



Volume: 2<sup>nd</sup> & Issue: 6<sup>th</sup> (April – June 2015) PP: 146-159 Date: 25-06-2015

## INSTITUTIONAL REDRESS MECHANISMS FOR VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

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### Author's Introduction:

Dr. Dugar started his career in teaching and research immediately on completion of his Masters in Commerce and Philosophy. Being a Gold Medalist at the Masters level he was offered the post of Lecturer in the Govt. of Rajasthan and served there from 1984 till 1986. Since 1986 Dr. Dugar was associated with the Jain Vishva Bharati University, Ladnun, Rajasthan. At present Dr. Dugar is a Professor and Head in the Department of Non-violence and Peace and Director, Research in Jain Vishva Bharati University, Ladnun, Rajasthan. He also occupied the post of Registrar in the same University from 1997 to 1998. He has more than 30 years of experience in teaching at the postgraduate level, guided 20 Ph. D. scholars and has made seminal contribution in various national and international seminars and conferences. Beside a Ph.D. on Various Facets of Super-sensuous Knowledge and Human Consciousness he has more than 70 research papers and more than 15 books to his credit in the field of Non-violence, Culture of Peace, Conflict Resolution, Training in Non-violence, Philosophy and Human Rights. He has successfully completed many research projects on Value Education, Training in Nonviolence and Domestic Violence. Presently, he is actively involved in the development of Relative Economics and organization of programmes on Training of Youth in Non-violence and Culture of Peace. Apart from his departmental contributions he served the JVB University in various committees of importance dealing with NAAC Accreditation as a member of IQAC, UGC Review, preparation of UGC Development Plan Proposals, etc. contributing to the university's corporate growth and development. He has been a member of Board of Studies of various universities, Member of Academic Council, and Board of Management. He has a flair for institution building and believes in team work.

**Abstract:**

Atrocities against women especially domestic violence is a world-wide phenomenon. The United Nations took the first step to focus on this issue. The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) was established by UN in 1979. This was the first agency to address women's rights in all areas of their lives, including political, economic, social, cultural, and family. CEDAW's primary goal was to eliminate discrimination against women and to promote a respect for the human rights of women across the world. Another apprehension is that CEDAW would destroy the fundamental structure of the traditional family and the various roles of men and women. Domestic violence was recognized as a criminal offence in India for the first time in 1983. The offence chargeable under section 498-A of the Indian Penal Code relates to domestic violence as any act of cruelty by a husband or his family towards a married woman. Until recently, there was no separate civil law addressing the specific complexities associated with domestic violence, including the embedded nature of violence within familial networks, the need for protection and maintenance of abused women, and the fact that punishment and imprisonment for the husband may not be the best resolution in every case. Only after a lengthy process of consultations and revisions for more than a decade did a comprehensive domestic violence law come into force in 2006, which is known as the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act 2005.

**Keywords:** Domestic Violence, Violence against Women, CEDAW, PWDVA

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**Introduction:**

The paper incorporates the policy frameworks in which the problem of domestic violence is addressed. An attempt is made to analyse the phenomenon of violence against women (VAW) globally and in the Indian setting. At the national level the Constitutional safeguards available to women for a

dignified and worthy life is elaborated widely. The availability of legal protection through the institution of various Acts to Indian women to address critical issues related to dowry, marriage, succession, sati, etc. is also discussed. Mentioned also are the legal procedures and mechanisms related to the dealing of violence against women as a criminal offence. A major section is devoted to the enactment of the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act of 2005 and the critical provisions that are built-in for redressing the problems faced by women victims of domestic violence.

**Violence against Women – The Global Scenario:**

Atrocities against women especially domestic violence is a world-wide phenomenon. The United Nations took the first step to focus on this issue. The CEDAW was established by UN in 1979. This was the first agency to address women's rights in all areas of their lives, including political, economic, social, cultural, and family. The CEDAW emerged out of the 1975 First World Conference on Women and was the result of more than three decades of efforts by the UN Commission on the Status of Women.

CEDAW's primary goal was to eliminate discrimination against women and to promote a respect for the human rights of women across the world. An examination of progress in more than 160 countries that have ratified CEDAW reveals that this has helped secure fundamental rights and freedoms of women throughout the world. The United States is the only nation which has not ratified the convention. Similarly other nations which have not ratified the convention believe that this would give the international community a chance to poke into the internal affairs of their country. CEDAW however states that nation states can express "reservations, understandings and declarations" if there are discrepancies between the international convention and their own law. Others believe that the concept of "discrimination" is too loosely defined, and it would result in "frivolous" or false lawsuits.

Another apprehension is that CEDAW would destroy the fundamental structure of the traditional family and the various roles of men and women. It may be noted that such doubts are misplaced as CEDAW does not seek to regulate any constitutionally protected interests regarding family life. CEDAW simply stands for the programmes which are educational and informative in nature,

which will help to eradicate prejudices and evil practices that is a barrier to the realisation of social equality of women.

### **The Indian Penal Code Dealing with VAW:**

Domestic violence was recognized as a criminal offence in India for the first time in 1983. The offence chargeable under section 498-A of the Indian Penal Code relates to domestic violence as any act of cruelty by a husband or his family towards a married woman. Four types of cruelty are dealt with by this law: (i) conduct that is likely to compel a woman to commit suicide, (ii) conduct which is likely to cause grave injury to the life, limb or health of the woman, (iii) harassment with the purpose of forcing the woman or her relatives to give some gift, or property in the form of dowry, or (iv) harassment because the woman or her relatives are unable to yield to demands for more money or does not give some property. The punishment, if found guilty through a court of law, is imprisonment for up to three years and a fine. However, it is not essential in such cases of harassment and cruelty that the complaint has to be lodged by the victim herself. Any relative or near and dear one may also make the complaint on her behalf. The above section relates to the criminal provisions of a more stringent

offence. There was a need of provision in law with more flexible remedies to offer within the broader framework of civil and criminal laws.

Until recently, there was no separate civil law addressing the specific complexities associated with domestic violence, including the embedded nature of violence within familial networks, the need for protection and maintenance of abused women, and the fact that punishment and imprisonment for the husband may not be the best resolution in every case. Only after a lengthy process of consultations and revisions for more than a decade did a comprehensive domestic violence law come into force in 2006, which is known as the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act 2005. Some key elements of the law include the prohibition of marital rape and the provision of protection and maintenance orders against husbands and partners who are emotionally, physically, or economically abusive.

#### **The Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act (PWDVA), 2005:**

Domestic violence is prevalent in Indian Society since ages and there is a very fast increase in the incidence of domestic violence against women in recent years, especially over the past two to three

decades. It appears that the family which was supposed to protect its members against violence and discrimination against women and the girl children has failed in its role. Increasing pressure from various sections of civil society led to the enactment of a social legislation that would comprehensively deal with domestic violence. Law as an instrument to redress the problems of victims of domestic violence and bringing about social change is essential for addressing the vastness of the spread and the seriousness of the problem.

An analysis of the pre-2005 era of legislative frameworks available for dealing with domestic violence is essential in order to chart the course the evolution of the PWDV Act. Dowry was a major problem in India. Hence, before the enactment of the PWDVA there was an existence of Civil law on divorce. The legal system in India offered remedies of divorce, separation and maintenance, available under matrimonial laws. However, the most significant loophole in our matrimonial laws was the lack of any provision that gave the women a right to reside in the matrimonial home and this was the problem faced by women irrespective of their religious affiliation i.e. whether they were Hindus, Muslims, Christians or Parsis. This according to

feminist groups and social activists was the main cause of vulnerability of a woman in her matrimonial home. It is also one of the major reasons why women could be easily driven out of their homes and made destitute or blackmailed into agreeing to an unfair treatment and settlement.

In the event of divorce the woman has to face the loss of right to any share in the matrimonial assets or a decent alimony. Often the woman is not able to get back even her *streedhan* making her economically vulnerable. She may have to do away with her children also or her *streedhan* even. Alimony awarded is either very meagre or not always paid. Without the recognition of a right to reside, civil laws on divorce provide little in terms of support to women in violent situations. However, not all women are able to get divorce easily on the basis of mutual consent. Such cases take very circuitous routes without any access to support services. Experiences of working with Section 125 of the Cr.P.C., 1973 show that there are huge delays even in obtaining interim orders for maintenance. In this perspective the passing of the PWDVA was a welcome change for providing immediate relief to victims of domestic violence seeking justice in this country.

The Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act 2005 (PWDVA) was brought into force by the Indian government from October 26, 2006. The Act was passed by the Parliament in August 2005 and assented to by the President on 13 September; 2005. The Act has 5 chapters & 37 sections. A few of the important sections of the Act as provided for are as under:

Section-2 enumerates various definitions to be used in the Act. Some of the most important of the definitions that have been provided in this section are – the “domestic incident report” which means a report made in the prescribed form on receipt of a complaint of domestic violence from an aggrieved person; “domestic relationship” that includes live-in relationships that is in nature of a marriage in addition to relationships established by marriage, adoption or due to residing as a joint family; “respondent” which refers to the husband or the live-in partner who is in a domestic relationship and also includes any person who is related to the husband or the male partner who commits or is party to violence done to the aggrieved women or victim; “shared household” that could be an owned or rented house where the aggrieved lives singly, or jointly along with other members of the joint family irrespective of

whether the aggrieved person has any right, title or interest in the shared household.

Section-3 provides the definition of domestic violence which reads – “For the purposes of this Act, any act, omission or commission or conduct of the respondent shall constitute domestic violence in case it:

- a. harms or injures or endangers the health, safety, life, limb or well-being, whether mental or physical, of the aggrieved person or tends to do so and includes causing physical abuse, sexual abuse, verbal and emotional abuse and economic abuse; or
- b. harasses, harms, injures or endangers the aggrieved person with a view to coerce her or any other person related to her to meet any unlawful demand for any dowry or other property or valuable security; or
- c. has the effect of threatening the aggrieved person or any person related to her by any conduct mentioned in clause (a) or clause (b); or
- d. Otherwise injures or causes harm, whether physical or mental, to the aggrieved person.”

According to the Act, "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 aggrieved person and includes assault, criminal intimidation and criminal force; "sexual abuse" includes any conduct of a sexual nature that abuses, humiliates, degrades or otherwise violates the dignity of woman; "verbal and emotional abuse" includes: (a) Insults, ridicule, humiliation, name calling and insults or ridicule specially with regard to not having a child or a male child; and (b) Repeated threats to cause physical pain to any person in whom the aggrieved person is interested; "economic abuse" includes - a) deprivation of all or any economic or financial resources to which the aggrieved person is entitled under any law or custom whether payable under an order of a court or otherwise or which the aggrieved person 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 the aggrieved person, payment of rental related to the shared household and maintenance; b) 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 aggrieved person has an interest or is entitled to use by virtue of the domestic relationship or which may be reasonably required by the aggrieved person or her children or her *stridhan* or any other property jointly or separately held by the aggrieved person; and c) Prohibition or restriction to continued access to resources or facilities which the aggrieved person is entitled to use or enjoy by virtue of the domestic relationship including access to the shared household.

Section-4 clearly obligates members of the community at large, who have knowledge of an impending or already committed act of domestic violence, to come forward and file a complaint on behalf of the victim. This section of the PWDVA appears to promote the active participation of citizens in general to come forward and file complaints of potential and actual cases of domestic violence since it categorically says that such informants who have provided such information in good faith would not be liable for any civil or criminal proceedings against them.

Section-5 of the PWDVA is a social legislation that creates various administrative, social, legal, and judicial mechanisms to provide assistance and justice to victims of domestic violence. It

speaks of the duties and responsibilities of four key agents of justice delivery – the Police Officer, the Protection Officer, the Service Provider (most often NGOs working in the locality) and the Magistrate in providing basic information to the victims as regards their rights under the Act. This section provides for the services of Protection Officers who would assist the victims seeking assistance for redressal; free legal aid and other services under the Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987; as also a right to file a complaint under Section 498-A of the Indian Penal Code (45 of 1860), wherever relevant. Protection Offices and registered Service Providers have been appointed by the Government of Rajasthan to function in accordance with the requirements of the PWDV Act in various districts of Rajasthan. Like in many other states of India, Rajasthan too deputed its existing personnel in the Department of Women and Child Development – mostly the CDPO (Child Development Programme Officer) to act as Protection Officers under the PWDV Act. This belies the fact that the POs were supposed to be professionally qualified to deal with such complex cases needing constant counselling of the victims and dealing with multiple stakeholders who can give time to each individual case. The CDPOs,

however, cannot do justice to this additional charge they have been entrusted with. Moreover, there was a delay of almost two years in putting in place these POs to deal with matters of domestic violence.

Section-6 makes it compulsory for the state to provide shelter to the victims who are facing serious physical or sexual abuse and also those who seek such help out of their own choice or vocation. The Acts makes it mandatory for the state to make arrangements for the establishment of Shelter Homes for the victims or fund such arrangements which are run by NGOs and others.

Section-7 speaks of the provision of medical services and medical aid to the aggrieved victims of violent forms of physical abuse that cause injury. Section-8 mandates that as far as possible, Protection Officers should be in place in all districts of the state. Protections Officers have to be women and should be appointed as full-time positions.

Section 9: of the PWDVA defines the duties and functions of the Protection Officers. They are expected to record the complaints of the victims in the "Domestic Information Report" (DIR) as prescribed in the Rules and in such format as provided from time to time. The DIR has

to be sent to the Magistrate with a copy to the concerned Police Station or Mahila Thana under whose jurisdiction the case falls as also to the registered Service Providers working in the area. It is also the duty of the Protection Officer to provide relief to the aggrieved as desired for in terms of temporary residence or safe shelter, free legal aid services, counselling and or medical check-up in case the victims has sustained bodily injuries. In order to provide such services and assistance the Protection Officer has to maintain a list of and addresses of Shelter Homes, Service Providers, Lawyers for legal aid, NGOs and others readily available in the vicinity and nearer to the residence of the victims.

Section-10 lays down the duties of Service Providers who are responsible for protecting the rights and interest of the victims by any lawful means including providing of legal aid, medical, financial or other assistance. Like the Protection Officer the Service Provider is also empowered by the PWDV Act to record the DIR and forward a copy of the same to the Magistrate and Protection Officer concerned. Medical assistance and safe shelter also needs to be provided to the victims if she seeks such assistance or if she has sustained physical injuries or psychiatric help if required.

It can be said that the duties of the Protection Officer and the Service Provider is almost the same as explicitly mentioned in the PWDV Act. This may lead to a clash of interest, duplicity of work, shifting of responsibilities to the other in case of default or negligence by any one of the parties involved. Alternately, it may benefit the victims since they can approach the other in case one of the two fails to serve the victim appropriately.

Section-11 lays down the various duties of the government to give the Act wide publicity through the media, to conduct periodic sensitization and awareness training of the officers concerned, to co-ordinate different ministries/departments for the effective implementation of the PWDV Act, conduct periodic reviews, and to ensure that protocols for the various agencies concerned including courts are prepared and put in place.

It was found that some of the lead NGO Service Providers have been organising training programmes and Workshops for their staff and other service providers in the district as also for Protection Officers and the Police including the personnel of Mahila Thanas. Resource persons from various walks of

life especially social work professionals and educators, psychologists, psychiatrists, practicing social workers and lawyers, sociologists, judges, etc. were invited to orient the participants. Discussions on various issues relating to difficulties faced on the ground, modalities of filing DIRs, interpretation of the law and various sections of the PWDVA and other related Acts.

Sections 12, 13, 14, 15 and 16 lay out the modalities to be followed as regards the provisions and procedures for obtaining/providing relief and/or compensation or damages notwithstanding anything contained in the Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC) or any other law of the land in force.

Section 17 of the act is a revolutionary piece of provision that allows every woman in a domestic relationship to have the right to reside in the shared household whether or not she has any right, title or beneficial interest in it... This is also applicable to rented accommodation in which the victim was staying along with the husband or other members of the in-laws. The aggrieved person shall not be evicted or excluded from the shared household or parts save in accordance with the procedures established by law. Such a provision was

not present in any such other social legislation in India and has provided a right to a dignified life for women victims who are vulnerable to being thrown out of the house of an abusive husband or in-laws.

Section-18 speaks of the announcement or passing of prohibitory orders by the Magistrate in terms of prohibition of further acts of violence, aiding or abetting such acts, restriction on entering the premises or office where the victim is employed, or the school where the victims child(ren) is/are reading, or restriction on communicating with the victim – including personal, oral, written, electronic or over the telephone/mobile. The court can also restrict the perpetrator from alienating the victim from any assets, operation of joint bank accounts or lockers, use of *streedhan*, etc. The Magistrate also may specifically warn the perpetrator for causing any harm to the dependents, relatives, or other persons who provide assistance to the victim.

Section 19 should not be confused with any provision for providing women with property rights. It merely restrains the respondent from dispossessing or disturbing the possessions of the victim from the shared household even if the victim does not have a legal right on such

possessions. Through this Section, there can be an order directing the respondent to remove himself from the shared household, although no such orders could be passed against women. Orders can also be passed restraining a respondent or his relatives from entering any portion of a household where the victim resides. This Section can help victims to secure an alternate accommodation, get directions for Police protection, for the payment of rent and other payments, or for directions for the return of property, *streedhan* or other valuables to the woman. The purpose of such provisions is to prevent undue harassment of the women who had the courage to go against the husband or the in-laws by approaching the court or the concerned officials for redressal of her problems.

The purpose of PWDVA is to provide remedy to women under the civil law which intends to protect women from being victims of domestic violence and harassment. It is aimed at providing support to woman who is in grave difficulty and is possibly on the streets because she has not been allowed to her right to stay in her matrimonial residence. Legal remedies pertain to civil relief such as injunction, compensation and monetary relief. There can be no arrest made on a complaint filed under this law.

Section 20 speaks of Monetary Reliefs that are provided to victims of domestic violence who find it difficult to make both ends meet. One of the most common form of harassment faced by women in a marital relationship is economic abuse which is in terms of withholding money over which most of Indian women do not have any control. Being housewives they have to depend on their husbands or their in-laws to meet the expenses of themselves, their children and the family as a whole. The court may direct the respondent to pay adequate monetary relief to meet the expenses incurred keeping in view the standard of living to which the aggrieved person is accustomed and losses suffered by the aggrieved person and her children. This includes expenses towards loss of earnings; medical expenses; loss caused due to destruction, damage or removal of any property from the control of the aggrieved person; and maintenance of the aggrieved person and her children. Such relief may be payable in lump sum or on monthly basis as the situation demands. It is the duty of the concerned police station to see to it the monetary relief orders as directed by the courts have been complied with. In case the respondent fails to comply with the relief orders of the court his salary or wages could be appropriately

attached and the onus of making such payments lies with employer concerned.

Section 21 provides for passing of court orders providing the custody of children to the aggrieved women if she has been forcibly driven out of the house of the husband and has not been allowed to meet her children. The court may also restrict the husband or his relations from even meeting the children if it deems that such visits may be harmful to the interests of the child or children.

Section 22 relates to compensation or damages that the respondent may have to pay to the aggrieved party for physical injuries, mental torture, and emotional distress caused to the victim of domestic violence.

Section 23 & 25 are a great relief to the aggrieved parties since they provide for granting interim relief and *ex parte* orders on the basis of affidavits given by the victim. This could be with regard to allowing the victim to residing in the matrimonial residence, or restraining the perpetrator of domestic violence to cause any disturbance to peaceful residence, or payment of the cost of rent of accommodation as desired by the victim, etc. orders can also be changed or modified or revoked if there are any

changes in the circumstances of the victims.

Section 28 is a revolutionary step in the history jurisprudence in India because it empowers the courts to lay down its own procedures for disposal of cases under the Act if it feels that the CrPC becomes a limiting factor in granting justice to the women victims of domestic violence or in meeting the Constitutional obligations towards the women of India.

Section 31 also has categorically laid down the procedures to be followed in case the orders of the Magistrate has not been followed or breached in some manner or the other. This section provides that a breach of protection order or an interim protection order by the respondent shall be an offence under the Act punishable with imprisonment for a term upto one year or with fine or both. There is a clear and specific mention that such breach of protection orders will have to be necessarily tried by the Magistrate who had passed such orders. Such a provision has been made because the various twists and turns of the cases in question was well understood by the Magistrate and he would be in a position to deliver further orders without much delay and pass judgements expeditiously. Hopefully, this provision in the law will help in expediting

the delivery of justice to victims of domestic violence.

Section 32 gives added teeth to the PWDVA since offences of breach of protection orders is declare a cognizable and non-bailable offence. Section 33 provides for penalties on the Protection Officer for not discharging her duties as directed by the Magistrate as directed for in the protection order. However, if such actions have been taken by protection officers in not being able to follow the protection order in good faith then suits against the Protection Officer cannot be entertained.

Section 37 provides for and gives direction to the central and state governments to frame such rules as may be required to carry out the provisions of the PWDV Act. These are especially with regard to the determination of qualifications and experience of the Protection Officers and other duties as may be required; their terms and condition of service; the form and manner in which the DIR is to be filed and an application for protection order may be made to the Magistrate; forms to be prepared for filing of complaints, prayer for protection and relief through a court of law, and format for filing of affidavit by the aggrieved person under Sub-section (2) of Section 23; rules related to the selection

and registration of Service Providers and the qualifications & experience of Counsellors as required under the Act.

#### **Conclusion:**

An overview of how the Government of India viewed women in the context of development gives us a clear picture of changes in vision, strategies and programmes. The shift from considering women as recipients of welfare to ensuring the participation of women in their own empowerment has been initiated with appropriate policy changes over the years.

The institution of the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005 is a holistic piece of civil legislation that serves various purposes. It provides for adequate rights to women victims of domestic violence to seek relief and justice through the courts. The PWDVA is tuned to make a speedy delivery of justice. It is flexible for the fact that the Magistrate has been given powers to lay down procedures which are not explicitly mentioned in the Act but is essential for speedy disposal of the cases; stringent because it makes the Protection Officers accountable for their actions and duties and in making violation of protection orders as cognizable offense leading to the issue of non-bailable warrants and subsequent punishment. What the research found missing is the fact

that there is a certain degree of insincerity on the part of the central and state government since they have diluted the rules related to appointment of POs as regards their qualification and the non-provisioning of adequate budget for implementation of various provisions of the Act.

The process leading up to this law heralded a new period of law-making in which the demand for a law was articulated by the civil society & NGOs; and the content of the law was arrived at through a consultative process aimed at consensus-building. This successful experiment has demonstrated that the process of law-making is no longer the sole preserve of the State, but must include participation from civil society.

However, a significant achievement in the efforts to end violence against women in India would be to ensure that women have effective access to justice to enable them to obtain remedies as envisaged under the Act. There is a need to address the gender bias in the administration of justice, along with structural and procedural barriers such as high costs, lack of effective/qualified legal representation or legal aid services, lack of awareness or information, judicial bias, hostility while accessing the justice system

and lack of enforcement – all of which prevent women from seeking relief that protects them from violence.

The most critical aspect for the success of the implementation of the PWDVA is the continuous monitoring and evaluation of the existing laws, programmes and policies for women so as to ascertain how the law is functioning and take corrective measures. It is crucial that the State also takes special measures to put in place zero-tolerance policies on domestic violence, thereby ensuring that there is no impunity for perpetrators of violence. Furthermore, the State needs to introduce and enforce substantive equality standards in all spheres, particularly with regard to equal entitlements within the family as this will go a long way in reducing vulnerability to violence. Finally, there is a need to implement the existing legislation properly and to ensure government accountability for the implementation of laws dealing with women.

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