

Domestic violence refers to any form of abuse or violence suffered by a person from a relative or domestic circle. Mostly women and children are the victims of domestic violence. 'Home' is where many people face a regime of terror and violence with somebody close to them – somebody they should be able to trust. This act of domestic violence results in death, serious injury, and chronic medical and mental health issues. Domestic violence is a health, legal, economic, educational, developmental and human rights issue.

Different Forms of Domestic Violence

"Bride tortured to death for dowry", "School going kid succumbs to his injuries after beaten by father", "Harassment of men in Chandigarh", "A seventy year old man killed over property dispute", these are some of the headlines that deals with the various forms of domestic violence prevalent in India.

Domestic violence takes different forms, such as physical, sexual, psychological, and financial abuse. Physical abuse may include spitting, scratching, biting, grabbing, shaking, shoving, pushing, restraining, throwing, twisting, slapping, punching, choking, burning, and/or use of weapons against the victim. Sexual abuse is one of the least discussed but most common forms of domestic violence. It occurs when a person is forced to unwillingly take part in sexual activity. Psychological violence includes any intentional conduct that seriously impairs another person's psychological integrity through coercion or threats. Financial abuse is another form of domestic violence. It can include withholding money, refusing to include victims in financial decisions and controlling all the household spending.

Domestic violence against women is a widespread problem, with appalling physical, sexual, emotional, psychological and economic consequences. It affects women of every age, in every society and in every socio-economic group. It includes sexual abuse of female children in the household, dowry issues, marital rape, female genital mutilation and other traditional practices harmful to women, non-spousal violence and violence related to exploitation.

Fighting the 'Domestic Violence' Evil

Elimination of all kinds of domestic violence requires the attention and efforts of all the concerned people and working together. Amongst immediate steps, the most important task of the government is to arrest the continuously deteriorating law and order situation. There should be vigilant policing round the clock both in cities and suburban areas. Non-governmental organisations and institutions should conduct a series of seminars, workshops and meetings at different places on various aspects of domestic violence. The media should bring issues related to domestic violence to the public domain. They can play an important role in spreading awareness. They can provide a platform for speakers and panellists from different areas for decision-making to share their views.

Family is the first and foremost institution, where children learn the first lesson of humanity and social relationships. Family is the best place to inculcate positive values, like honesty, simplicity, modesty, a sense of responsibility and respect for elders. These values inculcated in children will help in stopping domestic violence. Women can also play a major role in eliminating domestic violence. Instead of silently bearing all the atrocities perpetrated against them, women should raise their voices against injustice. They should create awareness amongst women about their rights. They should raise their voice boldly against social evils like dowry, bride-burning, female infanticide, etc.

Conclusion

Breaking the cycle of abuse and domestic violence will require concerted collaboration and action between governmental and non-governmental bodies including the common people. Providing education to both men and women will lead to change in attitudes and perceptions. Doing so will further reduce the cases of domestic violence and help in eliminating this social evil from our society.

