Module 3 Child Abuse, Child Labour and Violence against Women

Lecture 21

Victims and Perpetrators of Violence, Motivation in Violence, Self-image, Self-esteem and Adjustment of Victims

Victims of Violence

If we consider all the cases of violence against women, we find that victims of violence are generally those:

- Who feel helpless, depressed, have a poor self-image and suffer from self-devaluation, or those who are ‘emotionally consumed’ by the perpetrators of violence, or who suffer from ‘altruistic powerlessness’.

- Who live in stressful family situations, or who live in families which, in sociological terms, cannot be called ‘normal’ families, that is, families which are structurally complete (both parents being alive and living together), economically secured (satisfying basic and subsidiary needs of members, functionally adequate (have rare quarrels) and morally conformists.

- Who lack social maturity or social interpersonal skills because of which they face behavioral problems.

- Whose husbands/in-laws has pathological personalities.

- Whose husbands are alcoholic.

Perpetrators of Violence

As we know, individuals in any position in society are directly responsible for acts of violence against women. The perpetrators are sometimes agents of the state but can also be a private individual or maybe an organization. Husbands, family members, doctors, religious leaders, media, bosses and business personalities may all be responsible for violence. The human rights community customarily holds governments accountable for the failure to prevent violence against women, and looks
to governments to take steps to protect women’s rights. Besides that, other groups have power over women lives and should be held to account when they commit or condone acts of violence against women or when they fail to fulfill their responsibility to protect women from violence. Around the world there are many countries with parallel authorities run by clan elders or tribal chiefs. Not only they themselves commit crimes against women but also encourage and permit abuses very openly. According to Ram Ahuja (1997), seven types of women may be identified. They are:

- Those who suffers from depressions, inferiority complex and low-esteem.
- Those who have personality disorder and psychopaths.
- Those who lack resources, skills, and talents and have sociopathic personality.
- Those who have possessive, suspicious and dominant nature.
- Those who face stressful situations in family life. Those who are victims of violence in childhood.
- Those who are frequent users of alcohol.

**Motivation in Violence**

Four causes may be identified in violence against women: (a) victims provocation, (b) intoxication, (c) hostility towards women, and (d) situational urge. (Ahuja, 1992).

**Self-image, Self-Esteem and Adjustment of Victims**

Self-image and self-esteem are considered indispensable aspects of the behaviour. Every individual when playing a particular role according to certain social expectations is judged by society in accordance with his/her fulfilment of these expectations. A woman too, as a victim of violence evaluates herself which in turn helps or hinders her in performing the expected roles. Aspect of self-esteem in case of violation against women, it is generally believed that women victims of violence/exploitation develop a negative view of themselves. Egeland (1983) has called this as “low self-esteem”, Kinard (1980) as “poor self-concept” and Hjonth (1983) as poor self-image. According to Mukesh Ahuja (1996), self-esteem of the victims depends upon the emotional support that they get from different sources. High self-esteem is positive personality dimension and reduces dependency syndrome despite the social-cultural stigma attached to being sexually assaulted, kidnapped, battered, and humiliated. It leads to adequate familial adjustment owing to equalitarian mode of relationship.
References

Ahuja, Mukesh, Widows, New Age Publishers, Delhi, 1996.