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VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN: A SOCIAL CONCERN

Dr. Ramesh M. Sonkamble

Assistant Professor, Dept. of Social Work, Akkamahadevi Women's University, Vijayapur-586105, Karnataka, India

─────ABSTRACT─────

Violence against women is partly a result of gender relations that assumes men to be superior to women. Given the subordinate status of women, much of gender violence is considered normal and enjoys social sanction. Manifestations of violence include physical aggression, such as blows of varying intensity, burns, attempted hanging, sexual abuse and rape, psychological violence through insults, humiliation, coercion, blackmail, economic or emotional threats, and control over speech and actions. Newspapers and periodicals of all hues in India often carry reports about violence against women

KEYWORDS: *Violence, Women's, Domestic, Emotional, Control, Humiliation*

INTRODUCTION

An evaluation of these interventions is critical as more and more countries initiate systematic efforts to address domestic violence. India, therefore, offers a unique setting wherein a study of prevalence, patterns and trends of domestic violence, and an evaluation of responses to violence against women can be undertaken in an integrated fashion. hold can be reduced to dowry demand; domestic violence or wife battering is far more systematic and pervasive than previously acknowledged. The few studies available indicate that physical abuse of Indian women is quite high, ranging from 22 percent to 60 percent of women surveyed (Rao 1996 and Mahajan 1990). A survey in Uttar Pradesh, a state in northern India, found that nearly one in three men reported that they had physically abused their wives (Evaluation Project/PERFORM 1997).

All this points to the need for a deeper understanding of the patterns and trends of domestic violence. However, research on domestic violence is highly sensitive and there is strong cultural resistance in most societies to publicly acknowledging the extent of the problem. It is difficult to motivate governments to address the question of violence against women in general, and domestic violence in particular.

Violence against women is partly a result of gender relations that assumes men to be superior to women. Given the subordinate status of women, much of gender violence is considered normal and enjoys social sanction. Manifestations of violence include physical aggression, such as blows of varying intensity, burns, attempted hanging, sexual abuse and rape, psychological violence through insults, humiliation, coercion, blackmail, economic or emotional threats, and control over speech and actions. Newspapers and periodicals of all hues in India often carry reports about violence against women.

Throughout the 1980s, Indian society witnessed numerous struggles by women's organizations on issues of dowry deaths, custodial rape, abductions of women, sati (the burning of a widow on the husband's funeral pyre), female infanticide, sexual harassment of young girls and women in public places (euphemistically referred to as "Eve teasing"), trafficking, and prostitution. It is important to note that there has been legal reform by the government in response to each of these issues of violence against women during the past decade (Agnes 1996). While international attention has been focused on dowry deaths, perhaps the most dramatic manifestation of violence against women, it is only one part of the problem. Not all violence within the house dents of violence.

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) working in India have, therefore, expressed the need for reliable data on domestic violence with which they can develop targeted intervention and education strategies. Equally important is the need to understand the effectiveness of various preventive and supportive strategies, which have already been put in place. These include services provided by public and nongovernmental sectors, establishment of shelter homes,

counseling services, and legal aid centers. Further, several Indian states have established special women's police cells to aid women in reporting violence.

These include among others incidents of young brides being burnt for bringing 'insufficient' dowry, women dyeing in abnormal circumstances, rape on hapless women and molestation of young girls. In some cases there are public protests by women activists and such protests receive media coverage. Deaths of women are extreme outcome of ill treatment, psychological abuse, or physical violence suffered by women. On the other hand domestic violence suffered by women on a regular basis in the form of psychological or physical abuse goes unreported. Very rarely do women themselves file police cases against the ill treatment meted out to them. A few women who escape death end up in shelter homes, but the majority continues to live in marital union and endure abusive behavior. In Karnataka awareness on the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005 seems to have made no impact in the cultural city Mysore. Domestic violence continues unabatedly here.

However, there is an alarming increase in the number of cases related to cruelty by husband or relatives. While 94 cases were reported in 2006, it increased to 116 in 2007 and to 139 cases in 2008. Cases related to abetment of suicide increased from six in 2007 to 10 in 2008. Seven cases related to Immoral Traffic Prevention Act were registered in 2006 and 16 were registered in 2008. According to the police officials, the increase in dowry harassment and domestic violence could be for frivolous reasons. Some causes might be related to issues such as finance, infertility, neglect by children and alcohol consumption.

A senior official said domestic violence against women has increased because of the increase in nuclear families. "In joint families elders tackle the differences that couples have", he said. However, strict punishment under the Dowry Act has brought down the number of dowry deaths to 6 in 2008. Another startling fact that the official records show is that there is a rise in the number of cases related to children missing in Mysore city. Statistics of the CCRB shows that there has been a considerable increase in number of cases of missing children compared to the previous year. As many as 76 boys and 55 girls were reported missing till October 2008 and of these, only 40 boys and 40 girls could be traced. The whereabouts of the remaining are unknown.

In 2007, 105 boys and 96 girls were reported missing and the police could trace 81 boys and 86 girls. Incidents of girls missing have also increased in the city considerably. According to sources, in many cases parents do not register a complaint for fear of society. According to a police official there is a spurt in the cases related to missing girls after the release of "Chaluvina Chittara" by S. Narayan in which a minor girl elopes with a mechanic. "I don't know why such films are allowed to be released. They poison young minds", he said. The police sources said that many cases of missing girls were solved last year but there are many unsolved cases. They said investigation is on in other cases and missing children will be traced. Attempts to address the issue of violence against women have been lopsided andshortsighted. For example, the Dowry Prohibition Act, which was passed in 1961 and amended in 1984 and 1986, emphasizes marital violence in the context of dowry only. While inadequate dowry may be one of the underlying causes of harassment of women, in rural poor households, where dowry is either non-existent or is only a token payment, there are other causes of abusive behavior. Immediate 'shortcomings', negligence or failure in performing duties expected of wives or daughter-in-law also lead to violence. These causes may reflect the deep-rooted gender inequalities that prevail and persist inmost regions of India.

It is in this backdrop that violence against women and some of the best practices being followed in the country to address the menace are being examined in this paper. The paper begins with profiling of Indian women with respect to a few selected socioeconomic indicators. It delineates vulnerability nexus, which is adverse to poverty reduction and sustainable human development. It talks of dimensions of violence against women, including culturally sanctioned forms of violence. It then goes on to review best practices of combating violence against women. Bangalore women are incensed and have launched the Fearless Karnataka campaign to fight against this onslaught from men who are so cowardly that they pick on individual women who are in no position to fight back. But this is a campaign that should be mirrored all over this country. Today it is women in Karnataka who are being targeted. Tomorrow it will be women in any other city or town in this country. While the safety of women in the public space has been a concern in many cities, this new aspect of being deliberately targeted by men who want to inject fear and keep women at home is a new and disturbing development. The other face of violence is what women face even within the ostensible safety of their homes. Two recent studies have reiterated the extent to which Indian women face domestic violence, a fact already established by two consecutive National Family Health Surveys.

The study defines physical violence in specific terms, consisting of any of the following: twisting arm, pulling hair, pushing, shaking or throwing something at the woman, punching with fist or something else, kicking, dragging or beating up, attempting to choke or burn on purpose, threatening attack with knife, gun or any other weapon. And sexual violence as forced sex anytime during the course of marriage including the first night.

Studies show that a woman is raped every 35 minutes in India; female child mortality is higher than male by 25%-50% in India, Bangladesh and Nepal; about 60% of women all over the world have complained about sexual harassment and that the average South Asian woman's risk of dying in childbirth is a hundred times greater than for a woman in an industrialized country (1 in 43 for South Asia and 1 in 4,000 for the developed world).

Experts say that things cannot change much unless women are empowered. Socio-economic independence is one way to do this, as well as allowing women to participate in governance. One of the biggest reasons that little or nothing seems to change for the better for Indian women is the lack of strong and good law. Legislation is still awaited on anti-trafficking, the indecent representation of women, sexual harassment at the workplace and the compulsory registration of marriages. They have been on the anvil for several years but are yet to go on the statute book. "Strengthening of legislations are an ongoing process but my biggest regret is the fact that we could not bring the Bill for 33% reservation of women in Parliament," women and child development minister Renuka Choudhary said. It may be relevant to point out that though women's representation at the panchayat level is high, representation in Parliament has barely improved

from 4.4% at Independence to about 9% today. Civil society activists suggest that bringing in legislation is inadequate if not backed by sufficient resources. "We need to train protection officers and sensitise police officers to be able to handle cases related to crimes against women," says Rishikant, whose NGO Shakti Vahini works with trafficked women.

A SOCIAL CONCERN

Women are principal providers of care and support to families. Yet every social indicator shows a fundamental social bias and inequality. The latest Census (2001) data showing six point increase in sex ratio (number of females per1,000 males) between the Census years 1991 and 2001 have come under cloud and doubts have been expressed whether women were under-enumerated in 1991 or they were over-enumerated in 2001.During the 10 year period between the two Census, considerable progress has been made in the domain of literacy. During the period under review overall literacy increased by 34.46 percentage points – that of males and females by 30.46 and 40.60 percentage points, respectively. Similarly progress has been made with respect to indicators like health and nutrition, female workforce. participation, female life expectancy, female infant mortality and maternal infant mortality. India is among the poorest countries of the world. According to the Human Development Report1, India occupies 162nd place in nations' list of gross national product (GNP). Poverty estimate about India shows that 44.2 per cent population lives below $ 1 a day and 86.2 per cent below $ 2 a day. As a result quality of life in the country is poor. Under five mortality rate per 1,000 was 83 in 1998 and life expectancy at birth in the same year was 64. Public expenditure as percentage of GNP was 3.2 in 1997 and net enrolment ratio in primary schools 77. Public expenditure on health as percentage of GNP was just 0.6 in 1998, infant mortality rate per 1,000 live births 70, total fertility rate (births per woman) 3.2 and maternal mortality rate per 100,000 live births 410. All these critical indicators contribute to the vulnerability of women, leading to all kinds of abuse and exploitation. Clearly these data point to low human development in the area. The human development index identifies three basic parameters, literacy and education, expectation of life at birth and measures of material well being. In this scenario, there is a vulnerability quotient, which is adverse to poverty reduction and sustainable development.

Violence is perpetrated on women both inside and outside her home. Domestic violence comprises all acts of intimidation and aggression which forces a woman to seek redressal by breaking the silence imposed on her by a patriarchal culture3. This operational definition of domestic violence, however, does not include the culturally sanctioned forms of violence (such as, unequal access to the household resources or other restrictions), unless challenged by the women or others on her behalf. Minimally construed as the physical, mental, emotional and sexual abuse of a woman in her intimate relationship, such violence in the Indian context includes intimidating acts by the members (both men and women) of her marital family. Often condoned by culture, such systemic violence enforces gender inequality by curtailing a woman's freedom and right to self-determination. In turn, the climate for violence is created by the prevailing disparities (on the basis of his/her gender) in an individual's entitlements to the family and community resources. Here the focus on marital violence is not to negate the existence of gender violence or inequalities in parental home. On the other hand violence

against women takes place in shape of eve teasing, rape, murder (after rape it is quite common), trafficking, etc., both at their place of work and outside it. While data on the first three are difficult to find at the all India level because 'law and order' is a state subject, considerable data is available on trafficking. According to a report4, between 5,000 and 7,000 girls are trafficked, from their most deprived living environments to exploitative physical and social situations, into India from Nepal, most of them under 18. Girls as young as 13 are trafficked from Asia as mail order brides. In addition girls are trafficked to India from Bangladesh and from poorer states to more affluent ones. The popular routes are from Nepal to Indian states of Uttaranchal, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and West Bengal, and from Bangladesh to Indian state of West Bengal. They are powerless to protest, thus at risk of violence. Lastly, in cases of widespread violence, like communal violence, women are worst sufferers. Even if they are not physically harmed during such violence, they go through considerable trauma because their family members are killed and harmed and their property damaged, ransacked and set afire.

VIOLATION- A REVIEW

Physical violence as well as explicit forms of aggression are used by the more powerful in the household as methods to ensure obedience of the less powerful and therefore related to power dynamics in a household. At every stage in the life cycle, the female body is both the objects of desire and of control (Thapan 1997). Domestic violence includes not only inter spousal violence, but also violence perpetrated by other family members. Generally, an important part of the power relationship between spouses and their families relates to dowry and its ramifications (Karlekar, 1995).

There is a wide societal tolerance for wife-abuse, which is very often even considered justifiable under certain circumstance: Disputes over dowries, a wife's sexual infidelities, her neglect of household duties, and her disobedience of her husband's dictates are all considered legitimate causes for wife-beating. It is only when the torture becomes unbearable or death appeared imminent that most women appeared willing to speak out (Karlekar, 1995).

Glass defines domestic violence as "anything that is experienced as fearful, controlling and threatening when used by those with power (invariably men) against those without power (mainly women and children)" (Ravindran, 1991). Domestic violence includes, harassment, maltreatment, brutality or cruelty and even the threat of assault - intimidation. It includes physical injury, as well as "wilfully or knowingly placing or attempting to place a spouse in fear of injury and compelling the spouse by force or threat to engage in any conduct or act, sexual or otherwise, from which the spouse has a right to abstain". Confining or detaining the spouse against one's will or damaging property are also considered as acts of violence (Bedi K, 1999). Ahuja (1998) and Visaria (1999) have recently conducted studies on 'domestic violence' within marital relationship. The findings of their study have been discussed below. Domestic violence has been defined as " all actions by the family against one of its members that threaten the life, body, psychological integrity or liberty of the member. (Anthony and Miller, cited in Adriana Gomez, 1996) In identifying factors leading to wife beating, both Visaria and Ahuja, in their survey, have tested the co-relationship between wife beating and education. According to Visaria's (1999) survey in Gujarat, illiterate women face more violence than literate women. Relationship

between abusive behaviour and level of education has been found to be statistically significant (Visaria 1999:12). Illiterate women and those with education up to primary level (class 4) tend to be more subjected to violence as compared to those who had received education beyond the primary level. However, one has to keep in mind that the percentage of literate women in Gujarat is overall only between 20% to 50%. In one district, Banas Kantha in Kutch, the total percentage of literate women is even lesser than 20%.

In contrast a study by Ahuja (1998) shows that there is no significant relationship between beating and educational level of the couple. Educated women are beaten as much by their husbands as those who are illiterate or less educated. About one-fourth of the batterers (24%) in Ahuja's study were those who were moderately educated and about one-fourth (26%) were highly educated. However, he added that men whose educational attainment is low, are more likely to beat their wife than men who are better educated. Study findings of Ahuja shows that although women of all ages are victims of wife-battering, a larger number of victims (72%) are among those with an age difference of unto 10 years between spouses. According to the survey findings of Visaria (1999), women who experience domestic violence early in their marriage, continue to be subjected to it even with increase in age. His findings point out that family structure, the presence or absence of children, and the size of the family have little co-relation with wife battering. The study also points out that family income, husband's occupation and employment of women are not co-related with wife battering. According to survey findings of Visaria (1999) joint family tends to offer women some protection or acts as a deterrent to husbands using physical force to subdue them. The forms of violence commonly found by Ahuja (1998) were slapping, kicking, tearing hair, pushing and pulling, hitting with an object, attempting to strangulate and threatening. Forms of psychological abuse were also found to exist, for instance, verbal abuse, sarcastic remarks in the presence of outsiders, imposing severe restrictions on freedom of movement, totally ignoring the wife in decision-making processes, making frequent complaints against her to her parents, friends, neighbours, and kin much to the embarrassment of the wife. Some of the reasons given by the women were financial matters, behaviour with in-laws, back-biting, talking to any male without the liking of the husband, asking for money, preventing him from drinking and husbands personality traits.

Some of the worse forms of violence has been reported by Visaria in her study (1999), for instance, beating with sticks or iron rod, knives, utensils, blades and ladles, throwing women against objects or bashing their heads against the walls, burning of breasts and vagina. In addition, sexual assaults in the form of both hitting women in the vagina by kicking or forcing her into sexual intercourse were reported by nearly 10% of the women. Some of the women who had become victim of this form of violence indicated that injury in their private parts cannot be noticed by anyone and they would be too ashamed to talk about it to others. A couple of women also hinted that men know that their wives cannot report such punishment even to their own parents or seek medical treatment due to asense of shame. Some of the reasons given by women, in the survey done by Visaria is, meals not served properly, economic constraints, financial matters, men wasting money at tea stalls, drinking of alcohol, men feeling that women are paying less attention to the children and vis-à-vis, men

feel women have a lot of free time and so on. One of the main cause why domestic violence prevails and continues is the lack of alternatives among the victims. Women and children may be economically dependent on abusers. Elderly people and children may feel too powerless to escape. Language or cultural barriers may isolate victims from seeking help. Victims generally feel, it is better to suffer in silence than to be separated from loved ones. They keep hoping for improvement, but it is normally observed that, without help, violence gets worse. Victims may also feel helpless, guilty or worthless. They may feel ashamed of the poor quality of the relationship. Abusers may fear the consequences of seeking help, unaware that continuing as before may be even more dangerous. Family members may be unaware of the help that is available from the local agencies. They may also be unaware of their legal rights.In India we have no provision for protection of a complainant, not even under the Prevention of Dowry Act. A woman who has complained of harassment goes back to the very people against whom she has complained. What security can she possibly feel in such a situation, and how can she continue to act on her complaint? She obviously continues to be victimised often paying the ultimate price (Bedi K, 1999).

Many complainants are faced with eviction from the family home, are cut off without maintenance, and are unable to follow the complaint precisely because they have no means to do so. Frequent, unexplained injuries, reluctance to seek medical treatment for injuries or denial of their existence, fear in the presence of certain family member/s, social isolation, disorientation or grogginess, especially in elders indicating misuse of medication and decline in physical appearance and personal hygiene indicating increased isolation and a lack of desire to continue living are some of the indicators of violence (Aravamudan G,1995). Traditional values of the necessity of marrying a girl for spiritual merit and the modern system of calculation and other considerations of the groom's family in a milieu of inequality and insecurity have brought to the surface a sense of competition and manipulation to the advantage of the bridegroom (Paul; 1993:37). According to Paul the treatment of a daughter-in-law depends very much upon the quantum of dowry she brings along with her before, during and after the marriage ceremony (Paul; 1986: 26). However there have been cases when the status of the girl's parents has reduced after the marriage, or there is a loss in the business and the girl is ill-treated in the husband's house thereafter. The dowry normally continues for many years after the marriage. Often, the dowry brought by her is taken away after marriage. In times of financial problems in the husband's house, her jewellery and dowry items are normally the first to be sold. For some people, paying dowry at their daughter's marriage is an investment for fetching high dowry through their son's marriage. Some others, including women discuss on 'marriage with high dowry', with pride. Generally, marriages with pomp and show are preferred. The girls too think it is their right to take dowry with them when they go to the husband's house. People believe that the effective way of equipping women is to resort to dowry in arranging a marital alliance. Another feeling among the mothers-in-law is that when she herself brought dowry from her house at the time of her marriage, why shouldn't she take dowry for her son. According to Menon (1999), dowry related crime is motivated mainly by greed.

According to Mac Kinnons (1979) sexual harassment of working women is primarily a problem faced by women, that men rarely face this problem and therefore it should be considered a form of sex discrimination (Sikri, 1999: 128).Sexual harassment as defined by the court stipulates: "Such unwelcome sexually determined behaviour (whether directly or by implication) as physical contact and advances, A demand or request for sexual favors, sexually coloured remarks, Showing pornography and any other unwelcome physical, verbal or non verbal conduct of sexual nature". Burt (1980) says "unwanted sexual overtures", has the virtue of parsimony butnecessarily concerns intentions and motivation, not just overt behavior. Defining sexual harassment as unwanted sexual overtures has the same problem inherent in defining rape as unwanted sexual relations. In practice the woman has to prove that the sexual relations or the sexual overtures were unwanted (Sikri, 1999: 128). The male colleague will go out of the way to prove that the woman is of loose character (Ibid. 40). According to Quinn (1977) defining sexual harassment means setting boundaries on the term and differentiating sexual harassment from expressions of sexual interest. Not all expressions of sexuality in the workplace could possibly be called sexual harassment. Men and women do meet dating partners and future spouses at work. Some people may even enjoy sexual jokes and flirting that can be ego enhancing and enrich their fantasy life. National Commission for Women has laid down the code of conduct at work place to prevent sexual harassment of women, which has been sent to all Government offices, Ministries, and Universities with the hope that employers would become more sensitive towards women. The guidelines highlight that it shall be the duty of the employer to prevent or deter the commission of any act of sexual harassment at workplace would include unwelcome sexually determined behaviour by any person either individually or in association with other persons such as eve teasing, unsavoury remarks, jokes causing embarrassment, innuendo and taunts, gender based insults or sexist remarks and unwelcome sexual overtones in any manner, touching or brushing against any part of the body, molestation or displaying pornographic or other derogatory pictures or sayings Recommendations to the National Commission for Women based on the view that the definition of sexual harassment is deficient and that "sexual favours……sought by homosexual or lesbian employers of the same sex" also be included (Hindu, April 26,1998).

The Court places an obligation on employers in both the public and private sector to "take appropriate steps to prevent sexual harassment" and "provide appropriate penalties" against the offender. The criminal law should be resorted to where the behaviour amounts to a specific offence under the Indian Penal Code. The Court also recommends that a complaint made by the victim and that such a committee should be headed by a woman, and not less than half its members should be women (Hindu, April 26, 1998). However, this guidelines does not specify any time limit for drafting the code. The Court provides that the employer is responsible for drafting codes to prevent sexual harassment in the workplace. If the power to evolve these codes is to be in the hands of the employer, then given the conservative sexual climate in which we live, what is to prevent the employer from producing a code that encourages gender segregation in the workplace.

The codes could be formulated so as to discourage gender interaction in the workplace, or encourage the establishment of same sex schools and universities instead of co-educational institutions. Perhaps more specific guidelines are required which provide that such sex segregation is not an appropriate response for dealing with sexual harassment. In many cases, it has been found that the committees within the organisations were set up only when there were serious allegations of sexual harassment. Many working women point out that, even if there is an enquiry committee, does anyone really bother to find out what happens to the victim when the enquiry is going on? She is an object of curiosity, sympathy, disdainful glances or simply isolated by her colleagues. The situation at home is worse. Instead of sympathizing with her plight or standing by her, the attitude is one of distrust and suspicion or often humiliation and shame (Sikri, 1999: 40).

The work environment where sexual harassment occurs has hierarchy, norms, rules and constraints that profoundly affect the way people behave in that setting. In particular, the formal rules and informal norms of managers affect both the managers and their subordinates. The top management has the power to influence the employee's work habits, style of dress, recreational interests and social behaviour. When the top management tolerates or condones sexual harassment of employees, the standard reverberates throughout the organization (Sikri, 1999: 129) certain individuals use their positions of relative power to engage in sexual interactions. This type of behaviour clearly constitutes sex discrimination (Hindu, April 26, 1998). Male ego problems, sexual perversion, sexual obsession, widow-hood, pornographic materials and media portrayal is said to be some of the reasons for their harassment. Lawyers facing sexual harassment at work: A survey conducted by Sakshi, a Delhi based NGO, in a few major cities reported that 65 per cent of women lawyers interviewed were always or often subjected to, or had observed, verbal or physical sexual harassment from other lawyers.

The harassment would take various forms according to the survey. They include use of stereo-typed role characterization, sexual innuendo, devaluation of women's work, use of obscene or vulgar language, and comments on appearances and character. The bar report narrates two incidents. In one case, a woman lawyer was openly punched by a male colleague in the High Court premises for refusing to join him for a cup of coffee. When she tried to report the incident, a senior member of the bar dissuaded the police from registering it, on the ground that "it would tarnish the reputation of the Bar". Forty-eight per cent of the women lawyers surveyed also stated that they had heard or experienced remarks or jokes that were demeaning to women (Rameshan G, Hindu, July 19, 1998). In a survey done by National Commission for Women of 1200 women, nearly 50 per cent complained of gender discrimination and physical and mental harassment at work. While 40 per cent of the women said they "usually ignored" such provocation, 3.54 per cent said they reported these to their supervisors, 7.8 per cent to their colleagues and 1.24 percent to the police. About 10 per cent said that they protested against such behavior while 9 per cent said they warned the offenders. At least 20.17 per cent of the respondents said that no investigation was done on their complaints while 1.5 per cent said police harassed them again instead of making the enquiry. A majority of the respondents 84.97 % were not aware of the supreme

court judgment given in August 1997, for specific protection of women from sexual harassment at work (Bhatnagar.R., August 19)

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

All kinds of violence against women outside domain of her home are essentially administrative, police and legal matter. Voluntary organizations/civil society organizations have little role to play in this, except for mounting pressure on the official machinery to act in a non-partisan manner. Lower level officials who deal with such cases are often lured by the enticements of the perpetrators of crime and work in such a manner that is against the spirit of criminal justice. In such cases the organizations mount pressure on the officials by reporting the matter to the higher officials, or to various bodies constituted for women like National and State Commissions for Women. Of late the government has come out with woman police stations, called Mahila Thanas, in major cities of almost all the states of the country. These woman police stations have inherent problems: their coverage is entire district; they are ill equipped in terms of communication and mobility; and their human resource is drawn from other police stations of the districts concerned. Moreover, the woman cops are not tuned to the kind of work they are expected to do – on one hand woman cops are trained to act firmly with criminals and on the other while they are in women police stations they are supposed to act with sensitivity with women.

Lastly, they have to engage themselves in normal policing duties, with long stretches of working. Under these circumstances, it becomes quite difficult for them to discharge the role at the woman police station. As far as domestic violence is concerned responses are varied and multi-layered and they are subsumed in the overall struggle for gender justice. These strategies may be broadly categorised as those that seek to prevent/eradicate domestic violence and those that react/respond to such instances. Encoded in these broad categories are a variety of responses, which may be further delineated on the basis of their target groups and their expected outcomes: Developing a social analysis of violence through research and documentation. Understanding the extent and limits of the law and the criminal judicial system. Ensuring that these theoretical insights are disseminated to the field staff andsocial workers of the organization

INTERVENTION STRATEGIES

Identifying and monitoring vulnerable families to prevent violence Creating new options by developing skills (self-confidence, employment, political consciousness, etc.) Creating economic opportunities for women Empowering women with the knowledge of their rights Providing them with information about the various government welfare programmers and helping them to access them Providing women with the necessary socio-cultural space to conceptualize and articulate their issues Sensitising the community and the bureaucracy to the issue of domestic violence and its illegality Media publicity given to the issue of domestic violence Campaigning for gender just laws and reform in the criminal justice Mechanism. Documentation of cases and conceptualizing experiences systematically documenting the procedural lapses in the criminal justice System. Extending material support to the women (Poonacha, Veena and Divya Paney, Responses to Domestic Violence: Government and Non-Government Action in Karnataka and Gujarat, Economic and Political Weekly, Vol. XXXV, p. 571

Despite the universal awareness of the problem, there is little rigorous data from which to establish prevalence in different countries and to monitor trends. Further, few comprehensive studies have identified the determinants and the health and economic outcomes of domestic violence. Equally lacking has been any systematic analysis of the impact of responses to domestic violence that numerous community-based organizations and state agencies are implementing. Yet, all these elements are necessary to develop a holistic multi-sector policy approach which would not only provide support and treatment, but would effectively contribute to the more elusive area of prevention.

CONCLUSION

All kinds of violence against women outside domain of her home are essentially administrative, police and legal matter. Voluntary organizations/civil society organizations have little role to play in this, except for mounting pressure on the official machinery to act in a non-partisan manner. Lower level officials who deal with such cases are often lured by the enticements of the perpetrators of crime and work in such a manner that is against the spirit of criminal justice. In such cases the organizations mount pressure on the officials by reporting the matter to the higher officials, or to various bodies constituted for women like National and State Commissions for Women. Of late the government has come out with woman police stations, called Mahila Thanas, in major cities of almost all the states of the country. These woman police stations have inherent problems: their coverage is entire district; they are ill equipped in terms of communication and mobility; and their human resource is drawn from other police stations of the districts concerned. Moreover, the woman cops are not tuned to the kind of work they are expected to do – on one hand woman cops are trained to act firmly with criminals and on the other while they are in women police stations they are supposed to act with sensitivity with women.

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