



Domestic violence is so common and widespread today that it does not receive media or government attention to prop it up as a crucial social problem because its victims are predominantly powerless women who bear them up and suffer in silence. The cultures of countries in developing countries, especially those in the Asian region such as Sri Lanka, help

Women's Shelters, their lives become dangerously hopeless, to say the least. One may call it hell, if they have dependent children.

There are many theories relating to the cause of domestic violence. They are either psychological or social background of the perpetrators or both. They vary from individual to individual and there is no single approach to

perpetrators' efforts to dominate over their partners have been due to low self-esteem or feelings of inadequacy (as mentioned earlier), unresolved childhood conflicts, stress caused by poverty, hostility and resentment towards women (misogyny) and men (misandry).

It is true that much has been done to improve the status of women, and remove

rights of women.

Everything looks so rosy and compliant on paper but the issue of DV is still shrouded in silence, ignorance and gloom. No significant change has taken place in relation to domestic violence, and attitudes of the community and law-enforcing government departments to this vexed issue still remain almost the same.

If a victim goes to the police station to lodge a complaint, she will have to face invariably a long and insensitive questioning by the police who may perhaps have been influenced by the influential offenders and may not frame charges straightaway or they may be delayed. If a case is filed in courts, there will be considerable delay in taking up the case for trial. If it happens, the victim will be subject to intensive and insensitive cross-examination by the defence counsel. Perhaps, it is also possible there will be threats against her and the witnesses before the case goes to courts.

It is of paramount importance to provide protection for the clients and the witnesses. It should also be made mandatory for the police to refer the victims to welfare agencies in the area so that they may seek medical assistance for them and provide shelter for the victims and their dependent children, if any. If the existing Women's Centres are inadequate, the government should step in and give the Centres financial assistance for expansion or take action to build suitable Centres in localities where the number of cases is large. It is also equally important to make arrangements for counselling of the victims by trained counsellors to get over the shock and trauma, and supervise them until they settle down.

In order to reduce or eliminate domestic violence, which is fast escalating, it is essential that Domestic Violence should be made a crime legally and provide for the arrest of the offenders on reasonable grounds and file charges against them as early as possible. Depending on the punishment meted out to them by Courts, it is also equally essential to refer them to appropriate rehabilitation centres for treatment to reduce the possibility of recurrence of their behavioural and mental illness.

Domestic Violence an enforced silence

perpetuate the situation because of the social stigma attached to it and the costly and lengthy legal proceedings involved.

DV is domestic and spousal abuse, family and intimate partner violence that occurs in intimate relationships

cover them all.

Psycho logical: Psychological theories focus on the personality traits and mental illnesses (bipolar disorders, schizophrenia, alcoholism and drug abuse) of the

most of the inequalities between the genders.

Sri Lanka is proud to have produced the first female Prime Minister of the world in Sirimavo Bandaranaike and the first female President (Chandrika Kumaratunga) and some popular female cabinet ministers in the past and the present.

According to the Global Gender Gap Index of 2010, Sri Lanka ranked 16 in the world for gender equality ahead of Netherlands (17), US (19) and Canada (20) and many other European countries. It was above all South Asian nations and second only to Philippines from the Asian region.

Even in health care, vast strides have been made where 98 per cent of child births occurred in hospitals. Maternal mortality at childbirth (11.3 per 1,000 births) and child mortality (39.3 per 100,000 births) are almost at MDG (Millennium Development Goals) levels.

Sri Lanka has near gender parity in primary education with the ratio of girls to boys in primary education reaching 99 percent in 2006. The literary levels of 15 - 24 year olds have reached 95 percent across all sectors for both males and females. 113 percent of those attending universities are women. A staggering 69 percent of teachers are women. As in higher education, women have almost overtaken men in government departments which were formerly closed to women and now open to them. Women are now working shoulder to shoulder with their male colleagues in government departments, especially in clerical and administrative jobs.

The Prevention of Domestic Violence Act 34 enacted in 2005 provides for victims to obtain a restraining order against the offender, and Amendment to the Sri Lankan Constitution in 1978 covers gender equality and non-discrimination of women. Sri Lanka has also ratified the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and been a signatory to other International Declarations and Acts to safeguard and uphold the



such as marriages or living with partners. It takes the form of physical aggression, sexual and emotional abuse, intimidation and stalking, and economic deprivation.

The inevitable results are:

Physical: The common injuries reported are bruises, broken bones and head injuries.

Psycho logical: They are stress, fear, anxiety and depression. Victims are made to feel guilty for provoking the abuse and subjected to intense criticism. They have an increased risk of suicide either during or after the termination of the relationship. Besides depression, they commonly experience long Term Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) which is characterized by nightmares, intrusive images, flashbacks and avoidance of triggers related to the abuse. They exist to continue for a long period of time even after the victim has left the situation.

Financial: Victims lack financial or other resources to fall back on after separation due to continued economic abuse and isolation when in the relationship. This is considered one of the greatest obstacle facing victims of DV and, above all, the strongest factor that discourages them from leaving the perpetrators. Reduced to homelessness and inability to secure rental housing and the absence of adequate

offender. Most common characteristics of personality traits are sudden bursts of anger, poor impulse or anger control, and low self-esteem. It may also be possible for a child who has experienced abuse to be more violent



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as adults.

Social: External environmental factors such as family structure, stress and social learning.

It has been found that, in some relationships, DV had arisen out of a perceived need for power and control, a form of bullying and social learning of abuse. It has also been found that per-

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