

# VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

## *A Layperson's point of view*

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### **Abstract**

As the society moves towards 21<sup>st</sup> century it has shown a remarkable progress in every field and individual (which includes both men and women), especially women as they have crossed the boundaries and achieving new heights in every field, but few in this very same society are finding difficult to digest the fact of women empowerment as they themselves are still slaves of a naïve mindset. This article 'Violence against Women' is mostly based on the personal experiences faced by the author or close friends in the society.

### **Introduction**

Violence Against Women, a new term for some people but the oldest in practice. A new term, because generally violence against women is accepted in our society as the part of their life. I was also of somewhat that opinion at one time. I knew that women are suffering and they have to take a stand but again sometimes I started thinking that these are the repercussions of being a woman.

After exploring this area I realize that violence against women started since the dawn of civilization when they divided the criteria of men and women's work based on so called strength. They say that a women is delicate and by nature have a loving and caring personality, so must confined to the house, do the house-hold chores and nurture children. While men being strong and hard, explore the world. Nobody ask them why women appeared to them so delicate when before that they together took part in hunt with men? Even now in the present scenario we find women in every sphere of life, regardless of their so called mental and physical abilities.

Long ago in my childhood I used to watch *nukkad natak* played by a women's group. They very delicately describe the status of women in society. Like I remember in one play there was a debate that women is nothing but a mere shadow of man and people address her after her husband like the wife of a *master* is called *mastarain*, the wife of doctor is called *doctorain* and so on. They enact the whole play in a comical way but of course with a very serious note which made people to think. At that time I did not get its depth but it certainly leave an impression on me as later I realize.

Now come to think of it, isn't it crime to steal someone's identity? Yes it is, and crime always associated with violence, therefore it is indeed violence against that person. I wonder if you remember the old *complain ad*, in that ad the host asked a woman her name and she replied *Mrs.Sharma*. Surprisingly it is that type of violence which is largely accepted by women. Even today if you ask a married woman her name, eight out of ten called themselves as Mrs somebody. They very conveniently have made to forget their names.

In patriarchal system there is no space for women's own identity. She has always known as the subject of her husband or her father. She cannot claim a name of her own and this is the biggest violence against her.

Actually the problem is that women themselves are not aware of their rights and by and large accept their status as it is. They have been in this through ages and perhaps forget to think for themselves. Reason is very simple; the first thing that man do after being so called civilized, seize the identity of women. You can easily understand women's position by visualizing the condition of a bird that was caged for a very long time and finally when the door suddenly opens she hesitates just because she has forgotten to trust herself.

VAW today has spread its wings in various directions and now you can find each and every type of violence, crime or exploitation in it. To understand the term easily VAW is classified in various categories:

Domestic Violence, Mental and Physical Violence, Dowry, Suicide, Murder, Rape, Kidnapping, Teasing, Violence At Work Place, Violence in Sasural, Violence in Parent's House etc.

All are very well known type of violence and sometimes blamed on women alone.

### **Rape:**

This crime is supposed to be a violation of a women's honour and a very cruel way to teach a woman or her male kin (because women is supposed to be the property of her husband or father/brother) a lesson. It is a way to prove man's power- dominating power that says that women are the weakest link and even underdog of the society. Actually a girl is brought up in such a way that each new day she was told that losing virginity is the greatest sin of all, no matter she herself go for it or become a victim. She must take the responsibility of it. As a result the victim develops a guilt conscious in herself, started hiding and feeling what a great crime she had done. It is a great irony that if you are stabbed with a knife and it leaves a deep scar in your body, you will recover after a period, though the shock would still be there but you were sympathized and supported by the society but a rape victim, she has no right to recover from the incident and society always treats her as untouchable. Nobody told the person, who got the knife scar that it was your fault but they always felt that there must be some fault on rape victim's part. A girl becomes a victim, she was raped, why we don't just say that she meets a dreadful accident and we should help her recovering from it. Many examples you can find of this kind in our very dear society. Earlier, there have been incidents where a rape victim is denied entry in school or parents told their children to keep away from a rape victim who was once a very good friend of them. This type of violence is most prevalent in society and the convict who in most of the cases goes free.

### **Domestic Violence:**

In our country and in culture wife beating is considered a personal matter and husband has every right to do it. In a patriarchal system husband is the chief of the family, he is the decision maker. Wife is just an underling with no power at all. And this is not just the case with wife daughter are also of less importance as all the really good things are for son only. Domestic violence covers a vast range of violence. The suffering of women's life starts at her own home. In this 21<sup>st</sup> century we can find homes where woman is prepare to yield her hopes and demands before a man. She is

taught that she has no identity of her own but to follow man is her destiny. And then there start a series of violence against her. Of course she cannot complain because she is a girl, a woman. The question is what kind of things we say is violence against her? In my opinion gender based discrimination is the answer. When a girl is forced to do something or stopped to do something against her will, when she is illused by the family members because of being a weak girl/women and easily available, not to mention assault or battering and abuse then she is certainly facing violence.

### **Mental and Physical Violence:**

I had already mentioned the kind of physical violence faced by women in home. The fact is that violence against women is not confined itself to any boundaries but wherever a women goes there would be every possibility that she faces some or the other kind of violence. On physical level she faces assault and battery, verbal abuse, teasing, sexual assault and even acid throwing. Man leaves no stone untouched when it comes to hurt a woman. Therefore she suffers – suffers because she is a women and most of the time without retaliating. Physical wounds can be seen and treated and may be they left a mark but generally are curable but what about her mental condition. A woman who has been denied the right to live confidently and with dignity in the society starts living in constant trauma. She no longer feels safe. These are consequences of physical violence but it is, not necessary that mental violence is the outcome of physical violence. The way society discriminate women leaves deep impression on mind. No matter where she is at home, in office, in the market place etc. she is bound to be traumatize because of gender discrimination. People think that they can easily take advantage with a woman and sometimes even women make it easier for them as they don't have the courage to strike back. Woman's mental trauma is very evident if we look at the cases of sex selective abortion. No I am not saying that women take decision in this context but very few women who go for it willingly often said that they don't want their girl to be the part of this world which is so mean for women. I would like to give one more example here told me by my friend. She had a cousin who wants to exercise her right to choice in marriage but her family forcibly married her to the guy they choose for her since her childhood. There was no option left for her and she yield to her destiny but when her own girl was born she said openly that she would not educate her girl more than fifth standard because if you cannot exercise your rights what the use in knowing them. You can easily understand the level of her mental stress that she was constantly in ever after so much time lapse.

### **Dowry:**

It has its root deep down inside in every custom and culture. Some can say; a part of our very dear tradition but a very ancient tool to exercise violence against women. Today dowry becomes an extra source of wealth. And when a bride failed to be that source or her parents are unable to fulfill the demands then she must prepare herself to face each and every kind of torment. Generally it ends in bride burning or suicide. How easily I said all this. But one cannot realize the agony of the woman who has been in such tormenting state and finds herself very helpless. Nobody is there to help her or even listen to her even her husband mistreat her. Her life there is full of sufferings physical and mental.

### **Suicide:**

According to me suicide is not violence but an outcome of violence. You torture and torment a woman to that extent where she cannot think of any solution but to kill herself. We can find its example very often in our society that a girl killed herself because her parents were denying her every right or a girl killed herself because of boozier husband or a woman cannot bear the torment of her in laws and commit suicide.

### **Murder:**

Daily in the newspaper there is a report of one or two murder. It seems that rape and murder are salt of newspaper. But the question is how to put them in the context of violence against women. The answer is very simple on one hand but difficult on the other. Look at Rajasthan; they killed the girl child just after the birth by putting her in an earthenware jar and buried it. Sex selective abortion is also a murder of a girl before even her birth. Besides, dowry death, bride burning and all sorts of violence which lead a girl/woman to take her own life are murder which is the gravest violence.

### **Kidnapping & Trafficking:**

Kidnapping and trafficking has also its root very deep in our society. People kidnap girls and sell them. Reason; a sheer want of money and sometimes for revenge. These girls then forcibly thrown into prostitution. Statistics available on the subject amazed me as I come to know the large number of girls from different states and neighboring countries were kidnapped and then put into prostitution. I once came across a story in a urdu magazine which told the story of a very poor village where there was very little to live upon, parents willingly sell their girls to a broker who in his turn take them to city, gave them training to look civilized and then put into prostitution.

### **Teasing:**

Every girl in her span of life come across teasing. It is very common. Seldom a girl retaliate and generally ignore thinking that they say; let them say; we would go our way. But is that the solution? Certainly not. They say that girls themselves tempt men to tease them. And I had heard it myself; a mother was telling her daughter that if somebody would pass remark on you or tease you I would blame firstly you and would ask why on earth he choose you to comment upon? Girls generally ignore these things because they were told if they react then they would turn nasty and do something serious to harm them. When Nirbhaya was raped and murdered brutally Jaya Bacchan said that 'Had we been vocal against eve teasing in our time this would'nt have happened. We faced it and suffered in silence and they gain confidence which led to this hideous crime today. What woman does not understand that eve teasing is the first step by a man to violate her confidence and privacy; if this step is broken they cannot climb the ladder of VAW.

### **Violence at Work Place:**

Women cannot work in night shifts because there is more danger to her then in daytime. What I don't understand is that why there is always some kind of danger for women if they come out of their houses. Women is always subjected to violence whether in home or in work place.

In most of the places women are paid less salary than the male worker although the work they do is same. They were easy to exploit physically, mentally and sexually. A woman who works in an office is always a source of gossip to men. Her superiors try to take advantage of her physically and sexually which get her in a mental trauma.

A woman no matter how efficient, how strong; has always seen as a commodity of which man has every right to take advantage. And man thinking him superior tries his very best to show a woman her place which in his opinion is only doing so called womanly jobs. If she is promoted they will easily say 'oh, she must be having an affair with the boss' ignoring all the hard work she has put in. Actually men cannot easily digest a woman's efficiency and started playing rough with her so that she may lose her confidence.

### **Violence at Sasural:**

In our society we have set roles for everybody. Man is the head of house; woman is always her subordinate etc. Likewise there is a set pattern that when a woman becomes a mother-in-law she ought to behave nastily to her daughter-in-law; so does all other in-laws relations. When the son gets married in-laws become very happy and welcome the daughter-in-law. But the moment they found out that the golden trail which ought to follow her is missing; their behavior instantly changes. And then start a series of different kind of mental and physical torture. Generally a girl bears the sufferings because she has nowhere to go. She was told at her *vidai* that she has to live in her husbands home no matter what happen to her (*jis ghar mein doli gayee hai usse arthi hi nikle*). The problem is that a woman has no home of her own. The house in which she brought up was told to be her father's then she is send to her husband's house. She has nothing as her own.

### **Violence at Natal House:**

Home sweet home, the smallest unit of society, the safest place on earth. Is it really so? Never it had been. Violence against women starts at their very home. The safest place acts like a prison for them in this context. There they were taught they are inferior to boy physically and mentally. Discrimination starts at that very level.

They were denied freedom, education, food, toys etc. which a boy gets easily. The worse part of it that male members take advantage of the weakness and meekness of the girl and exploit them sexually. They frightened her enough not to tell anyone and if she does, she was told to be keep silence on the matter; but nothing is done to protect her from the culprit or to give her back her sense of security. Instead she was made to develop a guilt conscious in her and gradually loose all the confidence of her personality.

### **Conclusion:**

Violence against women is very prevalent in our society. It is going on in the name of custom, culture and religion. I remember a dialogue of a documentary film where a woman says:

“We have the power to reproduce life whereas men don't, that's why they are afraid of us and imposes so much ban and restrictions on us. They are afraid because what if we become aware of our powers?”

She said it very rightly and correctly. Indeed women are more powerful than men if not then surely they are not less than men. Then why this discrimination is there? Nobody has the answer. I think that for ages man was made thought to be most powerful on earth while women

is just there to obey him in every way. Take the example of a king who after a long period of dictatorship is told that state is not the king alone and the subjects who only follow his commands before now become aware of their rights and demand an equal partnership in the ruling of the state. This is the thing that is happening now. Women are getting aware of themselves and their rights. And the best part of it that they are acting like torch bearers; not only lighting their lives but of others also. The problem is that people seldom recognize violence against women. The types of violence that people know are rape, kidnapping & trafficking and murder. When it comes to domestic violence they say it is their personal matter, in the matter of violence at work place they why on earth that woman go and work there. She should stay at home and be a good wife and mother. Violence at sasural seems to be the part of her destiny and violence at natal house seldom go notice because nobody gives importance to the little girl's talk.

Two lines come into my mind just now which I am very fond of:

*“If you want to be some body, if you want to go some where Then you better wake up and pay attention.”*

Meaning: its high time we made society realize what it has been doing to the women folk since ages. At the same time we must spread awareness about the rights and freedom that a woman ought to have.

