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PROTECTION OF WOMEN AGAINST DOMESTIC VIOLENCE ACT, 2005: A CRITICAL ANALYSIS

DR. ARCHANA BHATIA ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR DAV CENTENARY COLLEGE FARIDABAD

ABSTRACT

We are lucking enough to witness the 21st century, the modern era. Men and women are doing wonders and creating history. They are becoming role models for their followers. Domestic Violence is suffocating our social development. My question to the nation is why there is a need of such acts. Rather violence at home should be prevented and not cured. Let us join hands and spread awareness about living in peace and harmony with one another. But even if there are a few of those anti-social elements, the law is there to take a good care of them in its own way.

KEYWORDS

Domestic Violence Act, 2005, women protection.

INTRODUCTION

omestic violence is a pattern of behavior which involves violence or other abuse by one person against another in a domestic setting, such as in marriage or cohabitation.

It can take a number of forms, including physical, verbal, emotional, economic, religious, and sexual abuse, which can range from exquisite coercive forms to marital rape and even domestic murders.

The Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act 2005 is an Act of the Parliament of India enacted to protect women from domestic violence. It was brought into force by the Indian government from 26 October 2006. It is a civil law meant primarily for protection orders and not meant to penalize criminally.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Kausher Shabnam "The study of Domestic Violence against Women Labor in Indian Society" Altius Shodh Journal of Management and Commerce", ISSN 2348 - 8891

Domestic violence is one of the crimes against women linked to their disadvantageous and weak status in the society. It is recognized as the significant barriers of the empowerment of women, with consequences of women's health, their health health-seeking behaviour and their adoption of small family. This research is based on the study of women domestic violence inside at home as well as outside of home during their employment and some study of previous research papers with their conclusion. The method used in this is theoretical method and conclusion made after the study of thesis on the study of women labour working during the construction work of any building. The study shows that this is not a recent problem rather it has its deep roots inserted since few decades. The government and voluntary organizations are making efforts towards ending violence against women which will be impossible if a common man is not supportive. The paper is an overview about domestic violence and the author attempts to analyze the data on violence against women. The analysis shows that the women belonging to low socio-economic status are more likely to agree with each of the different reasons justifying wife-beating.

LeelaVisaria "Violence Against Women in India: Evidence from Rural Gujarat" Gujarat Institute of Development Studies

The study based on five villages in Kheda district is a preliminary exploration of the prevalence of domestic violence against women. She correlates violence, the forms of abuse and the reasons given for abuse. The findings of the study dramatically underscore the universality of the experience within homes across age, community, and education. It also points to several interesting dimensions such as the lower incidence of violence among joint families, and the difference in impact of higher educational status of men compared to that of women on levels of violence. It also indicates some of the possible links between the gender division of labor within the household and incidents of violence. The study highlights the lack of options for women in rural communities to address domestic violence. Yet the analysis makes evident the possible points of entry of convention strategies that would strengthen family and community responses. It provides an important backdrop to the SNDT University and TISS response studies. These two studies provide a critical look at the ongoing efforts by both the government and the non-governmental sectors. Both studies have focused in particular upon the issue of partnership between civil society and the state, which has emerged as a central element in the implementation and monitoring of human rights obligations. The range of responses that have been considered include: 1) judicial and police responses, 2) state welfare policies, 3) sensitization programs conducted within the community and in specific sectors such as the judiciary 4) enabling actions undertaken by the voluntary organizations for economic and social empowerment of women, and 5) support to the individual woman to fight for rights and rebuild her life. A critical outcome from both studies is the development of a typology of this range of responses that is analytically rich and provides a tool to develop criteria for evaluating effectiveness.

Nishi Mitra "Best practices among responses to domestic violence in Maharashtra and MadhyaPradesh" Women's studies unit Tata Institute of Social Science,

The study focuses specifically on the governmental and non-governmental interventions and responses being implemented in the states of Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh. This study undertakes a non-random, cross-sectional survey of various factors involved in interventions. A qualitative analysis of purposively selected samples of state and NGO responses was also undertaken. Counseling oriented towards preserving family inviolability is found to be a predominant response in the state sector. The non-governmental sector does attempt to extend the range of services provided by offering an array of rehabilitative programs. An issue that Mitra probes is the extent to which the government interventions are contradictory in nature, and in particular whether the efforts at family counseling undermine legal and judicial responses.

Waghamode R.H., Desai Bhavana and Kalyan J.L. Domestic "Violence against Women: An Analysis" www.isca.in

This study deals with Incidence of Violence against women during 2006- 10 and percentage variation in 2010 over 2009. It reveals that violence against women such as rape, kidnapping and abduction, dowry deaths, torture, molestation, immoral trafficking, indecent representation of women have substantially increased in 2010 compared to 2009. This is a huge thing to get worried about. But we cannot conclude saying that crimes against women have increased in all aspects, because importation of girls, sati prevention, sexual harassment and dowry prohibition have registered lower no of cases in 2010 compared to 2009 which leads to some personal satisfaction that women are getting safer. Number of cases relating to rape and kidnapping and abduction have increased in the year 2010 compared to 2009 i.e. there is a percentage variation of 3.6 % and 15.7 % respectively in 2010 over 2009. Whereas sexual Harassment and Importation of Girls have registered lower no of cases i.e. there is a percentage variation of -9.5% and -25.0 % respectively in 2010 over 2009. Negligible percentage variation of 0.1% of Dowry deaths have occurred.

OBJECTIVES OF THE ACT

The study is undertaken in order to undertake the following objectives:

- 1. To summarize the salient features of the PWDVA, 2005.
- 2. To identify loopholes in the PWDVA, 2005.
- 3. To provide suggestive measures to strengthen the PWDVA, 2005.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Primary and Secondary data are being used in the study. A structured questionnaire was got filled up from 30 lawyers from Delhi handling cases of domestic violence. Out of 30 lawyers, 12 were female and 18 were males. 17 lawyers we under the age group of 45 and 13 were above 45 years. 11 lawyers had as experience of more than 10 years whereas 19 lawyers were having less than 10 years of experience. The various web resources, research articles in journals, the online version of the PWDVA, 2005, etc were consulted as secondary sources.

SALIENT FEATURES OF THE ACT

Primarily meant to provide protection to the wife or female live-in partner from domestic violence at the hands of the husband or male live-in partner or his relatives, the law also extends its protection to women living in a household such as sisters, widows or mothers. Domestic violence under the act includes actual abuse or the threat of abuse whether physical, sexual, verbal, emotional or economic. Harassment by way of unlawful dowry demands to the woman or her relatives would also be covered under this definition.

The salient features of the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005 are as follows:

- The Act seeks to cover those women who are or have been in a relationship with the abuser where both parties have lived together in a shared household
 and are related by consanguinity, marriage or a relationship in the nature of marriage, or adoption; in addition relationship with family members living
 together as a joint family are also included. Even those women who are sisters, widows, mothers, single women, or living with them are entitled to get legal
 protection under the proposed Act.
- "Domestic violence" includes actual abuse or the threat of abuse that is physical, sexual, verbal, emotional and economic. Harassment by way of unlawful dowry demands to the woman or her relatives would also be covered under this definition.
- One of the most important features of the Act is the woman's right to secure housing. The Act provides for the woman's right to reside in the matrimonial or shared household, whether or not she has any title or rights in the household. This right is secured by a residence order, which is passed by a court. These residence orders cannot be passed against anyone who is a woman.
- The other relief envisaged under the Act is that of the power of the court to pass protection orders that prevent the abuser from aiding or committing an act of domestic violence or any other specified act, entering a workplace or any other place frequented by the abused, attempting to communicate with the abused, isolating any assets used by both the parties and causing violence to the abused, her relatives and others who provide her assistance from the domestic violence
- The draft Act provides for appointment of Protection Officers and NGOs to provide assistance to the woman w.r.t medical examination, legal aid, safe shelter, etc.
- The Act provides for breach of protection order or interim protection order by the respondent as a cognizable and non-bailable offence punishable with
 imprisonment for a term which may extend to one year or with fine which may extend to twenty thousand rupees or with both. Similarly, non-compliance
 or discharge of duties by the Protection Officer is also sought to be made an offence under the Act with similar punishment.

While "economic abuse" includes deprivation of all or any economic or financial resources to which the victim is entitled under any law or custom whether payable under an order of a Court or otherwise or which the victim requires out of necessity including, but not limited to, household necessities for the aggrieved person and her children, if any, stridhan, property, jointly or separately owned by her, payment of rental related to the shared household and maintenance and disposal of household effects, any alienation of assets whether movable or immovable, valuables, shares, securities, bonds and the like or other property in which the victim has an interest or is entitled to use by virtue of the domestic relationship or which may be reasonably required by the victim or her children or her stridhan or any other property jointly or separately held by the victim and prohibition or restriction to continued access to resources or facilities which the victim is entitled to use or enjoy by virtue of the domestic relationship including access to the shared household, "physical abuse" means any act or conduct which is of such a nature as to cause bodily pain, harm or danger to life, limb, or health or impair the health or development of the victim and includes assault, criminal intimidation and criminal force.

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

LOOPHOLES OF THE ACT

- 1. There is greater inconsistency in the implementation of the Domestic Violence Act 2005 amongst different states. For instance, Maharashtra state has appointed 3687, protection officers, Assam had only 27 on its rolls and only 25 in Gujarat.
- 2. There are discrepancies about how qualified the protection officers were. According to a study, for instance, the majority of protection officers do not have a background in social work or law.
- 3. A major loophole exists regarding the status of the protection officer. They were in actuality government officials from various departments vested with this additional charge. This affects their capacity to intervene effectively.
- 4. Collecting relevant data proved to be a major challenge. For example, orders from the lower courts, where all the applications under PWDVA are filed, are not available for analysis, despite repeated requests to the Chief Justice of India.
- 5. Five petitions challenging the PWDVA violate the constitutional right to equality as it provides relief only to women.
- 6. Inadequate budgetary allocation and lack of proper infrastructure to implement the PWDVA also is a major drawback.
- 7. Medical profession does not really acknowledge domestic violence as a public health issue despite the fact that it is a stakeholder in the PWDVA, along with police and judiciary.
- 8. The main users of the PWDVA are married women which means that domestic violence is recognized in a non-marital situation or not seen as a problem capable of legal resolution.
- 9. The court or legal procedure is difficult for the victim and there is lack of proper protection of them provided by the authority.
- 10. Justice is often delayed (mentioned time period is 60 days)
- 11. Majority of protection officers are males but victims are females. Hence more female protection officers are needed.

A few statement questions were asked and the respondents rated their perception on a five point scale ranging from 1 to 5 (1-Strongly disagree and 5-Strongly Agree). The responses are analyzed as follows:

- The mean value of the statements "Domestic Violence is satisfying the need of the hour" and "Women are misusing the domestic violence act during disputes" was 3.12 and 3.37 respectively. This clearly indicates the fact that the respondents show a neutral attitude on these statements i.e. neither the respondents agree with these statements nor do they completely disagree.
- The mean score for the statement "Domestic Violence Act differs from the provision of Section 498 A of the Indian Penal Code" was found to be 4.07 indicating that the respondents in general agree with the statement that there are differences between the provisions of the Domestic Violence Act, 2005 and Section 498 A of the Indian Penal code. Rather it would not be wrong to conclude that the PWDVA, 2005 is a modified version of the Section 498 A of IPC.
- For the statements "Domestic violence act is looked as a criminal law handling instrument", "Domestic Violence Act is providing rapid and flexible relief to the victim and "Domestic Violence Act is an ideal gender law". The mean score compiled were 2.48, 2.65 and 2.23 respectively. This throws light on the fact that the PWDVA, 2005 is generally a civil law tool rather than a criminal law one. Also the respondents are of the opinion that the victim is not been provided with quick relief which supports the statement that "Justice delayed is justice denied". The act also created a notion that in general the women are the victim strata of the society therefore it cannot be treated as an ideal gender law.

• For the statement "There is greater variability in the implementation of the law amongst different states", the mean score were found to be 4.12. These responses show that impartiality in the implementation. This act amongst different states and this is also supplemented through the secondary data as well.

SUGGESTIVE MEASURES TO STRENGTHEN PWDVA, 2005

Based on the primary and secondary data used in the study, the following suggestive measures are hereby recommended to strengthen the PWDVA< 2005.

- 1. Regional disparities in the appointment of the Protection Officers in different states should be worked out after through consultation.
- 2. The basic qualification to be possessed by the Protection Officers must also be fixed.
- The status of these Protection Officers should not be intermingled with any other government department and must be entrusted duties only under PWDVA, 2005.
- 4. Adequate budget and infrastructure must be allocated for smooth the smooth implementation of the Act.
- 5. Domestic Violence must be recognized as a public issue
- 6. Awareness must be spread among the availability of the Act even for unmarried people and not only as a tool for the married ones.
- 7. The legal procedure under the Act should be simplified for it to be used by the victims and also effective steps should be taken for prompt decisions.
- 8. More of the female Protection Officers should be employed.

CONCLUSION

We are lucking enough to witness the 21st century, the modern era. Men and women are doing wonders and creating history. They are becoming role models for their followers. Domestic Violence is suffocating our social development. My question to the nation is why there is a need of such acts. Rather violence at home should be prevented and not cured. Let us join hands and spread awareness about living in peace and harmony with one another. But even if there are a few of those anti-social elements, the law is there to take a good care of them in its own way.

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