Quest Journals Journal of Education, Arts, Law and Multidisplinary Volume 15 ~ Issue 3 (May - June 2025) pp: 46-53

ISSN(Online): 2347-2895 www.questjournals.org



Research Paper

Protection of Women against Domestic Violence: An Indian Perspective

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Abstract

In the twenty-first century, women can be observed leaving their houses with confidence, competing with men, and occupying prominent roles. Should we conclude from this picture that there is no longer any violence against women in homes? "Big no" is the answer. Violence against women persists in society despite several attempts to reduce offenses against them. This article is an effort to find out the Kinds, causes and consequences of domestic violence in India against women and the laws that emerged to protect them from domestic violence.

Keywords: Domestic Violence, Woman, Abuse, Protection.

I. Introduction

"Home; Sweet home, no more holds true for multitudes of victims of domestic violence" Domestic or family violence has been a major cause of human rights violation of human rights of women. This situation is prevailed in almost every country in the world. It normally damages the women's autonomy and sense of self-worth. By domestic violence, the perpetrator usually inflicts bodily injuries, verbal threats and harassment, emotional abuses, proprietary damages, as means of coercion, control, revenge and punishment on the person in an intimate relationship. He commonly does this to control the victims and her action. In consequence of frequent abuses the victim feels herself morally damaged and powerless. This may make her unable to avoid or escape the abuses. Ultimately, the victim is affected with mental disorganization. And this may lead to end one her life.

According to the National Family Health Survey (NFHS), 2019-2021, "29.3 per cent of married Indian women between the ages of 18 and 49 have experienced domestic/sexual violence; 3.1 per cent of pregnant women aged 18 to 49 have suffered physical violence during their pregnancy."

That is only the number of cases reported by women; there are frequently many more that never make it to the police. In 2021, just 507 instances were registered across India under the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005, whereas 136,000 complaints were registered under Indian Penal Code Section 498A (cruelty by husband or his relatives).

On the other hand, the law enforcement officials frequently reinforce the abuser's attempts to demean and control his victim. The police and judicial authorities often dismiss it as "private" matter. All sorts of abuses like rape, murders, battering are criminalized in all most all countries. But these abuses are tolerated as norms.

Violence is growing in our society. It can be found practically anywhere, but nowhere is this eruption more severe than directly behind our dwellings. All around our nation, people are being tortured, beaten, and killed behind closed doors. It is occurring in cities, villages, rural areas, and metropolitan areas. It transcends all age ranges, genders, races, and social backgrounds. From one generation to the next, it is evolving into a legacy. Domestic violence is the phrase used to characterize this rapidly growing issue of violence in our homes.

Meaning and Definition of Domestic Violence

Violence means any kind of abusive behavior. The term violence refers to any physical force for or any damage or injury to person or property.

Oxford Dictionary defines: "Violence as behaviour involving physical force intended to hurt, damage or kill someone or something".²

Domestic violence means the violence that occurs within the family itself.

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¹ Singh, Minati (2010, March 8) Fair in Sex Foul in Fate, The Times of India, Bhubaneswar, Odisha, p.2.

² http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/violence

Domestic Violence means Violence or physical abuse directed toward your spouse or domestic partner; usually violence by men against women. Domestic violence and abuse is not limited to obvious physical violence. Domestic violence can also mean endangerment, criminal coercion, kidnapping, unlawful imprisonment, trespassing, harassment, and staking.

Section 3 of the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act provides the definition of Domestic violence, which states that "any act, omission or commission or conduct of the respondent shall constitute domestic violence in case it,

- 1. 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
- 2. 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
- 3. Has the effect of threatening the aggrieved person or any person related to her by any conduct mentioned in clauses (a) or (b); or
- 4. Otherwise injures or causes harm, whether physical or mental, to the aggrieved person."³

Kinds of Domestic Violence

The goal of all forms of domestic violence abuse is to control the victim and keep them under control. In order to control their spouse or partner, abusers employ a variety of strategies, including dominance, humiliation, seclusion, threats, intimidation, denial, and blame (30).

"Abuse" is defined as mistreatment that is reasonably likely to result in death, serious physical or psychological harm to an individual, or a substantial loss of the individual's property, whether it be sexual, mental, emotional, financial, physical, or a combination of any of these.

Instances of most common form of abusive behavior against the married women are as follows⁴

1. Physical Abuse

When physical violence is used to increase the abuser's authority and control over their spouse, it is considered partner abuse. Any violent physical activity that purposefully or unintentionally results in bodily harm or property destruction is regarded as physical abuse, and this includes the following:

- Hitting, beating, choking, pushing, slapping, kicking, pulling hair, biting, punching, backhanding, arm twisting, shoving, kicking or burning
- Holding the partner down or preventing the partner from leaving
- Throwing and/or threatening with objects
- Locking the partner out of the home

2. Sexual Abuse

Any forced or coerced sexual act or behavior intended to gain control and authority over the partner is considered sexual abuse. Contact that demeans or humiliates the partner and causes feelings of vulnerability or shame especially with regard to the body, sexual performance, or sexuality, is just as bad as forced sexual contact.⁵

Common examples are:

- Unwanted touching
- Demeaning remarks about the partner's body or appearance
- Minimization of the partner's sexual needs
- Berating the partner about his sexual history

3. Emotional/Psychological Abuse

Emotional abuse is any use of words, voice, action or lack of action meant to control, hurt or demean another person

Behaviors include:

- Verbal threats
- Demeaning the partner in front of friends, family or strangers
- Name-calling and use of abusive language

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³ Section 3 of the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005

⁴ www.legalserviceindia.com

⁵ www.legalserviceindia.com DOI: 10.35629/2895-15034653

- Constant criticism or humiliation
- Disproportionate anger or yelling to intimidate
- Irrational blaming of the partner

Abusing or threatening to abuse pets is included here, again when the intent is to emotionally harm the partner through the pets

4. Identity Abuse

Identity abuse is using personal characteristics to demean, manipulate and control the partner. This category is comprised of the social "isms", including racism, sexism, ageism, able-ism, beauty-ism, as well as homophobia. Examples are

- Outing or threatening to out the partner to such people as family, boss, orneighbors
- Using the partner's own homophobia to demean him or make him fearful
- Asserting that the partner will never have another relationship because he is too ugly or too old
- Blaming the abuse on the partner's identity (gay, bisexuality, transgender) or behavior (non-monogamy, wish to practice or not practice S&M, etc.) or justifying the abuse based on any of these factors.
- Using racial epithets and negative stereotypes
- Exploiting the partner's internalized racism
- Accusing the partner of being racist
- Ridiculing the partner's physical challenges or exploiting them
- Ridiculing the partner's gender identity: appearance, dress, voice quality, grooming, etc.
- Threatening to 'out' partner as Transgender.⁶
- **5. Economic Abuse:** Economic abuse includes acts such as the denial of funds, refusal to contribute financially, denial of food and basic needs, and controlling access to health care, employment, etc.⁷
- **6. Individual based Violence:** It is found that aged women and girl child particularly vulnerable to domestic violence. The condition of women in the families is undoubtedly still quite precarious. Unmarried girls, unwanted in their father's homes could also experience violence. a) Violence against Girl Child, (Unmarried Women) b) Violence Against Married Women c) Violence Against Aged Women.⁸

Causes of Domestic Violence

There are a number of different factors that contribute to the prevalence of domestic violence:⁹

- 1. Cultural factors: Women and children have historically been beaten and chastised in many patriarchal countries because they are seen as a man's property. Furthermore, the honor of the family is frequently linked to the idea of a woman's sexuality. As a result, a woman will be judged and abused for any actions or behaviors that are viewed as being dishonor to the family.
- 2. Legal factors: Law enforcement organizations can reluctant to step in or become engaged because they view domestic abuse as a private family concern. Domestic abuse charges are sometimes given a less sentence than those committed by strangers. In fact, many cultures do not even consider intimate relationship sexual abuse to be a crime.
- **3. Economic factors:** Lack of economic resources is often associated with domestic abuse.
- **4. Environmental factors:** Individuals who watched or experienced abuse as children and grew up in abusive homes may be more inclined to engage in domestic violence as adults. ¹⁰ This is referred to as the intergenerational cycle of abuse.

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⁶ www.legalserviceindia.com

⁷ Newton C. J. "Domestic Violence: An Overview" FindCounseling.com, Mental Health Journal. February, 2001. Available at http://www.aaets.org/article145.html

⁸ Dr. Mrs. Annie John, Violence Against Women Need To Awaken The Conscience Of Humanity, 55 (Asia Law House, 2013)

⁹ Yakubovich AR, Stöckl H, Murray J, Melendez-Torres GJ, Steinert JI, Glavin CEY, Humphreys DK. Risk and protective factors for intimate partner violence against women: Systematic review and meta-analyses of prospective-longitudinal studies. *Am J Public Health*. 2018;108(7):e1-e11. doi:10.2105/AJPH.2018.304428 *10* reene CA, Haisley L, Wallace C, Ford JD. Intergenerational effects of childhood maltreatment: A systematic review of the parenting practices of adult survivors of childhood abuse, neglect, and violence. *Clin Psychol Rev*. 2020;80:101891. doi:10.1016/j.cpr.2020.101891

- 5. Social factors: It can be challenging for victims to come forward and report their abusers because society still has a tendency to blame them for their mistreatment. Victims are frequently examined in great detail, and any flaws are used against them.
- **Substance use:** Excessive use of substances such as alcohol and drugs can lead to domestic abuse.

Consequences of Domestic Violence against Women

It can be challenging for victims to communicate because society still frequently places the blame for abuse on them. Battered women often remain silent, in pain, and emotionally unstable after the abuse has occurred. Women's productivity in all spheres of life is impacted by psychological anguish and setbacks brought on by domestic abuse. One fatal outcome of such mistreated women is their suicide, and the frequency of these occurrences is rising.

A working Indian woman may quit her job due to mistreatment at home or at work, which could cause her to become less productive. If she is not feeling well, both mentally and physically, her health could worsen. Following the first few horrific assaults, some women try to become independent and leave their house right away. When people must labor hard to acquire two meals a day, their survival becomes painful and challenging. Many of these women are rescued by women's welfare organizations such as the Woman's Emancipation and Development Trust (WEDT), the Affus Woman Welfare Association (AWWA), and the Women Welfare Association of India (WWAI). When they leave their homes, some of them are forced into engaging in pornography and women trafficking. As a result, there is an increased chance of developing HIV/AIDS and drug addiction. Of course, some people choose to do it.

The impact that domestic violence has on a woman's children is among its most serious consequences. Given that the mother is the one who gives birth, it is a natural phenomena that children typically have a stronger bond with their mothers. The child may act normally at home as long as the abuse the mother endures is kept a secret. A child may experience great emotional distress on the day when the mother's sorrow and suffering are made public. Youngsters might not even understand how serious the issue is. They might become quiet, reticent, and comfort the mother. When women are subjected to open acts of abuse when they are young, it might have a more profound and graphic effect on their mentality. They grow accustomed to such events at home and are inclined to do the same in their own lives. Domestic violence is a prevalent problem in India, particularly in rural households.

When women are the victims of intimate partner violence (IPV), they tend to keep their distance from their spouse. It has a negative impact on their sexual life. Many of them seek separation and file for divorce, which once more has an impact on the lives of the children. Some people are still taken advantage of because they are not properly aware of the laws of the constitution and human rights.

THE PROTECTION OF WOMEN FROM DOMESTIC VIOLENCE ACT, 2005

The Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act was enacted by the Parliament on September 13, 2005, and extends to the whole of India.

Objectives of the Domestic Violence Act, 2005

The main objective of enacting this Act is "to provide for more effective protection of the rights of women guaranteed under the constitution who are victims of violence of any kind occurring within the family and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto." Some other objectives of the Act include,

- To stop domestic violence by raising awareness of the problem and encouraging a change in society away from violence.
- To guarantee that perpetrators of violence are held accountable and subject to the proper legal repercussions
- To provide a robust legislative framework that addresses domestic abuse and gives survivors access to support services, protection orders, and legal remedies.
- To help survivors rebuild their lives and restore their independence by offering medical support, counseling, housing, and rehabilitation facilities.

Important provisions of the Domestic Violence Act, 2005

Some of the important provisions of the Act are mentioned as follows:

Section 5: Duties of Police Officers, Service Providers, and Magistrate

According to section 5, police officers and magistrates must inform the person who has been aggrieved of her right to apply for relief in the form of a custody order, protection order, residency order, compensation order, monetary relief order, and other forms. Additionally, it granted the right to use Section 498A of the Indian Penal

Code(now section 85 of Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita) to file a complaint against the respondent. Police officers, service providers, and magistrates are required by Section 5 of the Act to immediately address domestic violence allegations and assist in the process of securing protective orders. It highlights how crucial it is to educate judicial and law enforcement officials about the requirements of the Act.¹¹

Sections 6 and 7: Duties of Shelter Homes and Medical Facilities

According to **Section 6** of the Act, if an aggrieved person or a Protection Officer or a Service Provider, on her behalf, requests the person in charge of the shelter homes to provide shelter to her then they should provide shelter to her.¹² According to **Section 7** of the Act, the person in charge of the medical facility must provide her with medical assistance if it is requested by an aggrieved person or a Protection Officer or a Service Provider, on her behalf.¹³

Section 8: Appointment of Protection Officers

This section empowers the government to appoint Protection Officers in each district and notify the area or areas within which they should exercise the powers given to them. As per **Section 8(2)** of the Act, "the Protection Officers shall as far as possible be women and shall possess such qualifications and experience as prescribed." These officers assist and support survivors of domestic violence by acting as a link between them and the court.¹⁴

Section 9: Duties and Functions of Protection Officers

- To assist the Magistrate in the discharge of his functions under this Act.
- To make a DIR (Domestic Incident Report), "a report made in the prescribed form on receipt of a complaint of domestic violence from an aggrieved person," to the Magistrate.
- To make an application, as prescribed in the Act, to the Magistrate, if the aggrieved person seeks a protection order.
- To ensure that legal aid is provided to the aggrieved person under the Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987.
- To list out all the service providers providing various services such as legal aid, counseling, shelter homes, and medical facilities to the aggrieved person.
- To provide shelter home and medical aid to the aggrieved person.
- To make sure that benefits under Section 20 of the Act are provided to the aggrieved person. 15

The duties performed by Protection Officers are controlled by the Magistrate.

Section 10: Service Providers

This section acknowledges the critical role that many organizations and institutions play in helping survivors of domestic abuse. It requires the government to notify and designate service providers, including as hospitals, counseling centers, and shelters, to give survivors the assistance they require. Service providers are required to comply with the provisions of the Act and cooperate with Protection Officers in facilitating medical examinations, counseling, shelter, and other support services. This section guarantees survivors access to a network of service providers who can address their specific needs and aid in their recovery and protection. ¹⁶

Section 11: Duties of Government

The Central and State Governments should take appropriate measures to ensure that proper periodic sensitization and awareness training on the issues addressed by this Act are provided to the Central and State Governments officers. Moreover, awareness regarding the provisions of the Act should be given at regular intervals to the public via television, print media, and radio. Also, Governments should also ensure effective coordination between services provided by the concerned Ministries and Departments¹⁷.

Section 12: Application to Magistrate

Under this provision, the aggrieved person on any other person, Protection Officer or Service Provider, on her behalf can file an application to the Magistrate claiming relief under the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005. The application should be filed in the same format including all necessary details as

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¹¹ Section 5 of the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005

¹² Section 6 of the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005

¹³ Section 7 of the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005

¹⁴ Section 8of the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005

¹⁵ Section 9 of the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005

¹⁶ Section 10 of the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005

¹⁷ Section 11 of the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005

prescribed by the Act. Along with this, it is the duty of the Magistrate to fix the first date of hearing within 3 days from the date of receipt of the application by the Court and the same should be disposed of within a period of 60 days from the date of its first hearing. ¹⁸

Section 17: Right to reside in a shared household

This Section states that "every woman in a domestic relationship shall have the right to reside in the shared household, whether or not she has any right, title or beneficial interest in the same." It also illustrates that the respondent cannot evict or exclude the aggrieved person from the shared household or any part of it. 19

Section 18: Protection Orders

According to this Section of the Act, protection is provided to the aggrieved person by prohibiting the respondent from entering the place of employment of the aggrieved person, committing any act of domestic violence, attempting to communicate either personal, oral, written, telephonic, or electronic contact with the aggrieved person, causing violence to aggrieved person's relatives or any other known person, and committing any other act of violence.²⁰

Section 19: Residence Orders

This section addresses the issue of a woman's right to reside in her shared household, even if she does not have any legal ownership or title. It prohibits the eviction of the woman from her shared household and grants her the right to reside there. It also enables the Judicial Magistrate to direct the respondent "to return to the possession of the aggrieved person her 'stridhan' or any other property or valuable security to which she is entitled." ²¹

Section 20: Monetary Reliefs

This section recognizes the economic aspect of domestic violence and provides for monetary relief to meet the expenses incurred by the survivor, including medical expenses, loss of earnings, and damages for mental trauma. It seeks to alleviate the financial burden and empower survivors to rebuild their lives.²²

Section 21: Custody Orders

It recognizes the importance of ensuring the safety and well-being of the aggrieved person (the survivor) and any children involved in cases of domestic violence. This Section empowers the court to pass custody orders in favor of the aggrieved person, granting temporary custody of the children to her if necessary. The court considers the best interests of the child while making such decisions and may impose conditions or restrictions on the visitation rights of the respondent (the accused). **Section 21** aims to protect children from witnessing or experiencing further harm and to provide a safe environment for their upbringing.²³

Section 22: Compensation Orders

According to this Section, compensation orders are passed by the Magistrate in favor of the aggrieved person. It states that "the Magistrate may on an application being made by the aggrieved person, pass an order directing the respondent to pay compensation and damages for the injuries, including mental torture and emotional distress, caused by the acts of domestic violence committed by that respondent."²⁴

Penalty or Punishment

- Section 31 of the Domestic Violence Act, 2005: It deals with the 'Penalty for breach of protection order by respondent'. If the respondent breaches the protection order, he/she is punished with imprisonment for a term which may extend to 1 year and with a fine which may extend to 20,000 rupees or both.²⁵
- Section 85 of Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023: It deals with the act of cruelty against women by their husband or their relatives. As per this Section, "Whoever, being the husband or the relative of the husband of a woman, subjects such woman to cruelty shall be punished with imprisonment for a term which may extend to three years and shall also be liable to fine."

¹⁸ Section 12 of the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 200

¹⁹ Section 17of the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005

²⁰ Section 18 of the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005

²¹ Section 19of the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005

²² Section 20 of the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005

²³ Section 21 of the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005

²⁴ Section 22 of the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005

²⁵ Section 31 of the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005

Procedure

Section 28 of the Domestic Violence Act, 2005: It states that the proceedings arising under this Act should be governed by the provisions of the CrPC

Flaws of the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005.

In an effort to get money, women are harassing and blackmailing men by making false accusations against their husbands and family members. The only option available to males is to defend the case or bring a concrete lawsuit against the wife because of laws that are specific to gender. The latter can make things more difficult for husbands, thus the former is the only one that can be adopted. The act's main flaw is how easily it can be misused enabling women to teach lessons to spouses and family members and creating baseless and fabricated charges while taking advantage of the lack of legislation protecting men.

- 1. The primary flaw in the act is its ambiguous definition of domestic violence, which changes according to the situation and interpretation. The definition, which has historically been linked to physical violence, changes according on the medical, legal, political, or social situation in a given country. For example, insults and jibes fall under the category of verbal and emotional abuse. In certain situations, it could be expanded to include simple domestic disputes that weren't meant to qualify as verbal and mental abuse.
- 2. The term "cruelty" has a broader meaning and can be construed contingently to include consideration of events that have not yet occurred or may never occur. Women who fraudulently book their husbands run the risk of misinterpreting the phrase. Therefore, it is important to remember that although while the act defines domestic violence in a vague way, the concept of cruelty cannot be limited to women.
- 3. Furthermore, **the respondent**, as defined, refers exclusively to any adult male individual, indicating that a complaint cannot be lodged against women. But it's not mandatory that men always commit acts of violence against women.
- 4. Another perilous clause that is legally justifiable is that the aggrieved party may also be granted temporary custody of the child, which makes the respondent worried because the custody order may also deny visitation rights.
- 5. Monetary protection is the main safeguard that allows women's malign intentions to flourish. In the past, women's economic dependence on their husbands was the real reason they never spoke out against their hardships, but times have changed since then. In addition to being economically independent and educated, women are occasionally perceived as earning more than males. Even financially independent women torture their spouses by requesting financial relief by using the benefit offered by section 20(1) of the legislation. Women can receive financial assistance if the court decides to compensate the victim for losses resulting from an injury compensation order.
- 6. The victim of domestic abuse is also entitled to financial assistance, and they can seek redress from any civil or criminal court. Moreover, section 144 of the BNSS governs the magistrate's authority to issue maintenance allowances, exclusive of other legal laws. This implies that monetary relief and maintenance are not absolutely necessary. Women who make a lot of money are also observed abusing their position under various pretexts. The clause merely serves to produce multiplicity of proceedings and consequences that may be egregiously unjust to both parties.

II. Suggestions

Among the recommendations for stopping and reducing domestic violence are:

- 1. Raising public awareness and education can aid in the decrease of domestic violence. It can make a big impact to educate men and women on domestic violence, its effects, and prevention techniques.
- 2. Giving victims of domestic abuse legal support can help them obtain protection and access to justice. This can include legal remedies, such as emergency protection orders or restraining.
- 3. It might also be beneficial to include the community in the fight against domestic abuse. This may entail encouraging community education initiatives, running public awareness campaigns, or bringing attention to the problem in the local media.
- 4. A comprehensive strategy for preventing domestic violence can be developed via efficient collaboration between law enforcement, healthcare providers, and social service organizations.
- 5. Lastly, establishing laws and regulations that forbid domestic abuse can have a powerful deterrent impact and make perpetrators answerable for their deeds. Stronger laws, harsher penalties, and sentencing guidelines that take domestic abuse seriously are a few examples of how to do this.

III. Conclusion

Women are severely and permanently impacted by domestic abuse. Women who are subjected to domestic abuse may suffer bodily harm, mental health issues, or even pass away. It has turned into a social evil that must be eradicated before many lives are lost. Domestic violence has a complex and wide-ranging effect. It is now crucial that society begin to recognize and raise awareness of this. The time has come for people

to stop blaming victims of domestic abuse and instead begin to support them. Individuals today have begun to portray themselves as victims of domestic abuse when, in fact, they are not. In order for the real victims to receive justice as soon as possible, this should be stopped.

The Domestic Violence Act of 2005 is an effective tool for rapidly and fearlessly delivering justice. Domestic abuse victims are protected and given protection under this act. The most frequent causes of violence are ignorance and a lack of awareness. Individuals have a tendency to assert their superiority over others and begin to repress them through their actions, words, and authority. This also occurs when people are ignorant of their rights and, even after becoming victims of domestic abuse, are unsure of the appropriate course of action to pursue in order to obtain justice. This study makes recommendations that, if followed, could contribute to the eradication of domestic abuse. Therefore, we can conclude that the most crucial thing a person can do for themselves to obtain justice is to speak up for their rights. A person cannot obtain justice for himself if they remain silent about rights violations. Therefore, the first step towards obtaining justice is speaking out against injustice.

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