

attitudes and the social values shall provide an encouraging and pleasant life for all human beings on earth.

9. Sustainable social development draws attention to the processes of change with their results. A participatory process, that empowers the stakeholders and is transparent in nature, remains as precondition to sustainable social development.
10. The role of the national government is significant in directing its own and other interventions towards sustainable social development of a society. The planning, legislative and regulatory measures (PLR) should penetrate into every sphere of activity to lead to sustainable social development.

There is growing worldwide concern over the ecological conservation, the resource availability for future generations and the maintenance of a life in harmony with nature. A fundamental prerequisite for a world order in this direction is equitable distribution of resources to all human beings and thereby a decent life for all. Sustainable development with a focus on social well being draws out a more desirable picture of development. The human being needs to be the central part of the development. The strategies and indices of development can facilitate policy formulation and programme implementation in development guaranteeing ecological conservation and well being of all human beings. The efforts of UN through the MDG and HDI provide concrete platforms on defining and guiding development in a desirable direction. They need to be materialised through vigorous policies, concerted action and effective monitoring from the nation states.

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DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND ITS MANIFESTATION IN KERALA

Celine Sunny

Abstract

Domestic violence, that has been taking place in human society from time immemorial, has been recognised as an issue of social concern. Specifically it refers to violence within the family against woman perpetrated by her immediate relatives, especially husband and in-laws. This paper discusses the various aspects of domestic violence and in doing so the author uses the empirical data from her study of domestic violence in the state of Kerala, India. Physical violence perpetrated on women is mainly in the form of behaviours like hitting, kicking, beating, slapping, threatening to use weapon and forced sex. The common forms of psychological violence against women are the behaviour patterns of demeaning, threatening, abandoning and marital infidelity on the part of husbands or their in-laws. The major reasons for the occurrence of domestic violence are alcoholism, extra-marital relations, dowry, suspicion of marital infidelity, financial constraints, disparity in social status, sexual maladjustment, property dispute, not attending to household chores, not looking after children and lack of property. Domestic violence has its consequences at three levels: personal (of the individual woman victim), family (especially children) and societal. As a social issue domestic violence needs professional intervention in the service of the victims. In order to avail of professional help it is necessary that the victims of domestic violence are made aware of the agencies and individuals who can assist them.

INTRODUCTION

In the history of humankind one finds that different cultures,

however distant they may be in time and space, have universally treated women unequally. However, the Gandhian era and the decades after the independence have seen tremendous changes in the status of women in the Indian society. The Constitution of India has laid down equality of the sexes as a fundamental right. But the change in the position of women from degradation in the nineteenth century towards equality in the middle of the twentieth century is not a simple case of the progress of human society in the modern era. The position of women in the Indian society has been a complicated one. In fact, it may not be an exaggeration to say that the recent changes in the status of women in India are not entirely new, but restore the position that women held in the early Vedic period. Yet, the status of women who constitute almost half of the Indian population is not that encouraging. Gender based violence – including rape, sexual abuse and physical assault of women – is a real issue not only in India but also across the globe.

Gender based violence is clearly related to unequal power relation between men and women. The status of women in almost all societies is not equal to that of men in access to societal resources and participation in social processes. Violence against women in the family, community and society is a manifestation of the issue of gender discrimination. It takes the form of female foeticide, female infanticide, abuse of the girl child, and social harassment, mental torture and physical violence affecting the body and mind of women.

CONCEPT OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

The Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women, adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1993, defines violence against women as “any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm, or suffering to women including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty; whether occurring in public or private life.” Article 2 of the UN Declaration identifies three areas wherein violence against women commonly takes place, viz. within the family, in the general community and perpetrated or condoned by the state (UNDPI 1996). Violence occurring in the community includes sexual offences such as lurid comments, staring, stalking, harassment at workplaces, rape, forced prostitution and trafficking in women. Violence perpetrated by the state

includes sexual or physical abuse of women and girls in custody or in situations like armed conflict, displacement or refuge. Violence against women within the family occurs in the private sphere of the women's life and is generally termed as domestic violence.

The Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Bill 2005, approved by the Union Cabinet of the Government of India, extends the definition of domestic violence to include not only actual abuse of power, but also the threat of abuse – physical, sexual, verbal, emotional and economic. What is more, it covers physical and emotional abuse of single women in a live-in relationship and women living in joint families – sisters, mothers and widows. Harassment of the woman or her relatives in the form of dowry demands would also be covered in this definition.

Although men are victims of street violence, brawls, homicide and crime, violence directed at women is a distinctly different phenomenon. Men tend to be attacked physically by strangers or casual acquaintances whereas women are at risk of being victims of violence perpetrated mostly at home by men whom they trust. Violence against them is grounded in power imbalances between men and women, and is caused and perpetuated by factors, different from those of violence against men. Violence against women within the family is a global phenomenon.

Domestic violence, though means violence in the family, refers to violence against women in particular, because the victims of violence in family are almost always women. Domestic violence means physical or mental assault of women usually by their male partners. The term wife abuse is also often used to mean the same. Masculine behaviour, such as aggression, risk taking and the consumption of drugs or alcohol, is often believed to underlie male violence against women. Domestic violence is not only on the increase, but also assuming subtler forms.

Physical and Psychological Violence

Domestic violence against women can be broadly divided into two types, viz. physical violence (on the body) and emotional or psychological violence (on the mind). Some of the common forms of physical violence are (i) female foeticide and infanticide, (ii) incest, sexual abuse and rape within marriage, (iii) physical assault like

slapping, punching, kicking and murder, and (iv) subjecting to overwork without rest and neglecting health care.

Psychological violence may take different forms, such as (i) curbing freedom to associate with the natal family, neighbours, friends etc. and curtailment of self-expression, (ii) sexual infidelity of husband and baseless accusation of sexual infidelity of wife, (iii) alcoholic and irresponsible behaviour of husband, (iv) making the woman a scapegoat or victim in situations of family problems, and (v) money related violence, namely persuasion and coercion to get more money from the woman's parents, denial of freedom to spend money, and refusal to spend money to run the household.

Domestic Violence as Social Issue

Victims of domestic violence are used to endure the violence towards them in silence for fear of repercussions. They do not lodge complaints, as they fear that such complaints might create a hostile home environment. They are potential candidates for personality disorder and psychosomatic problems. The typical Indian woman considers the entire responsibility of preserving the family as her duty. Hence she makes all adjustments unilaterally in her husband's home. Many women, who experience various forms of physical and psychological violence, do not seek divorce, as they feel it traumatic and too great a price that they have to pay for their children. Thus to a great extent they are resigned to domestic violence as part of their family life. The findings of the National Family Health Survey (NFHS-2), released at the end of the year 2000, point out this fact. Although no direct link has been established, the survey reveals that more than 50 per cent of the women justify or accept violence against them within the home. Three out of every five women (56 %) said that they believed wife beating was justified on at least one of six grounds – neglecting the house or children, going out without telling the husband, showing disrespect to the in-laws, not cooking food properly, suspicion of wife's unfaithfulness and inadequate dowry (IIPS 2000).

Domestic violence takes place in our society in stark contradiction to the UN Human Rights Declaration (of which India is a signatory), and our constitutional and legal provisions. But most women are not aware of their rights to protection of life, liberty etc.

Even if they were aware, they would lack the resources in terms of money, skill, time, experience, confidence and courage to invoke these provisions. Moreover, traditionally women believe in tolerating harassment at home.

However, a different trend seems to be emerging. Women are increasingly breaking their silence by coming out and complaining about violence and harassment. Though international covenants, human rights, constitutional and legal provisions to protect women have already existed, most women were not aware of these. Legal literacy campaigns, initiative of social activists and social work institutions, government programmes of gender sensitisation for all levels of administration, greater interest in enforcing legislation regarding violence against women etc. have made women more confident to register complaints against the atrocities meted out towards them by the family members.

During the last few decades, rise in the awareness about women's status due to women's activism in various parts of the world has helped the recognition of domestic violence as a social issue. Despite this, the sensitivity and stigma associated with domestic violence, the perception that it is primarily a legal issue, and the lack of data on the dimensions of violence have hampered clear understanding of domestic violence and development of appropriate action (Heise *et al.* 1994). Domestic violence is primarily a socio-cultural problem. Its impact has far reaching effects on the family life, health of women, life of children etc.

EXTENT OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Domestic violence cuts across lines of race, nationality, language, culture, religion, economic status, sexual orientation and physical ability, and affects people from all walks of life. It is one of the most pervasive forms of gender discrimination. Domestic violence represents the most pathetic aspect of disrespect for human rights.

Domestic Violence in India

Female foeticide and female infanticide are basically a socio-cultural problem and not merely a matter of law and order. The UNICEF reports that 40-50 million women are missing from Indian population

due to foeticide (UN 1991). The National Crime Records Bureau (1995) has recorded an increase of 40 per cent in the case of social harassment, and 15.2 per cent in cases of dowry deaths during the period of 1987-1991. The steady decline of women in the sex ratio of the population noted for over a century in India - from 972 females for 1000 males in 1901 to 927 females in 1991 - and the prevalence of female foeticide are critical indicators of the issue of violence against women in India.

A study carried out in a private clinic in Mumbai showed that, of the 80,000 abortions done after the sex determination of the foetus, only one was male foetus (UN 1991). Another study on female infanticide conducted by Adhiti, a non-government organisation (NGO) in 1995 reported that in Tamil Nadu new-born female babies were murdered through methods such as covering their faces with wet clothes and feeding them on poisoned herbal milk. In the town of Kathihar in the state of Bihar 35 *dais* testified that each of them killed 3 to 4 babies per month. Adhiti pointed out that there were at least 5,30,000 *dais* in the state. Such instances of murder have been taking place in private hospitals also with the connivance of doctors (Rai 1995).

National Crime Report of 1991 reveals that in every 33 minute one Indian woman is being abused by her husband. It also reveals that in 1989 one dowry death occurred in every 125th minute. In 1990, 1991, 1992 and 1993 dowry death occurred in every 109th, 102nd, 106th and 90th minute respectively (National Crime Record Bureau 1995). This shows a gradual increase in dowry deaths.

In India comprehensive household data on the prevalence and costs of domestic violence are lacking. The multi-site study by the International Clinical Epidemiologists Network (INCLIN) is a pioneering effort to estimate comparable rates of violence within India and across four other countries, viz. Chile, Brazil, Egypt and Philippines. The multi-site household survey conducted by INCLIN was a part of the three year research programme undertaken by the International Centre for Research on Women (ICRW) on domestic violence in India (1997-2000) in partnership with researchers from a range of Indian academics and activist organisations (ICRW 2000).

In India the study by INCLIN was undertaken during 1997-

1999 at seven diverse and regional sites: Bhopal, Chennai, Delhi, Lucknow, Nagpur, Thiruvananthapuram and Vellore. The overall rate of domestic violence in India according to this study indicated that 36.9 per cent of women experienced physical violence and 35.5 per cent psychological violence, while for Kerala the corresponding figures were 62.3 per cent for physical and 61.61 per cent for psychological violence. In the rural areas the overall figure for India was 51.7 per cent for physical and 49.7 per cent for psychological violence, while the corresponding figure for Kerala was 68.8 per cent for physical violence and 68.9 per cent for psychological violence (ICRW 2000).

Women in India are subjected to violence not only by husbands but also by members of both the natal and marital homes. Girls and women in India are usually less privileged than boys in terms of access to material resources. Nevertheless, there are regional and community variations. Women in the north have relatively less autonomy than their counterparts in the south, and experience fewer opportunities for control over economic resources (Karve 1965). Although women in the south report less physical violence than their counterparts in the north, in depth qualitative studies have found considerable under-reporting about domestic violence (Rao 1997).

Domestic Violence in Kerala

Kerala has often been considered to be unique in many aspects of social development as compared to the rest of India. Although not among the states of India with higher per capita income, Kerala has achieved a quality of life, which is much higher than that of all the other states in India and is almost comparable to some of the industrialised countries. This unique phenomenon of socio-economic development has been referred to as the 'Kerala model of development.' Despite the positive indicators of social development of Kerala, women in the state continue to experience the disadvantages of their relatively lower social status, including domestic violence.

Domestic violence has attracted the attention of the general public and the judiciary in the different districts of Kerala due to a series of unpleasant incidents resulting in the loss of life or threat to life of women in several parts of the state. There have been several

cases of women who were ill treated, tortured and even murdered for not meeting the demands of the so called head of the family. For instance, a man in Parur, Ernakulam district was convicted for abusing his own 16 year old daughter and sentenced to seven years of imprisonment and a fine of Rs.5000 (Deepika 1998). In the same place a woman, following harassment from her husband and in-laws, hanged herself to death (Manorama 1998).

The INCLEN study conducted in Kerala (Thiruvananthapuram) by Raj Mohan of R-CERTC and M.K.C. Nair of Child Development Centre, Thiruvananthapuram states that overall 45 per cent of women reported to have had at least one incident of physical violence in their lifetime. Despite the violence, more than 95 per cent of women remained in their marriage. The study also found that the possibility of psychological and physical violence is greater with greater disparity in the education and employment status of the spouses (especially when the woman is more educated and better employed than her husband). Violence against women spans all geographical regions, economic strata, educational levels, and age and employment status. It could be seen that despite the total literacy and global model of development, Kerala tops the list in domestic violence, according to the survey conducted by ICRW (ICRW 2000).

Any serious effort on dealing with the issue of domestic violence would include awareness building geared through determined community action. For preparing an effective action plan, it is imperative that we understand and gain a clear picture of the major forms of domestic violence prevalent, the factors leading to it, the physical and psychological impact of domestic violence not only on the aggrieved party but also on her immediate environment consisting of her children and also on the society. It is against this background that a study of domestic violence, analysing its nature and manifestations, associated factors, and consequences/implications, was undertaken in Kerala (Sunny 2005).

This paper draws heavily from the findings of this study conducted in the state of Kerala (Sunny 2005). A sample of 1400 women victims of domestic violence – 100 each from all the 14 districts of Kerala – was covered in the study. The sample was selected from the

list of victimised women obtained from an enlistment survey of the registered/recorded cases of domestic violence from the women cells, family courts, police stations, counselling centres, NGOs working for women, social workers, women activists and members of the general public. In addition, discussion was held with key persons numbering 10 from each of the 14 districts. The key persons from a district included two each drawn from the categories of teachers, elderly persons, religious leaders, representatives of self-help groups and representatives of panchayati raj institutions. The data collection from the sample of 1400 women victims and 140 key persons was completed in May 2005.

VICTIMS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

In order to understand the victims of domestic violence, data on certain general characteristics of the women subjected to domestic violence in Kerala were collected in the study. They include age, education, marriage and economic status of the women who experienced violence at home.

Age

The vast majority (79.8%) of the victims of domestic violence belonged to the age group of 20-40 years. A small group of 5.1 per cent of the respondents in the study were from the age groups below 20 and above 50 years. The latter group included three women above the age of 60 years. The data here show that women of all age groups experienced domestic violence, although women in the age group of 20-40 years were at a higher risk of being subjected to domestic violence.

Education

The data on the educational status of the respondents showed that the vast majority of them were literate. Just 4.9 per cent of the victims were illiterate. This reflects the high literacy level of women in Kerala. The literacy rate in Kerala is 88 per cent for women and 94 per cent for men, compared to the national literacy rates of 54 per cent for women and 76 per cent for men. The sample included 19.5 per cent women victims with primary school education, 63.7 per cent who had

secondary or higher school education and 12 per cent who were graduates or postgraduates.

Marriage

The marriage of 84.6 per cent of the 1400 victims who were covered in the study was arranged by their own parents and the remaining 15.4 per cent of the women had made their own choice of the marriage partner. Many of them, who had arranged marriage, were consulted in the choice of the partner. As many as 65.3 per cent of the respondents said that their opinion was sought before arranging their marriage. Regarding the duration of marriage, a good number (42.3%) of the victims were in the range of 1-10 years. Those who were married for 11-20 years and 21-30 years constituted 37.1 per cent and 14 per cent of the sample respectively. A small proportion of the sample (2.7%) was married for over 30 years. It may also be noted that 3.9 per cent of the victims were married for less than a year. This showed that the problem of domestic violence can arise even during the early years of marriage.

Economic Status

Data on the employment status of the victims revealed that majority (78.1%) of them were only housewives and the remaining 21.9 per cent were engaged in casual labour or salaried jobs. This showed that earning women, despite contributing to the family income, too are not immune to domestic violence.

It was found that a good number (64.6%) of the respondents in the study had a monthly family income of up to Rs.5,000. The family income of another 23.5 per cent of them was Rs.5,001-10,000 per month. The remaining 11.9 per cent of the respondents had a family income of over Rs.10,000 per month. The data show that domestic violence takes place in families of different levels of economic status.

The main source of household income for majority (71%) of the victims was salaried jobs. For 11.6 per cent of the respondents the source of income was both salaried jobs and agriculture. Agriculture and business were the main source of income for the families of 10.2

per cent and 6.9 per cent of the respondents respectively. Pension was the main source of family income in the case of two victims.

NATURE OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Domestic violence on women is perpetrated in different forms. The most common behavioural patterns of violence against women at home are hitting, beating, kicking, threatening to use weapons, forced sex, demeaning, threatening, abandoning, and infidelity. In order to understand the nature of the forms of domestic violence the women victims of the study were asked to rank the behaviour patterns of violence they were subjected to at home in the order of importance as they have experienced. Data have been collected in this manner in the case of both physical and psychological violence.

Physical Violence

Physical violence was studied in terms of behaviours like hitting, kicking, beating, slapping, threatening to use weapon and forced sex. Domestic violence in the form of physical assault was a common experience of an overwhelming majority of the victims under study. The rest were subjected to psychological violence. Physical violence was further probed at three levels, viz., first (most common), second and third.

Table 1

Women Victims by the Type of Physical Violence Ranked by them

Type of Violence	Ranked as			Not mentioned	Total
	First	Second	Third		
Beating	372 (26.6)	344 (24.6)	403 (28.8)	281 (20.0)	1400 (100)
Kicking	287 (20.5)	346 (24.7)	313 (22.4)	454 (32.4)	1400 (100)
Slapping	153 (10.9)	194 (13.9)	268 (19.1)	785 (56.1)	1400 (100)
Hitting	281 (20.0)	-	-	1119 (80.0)	1400 (100)
Threatening to use weapon	8 (0.6)	47 (3.4)	41 (2.9)	1304 (93.1)	1400 (100)
Forced sex	23 (1.6)	18 (1.3)	27 (1.9)	1332 (95.2)	1400 (100)

Bracketed figures are percentages.

Among the behavioural patterns of inflicting violence on women at home beating comes first. The vast majority (80.0%) of the women victims in the study reported to have been subjected to beating; as many as 26.6 per cent of them considered beating to be the most common form of domestic violence. Kicking was reported by a total of 67.6 per cent of the women. Those who considered kicking as the most common form of physical violence at home constituted 20.5 per cent of the sample. A number of women in the sample (43.9%) experienced physical violence at home in the form of slapping; in the case of 10.9 per cent of the women slapping was the most common form of physical violence. One fifth (20.0%) of the women experienced hitting as a form of physical violence at home; in the case of all of them hitting was the most common form of violence. A small percentage of women in the sample were subjected to threatening the use of weapon (6.9%) and forced sex (4.8%).

Many of women victims of domestic violence experienced the ordeal regularly and at times daily. For instance, out of the 1124 women in the study who reported any of the six forms of physical violence as the most important one experienced by them, as many as 608 experienced the situation daily (20.1%) or frequently (33.2%).

The physical violence to which women are subjected to by their husbands and/or in-laws takes different forms. It is also important to note that often a woman victim of domestic violence suffers the different forms of physical violence, like beating, hitting, slapping and kicking simultaneously. The frequency at which it happens makes the situation of many a woman miserable.

Psychological Violence

Psychological violence refers to inflicting mental pain. Psychological violence against women is as common as the physical form of violence. The data from the present study of women victims of domestic violence revealed that almost all (97.1%) of them experienced mental strain at home in one form or the other. The common forms of psychological violence faced by the women in the study were the behaviour patterns of demeaning, threatening, abandoning and marital infidelity on the part of husbands or their in-laws. As in the case of physical violence, women victims of domestic violence were told to rank the different forms of

psychological violence experienced by them. It was again probed at three levels i.e., the first (most common), second and third.

Table 2
Women Victims by the Type of Psychological Violence Ranked by them

Type of Violence	Ranked as			Not mentioned	Total
	First	Second	Third		
Threatening	392 (28.0)	501 (35.8)	396 (28.3)	111 (7.9)	1400 (100)
Demeaning	540 (38.6)	296 (21.1)	97 (6.9)	467 (33.4)	1400 (100)
Infidelity	205 (14.6)	182 (13.0)	301 (21.5)	712 (50.9)	1400 (100)
Abandoning	223 (15.9)	373 (26.6)	-	804 (57.5)	1400 (100)

Bracketed figures are percentages.

Out of the four forms of behaviour patterns that resulted in the psychological violence against the women in the study, threatening has been the most common one. As many as 92.1 per cent of the women in the study were subjected to mental torture through the threatening behaviour of their husbands or in-laws. Those who considered threatening as the most common form of psychological violence constituted 28.0 per cent of the sample of women. Two-thirds (66.6%) of the women in the study reported that they experienced mental torture as a result of demeaning behaviour on the part of the husbands/in-laws. The sources of psychological violence in the case of about half of the women were marital infidelity of the husband (49.1%) and being abandoned by husbands and in-laws (42.5%).

Suffering from mental torture is a regular or even daily experience for many of the women victims of domestic violence. As many as 1360 women in the study experienced at least one of the four forms of psychological violence (demeaning, threatening, infidelity and abandoning) as the most important one. One fourth (26.5%) of them experienced the mental torture daily. Another 41.6 per cent of them were subjected to psychological violence frequently.

The data on the mental torture experienced by the women victims

of domestic violence show that almost all respondents in the study had to suffer psychological violence in one form or other. This has had negative repercussions on the personal, familial and social lives of the victims. The frequency at which they were subjected to behaviours of psychological violence showed that majority of the women victims had to suffer the pains of violence frequently and/or daily. In several cases, women had to face the pain of multiple forms of mental infliction simultaneously. The situation of domestic violence is serious enough to take concerted efforts in order to build up harmonious and congenial family environment for effectively dealing with the issue of domestic violence.

REASONS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Heise (1998) proposes a clearer and interrelated ecological framework for understanding violent behaviour among individuals. This framework includes a range of physical, social, emotional and psychological factors at the personal, community and societal levels. In this model, the causative factors are represented in the form of four concentric circles. The innermost circle includes the personal history of the man and the woman who are in the relationship, such as being male, childhood experience of marital violence in the family, childhood experience of abuse etc. The second circle represents the micro system factors that influence familial relationship and include the immediate context within which violence takes place such as male dominance in the family, control over money and decision making at the household level by men, low status of women such as daughter-in-law within the family, use of alcohol, marital conflict situations etc. The third circle refers to the external system representing the social structures at the micro level or community level such as poor socio-economic status, unemployment, poor social surroundings leading to delinquent behaviour, lack of access of women to economic and other resources, and lack of support structures leading to powerlessness. The fourth circle is the macro system that represents the broader societal norms that serve to create a favourable environment for the other three factors to act. These include the general societal acceptance of power structures that represent dominance, aggression and control of men over women, and of rigid gender roles.

The study of INCLEN (ICRW 2000) tried to find out what women consider to be the precipitating factors for the violence. Women

identified lapse in fulfilling their responsibilities (cooking, looking after children and in-laws, and attending to other household tasks,) as the key factor influencing the occurrence of domestic violence. This finding reiterates that violence is a mechanism for enforcing the gender roles and expectations within the family. Moreover, mothers-in-law too reported the same factor as precipitating violence in their own marriages. Not infrequently, women attributed violence due to infidelity or suspicion of infidelity of either of the spouses. Another area of conflict was dissatisfaction with the dowry.

Husband and In-Laws

Women experience domestic violence mainly from their husbands or in-laws. Their personal characteristics and interaction patterns within the family may variously influence actions that result in domestic violence. Husband's personal behaviour and his role performance in the family are in particular factors that maintain the integrity and bond of the family relationship or lead to domestic violence.

Centralisation of power in managing the affairs of the family in the husband could be one of the situations conducive to rift between the partners and consequent domestic violence. The male partner tends to nurture a position of superior power within the family and take decisions unilaterally. The data from the present study show that family affairs in the case of majority (57.9%) of the respondents were controlled by the husbands themselves. Another 18 per cent of the women reported that the family matters were managed by their in-laws. Only in 24.1 per cent of the cases family matters were managed by wife and husband together or by women themselves. In general, these data are in line with the patriarchal nature of the families in Kerala where the male partners control the families prominently. Although the data show that majority of the families affected by domestic violence were controlled by the husbands or in-laws, domestic violence was not totally absent in families where women had some role in the management of the family matters. So sharing of power within the family by itself does not ward off domestic violence.

Another factor that can have a check on the situations leading to domestic violence is the strong relationship within the family. It

largely depends on the husband's willingness to spend time together with the wife and children. The saying goes as: a family that sits and prays together stays together. Men often fail to do it by their behaviour of coming home late. The data from the present study showed that husbands of almost half (49%) of the victims reached home late either frequently (30.5%) or daily (18.3%). Husbands of 28.5% of the victims were late occasionally. Husbands of the remaining (i.e. 22.5%) women in the study were late rarely. The conclusion that may be drawn here is that late coming of husband at home may create a situation conducive to domestic violence.

The in-laws of women play their own role in domestic violence. They either instigate the husband to harass the woman or inflict pain on her by themselves. Less than half (44.4%) of the respondents in the present study were residing with their in-laws and the remaining 55.6 per cent were staying separately. Majority (69.2%) of the women victims said that they were not physically hurt by the in-laws. However, majority (67%) reported that they were subjected to psychological violence by their in-laws. Majority (61.3%) of them were also of the opinion that their in-laws instigated their husbands to harass them.

Opinion of Victims of Domestic Violence

The present research study sought from the victims of domestic violence what they considered to be the reasons of or factors leading to domestic violence. A detailed probe was undertaken to unearth the major reasons that lead to domestic violence. Each respondent was told to rank four major reasons in terms of the intensity and frequency with which they experienced domestic violence in physical as well as psychological forms. Accordingly, the reasons have been analysed separately.

The major reasons of domestic violence ranked by the women victims are alcoholism, extra-marital relations, dowry, suspicion of marital infidelity, financial constraints, disparity in social status, sexual maladjustment, property dispute, not attending to household chores, not looking after children and lack of property. These 11 reasons of domestic violence were ranked by the women in the order of importance as perceived by them. Some of the other minor reasons for violence

mentioned by the women are sterility of either of the spouses, employment of wife, mental disorders, and job dissatisfaction of husband.

Table 3
Women Victims by the Reasons of Domestic Violence Ranked by them

Reason	Ranked as				Not mentioned	Total
	First	Second	Third	Fourth		
Alcoholism	682 (48.7)	245 (17.5)	81 (5.8)	-	392 (28.0)	1400 (100)
Financial constraints	77 (5.5)	378 (27.0)	201 (14.4)	153 (10.9)	591 (42.2)	1400 (100)
Not attending to household chores	16 (1.1)	104 (7.4)	202 (14.4)	190 (13.6)	888 (63.5)	1400 (100)
Suspicion	114 (8.1)	157 (11.2)	184 (13.1)		945 (67.6)	1400 (100)
Extra marital affairs	169 (12.1)	85 (6.1)	52 (3.7)	133 (9.5)	961 (68.6)	1400 (100)
Dowry	143 (10.2)	121 (8.6)	83 (5.9)	-	1053 (75.3)	1400 (100)
Not looking after children	-	24 (1.7)	126 (9.0)	174 (12.4)	1076 (76.9)	1400 (100)
Lack of property	-	25 (1.8)	95 (6.8)	184 (13.1)	1096 (78.3)	1400 (100)
Property dispute	21 (1.5)	34 (2.4)	74 (5.3)	97 (6.9)	1174 (83.9)	1400 (100)
Sexual maladjustment	31 (2.2)	27 (1.9)	40 (2.9)	111 (7.9)	1191 (85.1)	1400 (100)
Difference in social status	30 (2.1)	86 (6.1)	68 (4.9)	-	1216 (86.9)	1400 (100)

The bracketed figures are percentages.

One fourth or more of the women in the sample considered six of the above reasons of domestic violence as important to be placed in the first four positions in the ranked list. They are alcoholism, financial constraint, not attending to household chores, suspicion, extramarital affairs and dowry. The most important reason for domestic violence on women is alcoholism on the part of the husband. As many as 72 per cent of the women in the study placed it in one of the four ranked positions of the list of reasons of domestic violence. Nearly half (48.7%) of the respondents in the study reported alcoholism to be the most important reason for domestic violence. According to 17.5 per cent of

the women alcoholism was the second most important reason for the violence inflicted upon them.

Financial constraint was mentioned as one of the reasons for domestic violence by more than half (57.8%) of the women in the study. It was reported to be the second most important reason by 27 per cent of the women. Over one third (36.5%) of the women victims in the sample placed failure to attend to household chores in one of the four ranked reasons of domestic violence on them. Nearly one third of the women reported suspicion (32.4%) and extra-marital affairs (31.2%) as one of the reasons for violence.

Dowry is an important factor in the prevalence of domestic violence in India. Despite the dowry prohibition act of 1961, dowry related deaths have continued to take place in our society. From the year 1987 to 1991, there was an increase of 169.7 per cent in dowry related deaths and 37.5 per cent in acts of cruelty against women by husband and other relatives in India (National Crimes Record Bureau 1995). In the present study of the victims of domestic violence in Kerala, dowry was mentioned as a reason of domestic violence by 24.7 per cent of the women in the sample. Dowry, which was once a token of the sublime sentiments of parents and relatives of a bride, gained all characteristics of a market transaction. The present study showed that 89.1 per cent of the respondents reported to have given dowry in their marriage. About 33.5 per cent of the respondents had been subjected to demands for dowry from their husband's family. However, 55.6 per cent of the women reported that their in-laws were satisfied with the dowry received. A very small per cent (10.9) of the respondents declined to answer the question on dowry in their marriage.

The percentage of women who mentioned the remaining five reasons of domestic violence as the four most important ones ranged from 13.1 to 23.1. Not looking after children (by a total of 23.1% women), lack of property (21.7%), property dispute (16.1%), sexual maladjustment (14.9%) and disparity in social status (13.1%) were these five reasons.

To sum up, there are a number of reasons that lead to domestic violence. Alcoholism, financial constraints, dowry, suspicion, extra-

marital affairs and not attending to household chores appear to be the major reasons for the violence inflicted on women at home. Nonetheless, one cannot ignore as unimportant other reasons of domestic violence, such as not looking after children, lack of property and property dispute, sexual maladjustment, and disparity in social status.

CONSEQUENCES OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Domestic violence occurring within the private sphere of the woman's life may be considered as the most common form of gender based violence against woman and its aftermath is seen in almost all areas of her life. In the present study, the consequences of domestic violence have been studied at the personal, family and societal levels. As these spheres are interdependent, impact on any one of them can have repercussions in the others.

Consequences at Personal Level

At the personal level, the consequences of domestic violence include physical injuries, deprivation of basic needs, mental depression, emotional breakdown and thought of suicide. Data from the study in Kerala showed that three-fourths (74.6%) of the women victims of domestic violence suffered physical injuries as a result of the violence inflicted on them. Physical injury forms the visible outcome of domestic violence experienced by women. It can be minor or serious and in extreme cases can result even in death. Another physical consequence of domestic violence that has direct impact on women's health is non-availability of basic necessities of life. The present study showed that 76.6 per cent of the women victims did not get the basic needs like food, shelter, and clothing in varying degrees.

At the psychological level, domestic violence can adversely affect women's mental health, erode self confidence and lead to problems such as depression, stress disorders, suicide, drug abuse, sleeping and eating disorders, anxieties and phobias. The present study showed that 98 per cent of the victims had experienced mental depression as a result of domestic violence. In a few cases (17%), depression was severe enough to seek psychiatric treatment. Compared to the physical injuries, mental depression associated with domestic violence may go relatively

unnoticed. Nevertheless, it is as dangerous as, if not more than, physical injuries.

Severe psychological stress, and living under terror and mental torture can lead to self-destructive behaviour. Suicide or attempted suicide or thoughts of it could be a consequence of domestic violence at the personal level. In the present study as many as 84.2 per cent of the women victims of domestic violence had the thought of suicide at some time or other in order to escape from the situation of domestic violence.

Consequences at Family Level

As domestic violence takes place within the family, it will have its immediate repercussion within the family. Obviously the relationship with the husband gets adversely affected. All the women in the present study reported that their relationship with the husband has been badly affected in different degrees. As a result of this, 27.3 per cent of the women were trying to get divorce. A few (6.4%) of them were staying away from their husbands at the time of data collection. Many others expressed varying degrees of displeasure or mistrust in regard to their husbands.

One of the reactions of the victim of domestic violence is to stay away temporarily from the husband and his family. Majority (55.9%) of the victims in the study reported to have resorted to it. Others (44.1%) did not or could not resort to this measure to escape from the situation of violence. It is not always easy to get safe and secure place of stay away from the husbands for women experiencing violence at the hands of their partners. Lack of suitable accommodation may result in women reluctantly staying in violent relationships. A good number of respondents (43.2%) reported that they chose to stay at their parents' home. Of the rest, 6.5 per cent chose to stay along with their relatives and 1.2 per cent with their friends. Only 4 per cent of the victims preferred 'short stay home' or hostels for their stay away from the situation of victimisation. Place of stay probably determines the duration of stay away from husband's home. In the present study duration of stay varied from a few days to months. Some (11.4%) of them stayed away from their husbands for more than 6 months. Others

had a shorter stay of a month or a few weeks.

Within the family children get affected by domestic violence. Children are often close witnesses to the perpetration of violence in the family. The incidence of violence in the presence of children can create additional stress for a woman, who may fear for the children's own safety. It is also possible that the woman under the stress of violence gets angry with the children. In any case, children who watch domestic violence and grow in the situation of the strained relationship between their parents may develop their own emotional and behavioural problems. Their personality development and progress in studies may be adversely affected.

Family is a network of relationships and violence in the family could affect the relationships in multiple ways. Majority (56.0%) of the victims of violence reported that their interaction with the other family members was badly affected on account of the violence within the family. Others could maintain their relationship with others in the family probably because the nature and degree of violence were not severe or there were other members who could counter the ill effects of domestic violence on the part of the husband.

Consequences at Societal Level

At the societal level domestic violence may affect the social life of the victims in varying degrees. Many of the women in the present study reported that their social life got restricted on account of domestic violence in the family. One third (34.3%) of them reported that domestic violence caused restrictions on their relationship with the immediate neighbours. In the case of 30.4 per cent of the women victims in the sample there was reduction in the relationship with even close friends. In some cases neighbours and friends avoided the women victims, and at times their husbands discouraged or even prevented them from interaction with neighbours and friends. Isolation, resulting from lack of personal interaction with friends and neighbours can aggravate the feelings of stress leading to anxiety and depression.

From the societal point of view domestic violence indirectly affects socio-economic development. By sapping women's energy,

undermining their confidence and neglecting their health, domestic violence deprives society of women's full participation. Most women continue in their oppressive situation for reasons such as dependence on the husband economically and in all matters, fear of isolation and ostracism, loss of status in the society, and consideration for the future of the children. In terms of economic loss due to domestic violence, a Canadian study showed that the total cost to abused women and to government due to domestic violence was more than \$3.2 billion in 1993 (Greaves *et al.* 1995).

Victims of domestic violence face its consequences at the personal, family and societal levels. It is worse when women victims of violence find the reasons for the bad behaviour of the husband in themselves and take the position that they are solely or largely responsible for maintaining and nurturing good relationships between husband and wife. It was also learned from the victims of domestic violence through personal interviews that many husbands who inflict violence on their wives did not want their wives to interact with any one outside the home for fear of disclosing the various forms of violence occurring at home.

INTERVENTION IN DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Today, more than ever, the need for intervention in domestic violence as a social issue at various levels is being recognised. It has been widely felt that, although friends and relatives can do a lot in helping the victims of domestic violence, nature of the problems associated with domestic violence requires professional help to the victims. In order to avail of professional help it is necessary that the victims of domestic violence are aware of the agencies and individuals who can assist them.

Agencies of Professional Service

Many (46.9%) of the victims of domestic violence in the study were aware of the agencies of professional service. The data further revealed that the best known among the organisations that address domestic violence are the counselling centres. However, it may be noted that only one fourth of the victims in the study knew about the

counselling centres and their services. Rehabilitation centres were the second category of agencies known to the respondents in the study. During the course of the study, the research team visited a few rehabilitation centres. It was found that many of the victims who stayed at the rehabilitation centres were serious cases of domestic violence. Some of them, after having left the house of their husbands, had come to stay at the rehabilitation centres because their parents were poor and could not afford them back into their homes. Clearly, rehabilitation centres are of great help to women from economically backward families who are unable to stay with their husbands. The third category of agencies involved in helping the victims of domestic violence, known to the respondents in the present study were organisations that provide legal aid. However, only a very small percentage of the respondents were aware of these organisations. Similarly a few of the victims of domestic violence in the present study knew of some religious and community organisations that help victims of domestic violence. Evidently, the role of these organisations in addressing domestic violence should be increased.

The finding that majority of the victims of domestic violence in the present study had no knowledge or poor knowledge about organisations and individuals engaged in helping women suffering from domestic violence is surprising because women in Kerala are better educated and considered to enjoy better social status than those in most other states of India. The data here indicate the need for programmes of sensitisation and awareness generation among women with regard to the avenues of professional help to victims of domestic violence.

The present study further revealed that a number of victims of domestic violence sought help from others. Over one third (36.7%) of the respondents in the study approached their relatives for help when they were victimised. Relatives are the first line of defence for many victims of domestic violence because they are often more accessible than organisations/individuals addressing the issue of domestic violence. Those who sought outside help included 15 per cent of the victims in the study who approached the Family Counselling Centres (FCCs) for help. Some (13.5%) of the victims went to the nearest police station for help. A few of the respondents sought the services of NGOs (7.9%), community organisations (4.6%) and religious institutions (2.7%).

However, out of the 657 respondents who approached the various agencies for help, 234 (35%) were of the opinion that the intervention of the agencies did not help in solving their problems.

Several respondents in the study complained about the ineffectiveness of the services provided by the various agencies. Some said that they did not have faith in the services provided by the agencies. Some other respondents were of the opinion that the agencies were not spending adequate time with the victims and their families to solve their problems. Another complaint was that counselling sessions were not effective because the counsellors had no clear idea about the real cause of the problem. Interestingly, a few of the victims remarked that the service providers went too deep into the problems that it affected their life's rhythm. Evidently, the data showed that there is need to improve the services for the victims of domestic violence. More importantly, the agencies of the service should be flexible enough to adapt to the specific problems and needs of various individuals.

CONCLUSION

Violence against women is not a recent phenomenon. Women have been victims of domestic violence all through the ages and in all societies of the world. Domestic violence in any form should be condemned and averted by all means. As the first step to control or reduce violence against women, men should be sensitised to understand the value of womanhood and should have respect for them. Usually the victims of domestic violence are forced to continue under the strained relationships due to lack of adequate support from the parents or the society. Women staying away from their husbands in order to avoid the situation of violence should not be scorned or looked upon with suspicion. Programmes of gender sensitisation at different levels could bring about a difference in this scenario of domestic violence. Pre-marital counselling is also suggested as a measure to prevent domestic violence and to help women in trouble to face the situation without family breakdown.

The victims of domestic violence believe that women will have more power and voice to assert their rights, if they are psychologically and economically empowered. This would demand a series of