make society biased and male-dominated. As a result, women get low status and very few rights. Women are suppressed implicitly in these traditional mores and men get enjoyment through these practices.

Lack of awareness of their rights

Low rate of access to *Mahila* (woman) courts, legal cells, crime cells for women is the great cause of women suffering. Women are less interested and known about these laws. Sometimes they are scared of going for these processes and tolerate inhumane treatment rather. Although for this women should not be responsible as they are still now dependent on men for their livelihood in most of cases. Surprisingly women are so brought up in a way that they like to depend on their husbands. They show less interest in learning the laws related to the rights of women. They think whatever they get from the male members of the family is enough. They are destined to be satisfied with these; they have no rights to raise voices as they are women.

Inaccessibility of Laws

Inaccessibility or hostility of the police and justice system, threat of retribution, harassment by law enforcement agencies, complications of reporting sexual crimes and pursuing cases, excessive vested power in the hands of armed and paramilitary forces in unrest areas, notions of shame concerned with sexual crimes are the hindrances to accessing laws properly. Most of the people know about Irom Sharmila who was in fast for a long period to protest against the AFSPA and demanded the withdrawal. AFSPA (Armed Forces Special Powers Act of 1958) gives special power to armed forces who allegedly rape women. On 15 July 2004, a news from Manipur shocked the world as 12 middle aged mothers walked out naked in front of the Kangla Fort in Imphal with a banner that showed the slogan ‘Indian Army Rape Us’ to protest against the rape and murder of a Manipuri girl by Assam Rifles.

Conventional teaching of family

In a traditional family, a girl child is taught that she must try to please male members of family especially husband from the very begging. Even women may need to make her an object of entertaining for men. Gradually women are made to renounce their autonomy and liberty for the sake of men. Mothers while bringing up girl children teach them with their own destiny. Besides female members especially mothers ask the girl children to follow what they used to do despite being undergone many ill-treatment. It is said that women are destined to do so and so even if there are many troubles and suffering. The mother does not think twice to apply herself to changing the child into a woman like her. A girl child is made to think or realize that she is to become one day a woman like her mother and she could not be a powerful authority of the family like father-brother-uncle. Thus, women are dominated in a family as well as society. Existentialist feminist philosopher Simone de Beauvoir writes in her celebrated book The Second Sex, “One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman. No biological, psychological, or economic

fate determines the figure that the human female presents in society; it is civilization as a whole that produces this creature, intermediate between male and eunuch, which is described as feminine” (Beauvoir 295)

Negative Role of Women

In case of fixing, the amount of dowry money and other wedding gifts, female members of bridegroom play a great role. At that time, they do not consider the situation of bride.

In case of representing oneself (woman) an object of entertainment for men, women are more responsible than the men are. Most of the modern women are willing to present oneself as a model or poster girl. They very often want to be in focus with cheap popularity. Women spend more time in physical appearance. They fail to act as role models but as mere filmy model.

Negative Teaching of Great Thinkers

Eminent Greek philosophers like Aristotle and Socrates thought poorly of the intellectual capabilities of women. Plato maintained that women had no souls, while the Socratic dialogue ‘The Symposium’ concludes that women were incapable of providing men with intellectual companionship (Guha)

Biased teaching of religious scriptures

To some extent, religions and *Shastras* (scriptures) are also responsible for the low status of women in a traditional family as well as society. According to Hinduism, at the time of creation of this material world, God has divided Himself into two complementary parts- the male and the female. Man is not complete without his counterpart woman. The male and female form one complete whole. Without the one, the existence of the other cannot be conceived. This is why wife is considered as *ardhangini* (half-self) of husband. But women (including wife) are treated differently. Because the same law of creation states another biased aspect that men and women are not same in their physical strength and features and in their mental capacities. Even if it's so, a mere natural difference in gender cannot make the male and female unequal. But we cannot even imagine that how religious scriptures create gender discrimination and make the status of female inferior to that of male. In Hinduism, many scriptures and references are in support of lower status of women.

In *Manusmriti*, many shlokas(verses) give sanctions to this position. A girl, by a young woman, or even by an aged one, must do nothing independently, even in her own house (V.5.147). In childhood, a female must be subject to her father, in youth to her husband, when her lord is dead to her sons; a woman must never be independent (V.5.148). She must not seek to separate herself from her father, husband, or sons; by leaving them she would make both (her own and her husband's) families contemptible (V.5.149). She must always be cheerful, clever in (in management of her) household affairs, careful in cleaning her utensils, and economical in

expenditure (V.5.150). In the 214th verse of 2nd chapter of *Manusamhita*, it's written that "women are able to lead astray in (this) world not only a fool, but even a learned man, and (to make) him a slave of desire and anger" (v.2.215). Therefore, we should have to be aware. We must keep the safe distance from women. In this regard, women get a disgraceful position in society. Even it's mentioned that "It's the nature of women to seduce men in this world" (v.2.213). Besides, it's said that women have no unique and graceful qualities. But "whatever be the qualities of the man with whom a woman is united according to law, such qualities even she assumes, like a river (united) with the ocean" (v.9.21). From these above shlokas (verses), it is clear that women are always pictured as dependent on men. There are many others texts that give sanction to inequality.

In *Gita*, which we take as a book of moral and guiding principles, it's said that "when irreligion is prominent in the family, O Krishna, the women of the family become polluted, and from the degradation of womanhood, descendant of Vrsni, comes unwanted progeny" (v.1.40). In other words, good population in human society is the basic principle for peace, prosperity and spiritual progress in life and such population depends on the chastity and faithfulness of its womanhood. As children are very prone to be misled, women are very prone to degradation. Other religions also have same teaching implicitly.

In Islam, women are kept in *Purdah* in public life. It confines the women only. Besides, it restricts their free activities in society. It's degrading the status of women. *Purdah* or seclusion can be regarded as male-imposed symbol of domination over women. It obstructs women to express their own identity in their own style. It not only degrades the status of women but also deprives their right to freedom and equality. Gandhi opposed this vehemently. The *Shariat* law regulates and specifies the status of men women in Islamic society. It's used only for keeping control on women. Women are not allowed to go to mosque. They are kept in house so that they could not make male devotees deviated. A man may have four wives, whereas a woman should have only one husband. Men have the right of divorce only with the verbal expression of "triple talaq". Woman has to confine herself to the four-walls of house only. She is not free to participate in political and economic activities.

Hate and Biased Speech by Leaders-Politicians

Leaders and politicians are the law-makers of a country. They possess royal position in administrative system. They are for giving safeguard and protection to the every individual of the country. MP, MLA and Ministers are the representatives of common people. Now a day, they forget their duties to country and its citizens. They (male politicians) very often speak against the victims (in case of rape, molestation, sexual torture or harassment etc.). They try to find the fault of victim instead of giving punishment to the culprits, as they are very often associated with the political party. They make the rape victim responsible for this heinous incident. For them, the western dress, life style, using Smartphone are the causes for rape as women make the men

horny to rape them. In brief, women are responsible for rape and molestation. It is most unfortunate when a woman CM of a state in India says that rape victims are not good in character. When a woman head of a state says such, how do women get justice?

Conclusion

Violence against girls and women is increasing, and grounded in social norms and gender inequalities. Although it can be prevented as both the violent incidents and causes are man-made and artificial. In order to prevent violence against women, it needs systematic efforts, by students, teachers, and schools, and more widely, in families, communities, and nations. Progress has been made through the discussion, seminar-conference, enacting laws etc. but there is much more to do. Changing people's attitude at first is a fundamental and compulsory step to protect women's human rights. Pope Francis recently asked men to be less macho and listen more to women. What the world needs to survive is not male machoism, but feminine energy, that is intelligent and balanced ("Why" P8).

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