

Domestic Violence against Women

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Abstract : Domestic violence against women is a vital theme of the Indian history. Though, the women of India played an important role throughout the ages for the sustainable development of the human civilization but they were not beyond the bad practice of the domestic violence. Household violence created a lot of miseries and sufferings in the lives of many women. In accordance with A.S. Altekar, an eminent historian, the female baby was not welcomed in the patriarchal society of ancient India, So, it seems the a girl was to tolerate the domestic apathy at her first birth's cry. During the period of the Indus valley civilization, the lady deities were worshipped by the contemporary Indus dwellers. Therefore, the women in that civilization occupied an immense familiar prestige. That's why, the Indus valley civilization was supposed as the women centric civilization. In the Vedic civilization, this picture of the women status was changed. Father or the male elder of the family was the principal authority of the family. He had an enormous influence on the rest of the family members. The female member got no exemptions of his authority. Thus, there started the patriarchy in the Vedic civilization. This discriminatory social continuation of patriarchy influenced the domestic lives of the Indian women throughout the ancient, medieval and modern ages in various ways. Numerous lives of the countless women became the innocent victims at the hands of the cruel domestic offenders. Swami Vivekananda, the great humanist thinker observed that two sins were in India. One was the system of caste-ism and other was the oppression on the females. Even, the social reformers made the efforts to put an end to the in human customs of the domestic and social violence imposed on the ladies. Despite it, household offence had been going on for a long time. After the independence of India a large number of women became an easy prey in the event of the partition. Violence on numerous women was going on in the form of physical harassment and abduction etc. on the eve of the partition of India and Pakistan. Independent India proceeded ahead after making a successful solution of this problem. But domestic violence yet was going on by some mentally detorted persons in India, So, abortion, honor killing, early marriage, dowry system, purdah system, domestic denial to the right of many women to education and property etc contaminated the good and healthy domestic environment of the society. Recent outbreak of the Corona pandemic added a fuel to the domestic violence and made the problem more complicated. Like many men, a lot of women lost their jobs and they were helplessly and unwillingly compelled to stay at their homes at the proximity of the domestic offenders by without seeking any other shelter for their living.

Key words: Domestic violence, honor killing, dowry system, Swami Vivekananda, human civilization.

Domestic Violence against Women:

Domestic violence against women is a vital subject matter of the history of India. The women contributed in various ways to the sustainable development of the human civilization. They left a constructive role to the welfare of the human being. A section of the human being not only irrespective of their outstanding

role, but they also harassed them in many ways. So, the torture as well as the harassment on the women by the domestic male members defamed the history of the human being. Even in modern India many wise persons like Ramkrishna Parmahangsadev worshipped the ladies as the goddess. In Harappan civilization, there was the adoration of the lady deities.¹ In the modern time, Sri Ramkrishna Paramahangsadev.² Despite this glorious cultural heritage of India, the event of domestic violence on the ladies was going on throughout the ages. Nevertheless, it has maligned the reach tradition of Indian culture.

During the Vedic age, father was the absolute authority of the family. He was the owner of the family. He had an immense influence on the rest of his family. The household ladies were not beyond his control. All of the members of the family had to obey the instructions of the father. But, it may not be said that the women had no prestige. In the family, they enjoyed an immense prestige.³ The ladies could take the lessons to the elder family members. Even they could go to the distant places in taking proper lessons under the teachers. It may be observed that Atreyi was an well educated lady. She completed her lessons under the guidance of the wise teachers like Balmiki and Agastya munis (saints).⁴ But, inspite of it, it may be seen that in the Vedic civilization the birth of the female child was not appreciated in the family. Instead of it, the family members expected the birth of a male child. This same thing was noticed in the respect of the educational field. The ladies were expected fo do their household activities. But, some of the renowned ladies like Gargi, Apala, Subhadra, Lopamudra and Mamata overcame this problem and they established themselves as the higher educated ladies at that time. Moreover, they were able to write some charms and hymes of the Veda scripture.⁵

Later or, there was a change of the position of the women in the society. They were deprived of their positions and rights to property.⁶ Many husbands pursued the evil practice of polygamy. The girls were given marriage in their early ages. Many of the females were not allowed to take their education. They were kept under the purdah inside their family. Caste-system began to develop towards the end of the later Vedic civilization. Marriages with the brides of the lower castes were not expected with the grooms of the higher castes of the society. So, there emerged the untouchability in the caste based society.⁷ The Sudras and the many tribals were kept beyond the society.

In the Buddhist society, there was not the presence of the complexity of the caste-system. Buddhists did not show any discrimination towards the various castes. They exhibited equal treatments to the people of all castes.⁸ But, it is seen in the Buddhist society that there was the violence of the Buddhists against the ladies in various ways. For example, it may be mentioned that there was the discrimination between a man and a woman to the admission in the Buddhist monasteries. A man disciple could easily take the admission into the monasteries of the Buddhists. But, a woman disciple had to give various examinations to enter into there. It was not easy to the entrance of a nun there. Simultaneously, the male members got an easy promotion in comparison with a female member in the Buddhist monasteries. In every month, the nun had to take the guiding principal of the male abbot.⁹

In medieval India, domestic violence was more apparent. The ladies were given early marriage. They were not allowed to enjoy the equal right like the male. They were kept under the purdah system. They were not given the equal shares of their hereditary property. Every people of the lower castes were not given the right to cultivate their own lands.¹⁰ The women were deprived of their higher education due to the lack of the higher educational centers. They were asked to learn the household affairs during their leisure.¹¹ They could be able to take the lessons of weaving handicrafts, sewing and other household affairs. But, despite domestic authority of the elder male members, the women were not beyond the attainment of the cultural lessons. They could participate in the fair and the drama as the audiences. The message of these occasions enriched the mental health of the females. Apart from it, the Sufis and the Bhaktis with the preaching of their humanistic teachings enlightened the contemporary medieval people.¹² In the society, there was a misconception that the ladies would become the untimed widows, if they took an education. There was also a superstition among the ladies that only the girls who were associated with the stage dancing and dramas and place would take the education.

In the British Indian age, domestic violence by the male members against the ladies exceeded the limit. In the pretext of the superstition of enjoying the pleasure at the heaven, the male members sent the widows to the funeral pyre of their late husbands. Many uneducated ladies could not understand the cleverness of their own family members. The male members of the widowed family wanted to enjoy the property of the widows by burning them in the fire with their late husbands. The family members of the widows without showing their sympathy to them, wanted to expect their destructions so that they might be able to enjoy their properties without any obstacle.¹³ They brought the domestic violence too far that they gained an immense pleasure during the sacrifices of the widows willingly or unwillingly, by beating drums and other musical instruments. But, eminent social reformer namely Raja Rammohan Roy made his efforts to stop this inhuman evil practice. Lord Bentinck responded to his appeal and banned this notorious Sati custom in 1829 AD.¹⁴ Beyond it, there was the other violence of the males on the females. The females who became widows were not allowed by their family members and the society to do marriage once more. The widows had to lead their lives through performing many orthodox principals. They were not allowed to dress up as per their own desire. They had to fast for several days in many religious occasions. Though they could not bear the severe agony of the fastness, but they were obliged to obey it.¹⁵

Under this situation, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar propagated for the re-marriage of the widows. But, the contemporary patriarchal and superstitious society did not prefer his wise deed. So, they protested against him. Despite it, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar did not give up his hope for the justice of the widows. Therefore, in 1856 AD, widow re-marriage act was passed to legalize the re-marriage of the widows. Besides it, the ladies did not get the proper opportunity to conduct their lives as per their own rights. Contemporary writers applied their writings to gain the right of the women in favor of them.¹⁶ Here, the names of Michael Madhusudan Dutta and Rabindranath Tagore may be mentioned. Both of them with the help of their pens claimed the autonomous rights of the women. On the other hand, some leading social

organizations made their efforts to put an end to the domestic violence against the women of their own family members and the other. In this connection, the Young Bengalis under the leadership of Henry Vivian Derozio, a young teacher of the Hindu College tried to end the domestic violence on the women. For this purpose, they carried on a campaign in the meetings, gatherings and conferences through delivering lectures. Besides this, they promoted their campaign in the papers, journals etc.¹⁷ But, contemporary men could not understand the utility of the far-sightedness of the Derozians. So, they did not accept him and he was expelled from his position of treachery at Hindu College.

Begum Rokeya was also the witness of the domestic violence of her time. She could not achieve an opportunity to take education in the educational institute by going out of her own home. So, she had to take her lessons at her own home. Her elder brother and her husband gave her all sorts of facilities to complete her lessons.¹⁸ Her husband namely Syed Sakhawat Hossain, deputy magistrate of Bhagalpur inspired her to establish a girls' school to promote education among the women. After his death, Begum Rokeya came to Calcutta from Bhagalpur and set up a girls' school there. She preached consciousness among the women against the domestic violence of the men on the women. Here, she made an strong protest against the purdah system. According to her, purdah system was a silent killer of the society. Through her numerous writings, she wanted to grow self-consciousness among the women.¹⁹ Thus, it may be observed that there prevailed domestic violence. The women were not appreciated to take education in the schools. Their family members did not prefer to support the female members to take lessons. So, the girls had to conduct their lessons in the leisure of their cooking. Even, some girls who went to school faced severe problems own their way. The eve teasers disturbed them by throwing stones and using abusive words towards the girl students. Despite this violence, the girls were able to achieve an education. So, there were many female teachers who established girls' schools under their own care. Kadambini Ganguli and Chandramukhi Basu were the higher educated ladies. During the recent perspectives of the pandemic of Corona virus, covid-19, the issue of domestic violence against the women has risen once more. Many women have lost their jobs and began to stay at homes obeying the principal of social distancing. It has given the domestic offenders more opportunities to harass the female family members by physical torture, mental disturbance in the farm of beating, miscreant, abortion, honour killing, early marriage, dowery system, purdah system etc. The helpless victims of the domestic violence unwillingly are forced to stay along with the domestic offenders at homes without getting any opportunity to take shelters anywhere in order to get rid of the severe problem of the domestic violence.

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