

# Alcoholism and Domestic Violence

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Violence against women within the family is a global phenomenon. However its ramifications are more complex and its intensity are much greater in India. The most pathetic aspect of such atrocities is 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”. Violence against women is one of the crucial social mechanisms by which women are forced into a subordinate position compared with men”. The status of women in India is not equal to the status of men in terms of access, participation, and reward. This situation owes its existence to the patriarchal and feudalistic structure of the society.

It has been suggested that the role of alcohol in violence differs with regard to factors such as who has been drinking, the drinking context, the relationship between perpetrator and victim and the situational differences make it difficult to conceive of models that satisfactorily explain the role of alcohol in a wide range of violent incidents (Martin, 1979). Research has found that alcohol is present in a substantial number of domestic violence accidents. The most common pattern is drinking by both offender and victim. Alcohol has been shown to be a significant risk factor for husband-to-wife violence. Studies have shown that the relationship between alcohol and domestic violence is complex.

Drinking frequently has been associated with intra-family violence. Reviews have found that excessive alcohol use is a strong and consistent correlate of marital violence. Regarding partner violence, research evidence indicates that it is more strongly associated with heavy drinking. Studies also report an association between drinking patterns and intimate

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partner violence; excessive drinkers and alcohol-dependent individuals are more likely to act violently toward their intimate partners (White & Chen, 2002). According to Parker and Rebhun (1995) Alcohol tends to lower people’s inhibitions against using violence to achieve their goals.

In a study of 180 women seeking prenatal care in rural South India, it was found that 20% of the women reported domestic violence and 94.5% of these women identified their husbands as the aggressors. Husband’s alcohol use was a significant risk factor for domestic violence (Halasyamani, Davis & Battacharjee, 1997). The role of alcohol in domestic violence is also cited in another Indian study which found that 33% of spouse-abusing husbands were using alcohol. Of these 15% were occasional, 45% frequent and about 40% were daily users of alcohol. More than half of the spousal abuse took place during the period of intoxication (AIIMS, 1997). A cross-sectional study of a random sample of 275 women in Barranquilla, Colombia found that habitual alcohol consumption in the women and in the spouses were factors associated with marital violence (Tuesca & Borda, 2003). The National Crime Report of 1991 reveals that in every 33 minutes a woman is abused by her husband. CSR (Centre for Social Research) has one and a half decades of experience in providing direct services to women victims of violence and has established a National Network on Violence against Women.

## Forms of Domestic Violence

The various forms of violence are Physical Violence and Psychological Violence. Physical Violence includes the following forms:

- (i) Female foeticide and female infanticide;
- (ii) Incest rape within marriage, connivance and collusion of family members for sexual abuse of women in the household;
- (iii) Physical torture like slapping, punching, grabbing, and killing;
- (iv) Burdening of women with drudgery;
- (v) Neglect of women’s health problems.

## **Psychological violence takes different forms:**

- (i) Curbing the freedom to associate with the natal family, neighbours, and friends;
- (ii) Curtailment of right to self-expression;
- (iii) Promiscuity of the husband;
- (iv) Accusing the women in the household of unchaste behaviour;
- (v) Irresponsible behaviour and alcoholism of the husband;

- (vi) Humiliating and victimising women;
- (vii) Fleecing women and their parents of their money and
- (viii) Assets by compulsion coercion and threat and squandering of money for non-household purposes.

Linkages between alcohol abuse and crime remain uncertain as they may reflect the presence of other confounding factors associated with both risk behaviours (Fergusson and Horwood, 2000). Alcohol harm is experienced not only by drinkers but by those around them including families, friends, colleagues and strangers. There is a strong relationship between alcohol and domestic abuse, violence and sexual assault.

Domestic abuse includes both physical violence and emotional, sexual, psychological or financial behaviour between intimate partners or family members. Pernanen et.al. (2002) suggested that compared to the use of other psycho-active substances, alcohol has been shown to most commonly increase aggression. Intoxicated people may be more vulnerable to violent crime than non-violent crime because they exhibit more risk-taking behaviour (McClelland and Teplin, 2001).

Thus it is clear that domestic violence is directly related with alcohol consumption. In this context Skrti et.al (2008) also viewed that Family issues such as marital breakup, domestic violence and spouse abuse are strongly tied to high use of alcohol. Domestic violence on married women are done not only by husband but also by other alcoholic person. Alcohol abuse may be a symptom of men with the tendency to use violence rather than a direct casual factor in their battering

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