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Impact of Economic Status of Women on Domestic Violence a Legal Perspective

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ABSTRACT

This paper recognizes a linkage between the socio-economic status of women and the domestic violence faced by them in our country. The widespread presence of domestic violence is a very serious issue which shows the entrenched socio-cultural and legal agitation. It shows how economic empowerment can impact a woman's life positively as well as in a negative way. It focuses on the role of laws which are specifically enforced to protect women, such as the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act 2005 and studies as to how the economic condition affects women's potential to get enough from these reforms, participate in the decision making in their families and have a say on their lives. This study also considers possible legal reforms that can help protect women's economic interests in order to decrease abusive patterns.

Keywords: *Domestic abuse, financial independence, economic empowerment.*

I. INTRODUCTION

Issue across India, affecting almost all sections of the society but its extremity varies with the socio-economic status of women. While domestic violence affects women of different economic stability, studies show that economic dependence may worsen the exposure to abuse. Whereas economic independence may boost a woman's confidence to fight for herself and stand for her rights. This will also make them realize their self-worth and leave abusive relationships. This paper shows that domestic violence and the economic status of women go parallel, which focuses on how legal framework can protect the women who are economically disadvantaged in a better way. Economic deprivation is the root cause of all forms of inequality and consequent oppression. The gulf between the haves and the have-nots in the economic sphere is very hard to bridge. The economic equality can be achieved only by decreasing the gap between these two extremes. It is not the question of bringing down rich people to a lower level but on the contrary, it shall be the task of society to uplift poor people to a higher level. It is an age-old story of womanhood that they were not allowed to possess wealth, nor were they allowed to maintain economic independence. As the old saying goes, a woman has to be dependent on men at all

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stages of her life” when this was narrated not only to give her personal security but also economic dependence for her personal needs, she had to be dependent upon men from shelter to old age infirmity. This kind of dependence coupled with her physical weakness having the sanction of religion and custom. She has been subjected to irredeemable hardships and sufferings. She was always considered to be a privileged slave in her family. She cannot exercise or enforce her fundamental rights as a woman. Though the Constitution of India has guaranteed certain rights to her, yet in practice she is being subjected to hardships.

II. THE INTERSECTION OF ECONOMIC STATUS AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

1. Economic dependence and susceptibility

Economic dependence on a husband or family members may take power from the women, making her feel insecure and prone to violence. Financial dependence makes a women feel unworthy, and the other person has a coercive control on her which limits the victims' access to money and financial decision-making.

The Protection of Women from Domestic violence Act 2005 defines domestic abuse as the deprivation of all or any economic or financial resources to which the aggrieved person is entitled and economically dependent. Women find it difficult to walk out of an abusive relationship due to the lack of financial support, family pressure and also, societal stigmas.

2. Economic empowerment as a shield

Studies show that women who are financially independent are less likely to stay in an abusive setup and tolerate it. Being independent provides them with the necessary resources, which motivates them to leave violence and seek some legal remedies.

Government schemes, microfinance initiatives and self-help groups which work toward motivating women to become financially stable have shown reduction in instances of domestic abuse, however. These programs must be backed up with legal support to ensure the full access and utilization by the economically empowered women.

III. LEGAL FRAMEWORK ADDRESSING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

1. Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act 2005

This Act provides for more effective protection of the rights of women guaranteed under the Indian Constitution who are victims of violence of any kind occurring within the family and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto.

This act seeks to provide civil remedies to the victims of domestic violence, which includes the

right to secure housing, protection orders and monetary relief. It includes provisions for the protection of women from domestic violence, but its implementation often fails when it comes to the economically vulnerable women who may lack the access to legal support.

2. Other relevant legislations

Acts like the Dowry Prohibition Act 1961 and the Bhartiya Nyaya Sahitya 2023 also talk about the penalty attached to the act of domestic violence. Section 85 of the Bhartiya Sahitya 2003, which was Section 498A, Indian Penal Code earlier, criminalizes domestic violence which includes financial exploitation. So far, it is seen that the law is slow and seems to be biased against the women. Mainly those who have a poor financial background and lack the means to navigate the legal process efficaciously.

The Hindu Succession (Amendment) Act, 2005 has also opened the gates towards economic empowerment of women by giving them equal rights to ancestral property, but the burden of their families and the social norms do not allow them to claim what is rightful of theirs, making them depend on their husbands, hence leaving them vulnerable to domestic abuse and economically dependent.

There are laws which entitle women to claim possession of property. They have scope for employment and earnings. They're encouraged to become entrepreneurs, even high-profile traders. Out of these professions, women earn wealth and feels they are financially independent. They have a sense of satisfaction and a feeling of fulfillment, but the same becomes a disadvantage to them in the form of their mentality. They develop superiority complex and try to assert too much which is beyond the endurance level of male members, just like absolute economic dependence, occasion, sufferings of women so also economic affluence cause the same effect. An affluent woman's conduct if it exceeds the expectations of male members, cause suffering to women in domestic areas.

IV. SOCIAL LEGAL CHALLENGES IN ADDRESSING ECONOMIC DEPENDENCE

(A) Social norms and patriarchal setup

The Indian society, especially the rural areas, is deeply rooted with patriarchy. Women are expected to stay at home and do all household chores having to take care of the family and children alongside. This setup makes them dependent on the male members of their family for financial support. This thing bridles the women, and the male members have power over them which is linked to the acts of domestic violence. Women are less likely to challenge the patriarchal setup if they lack any financial support or independence.

In the sphere of domestic violence, she becomes a toy for male chauvinism and domination. She is considered nothing more than a pleasure object to be tasted and thrown away after sensual gratification by men. Her feelings and longings, deprivations and earnings are not given due consideration by men. Such indirect hate towards women develops into violence against her domestic sphere and whatever happens to her, she has to bear it and cannot separate herself from the bondage because she cannot survive physically outside the family fold. Therefore, means and methods shall be devised to make women folk economically independent and self-sufficient.

V. THE ROLE OF ECONOMIC REFORMS AND REDUCING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

1. Promote women's financial empowerment

For the reduction of domestic violence, women must be motivated to participate in the workforce and financial literacy. This must be started from the very beginning stage, that is, from childhood. Women must be allowed to go for higher education so that they know their basic rights and they can fight for any wrong happening to them.

Though government has become successful in promoting entrepreneurship along women by schemes such as Mahila E-Haat and Stand-Up India, women from the marginalized section are still not able to get the benefit out of these.

Financial literacy for women, especially in rural areas, will help empower them to make adequate utilization of their own finances so as to minimize their economic dependence on abusive partners.

2. Ensuring effective implementation of economic rights

To reduce economic dependence, the implementation of the provision of equal inheritance rights and maintenance needs to be done more effectively. These rights must be claimed by the women from their families so that they can have a financial security necessary to escape domestic violence.

Male members think, often correctly, that an affluent women's conduct is influenced by the wealth she independently possesses. This again compares male members to devise means to deprive female members of their control over their own properties. This may lead to domestic violence in the form of harassment of women, who is compelled to part with the property and wealth or monthly income in favour of her male protectors.

They would do well if they maintained an attitude of detachment from their own wealth and entertained a generous view that their property is that of the family in which they live. Women

must have noble idea that the wealth should be utilized for the benefit of those entire family. Women should shed away the sense of exclusiveness and maintain cordial relationship with every member of the family, to that, she may be viewed with jealousy or envy. In this manner it will be seen that the necessity of economic independence of women shall be necessary, and women must also conduct in such a way the economic process shall be for the benefit of their family. Such domestic condition would greatly reduce the incidence of domestic violence.

VI. CONCLUSION

The connection between financial dependence and household abuse is clear. Women stuck in financial hardship often have to put up with mistreatment because they rely on the abuser to survive, while women who are independent have better shot at breaking free from the cycle of abuse. Just having laws to protect women are not enough, giving women financial power is crucial to stop this harmful pattern. By giving women financial freedom through learning, jobs, and community help, we can make them less likely to face abuse. Household violence isn't just a private matter, it is a failure of society that needs big changes to give women of all financial backgrounds more power.

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