

# BREAKING THE CULTURE OF SILENCE

Uniting to fight domestic violence

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*Published in January 2008*

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*[ A joint initiative of the Public Health Department -  
K.B. Bhabha Hospital, Bandra (W) and  
Centre for enquiry into health and allied themes (CEHAT) ]*

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Cover Design and Drawings by : Aruna Burte

Design and Layout by : Pramila Naik

DTP by : Pradeep Kapdekar

*Printed at :*

Satam Udyog

Parel, Mumbai-400 012.



**To all the women  
who keep faith in a violence-free world  
through their resistance**

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## PREFACE ...

“Breaking the culture of silence” places Domestic Violence within the context of the feminist movement of 1980s in India. It highlights the democratic and left movements that created space for raising issues related to women’s rights. This is one more addition to the material developed by CEHAT on Domestic Violence. Through its partnership with the BMC for establishing a public hospital based crisis centre for women facing domestic violence, CEHAT has produced a lot of material on role of health care providers in responding to Domestic violence. But the issue is complex and it is not enough to merely understand the health consequences of Domestic violence. Often it is understood as a personal and private matter. This booklet therefore defines domestic violence, the structures that perpetuate violence against women and breaks the myths around it. I am sure it will be useful for health and human rights activists in understanding domestic violence and recognizing the role that each one can play in preventing it and transforming society. I would like to thank Aruna for writing this booklet.

**Padma Deosthali**  
Coordinator  
CEHAT

## PROLOGUE ...

When there is already so much material on the issue of domestic violence, one might ask: why add to it? After 1990, a series of studies, articles, reports and booklets on the subject came out; however, most of them overlooked the context of the women’s movement. This point came up during discussions with the younger generation of feminists, especially the team members of CEHAT-*Dilaasa*, who felt that domestic violence needed to be placed in the context of the feminist movement of the early 1980s led by autonomous, left and democratic women’s groups.

In the eighties, the feminist movement in India addressed all aspects of violence against women – state violence, violence at the workplace, in the organised and unorganised sectors, violence arising from caste-communal conflicts and domestic violence. This booklet attempts to deal with the widespread issue of domestic violence, especially highlighting the lost context of liberal, democratic and left movements which provided a favourable atmosphere in which to draw society’s attention to women’s issues.

For reasons that are too complex to go into here, the post-1990 groups working on issues of gender and violence against women were unable to establish strong links with the left and democratic movements of early 1980s. They worked on subjects like legal advocacy, female child sexual abuse, sexuality, reproductive and child health, small credit and development, all of which lent visibility to women’s issues.

Another development dating from the nineties was the generic use of the term ‘women’s movement’ or ‘women’s groups’ irrespective of the ideology of those groups. The political atmosphere in the country had changed drastically after 1985. The turning point came in 1985 when the Rajiv Gandhi government reversed the Supreme Court judgment in the Shah Bano case by changing the law through its two-thirds majority in Parliament.

The issue of women’s rights began to take on a different colour: it became less a part of the process of democratic rights and more an assertion of religious and caste identity. While a decade of feminist action, from 1975 to 1985, had raised important issues and made some gains, it had also drawn the attention of various political parties to the uses of women’s awakened consciousness of their rights. Right-

wing political parties such as the Bharatiya Janata Party and the Shiv Sena activated women's wings in their parties and set up different groups. They used the same language as that of left, democratic and autonomous women's groups but linked women's rights to community identity. Many women in these wings participated in the programmes of communal violence unleashed after the Babri Masjid was demolished in 1992 and again after the train burning incident at Godhra in 2002. This was in sharp contrast to the earlier left, democratic and autonomous women's groups which aligned themselves with anti-communal and democratic values and supported the struggles of Dalits, Adivasis and minorities.

This historical context underlies the definition and understanding of domestic violence in this booklet. The women's movement had provided the context. It helped us to understand patriarchy and the material basis of women's subordination, analysed the causes and consequences of violence, established links between private oppression and social, economic and cultural factors. It helped to dispel many of the myths surrounding these issues. The various sections of this booklet deal with these themes.

The perpetuation and acceptance of domestic violence is deeply rooted in the minds of women and men, and the first step in preventing it is to study and understand the prevalence and types of this violence, which affects not just women but men and children as well. The debilitating effects are yet to be computed for us to reckon the enormous loss that we as a society suffer.

Studying domestic violence makes us aware that cause and consequence are mixed. In being subjected to violence, women suffer discrimination and are oppressed. Viewed from another angle, it is because patriarchy sanctions gender discrimination and exploitation that women have to face violence. The material foundation of patriarchy is the sexual division of labour. There is unpaid domestic labour, which is regulated through patriarchy and supported by the capitalist, imperialist economy outside. The family and marriage are institutions where women and men are socialised to perform strictly defined gender roles. At one end of the spectrum, the causes may be personal or individual but they also have roots in the political, economic, social and cultural arrangements.

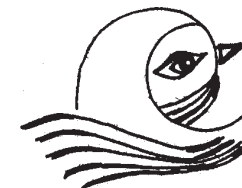
The myths that society has built around domestic violence do not allow it to be seen as a social evil. Such myths condone or subtly justify

domestic violence. Therefore, it is essential to understand the reality behind these popular myths. Society has to recognise that domestic violence is no longer a 'private' matter. It is a public issue.

When women are coming forward to narrate their experiences of domestic violence, they are ringing the bells for change and questioning patriarchy. The family and the institution of marriage have to become more democratic. The social, economic, political and cultural roots of patriarchy exist in other institutions of society as well and therefore change has to take place at all these levels. A new order has to evolve to end domestic violence based on the principles of non-violence, democracy and non-discrimination regardless of gender, caste, class, race, and religion.

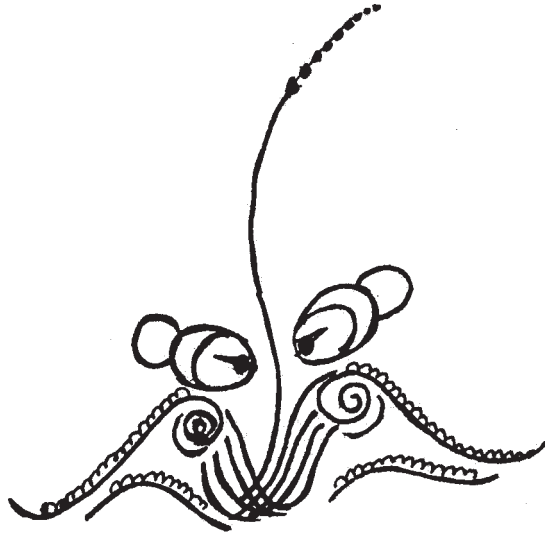
Many national sample surveys and national family health surveys confirm that the issue of domestic violence directly affects the lives of one third of all women, with another one third being indirectly affected. Those working in the areas of social problems, health and human rights cannot ignore these findings. In fact, they must make a special effort to understand what a big difference remedial steps, proper referrals and awareness of the issue will make to the women who need them most.

Understanding and preventing domestic violence is critical to the goal of transforming society. With this conviction, the women's movement has worked on an issue that touches all of us, directly or indirectly. This booklet is intended to capture the process that has enabled women to break the culture of silence that has hitherto surrounded their trauma. It is hoped that more and more women, as well as men, will work towards understanding and preventing domestic violence. At present, those who do not want to suffer in silence have some alternatives; yet, compared to the enormity of the problem the alternatives are inadequate. Therefore, raising and sustaining public awareness of the issue are also important.



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS...

I thank all the women who spoke openly of their private pain, which reinforces the courage we need to go on working towards changing society. My association with the Forum Against Oppression of Women (previously, Forum Against Rape), with the Women's Centre as a founder member and with the *Dilaasa*-CEHAT project as a consultant provided me with the opportunity to come in touch with the many women who are the *raison d'être* of this effort. I am indebted to all of them. I take this opportunity to express my gratitude towards the autonomous, left and democratic women's movements which shaped my perspectives.



Close interaction with and inputs from the *Dilaasa* team are the immediate impetus for writing this booklet. Without this dynamic young team led by Padma Deosthali and Sangeeta Rege the booklet would not have been possible. The team is headed by Dr. Seema Malik, Chief Medical Superintendent, Peripheral Hospitals. Her motivation and commitment have ensured the smooth running of the department and enhanced the quality of services. The valuable suggestions given by all those who have reviewed the draft have helped deepen my perspective. The reviewers were Manisha Gupte, Renu Khanna, Anuradha Kapoor, Sandhya Phadke, Anant Phadke, Vedavati Bhogishayana and Prakash Burte. I thank the members of Programme Development Committee of Cehat for giving feedback. The final editing was done by Jessica Jacob whose close reading and incessant demands for clarification of statements and ideas improved the manuscript!

The printer Satam Udyog and Pradeep Kapdekar who looked after DTP deserve thanks.

I thank Ms. Pramila Naik for liasoning with the printer and for enhancing design and layout of the text.

All the positives are attributed to the above while the limitations are mine.

# 1. HERSTORY IN CONTEXT OF WOMEN'S MOVEMENTS



Through the ages, women have been subjected to violence within the family in one form or another. The family socialises them to bear their trauma with sealed lips. Outside, all the other institutions in society underline the same message. Nevertheless, women have resisted oppression both within the family and in society.

Some of the important stages in this process in India were the social reform movement of the nineteenth century; the freedom movement, the social movements of the post-Independence period, the women's movement<sup>1</sup> of the mid-1970s and early eighties. The issue of violence within the family became a public issue in the true sense in the early eighties because the women's movement took it up consistently over three decades of continuous campaigning. Parallel stages can be traced internationally as well, and the efforts of women everywhere culminated in the first UN-sponsored international women's conference in Mexico in 1975. The culture of silence was slowly breaking down across national borders; private oppression was slowly becoming a public issue.



It was not easy to bring this issue to the forefront. Throughout history, patriarchy has been the norm. Even today, many people, including members of the so-called elite or intellectual class, feel that domestic problems are a private affair and should be solved within the four walls of the house. Family prestige and status are at stake if a woman goes out and speaks about the abuse she suffers at home. Society finds it tough to acknowledge the viewpoint that "the personal is also political and social". It was the feminist movement that brought about this paradigm shift in thinking. The abuse happens in a private space, within the four walls of a home. However, its links are outside in the society, which is male dominated and supported by patriarchy. The private space of home is determined by what is happening to women in the public space outside the home, in society. The way men view women in general is linked to the way in which a man views his wife.

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<sup>1</sup> Women's movement in this document includes feminist autonomous women's groups, left, socialist, democratic, progressive women's wings, organisations and fronts.

## **Social reform movement of the 19<sup>th</sup> century**

The social reform movement of the nineteenth century is seen as a precursor of the feminist movement in raising the issue of gender equality in India. When visionary Mahatma Jyotiba Phule and his wife Savitribai Phule opened the first school for the lower castes and women of all castes in Pune in 1848, a beginning was made in Maharashtra. Many child widows (some of them pregnant due to sexual abuse by male members of the family) who were driven to attempting suicide were given shelter by the couple. Other social reformers of the time such as Raja Ram Mohan Roy also declared that child marriage was a social problem and a grave injustice to women. They also campaigned to eradicate the practice of 'sati' (dying on the funeral pyre of the husband) which they saw as a blot on society. The campaigns for women's education and welfare, improving the conditions of women's work and other causes attracted both men and women to their ranks. Several decades of agitation led to the Child Marriage Restraint Act of 1929 that stipulated 14 years as the minimum age of marriage for a girl.

Formal schooling for girls was another major concern, and reformers pointed out that many different forms of discrimination, inequality and injustice sanctioned in the name of tradition were social problems. For example, child marriage, the practice of sati, the ban on widow remarriage, the tonsuring of widows were all traditions that had the effect of denying education to women. Therefore, making provision for women's education was a very important step. Maharshi Annasaheb (Dhondo Keshav) Karve established a boarding school for widows in 1896 near Pune at Hingne. Pandita Ramabai set up Sharda Sadan to educate child widows to make them independent. Traditional gender roles were challenged. These social reformers appealed to the conscience of the public at large. Mahatma Jyotiba and Savitribai Phule said that both men and women are born of the same creator, then why discriminate between them? Both are equal human beings. Phule established Sarvajanic Satyadharma (religion of social truth) to practise equality of caste, gender, religion and creed. One of Phule's disciples, Tarabai Shinde, wrote an essay titled 'Streee Purush Tulna' ('Comparison of male and female') where she reasoned that there is no ground for inequality.

## **Freedom movement**

Later on, at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Independence struggle brought many ordinary women into public life under the

leadership of Mahatma Gandhi. He was the leader of the masses. Women did the spinning and weaving of cotton by hand, and participated in marches, in the salt satyagraha and in the torching of foreign goods. Many also sacrificed their gold ornaments to raise funds for the cause. Women helped political activists involved in the freedom struggle by sheltering them when they went underground to evade arrest, directly participated in political actions and expressed their intent to strengthen freedom struggle through various ways.

Historically, these were the early beginnings. The All India Women's Conference, established in 1927, became a leading organization in the movement for social change. All its leading members were actively involved in the freedom struggle. It was the only all-India level organisation recognised both in India and abroad. In its early phase, the organisation had lobbied for various important issues concerning women's lives. Among these were women's right to divorce, reasonable hours of work in factories, universal adult franchise, scope of women's political participation and increasing the legal age of marriage for girls. Because of these movements for social change and the political ferment of the Independence movement, women had begun to see and experience life outside their family boundaries. Women's consciousness was rising rapidly through their participation in the freedom movement of the early half of the twentieth century.

One of the important outcomes of the Independence movement was the Indian Constitution. There was widespread recognition that the Indian Constitution was a document sensitive to women. Article 15(1) of the Constitution prohibits discrimination based on caste and gender. Article 15(3) authorizes the state to make 'special provisions' for women and children. Such affirmative action as envisaged in the Constitution is necessary to combat deep-rooted oppression and bring about a change in the status of women.

## **Social movements of post-Independence period**

Active women from All India Women's Conference set to work assiduously on reforming Hindu personal laws. By 1956, when the law minister finally piloted the Hindu Code Bill into the statute books after years of bitter parliamentary wrangling it had been considerably watered down. But it represented, nevertheless, a turning point in the early phase of post-Independent India women's struggle.

The euphoria of Independence did not last long. The promises of equality presumed in the freedom struggle did not materialise. The



spirit of protest was very strong among the poor, peasants and working class women. Therefore, this period witnessed a groundswell of movements on issues of survival in which women were very active. Social movements and people's movements organised by left political parties were addressing the women's question, among other things. This phase was the precursor of the second wave of feminist movement of 1970s and early 1980s.

Immediately after Independence, the land rights militant movement in Telangana (Andhra Pradesh) posed relevant questions to the newly formed Indian state. Large numbers of women participated to resist the conditions of extreme poverty, slavery and sexual exploitation by feudal landlords that they had been suffering from for decades. The movement was ruthlessly suppressed. In later years, the Naxalbari movement also drew many young women protesting for a just distribution of land.

The All India Women's Conference (AIWC) lost its dynamism soon after the Independence movement. Most of its leading members accepted government positions after Independence. Though it acted as an umbrella organisation and included members from Left parties it had no presence in south India. It had a middle class and upper caste base which limited its appeal. Therefore the National Federation of Indian Women (NFIW), which was close to the Communist Party of India, was formed to voice the concerns of women immediately after Independence.

In rural Bengal, the Kisan Sabha responded to the major threat of crop failure through the Tebhaga movement which organised sharecroppers. This was a mass struggle against the landlords' traditional claim to two-thirds of the crop harvested by the sharecroppers. Mahila Samitis questioned gender discrimination in the Kisan Sabha by raising issues of domestic violence and gender discrimination. Records show that women articulated their problems in specific terms: 'My man beats me up' and 'we cultivate, produce, market, so why do the husbands take the bigger share?'<sup>2</sup>

The tribals mounted an armed struggle against the police, revenue officers, exploitative landlords and moneylenders in 1960 in Srikakulam district of Andhra Pradesh. The CPI (ML) led this with women forming

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<sup>2</sup> *Perspectives on Independence - Through Women's Eyes* by Indian Association of Women's Studies - 1998.

themselves in Mahila Sanghams. They held protests against cases of sexual abuse by landlords. Along with economic issues like the right to cultivation and access to forests they took up social issues like payment of bride price and advocated that women marry by choice and communities take responsibility for child rearing. The tribal movement in Srikakulam was crushed by 1970. A significant feature of this movement was the participation of women in new roles of leadership.

In the early seventies, the Chipko movement in Uttarakhand also saw women coming to the forefront. True to the meaning of the word *chipko*, which means "to hug" or "cling to" women literally hugged the trees to protect them from being felled by commercial cutters. In this they were asserting their right to livelihood and protecting the ecological balance on the slopes of the Himalayas. The founder of this movement, a Gandhian called Chandi Prasad, said, "Our aim is not to destroy the trees but to preserve them. When the men go to cut them, why don't we cling to the trees and dare them to let their axes fall on our backs? The main goal of our movement is to promote the *judicious use* of trees."

Between 1970 and 1973, a severe drought hit the country and Maharashtra was badly affected. Inflation reached its highest level during 1973 to '74. Many students from elite institutions like the IIT and medical colleges undertook survey visits of the drought hit rural interior. They got involved in the struggle of the landless poor in Shahada, district Nandurbar, Maharashtra. In what later came to be known as the Shahada movement of 1972, attempts were made to organise the rural landless poor and raise their consciousness about changing social equations with the land-owning class. This effort spread to other parts of the country as well.

Women participated actively in both the Chipko and Shahada movements, assuming roles of leadership and questioning not only low wages and landowners' oppression but also violence within the family. Widespread social unrest led the government to introduce employment guarantee schemes (EGS), starting with Maharashtra. On this issue too, women were in the forefront, demanding minimum wage implementation in the EGS. Significantly, they also protested alcoholism and wife beating.

The period from 1967 to 1975 heralded an era of social unrest where oppressed sections of society, along with a section of the middle class were making a statement on the quality of freedom achieved in 1947

and on the failed promises. The winds of social change were blowing not only among the post-Independence generation but the world over for that matter. The student movement in France in 1968; the anti-Vietnam war movement in the US in 1967 spearheaded by students; the anti-apartheid movement in South Africa echoed in the minds of young people everywhere. Indian youth also responded to these winds of change by expressing their faith in the principles of equality in their own way.

The sixties signalled changes on many levels. The first split in the Communist Party of India took place in 1964 and in the Congress in 1967. This clearly indicated the trends of disillusionment within the political parties, with some sections feeling that their aspirations and the aspirations of those whom they represented were not being adequately addressed. New experiments were also taking shape in a larger context. Many young people were also questioning the philosophies of social justice put forward by the major political parties. They started criticising the theories of not only the ruling party but all the left parties as well, including the far left, that is, Naxalite groups. The young wanted to do something outside the framework of political party politics. Interestingly, they embarked on programmes of working with the rural and urban poor in novel ways. Newer forms of organisation were tested. In Maharashtra's Shahada Dhule district, the Shramik Sanghatana was formed to protect the rights of landless peasants. In metropolitan Bombay, the Workers' Democratic Union was formed. These organisations gave importance to leadership from the rank and file and not to middle class and upper caste intellectuals. It is important to recall these efforts in the context of the feminist movement since it was participation in these movements and newer forms of organisation that shaped the consciousness of women who later concentrated on women's issues.

The movement of Dalits who came to be known as Dalit Panthers articulated lower caste aspirations very strongly after Independence for the first time. A new energy led to a flood of literature, bringing hidden vistas of experience into the literary world that had hitherto been dominated by an upper caste worldview.

Jayaprakash Narayan's 'Nav Nirman' movement in 1974 to '75 to cleanse public life and fight corruption appealed to many school and college going students as well as a large section of the middle class. His call to '*Padho aur Ladho* (study and struggle) was resoundingly answered, aiming at a revamping of the political system.

In the South, students of Osmania University in Hyderabad began a campaign in 1971 to raise awareness on issues of corruption and goondaism. As an offshoot of this campaign, the Progressive Organisation of Women (POW) was formed in 1974 on the premise that the liberation of women was closely linked with the liberation of the rest of society. The POW believed, moreover, that women's liberation was part of the struggle against all oppressive systems including the family with its sexual division of labour. Campaigns were therefore launched against a range of social evils such as dowry, eve teasing, molestation, and obscenity in films, price rise and unemployment. The members were active in asserting Dalit rights and took a leading role in the anti-arrack movement in Andhra Pradesh.

In Maharashtra, an anti-price rise movement had women coming out in large numbers on the streets. A united anti-price rise committee was formed in 1972 in Bombay under the leadership of Mrinal Gore, Ahilya Rangnekar and others. Women wielding rolling pins and thalis stormed the state machinery and gheraoed ministers in their offices, demanding public distribution of essential food grains.

The long drawn out textile strike started in Bombay in 1974 followed by a nation-wide railway strike the same year. There was an upsurge in the organised sector of workers who expressed their anger at their deteriorating standard of living.

The lives of those living in urban slums were further disrupted by slum eviction drives. Instead of eliminating poverty, a promise often repeated in all the five-year plans, the state machinery seemed out to get rid of the poor themselves. The famous "garibi hatao" (elimination of poverty) slogan was coined in 1971, only to ring empty in the ears! Educated young people were moved to organise slum dwellers against these eviction drives. There were other efforts to organise the unorganised urban poor, with women participating enthusiastically. Women's consciousness was rising rapidly.

All these struggles were taking place in many parts of the country. It was to control the upsurge that Prime Minister Indira Gandhi announced the Emergency in June 1975 (which lasted up to January 1977). She justified the action by propounding the theory that there was a revivalist, right-wing, and anti-democratic backlash imminent in the upsurge. The Communist Party of India supported the Emergency because it believed in the threat of a right-wing backlash. This angle of the upsurge could not be denied – its obvious manifestation was in

Lok Nayak Jayaprakash Narayan joining hands with hardcore RSS leaders, giving credibility to the Sangha Parivar ideology of nationhood along the narrow boundaries of religious identity, that is, 'Hindutva is Bhartiyata'. The right-wing Jana Sangh was allowed to join the coalition government at the Centre after the Emergency rule of Indira Gandhi was swept away by a massive popular vote.

In retrospect, it appears that the CPI could have found a better way of defending working class rights without supporting the Emergency and sacrificing democratic principles. The Emergency was declared more as a political contingency to curb discontent from within rather than to control a popular upsurge from without. Whatever might be the analysis of the Emergency after three decades, it did expose many of the 20-plus generation to the brunt of state repression. It moved them to analyse established left parties. The young generation tried out new forms of organisation by bringing them closer to representing people's aspirations within the framework of democratic processes.

What is remarkable and memorable about this period is that common citizens of the country, especially the younger generation, voiced their concerns with conviction and in the hope of bringing about a utopia of equality and freedom. It was this faith too in the principles of an egalitarian, democratic society that is reminiscent of the struggle for Independence.

During this phase, women were not only actively participating but also taking cognisance of the processes of change on deeper levels. Early efforts to articulate women's issues were made by the Samyukta Stree Mukti Sangharsh Parishad in Pune in October 1973; a conference was organised by the Democratic Women's Union in Tamil Nadu in January 1974; and a women's special number of *Magowa* (a journal of progressive thought from Pune) was brought out in September 1973. These early efforts indicate that women in both the organised and unorganised sectors felt the need to organise themselves and network at a national level.

When the United Nations declared 1975 as International Women's Year, it gave a boost to the efforts that were already taking root to establish women's rights. Women were working to establish a national network on women's issues, including publishing journals and magazines. One of the earliest groupings was the Feminist Network (later called the Socialist Feminist Network) from Bombay during 1978 and 1979. As a

result of a workshop held in Bombay in 1978, two national level magazines were launched-*Manushi* from Delhi 1979 and *Baija* from Pune.

### **The report 'Towards Equality' in 1975**

As a part of its obligations arising from signing the 1967 UN Declaration of Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the Union government had constituted the Committee on the Status of Women in India. It interviewed women all over the country on a wide range of issues. The committee's report, *Towards Equality*, brought out in 1975, acknowledged the failure of state policies to eradicate the inequalities faced by women in the areas of education, health, training, employment, shelter and property rights. The report created widespread awareness about the abysmal status of Indian women and urged concerted initiatives for change. Significantly, it argued for constant vigilance against the dilution of constitutional safeguards and provisions and forcefully argued for women's equality as a necessity "not merely on the grounds of social justice, but as a basic condition for the social, economic and political development of the nation". This document provided a necessary boost to women's campaigns to change the status of women in the social, economic, educational and political spheres.

Internationally too, campaigns and initiatives to highlight and improve women's conditions the world over got a boost when the United Nations followed up its earlier declaration of International Women's Year to declaring 1975 to 1985 the International Women's Decade. In many countries, one of the issues that came into focus was violence against women.

### **The period from 1975 to 1980**

This period marks the formation of women's groups on issues like dowry deaths, eve teasing, beauty contests, rape and other forms of violence. These groups, independent of any political party, were called autonomous women's groups. One factor common to them all was their closeness to left, democratic, human rights organisations and liberal streams of thought. Some of them were professionals and non-professionals who were prompted to join because of their own experiences as women. Largely, members of these groups drew their inspirations from the processes mentioned earlier (between 1967 to 1977). The groups were all urban in nature and had all-women memberships. Though they were urban, they maintained links with the rural and tribal landless poor and urban poor as well. One such group was the Forum Against Rape, later called the Forum Against the

Oppression of Women (FAOW) in Bombay. Its members were urban, educated professionals and activists from various movements. The mood of these groups can be captured from the editorial in the first issue of *Manushi*: "Let us take nothing for granted. Let us not only re-define ourselves, our role, our image — but also the kind of society we want to live in."

The issue of women's rights was seen as part of building a new society where relationships based on exploitation would cease and relationships based on mutual concern and care would be ushered in. It was this conviction that was an interconnecting thread with other movements. By 1977, the Emergency was lifted and the short-lived experiment with the Janata Party (a blend of varying political persuasions that came into being to oppose the Congress) ended in 1980.

In Bombay, the FAOW took up cases of rape and atrocities against women. Prominent among them was the Turbhe case, where a minor girl working as a construction labourer was raped. Another case concerned a woman worker at the Ghatkopar industrial estate. She was raped and then murdered. There were several other cases of wife murders in the city that the Forum took up.

There was a lot of discussion after each campaign, adding to the members' perceptions of women's oppression. The campaigns drew public attention to the plight of women. The experience also increased the confidence of participants about projecting linkages of women's liberation with the total transformation of society. The work experience of all autonomous feminist groups was shared at the first national conference hosted by the FAOW, Bombay, in 1980. This conference discussed perspectives of autonomous feminist groups which declared their autonomy from political parties, state and foreign funding agencies and their agendas. The concerns that were shared ranged from law reforms, health, role of the state, roots of oppression, class and caste factors, relations with other movements like unions, people's movements, human and democratic rights movements. Rich and varied experiences were shared to evolve perspectives for the autonomous feminist movement.

In this conference, newly formed groups expressed the desire to network to make the struggle to attain women's rights effective on a national level. The resolve was to make the women's movement a powerful force in national life. The women who were motivated to bring about this change were usually in their twenties and were the

product of a social class that was highly educated, middle class, and articulate— products, in fact, of the same social milieu that had set the terms of change at the time of Independence as well as post-Independence movements. They were also close to left, socialist and democratic streams of thought. Their struggles on the national level drastically changed the terms of reference of any theory and practice of social change. The question of women's rights was removed from the 'reform' or 'social welfare' agenda of the pre-Independence period and placed within the context of 'pre-condition of any revolutionary change'.

The gender issue became one of the core issues to be addressed in any economic, social and political agenda. Left groups and parties - whose politics are primarily shaped by progressive, left ideology - formed and activated women's wings in established mass organisations.

Throughout the sixties and seventies, women were participating actively in various movements, leading to the formation of women's groups to fight for their own rights. During this process, these groups also realized that it was not only the law that needed reforming; other factors were also important. Work at the ground level— awareness building and sensitisation — was necessary.

Therefore, though the era of the seventies and eighties continued to be marked by street-level protests and national campaigns on the issues of bride burning and rape, various services such as counselling, legal aid cells and shelters also began to be set up. The issues were consistently highlighted in the media and in Parliament, and strong protest campaigns were organised.

### **1980 to 1985: Mathura rape case**

In 1980, many groups working on women's issues came together on the national level to demand the reopening of the Mathura rape case along with changes in the rape law. A 16-year-old tribal girl had been raped by local police officers in Desaijanj, Chandrapur (Maharashtra) police station, in 1972. The case took its own time to reach the Supreme Court and in 1979 the rapists were acquitted. This led to nationwide protests against the patriarchal bias of the judiciary. In Bombay, the campaign group called Forum Against Rape later renamed the Forum Against Oppression of Women (FAOW) took up a signature campaign to build pressure for reopening of the case. The campaign pamphlet of 1980 announcing a public meeting reads: "The Mathuras of the country are doubly oppressed, they are women and they belong to an already oppressed section in a nation where justice is the privilege of a few.

And then women do not face the terror of rape as individuals – but as a category. Mass rape is often used as a weapon to demonstrate power. You do not have to look far for examples. Have you forgotten what happened to the mineworkers at Baila Dilla in 1977? To the wives of railway workers during the 1974 railway strike? To Dalit women at Chandigarh, Bhojpur and Agra? Or to Muslim women at Jamshedpur, Aligarh and in almost all communal riots? To Mizo and Nepali women, at the hands of the Indian Army?”

There were nationwide protests, public meetings, rallies, signature campaigns, and delegations to the government to re-open the Mathura case. The issue of rape made headlines and united women across the board, clearly indicating two things: that the issue of rape cuts across class, caste and community lines and that the issue was seen as one of state repression. Indeed, the national campaign emphasised these two factors.

The agitation sparked off by the Mathura case ultimately led to significant changes in the Criminal Procedure Code and the Indian Penal Code, the most important of which was shifting the onus of proof onto the accused in cases of custodial rape.

### Support networks

The unrest that had begun in the mid-70s and reached its height in the eighties formed the second wave of the women’s movement. Women began questioning the roles imposed on them in the name of tradition. Inspired by the campaign of left and democratic women’s groups, educated middle-class women also came out in the open and spoke of their personal experiences of domestic violence. They stated that unless there was external pressure such as effective laws, interventions by the police and social discrediting and ostracism of offenders, domestic violence would not stop.

However sincere, the efforts to help women who were battered, raped or victimised were felt to be inadequate when it came to providing continuing support. These limitations and inadequacies were shared and discussed. Increasingly, women felt the need to evolve an alternate feminist support structure which women would feel safe to take help from.

During this time, two FAOW members had undertaken research on domestic violence through a small grant made available by the Institute of Social Research and Education’s Feminist Resource Centre in June

1980. The research on domestic violence covered 50 working class and 50 middle class families and revealed the widespread existence of domestic violence. Discussions led further to consolidation of ideas towards the formation of a support group.

The women’s liberation movement gave credibility to women who dared to come out in the open with what was happening to them in their personal lives. The family, considered the most private sphere, was no longer so private. Society and the establishment in particular had to take note of ‘women’s narrations’. The movement worked to create a climate of understanding and support in which individual women often found the courage to step out of their violent homes and start life afresh, drawing on the help of counselling centres and support groups that had been set up.

Understanding the larger context of women’s oppression through participation in various struggles had led to the formation of groups like the FAOW. Now, the linkages with individual experiences created a focus which led to forming a resource centre for women. Thus, by September 1981 six FAOW members launched a series of discussions on how to create a support group. This led to the formation of one of the earliest support groups called the Women’s Centre – ‘a space of our own’ – in Bombay. One of its founder members was Flavia Agnes whose triumph over her personal experience of domestic violence was a force in giving other women courage. Her autobiographical book, *My Story... Our Story of Rebuilding Broken Lives*, brought out in November 1984 by the Women’s Centre, records the early phase of the women’s movement which practised the principle of ‘the personal is also political’. Similar processes were taking place in other groups in other cities – Saheli in Delhi and Vimochana in Bangalore, to name just two. These groups combined ‘counselling’ and support work for individual women along with campaigns, conferences, research and consciousness raising activities on a broader level. The groups were never viewed or run exclusively as ‘service centres’.

The direction of the movement was clearly laid out in a souvenir brought out by the Women’s Centre, Bombay, for the premier of the film *Subah* in 1983: “What we want for women is nothing less and nothing more than what should be the birthright of every human being – freedom, equality and the right to determine their own lives. The Indian woman has made her own declaration of independence. We participate in the struggle to make that independence a reality...” Interestingly, *Subah* featured the popular actress Smita Patil as the

main protagonist who charts a new path for herself independently of her husband by taking charge of a woman's home in another city. Smita Patil's sympathies, both in the film and in real life, were instrumental in premiering this film to benefit the Women's Centre.

The movement questioned patriarchy, which sanctioned male privilege and female subordination not only in social institutions but also in the family and in marriage. The private space of the family became open to public enquiry. Powerful feminist themes expressed in pithy phrases resonated around the world: 'The personal is political'; 'Sisterhood is powerful'; 'We have a right over our bodies'. Gender exploitation, discrimination, inequality in public and private spheres was challenged. Patriarchy in the family and other institutions was questioned.

As more and more women broke the silence of their personal traumas and brought it into the public realm, the realisation began to dawn that this was a more severe and widely prevalent problem than anyone had guessed. Political parties took up the issue through their women's wings. Among them were the All India Democratic Women's Association (AIDWA), the National Federation of Indian Women (NFIW), the Shramik Mahila Morcha, and the Samajwadi Mahila Sabha. Their emphasis differed from autonomous women's groups when it came to identifying the causes of domestic violence. They worked for its prevention by connecting with other issues like provision of rations, water, electricity, alcohol addiction and the threats from thugs in bastis — all of which were of course important issues of survival that women had to cope with on a day-to-day basis.

Despite their differing perspective on this and other issues, autonomous women's groups and left-socialist political women's groups have come together on many occasions on a common platform. Issues like violence against women, price rise, protests against communalism and many more still bring them together. The awareness created by the movement received academic support when the Indian Association of Women's Studies was set up in 1984 to research women's issues. All these streams formed a vibrant women's movements.

### The Backlash

The 1990s witnessed two major developments that directly affected women's lives. One was the commercialization and consumerism that entered the national economy because of the free market. Women were drawn into the project of being the main consumers of beauty products, adding to the profits of multinational cosmetic industries.

Beauty contests were designed to build Indian women's image through the selection and crowning of a Miss India every year and sending the winner on to compete in international competitions for Miss Universe and Miss World. This was the outcome of a conscious effort to snare the average woman who aspired to be called beautiful by elevating her to the status of a 'woman of substance' (a *Femina* blurb), thus killing two birds with one stone: selling the magazine and selling beauty products.

The second impact was that of communalism in which ordinary women fell under the spell of the Sangha Parivar Hindutva ideology. The project of Hindutva sought to bind women to the narrower identity of religion with the overt and covert message that 'women's place is in the family'. It has successfully divided 'universal sisterhood' and split women along religious identities. The issue of women's rights was defined by community identity. The turning point of the communalisation of women's issues came in 1985 with the controversy generated by the Shah Bano<sup>3</sup> case of maintenance. With women now placed squarely in two opposing categories, 'Hindu' and 'Muslim', the Hindutvavadi groups were able to take over the demand of gender-just family laws that had first been made by the women's movement. They lobbied for it publicly and successfully, by taking the issue of democratic constitutional rights raised by the movement and linking it with religious identity, thus making out the entire Muslim community to be backward, regressive and unjust to women. Thus the issue of Muslim women's right to maintenance became the arena in which the Hindu and Muslim communities fought out their animosities.

Similarly, after the Roop Kanwar sati case in 1987, the Rajputs saw the act as a symbol of 'community pride'. The state government tacitly collaborated in allowing the chunri mahotsav<sup>4</sup> in support of sati to be held. Political parties of all hues except the left either kept silent or actually participated while the administration looked the other way. Thus women's rights were sacrificed and so-called 'community rights' prevailed.

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<sup>3</sup> There was something in the wording of the Shah Bano judgement that evoked a strong reaction from the Muslim community that was already experiencing isolation and long-standing insecurities dating from Partition. The judgement was delivered (Mohd. Ahmed Khan v. Shah Bano Begum 1985 - 2 Supreme court cases 556 - Criminal Appeal No. 103 of 1981 decided on 23.4.1985) by chief justice Y. V. Chandrachud along with a five-member bench made communal references to minorities and coupled them with a strong case for enacting a Uniform Civil Code.

<sup>4</sup> chunri mahotsav (a ritual deifying the woman who commits sati)

In the Bhanwari Devi rape case, the backlash took a different turn. Bhanwari Devi was working as a *Sathin*, a community worker in the women's development programme of the government in Rajasthan. As a part of her job, she attempted to prevent a child marriage. The family belonged to the higher Meena caste and Bhanwari to the lower Kumar caste (potters). The higher caste people construed her action as an insult, and the result was that five persons belonging to the upper caste raped her in front of her husband. Political parties of the Sanghparivar mobilised women against Bhanwari and felicitated the rapists in flagrant support of community rights. The very same forces had done the same thing in support of sati in Deorala.

What is worse, women supporting this kind of ideology have directly participated in the violence unleashed by the 'Hindu Rashtra' brigade during 1992-'93 post-Babri riots and in the 2002 Gujarat genocide. The author has witnessed Sanghparivar women in Mumbai blocking the fire brigade from reaching the Muslim-dominated basti in Bandra East when it was engulfed by fire. In Gujarat, Sanghparivar women led the mobs that unleashed murder, looting, rape, arson and terror on the entire Muslim community, including women and children.

The economic policy of liberalisation, privatisation and globalisation is affecting the lives of ordinary women from 1990 on as never before. Women are pushed into unorganised and low paid jobs resulting in the feminisation of poverty. The majority of women today face survival issues like shelter, sanitation, water, minimum wages and poor health facilities. Often when they turn to 'family' for help, they encounter domestic violence. Thus women find themselves between the devil and the deep sea. In low paid jobs and with no social security, they do not have the means to effectively negotiate non-violence in the family. Women's exploitation in an era of consumerism is twofold: in the outside world, they are marginalised, and on the domestic front they have little or no power. The ethos of consumerism creates the impression of a vast array of products available to everyone, whereas the majority of women are left with shrinking purchasing power. This situation and women's own participation in both consumerism and communalism projects have added to the violence against women.

### Some gains

Various women's groups began helping individual women who faced domestic violence, did consciousness raising and built support groups. They campaigned for changes in the law, identified the gaps in the states' implementing machinery such as the police and the courts and

brought them under public scrutiny. They made demands on the state for equal opportunities in education, training and employment. One of the immediate responses of the state to the campaign against domestic violence was to introduce new laws or amend the existing ones. In 1983, IPC 498(A) section was introduced and domestic violence was acknowledged as a crime.

In 1984-'85, the government established family counselling centres to prevent family violence through the Central Social Welfare Board. Special cells were set up under the police commissioner in different cities to help women facing domestic violence. Under the Family Courts Act 1984, the government set up family courts to settle family disputes in major cities in the country. The National Commission for Women (NCW) was set up in 1992 and many states have State Commissions for Women for more effective functioning. Moreover, in many states, all-women police stations have been established to make it more convenient for women to approach them. Different state governments have announced women's policy and development programmes.

The country also saw 2001 being named as Women's Empowerment year and in the same year a National Policy of Empowerment was brought in with the aim of reviewing discriminatory laws and improving functioning at the service delivery levels. After almost two decades of consistent campaigning, a law titled 'The Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act 2005' was passed and made usable from October 2006. Finally, a woman's right to a violence-free life in the family has been recognised.

### Her story continues....

From the time of the nineteenth century reform movement, women have travelled a path that is not linear. Working to understand and prevent domestic violence touches all aspects of women's lives — economic, political, social and cultural. The women's movement has made some gains in enabling women to negotiate a non-violent space for themselves. These gains have to translate into concrete alternatives for women to rebuild their lives. Towards that end, the women's movement has to continue to be active and to keep expanding. The challenges are grim; first in the form of the growing impact of Hindutvavadi parties that draw women into communal projects and second, in the acceleration of these trends by the forces of globalisation, privatisation and economic policies. Both pose a real threat as far as prevention of domestic violence is concerned.

### Important landmarks at national level

| Period                   | Details   |
|--------------------------|---|
| 1848                     | Mahatma Jyotiba and Savitribai Phule opened the first school for women and lower castes in Pune, Maharashtra.   |
| 19 <sup>th</sup> Century | Reform movement led by Raja Ram Mohan Roy brought changes in law to prevent sati, increase age of marriage, among other things.   |
| 1950                     | India adopted its Constitution, which guaranteed the right to non-discrimination due to gender and caste.   |
| 1975                     | <i>Towards Equality</i> . Report of the Committee on the Status of Women in India. The Union government constituted the Committee as part of its obligations as a signatory to the 1967 UN Declaration.   |
| 1980                     | Emergence of second wave of women's movement marked by protests to gender biased judgement of Supreme Court in Mathura rape case. The issue of violence against women including domestic violence taken up along with many other issues affecting women. Formation of support groups rendering help to individual women facing domestic violence. |
| 1985                     | The decade (1975 to 1985) of hectic activities on women's issues like violence, health, education, work, wages, media and political participation. Formation of many networks, setting up women's studies, holding of conferences by autonomous and other left women's groups, publishing magazines, lobbying for changes in law.                 |
| 1985 onwards             | Backlash in the form of reversal of Supreme Court judgement in maintenance case of Shah Bano. State of Rajasthan failed to prevent chunri mahotsav after Roop Kanwar sati in 1987. Community identities took precedence over women's rights.  |

|      |   |
|------|---|
| 1990 | The National Commission for Women was set up by an Act of Parliament in 1990 to safeguard the rights and legal entitlements of women. Subsequently State Commission for Women was also set up.  |
| 1993 | India ratified various international conventions and human rights instruments committed to securing equal rights of women. Key among them is the ratification of the Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in 1993.                          |
| 1993 | The 73 <sup>rd</sup> and 74 <sup>th</sup> Amendments (1993) to the Constitution of India provided for reservation of seats in the local bodies of Panchayats and Municipalities for women, laying a strong foundation for their participation in decision making at the local levels. |
| 2005 | Concerted campaign for comprehensive law to prevent domestic violence results in the passing of The Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act 2005. From 26.10.06, this law became applicable in every state in the country.   |

### Important international landmarks

| Period                   | Details  |
|--------------------------|--|
| 18 <sup>th</sup> Century | Mary Wollestonecraft's "A Vindication of the Rights of Women" (1792) made her the first feminist author and philosopher. Born in a poor family she struggled to be educated argued that it was the education and upbringing of women that created limited expectations.  |
| 19 <sup>th</sup> Century | Women had to mount militant protests in the U.K. and U.S. to win the right to vote. In the 19th century, feminists resorted to militant tactics like chaining themselves to the gates of public offices. Around the same time, Marxist thinkers like Friedrich Engels identified the bourgeois family as one of the chief oppressors of women. |



|                                      |  |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| <b>Early 20<sup>th</sup> century</b> | 1908 - textile women workers protested for an eight-hour working day, human working conditions and equal pay. In 1910, German leader Clara Zetkin declared March 8 as International Working Women's Day at the International Conference of Socialist Women in Copenhagen. In 1917, immediately after the war, Russian women went on strike demanding 'bread and roses' and gained the right to vote.   |
| <b>1917</b>                          | During the Russian Revolution, prominent women such as Rosa Luxemburg, Alexandra Kollantai and Clara Zetkin held discussions on issues like equal wages, freeing women from housework and child rearing by establishing community kitchens and childcare facilities at the workplace.  |
| <b>1946</b>                          | The Commission on the Status of Women was established at the UN to promote the advancement of women throughout the world.  |
| <b>1960 and 1970</b>                 | The "Second Wave" feminism of the 1960s too was an intense upheaval all over the world – this time against the external manifestations of patriarchy and the internal ones within political groups and the family. Thousands of women joined the National Organisation of Women (NOW) in America and, putting aside their domestic duties, came out in the streets in August 1970 in a national strike. The movement for the Equal Rights Amendments Act was a prolonged one, showing that women's liberation was much more than burning bras. |
| <b>1975</b>                          | At the urging of the Commission and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), the United Nations observed International Women's Year with the theme "Equality, Development and Peace".  |
| <b>1975-1985</b>                     | The United Nations Decade for Women and the several world conferences on women created an unprecedented momentum for change.   |

|                                 |  |
|---------------------------------|--|
| <b>1975 to 1995 and onwards</b> | The Commission made a decisive contribution in organizing and following up the world conferences on women in Mexico in 1975, Copenhagen in 1980, Nairobi in 1985 and Beijing in 1995. The world conferences set in motion research and analysis; goal-setting; progress review to identify achievements as well as gaps and obstacles; and renewal and expansion of commitments on women's status. |
| <b>1995</b>                     | The Platform for Action adopted in Beijing consolidated the consensus and commitments achieved through the work of the Commission.   |
| <b>1979 to 2006</b>             | In 1979, after four years of preparatory work by the Commission, the General Assembly adopted the historic Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). This landmark treaty came into force in 1981 and by early June 2006 had been ratified by 183 countries.   |

## 2. DEFINING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE



All human beings want to have a caring and loving family. Therefore, 'domestic violence' is a contradiction in itself.

The notion of what constitutes domestic violence is not fixed. It changes according to the specific context. The context is based on class, caste, and religion intersecting with gender. In addition, social, political, economic and cultural systems influence the context. Historically, the women's movement has struggled to name the problem.

The term domestic violence is gender neutral. But it is used to refer to the violence women are subjected to in the family as well as such extreme outcomes as dowry deaths or bride burning. A simple definition of the term is: "any violence against an individual within the context of the family or an intimate relationship." Terms such as family violence, marital violence, intimate partner violence and so on express overlapping and slightly differing shades of domestic violence. What constitutes 'violence' within the context of the family has always been defined based on social and cultural notions in a given society. Violence is an act committed to put down, silence, and to keep under control someone with the intention of hurting or humiliating the person. Domestic violence is an abuse of power. It is the domination, coercion, intimidation and victimisation of one person by another by physical, mental, sexual or emotional and financial means within intimate relationships. The worst kind of violence is usually directed against the female member within the family and within the intimate relationship of marriage, and that is the focus of this document.

Until 1983 women who faced violence in the family had to take recourse to other general provisions of the criminal law to convict the perpetrator for murder, abetment to suicide, causing hurt and wrongful confinement. But these provisions did not take into account the specific situation of women facing domestic violence. In other words, the peculiar situation that the woman faces in her home was not defined and recognised.

The context in which violence against women in their marital homes was first brought to public attention was the phenomenon of 'bride burning' or 'accidental death by burning', which shocked the sensibilities of the nation in the late 1970s. Backed by an active



women's movement, many women found the strength to come out with their horror stories. Death due to fire (which, incidentally was always presented as an accident) was but one extreme form of marital violence. Other forms of violence also filled women's narrations, and some evidence-based studies and active campaigns backed by autonomous women's groups led to a wider definition of domestic violence.

An amendment to Section 498-A of the Criminal Procedure Code made in 1983 formally defined what constitutes domestic violence. It indicated the forms of violence that women were subjected to in the marital family. Thus, only married women could use this provision. This amendment formally recognised domestic violence as a crime. It recognised both physical and mental harassment and physical and mental violence. This was a significant step, and the women's movement could take some credit for making the state recognise the harsh reality millions of women had to bear in their matrimonial family.

The amendment under Section 498-A reads as follows

**Section 498-A**  
**Husband or relative of husband of a woman subjecting her to cruelty.**

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 a fine. Explanation - for the purposes of this section, 'cruelty' means -

- (a) any wilful conduct which is of such a nature as is likely to drive the woman to commit suicide or to cause grave injury or danger to life, limb or health (whether mental or physical) of the woman; or
- (b) harassment of the woman where such harassment is with a view to coercing her or any person related to her to meet any unlawful demand for any property or valuable security or is on account of failure by her or any person related to her to meet such demand.

The realisation that women could be driven to suicide because of mental and physical torture as well as the injustice of continuing monetary demands on the maternal family had surfaced as a result of the campaigns taken up by women's groups. These cruelties were particularly glaring in the cases of bride burning.

From 1983 to 2005, the women's movement had done more than two decades of work on preventing domestic violence. The Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act 2005 is an important landmark<sup>5</sup> in dealing with domestic violence comprehensively. These are its main features

- ⇒ It has expanded the definition of the family to include matrimonial, natal and live-in relationships in the nature of marriage. This happened because many narrations of women contributed to the evidence
- ⇒ It has acknowledged the many contours of domestic violence by including sexual, economic, verbal, emotional abuse, both mental and physical.
- ⇒ It is applicable to women of all communities.
- ⇒ It combines civil and criminal remedies.
- ⇒ It recognises women's right to reside in a shared household.
- ⇒ This law is in addition to other laws now in force, whether criminal or civil.
- ⇒ It provides immediate protection from violence and enables the woman to decide her future course of action.
- ⇒ The court can prevent the abuser from entering the workplace or any other place frequented by the woman.
- ⇒ The Act also takes cognisance of marital rape.

In this law, two new concepts are introduced: one, service providers who can be NGOs and two protection officers under the law. This has been done to create an enabling atmosphere for the woman to access the law. The law recognises women's right to live life free from violence in the family.

Now the term 'domestic violence' is formally defined in The Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act 2005 as follows

**Domestic Violence**

Domestic violence means an act, omission or commission or any conduct of the respondent which:

- (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 physical abuse, sexual abuse, verbal and emotional abuse and economic abuse; or

<sup>5</sup> The left, socialist, autonomous and democratic women's groups campaigned for more than a decade to reach this landmark. The Lawyers Collective - Women's Rights Initiative headed by Supreme Court advocate Indira Jaising converted the demands of the campaign into actual law by working tirelessly with the wider women's movement.

- (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) Threatens the aggrieved person or any person related to her by any conduct mentioned in clauses (a) and (b); or
- (d) Otherwise injures or causes harm, whether physical or mental, to the aggrieved person.

### Explanation 1

- (i) "Physical abuse" includes 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 person, aggrieved and includes assault, criminal intimidation and criminal force.
- (ii) "Sexual abuse" includes any conduct of a sexual nature that abuses, humiliates, degrades or otherwise violates the dignity.
- (iii) "Verbal and emotional abuse" includes
  - (a) insults, ridicule, humiliation, name calling, including insults, ridicule specially with regard to not having a child or a male child, or;
  - (b) repeated threats to cause physical pain to any person in whom the person aggrieved is interested.
- (iv) "Economic abuse" includes -
  - (a) deprivation of any or all economic or financial resources to which the person aggrieved is entitled under law or custom whether payable under an order of court or otherwise or which the person aggrieved requires out of necessity, including but not limited to household necessities for the person aggrieved and her children if any, stridhan, property, jointly or separately owned by the persons aggrieved, payment of rental related to the shared household and maintenance;
  - (b) Disposal of household effects, any alienation of assets whether moveable or immovable, valuables, shares, securities, bonds etc or other property in which the person aggrieved has an interest or is entitled to use by virtue of the domestic relationship or which may be reasonably required by the person aggrieved or her children or her stridhan or any other property jointly or separately held by the person aggrieved; or,
  - (c) Prohibiting or restricting continued access to resources or facilities, which the person aggrieved is entitled to use or

enjoy by virtue of the domestic relationship including access to the shared household

### Explanation 2

A single act of commission or omission may constitute domestic violence.

What has become abundantly clear is that society takes note of injustice only when the aggrieved sections create pressure. Women have been subjected to domestic violence since time immemorial. But the formal admission was brought about only because women's groups worked for it.

### What needs to be remembered is that domestic violence

- ⇒ Happens in a family or with an intimate partner in a live-in relationship.
- ⇒ Can target any member, but in the majority of cases it is directed against female members.
- ⇒ Is learned behaviour.
- ⇒ Is chronic abuse of power.
- ⇒ Is intended to humiliate and control.
- ⇒ Perpetuates male privileges.
- ⇒ Is violation of human rights.
- ⇒ It cannot be justified.

The Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act 2005, though passed in September 2005, was made operative only from October 2006. It remains to be seen how women use this important law. Much remains to be done. The state has not yet moved in the direction of appointing protection officers. The women's movement has to create the necessary pressure so that the state machinery puts the much needed infrastructure in place. That is the real challenge to the women's movement. But at least women now have a statute that clearly lays down what constitutes domestic violence to protect them.

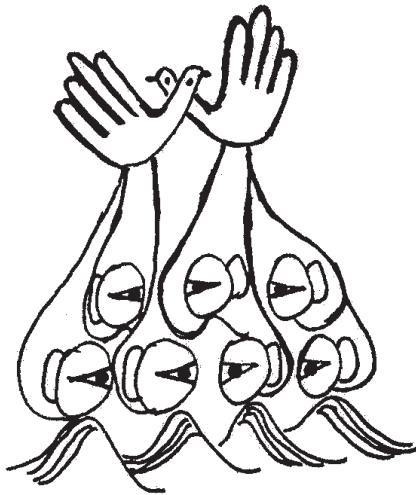
#### Understanding prevalence, types and consequences of domestic violence

While it took a long time for our society and state to admit that such a large number of women face domestic violence, continuous campaigning, studies, research and action on this issue have helped us to understand its prevalence, types and consequences to some extent.

#### Prevalence of domestic violence

As more and more women come out openly, the prevalence of domestic violence is being mapped. It is already clear that it is widespread and affects all categories of women irrespective of their economic, educational background and age, language, caste, religion or community.

An exact statistical picture of the problem does not exist because domestic violence takes place in a very private sphere. For each reported crime there are many more that go unreported. In addition, the notions of what constitutes 'domestic violence' differ. There is no national agency continuously monitoring such statistics. Therefore, the prevalence can be judged only by referring to occasional national surveys, crime records and some sample work done by NGOs in different pockets



#### Some international statistics

International research has signalled that violence against women is a much more serious and widespread problem than previously suspected. A review of studies from 35 countries carried out prior to 1999 indicated that between 10 and 52 per cent of women reported being physically abused by an intimate partner at some point in their lives, and between 10 and 30 per cent reported that they had experienced sexual violence by an intimate partner. Between 10 and 27 per cent of women and girls reported having been sexually abused, either as children or adults. Data from developing countries was, however, generally lacking.

*(From a WHO multi-country study on women's health and domestic violence against women: summary report of initial results on*

*prevalence, health outcomes and women's responses. Geneva, World Health Organization, 2005.)*

An investigation of hospital casualty records done in Mumbai by Achala S. Daga and others through 1998 showed that almost one case in four could be classified as definite domestic violence. Another 44 per cent are suspected domestic violence cases. Similar figures emerged when the Cehat team studied casualty records at the Bhabha Municipal Hospital, Bandra, in 2000. This was before Cehat set up its crisis-counselling department, Dilaasa, at the hospital.

The National Family Health Survey (NFHS II-1998-'99) reported that 21 per cent of women in our country have experienced violence since the age of 15, and 19 per cent have been beaten or physically mistreated by their husbands. The other forms of domestic violence are not even accounted for. The latest NFHS-III (2005-2006) has not shown any decline in the incidence of domestic violence. As much as 37.2 per cent of married women reported experiencing spousal violence, with 30.4 per cent of those affected living in urban areas. The need to work on this issue only seems to be intensifying.

With national crime records rising, this is a matter of deep concern. Studies show domestic violence is not only rampant but that it forms the largest category of crimes against women (NCRB, 1995-'99). According to the National Crime Records Bureau, of the 155,553 crimes committed against women in 2005, 68,810 were domestic violence cases. Its statistics also show that one dowry death takes place every 77 minutes and one case of cruelty by husband and relatives every nine minutes.

This is a serious issue that demands urgent intervention. Official data is limited but studies done by NGOs highlight the gravity. A study by the Centre for Women's Development Studies says that every hour five women face cruelty at home. (*Crimes Against Women: Bondage and Beyond (2002), Centre for Women's Development Studies, New Delhi*)

### **High prevalence**

Overall, in the multi-site study conducted by (International Clinical Epidemiologists Network (INCLLEN), of 9,938 rural, urban slum and urban non-slum households, approximately 50 per cent of the

women surveyed reported experiencing some form of violent behaviour within their marriage. Forty per cent of the women reported experiencing at least one form of physical abuse and, of these, 65 per cent reported severe physical abuse, which included being kicked, hit or beaten. Further, 43 per cent reported psychological abuse. In the Gujarat Institute of Development Studies (GIDS) study done on 346 women in the Kheda district of Gujarat, 66 per cent of the women reported physical and/or psychological abuse. While the studies are not strictly comparable due to differences in methodologies, it is possible to conclude that they confirm a high prevalence of violence – at least one out of every two women has experienced violence in marriage.

*(International Clinical Epidemiologists Network (INCLLEN), INDIASAFE: Studies of Abuse in the Family Environment in India, A Summary Report, Washington D C: International Center for Research on Women (ICRW), forthcoming.)*

According to the Indian National Crime Records Bureau's unique 'crime clock 2005' which tracked criminal activities over 2004, the country reported one molestation every 15 minutes; one crime against women every three minutes; one dowry death every 77 minutes; one rape every 29 minutes; one murder every 16 minutes; and one sexual harassment case every 53 minutes.

### **Types of domestic violence**

It includes discriminatory treatment and abuse of girls, wife beating and abuse, torture of daughters-in-law and neglect of widows in the family. It affects women in all stages of life from infancy to old age. It includes denial of food, property, shelter, freedom of movement and decision-making to widowed, deserted, separated, divorced, married and unmarried women in the family. It also includes all types of abuse in intimate relationships. Women's direct experience when made public has helped to chart types of domestic violence under some broad categories. Even routine happenings in family life discriminate against female members. For example

- ⇒ The birth of a baby girl is not greeted with happiness and she is differentiated from her brothers while growing up.
- ⇒ Young female members are more likely to get less nutrition compared to male members in the same family. Opportunities for education, training and employment are also denied or delayed in favour of the men.

- ⇒ Teenage female members' mobility is restricted compared to the male members of the same family.
- ⇒ After marriage, the young bride is told to obey her husband and his family. The woman is supposed to erase her earlier identity, merge it into her husband's home and take on the mission of becoming a part of the matrimonial family.

Besides these routine happenings, women are treated as the property of the family and blatant crimes take place. For example

- ⇒ Young girls and sometimes even men are murdered in a broad daylight with the sanction of the community for having gone against the dictates of caste boundaries while choosing a life partner.
- ⇒ Women are either murdered or driven to commit suicide (by burning themselves, drowning, consuming poison) in the face of harassment by the matrimonial family.

All such happenings and processes subordinate and devalue women. They affect every aspect of a woman's life and personality, as one can gather on listening to them narrate their experiences

- ⇒ "I have done my MSW and have been working. My parents have no objection to this. However, I do not have any freedom to choose my life partner. I am under constant conflict and tension."
- ⇒ "My father beats my mother. Throughout the night he keeps us awake. I get so tired that I feel sleepy in school. I do not feel like returning home."
- ⇒ "My brother sexually forced himself on me when my parents were away. When they returned I could not bring myself to tell them what had happened. As a result, I got pregnant. They helped me to get an abortion done and married me off. My husband came to know about this and now my husband's family curses me. My past haunts me. I do not want to live."

Domestic violence can be psychological, physical, sexual, emotional and economic. Physical abuse is never a one-time occurrence; it is recurrent and often increases in severity. While some of the injuries inflicted result in death, others cause morbidity. Women have reported broken limbs, blunt trauma, loss of eyesight, reduced hearing, severe head injuries, heavy bleeding and many other effects with short-term and long-term impact.

Very often psychological violence precedes physical violence. At other times, it may continue even without physical violence. Women have reported that this violence too affects them severely, leaving permanent scars. It targets their self-image. While some remarks may appear merely derogatory, others are invisibly hurtful and difficult to define. Still others are openly hostile

- ⇒ "You are the cause of all the trouble, a real curse."
- ⇒ "You are good for nothing."
- ⇒ "Get out of this home."
- ⇒ "Go and kill yourself."
- ⇒ "You are mad."
- ⇒ "You are a real burden."
- ⇒ "You do not belong to this family."

Verbal abuse is emotionally draining. Women report that they feel negated, ridiculed, worthless, and unfit for anything. A woman can be made to feel she is not a good person, not a good wife, mother, daughter, family member. More often than not, verbal abuse targets a woman's vulnerabilities.

Women also face sexual assault. The phenomenon of child sexual abuse is a separate area in itself where the victim is terrorised to comply with sexual demands by an adult. However, sexual violence by the husband is seen in a different light. Women are coerced to perform acts of sex that they may not desire; they are forced into sex when they do not want it; they are made to comply as many times as the male desires. This violence is most difficult for them to discuss. Women have said that they feel humiliated at the thought of bringing this up.

Women are isolated from supportive relatives, friends, neighbours and colleagues as a method of control. Thus isolated, the woman grows dependent on the perpetrator. Fear grips her, isolating her further. Wild allegations and suspicions of her character are the surest means to break her and isolate her. One method employed to keep domestic violence screened from public scrutiny is to hold women hostage in their homes.

The woman's economic resources are controlled if she is earning or has some money. Similarly, access to food, clothing, shelter and transport is also denied or controlled. If she tries to earn so that she can take care of basic needs, she is denied access to paid work. She is neither provided for nor allowed to provide for herself. Thus she is completely dependent on the perpetrator for her survival.

| Type of violence                                | Based on narrations of women   |
|---|--|
| <b>Physical</b>                                 | Hitting, slapping, kicking, punching, burning, biting, choking, using physical objects to cause injury, strangulating, dousing with kerosene, control over access to health care, denial of health care.   |
| <b>Emotional/<br/>Mental/<br/>Psychological</b> | Threats, dictating what a young girl or a woman can and cannot do, verbally abusing, humiliating her or her parents, not allowing her to leave the house or visit her natal house (controlling her mobility), preventing her from going to school or work, deliberately restricting communication, torturing her children in front of her, forced marriage by parents, suspicion, threats on part of husband to remarry or kill her, making wild allegations against her character, husband having extramarital affairs. |
| <b>Sexual</b>                                   | Rape, incest, unwanted touching, forcing sexual acts, refusal to practise safe sex, not allowing her to use methods of family planning, denying her sexual pleasure, forcing her into an abortion, including sex selective abortion, not allowing her to undergo an abortion, forcing her into the sex trade.  |
| <b>Economic</b>                                 | Stealing, destroying or selling personal belongings, encroaching on her property, demanding money, withholding basic needs such as food, clothing and shelter, not allowing her to work, restricting control over her own income.  |

When women are asked to categorise the violence they have faced they feel helped to face the facts as they are. They remain true to their experience and do not embroider or make up details. If asked, 'Has he tried to strangle you?' they will not allege that the husband has done so if he has not.

### **The phenomenon of vanishing daughters**

This is a type of violence arising out of misuse of modern technology. Earlier there was a tradition of killing female infants by immersing them in milk or administering an overdose of poppy seeds.

With modern technology detecting the sex of the fetus in the womb, there has been an alarming 'elimination' of girls and women. The census of 2001 shows the sex ratio as being 933 females per 1000 males, which is a slight improvement over the 1991 census of 927 females per 1000 males. But the child sex ratio from 0 to 6 years is declining below the national average of 933 females to 927 females per 1000 male children (it was 945 in 1991). In Maharashtra there are 88 Talukas where the female child ratio has fallen below 900 per 1000 male children. The state had a ratio of 946 to 1000 in 1991; this has come down to 913 in 2001. It is now well known that women in the economically better off strata go in for (or are made to go in for) sex-selective abortions. The easy availability of technology, rapid privatisation of medical services, population policy mandate of 'Hum Do and Hamare Do', monetary ability, the craze for a male child and entrenched social norms are some of the reasons cited for this trend.

In some cases the woman herself makes the choice. If she is economically well off and already has a daughter, she may view it as her right to select the sex of her second or third child. She is unable to see the connection between personal choice and social good. However much she may perceive that as her choice, she is operating within the boundaries of social values that give such great importance to males.

A female child who is viewed and received as an unwelcome addition to the family is a reflection of domestic violence at a very core level. It arises out of discriminatory treatment which many girls have to grow up with and live with. To be reminded of being unwanted is psychological violence resulting in low self-image when the girl grows into an adult. If this trend continues, the demographic imbalance in the sex ratio may cause greater violence towards female members of society. A whole new slew of social evils could arise, such as forcible marriages, being forced into sexual slavery to more than one man, restrictions on mobility and greater controls over all aspects of a woman's life. Already, one can see disturbing signs of such fallout. For example, in Solapur, Maharashtra, young girls from poor working class families are married off to much older men in Gujarat, where the sex ratio is imbalanced. The parents of these girls actively collude with the men and receive payment for their compliance. Similar cases are happening elsewhere in India.

### **The phenomenon of sati**

Women's death by burning is usually attributed to accidental stove bursts or passed off as suicide. This is a very specific type of violence



that happens within the four walls of the home. Perhaps it has deep-rooted links with mythology and Sita's *Agni pariksha* (trial by fire) that has seeped into the collective psyche. The tradition of sati is kept alive in the social memory by repeatedly recounting this myth in the mass media. Women are elevated to the status of goddesses. However, they are expected to prove it by giving their life. Many ordinary women act on notions absorbed through their socialisation. Even in a city like Mumbai there is a sati temple and the road is named after Rani Sati. It is a matter of concern that death through burns is the single largest cause of death for women in the 15-44 age group in Maharashtra.<sup>6</sup>

### Consequences

Various other studies have also shown that physical abuse is the one of the major causes of injury to women. Also, that it has more long-term effects than any other crime. It has serious repercussions on both physical and mental health. Apart from temporary and permanent physical disability due to abuse, women suffer from long term effects such as chronic asthma, blood pressure irregularities and unspecified body pain and aches. The list of the harmful effects of domestic violence is long and brutal

- ⇒ Physically the woman suffers injuries, sometimes permanent disabilities. In extreme case she dies.
- ⇒ Psychologically she loses her sense of self, confidence, self-respect and feeling of worth. She is made to feel unwanted, unloved and redundant. The scars go deep. She blames herself and her fate. She becomes depressed, develops negative thoughts like teaching her oppressor a lesson or taking revenge. She cannot control her anger and often directs her anger towards herself, resulting in suicide or an attempt at suicide.
- ⇒ Sexual violence makes her feel humiliated, invaded and insulted. She is silenced out of a fear that she will be blamed or stigmatised.
- ⇒ Emotionally she feels uprooted, displaced and shelter less. She is trapped in fear, anxiety and isolation. She develops an unrealistic hope that the situation may change.
- ⇒ Economically she loses all control over whatever few resources she may have. She loses or misses the opportunities that may arise to escape her entrapment. She suffers financial loss or deprivation in many ways. In addition, she may be denied her

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<sup>6</sup> *Violence as a Public Health Issue* brought out by the Jan Arogya Abhiyan, November 2001, produced by Tathapi Trust, Pune.

economic rights, her share in property, money, jewellery, or other assets. Her capacity for earning or engaging in any income generating activity gets adversely affected as a result of the physical and psychological toll that violence takes. She may be denied shelter, food, clothing and other personal necessities; in other words, she is denied her basic human rights. Her survival is threatened.

- ⇒ Sustained health problems such as unwanted pregnancies and restricted access to family planning information and contraceptives; unsafe abortion or injuries sustained during a legal abortion after an unwanted pregnancy; complications from frequent, high-risk pregnancies and lack of follow-up care; sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV/AIDS; persistent gynaecological problems.
- ⇒ Mental problems such as depression, sleeplessness, panic attacks and thoughts of suicide manifest themselves. If she consults a doctor for her complaints, only the symptoms are usually treated while the underlying cause of stress remains unaddressed and even unrecognised. Thus, she suffers further consequences and becomes a chronic case. In severe cases, there is personality dysfunction.

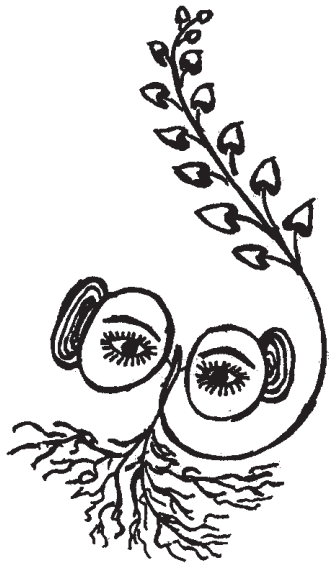
### Effects on children

The effect of direct and indirect domestic violence on children has not yet been studied in all its aspects. Many children are subjected to sexual violence including incest. Many children, who witness violence suffer on all levels. The instability at home affects their performance at school, their ability to socialise, alters their personality, sometimes leading to aggressive behaviour. Young boys may turn to drugs and alcohol for solace. They may also indulge in anti-social activities. They are likely to be violent to their partners in adult life. Girls become extremely depressed or prone to tantrums. Some may develop unhealthy relationships and in certain cases may even jump into sexual relationships in the hope of escaping the violent family. Some girls suffer from constant anxiety resulting in poor performance at school. The violence has a cyclical effect as children who witness violence end up imitating it in adult life or accepting it in their own lives.

### Effects on society

Domestic violence stunts the woman's growth as a person. It affects her total being. She suffers from physical and psychological health problems. In addition, the family economy slides down. All the members pay a very heavy price due to violence. Men who beat their wives lose

their humanity and cannot realise their full potential to grow. It may take a toll on their productivity and well being. These consequences have not yet been fully studied qualitatively and quantitatively. For example, women who are malnourished due to violence give birth to underweight infants. These children are at a disadvantage from the beginning. Other consequences like the plight of deserted women and female-headed households take an enormous toll in other ways. This crime costs all of society dearly.



## 4. TRACING THE ROOTS

### Understanding causes of domestic violence

Domestic violence happens in the private space of the home. One of the most important contributions of the women's movement has been to study and establish the social, political, economic and cultural roots of women's oppression.

In our society there exists multi-layered discrimination, injustice and exploitation arising out of class, caste, community, religion, region, language, education, race, skin colour and many other social factors. Gender is an important aspect of social reality cutting across all other aspects. Based on these aspects some enjoy privileges while others suffer disadvantages. The balance between power and powerlessness is maintained through social norms. Those who enjoy the privileges of power want to hang on to them; in fact, the tendency is to increase their scope. Social norms are so constructed that both men and women are taught to maintain the 'limits' or 'accepted boundaries'. Social control is maintained based on those norms—those who cross the limits are censored, taught a lesson, curbed, suppressed, silenced, tortured, punished and sometimes eliminated.

The following examples that are typical news items in any daily newspaper bring home to us the harsh ways in which power is exercised

- ⇒ Workers in a factory were lathi-charged by the police when they declared a strike to demand better working conditions. The police was called to protect the factory owner. Here the owner is punishing the workers for 'crossing limits'. And the state's arm, the police, is helping the powerful, that is, the owner.
- ⇒ A Dalit man was spotted praying in the temple. Upper caste worshippers decided to beat him up for having 'crossed the boundaries'. The Dalit man has crossed the caste boundaries. He is not expected to enter the temple according to the powerful caste censorship.
- ⇒ The Babri Masjid was demolished and in subsequent riots the lives and livelihood of countless Muslims were brutally crushed to 'teach them a lesson'. The Hindu majority perceived the Muslim minority as a threat and felt they were not maintaining the 'boundaries' expected of them.
- ⇒ When the people working on employment guarantee scheme did not receive proper remuneration, they protested. The

police was called in to silence them. Again, the state machinery meted out a 'lesson' to those who stepped 'out of line'.

- ⇒ Everywhere in rural India, young girls and boys are punished, sometimes killed, by caste panchayats for falling in love with those from a lower caste.
- ⇒ A husband beats his wife when she questions him regarding his extra-marital relationship. Sometimes he beats her without any provocation.

What is common in all these examples is the social pathology of power and powerlessness. The regime of power and control is followed in all institutions of society. The institution of family and marriage is no exception.

This brings us to the generalised feeling that it is fine to be abusive if a woman commits a mistake. But does a woman have the same right over the man? Do the powerless have any right over the powerful? Therefore, one is not talking about the mistake but the power relation between the man and the woman. Violence does not occur because a person is physically stronger than the other. A strong person does not beat up his boss. It is about power and control.

### **The institution of family and marriage**

The institution of family and marriage is intended to protect and bond its members with love and care. While this aspect is not totally absent, the reality is different when it comes to women's position in the family. They suffer the severest pain and violence inside the home. We in India believe that we have high family values. We still feel that family ties are very strong in our society. Yes, they are strong in terms of controlling the members' freedom to exercise individual choices. Our families are more authoritative and less democratic. As far as protecting and nurturing all the members, our families fail miserably. The majority of incidents of child sexual abuse happen within the family. Forced sex is taken for granted in marriage. There is very little autonomy or freedom of movement for women in the family. They are also controlled financially. They have very little scope for decision making.

Domestic violence is as old as the institution of family and marriage. The institutions of family and marriage have undergone changes in different stages of civilisation. The joint family set-up was very strong when society was predominantly agrarian. With industrialisation, more families became nuclear. At present, we see remnants of the joint

family lingering because any transition does not take place in a clear-cut way. Joint and even nuclear families to a certain extent have been authoritative. The people within it are bound by the position they occupy in the power structure. The lowest on the rung are female members. Strict dictates of traditions, rituals, coercion, control and violence are some of the means by which this system is maintained. While domestic violence has always existed, what has changed is that voices are being raised against it.

It is in the family that gender roles and identities are constructed very early in life. The family is a power structure based on the gender roles of its members. Gender is different from sex. Gender is socially constructed whereas sex is biological. Male and female sexual identities are socialised and civilised into gender identities as man and woman. The concepts of what is 'feminine' and 'masculine' are defined in any society at a given point of time. These concepts have undergone changes over time. Caste, class, community, religion, region, ethnicity and nation also influence them. Both male and female are expected to be 'masculine' and 'feminine' respectively within the framework of definitions. For example, take the quality of gentleness. Though it is a good quality for both men and women to have, it is expected more of a woman, so girls are trained in that manner. If a girl does not like to cook, or does not like children, or is not a good homemaker, she is frowned upon by society and considered a misfit. Gender norms are strongly imbued in all of us from childhood.

Accordingly, women are supposed to be caring, nurturing and sacrificing. They are to be submissive, coy and shy. Men are to be powerful, providing, performing, controlling, ordering and in charge of their emotions. Both men and women learn behavior patterns very early on in life. Men are socialized into being aggressive and women into being submissive. It is more likely that men adapt to violent means of resolving conflicts compared to women. Therefore, it is usually men who are the perpetrators and women the victims of domestic violence.

Thus in the family the power and authority rests with the men. The power dynamics between the man and the woman always puts the woman at the lower rung of the ladder. By and large, women and girls have little or no say in the major decisions of their life like education, the course they choose, marriage, children, sex within marriage and financial decisions. As a result of little or no negotiating power, girls and women become all the more vulnerable to violence. This is further

complicated by the common belief that violent acts are an expression of love and merely a desire to help 'better' that person.

There is a very high premium placed on the institution of marriage. In our society most women want to get married and stay married. Even women who are engaged hesitate to break off the relationship despite abuse. This is the dominant ideology. Married women have recognition and social status. In contrast, single, deserted, separated, widowed and divorced women do not enjoy the same social status. Men at large see them as 'available'. Their position is rendered vulnerable. Therefore, women are socialized into making compromises while getting married and once married staying in the marriage. They too know that the world outside can turn out to be exploitative. They grow up with the idea that it is only 'bad women' who challenge family norms and traditions. Such women are not respected; indeed they are isolated. Marriage also confers the only 'sanctioned' way to satisfy sexual desire. Sometimes women are forced to pay for these beliefs with their lives. Many absorb the deeply ingrained belief that on marriage the woman leaves the natal family in a *doli* (a special carriage) and can leave the matrimonial family only in an *earthi* (coffin). All such religious and cultural norms affect women's psyche. In contrast, men do not attain or lose their social position due to their marital status to that extent.

Thus the family regulates and controls power relations between men and women.

### The dilemma of abused women

The family is the first school where gender roles are taught and learnt. In this school lifelong mindsets are cast. The process begins as soon as one is born. Women are given the script that they must marry and maintain the family whatever might be the cost. Often an inherent need to have meaningful relationships is at the core of the desire to get married.

Women who are abused also share these thoughts. Many women want the violence to end, not the relationship. From the narrations of women, one gathers certain common patterns:

- ⇒ A woman who was driven to resort to police intervention due to extreme violence by her husband said, "When I see his plight in police custody, my heart melts. If only he would change his behaviour!" Despite his behaviour towards her, she used to take food for him while he remained in custody.

- ⇒ Violence from one's near and dear ones is very difficult to accept. Women take a long time to accept it and only then can they think of doing something about it.
- ⇒ In addition, religious, cultural and socially learned beliefs prompt women to feel that it is their duty to keep the marriage together at all costs. Society does not extend any respect to women who are separated, divorced, deserted, unmarried and widowed.
- ⇒ The violence sometimes takes a cyclical pattern. It consists of three phases. In the first phase, there is 'tension building'. The woman can usually sense this tension in the air, in the interaction. It then results in a 'violent episode', which is the middle phase. Sometimes the woman may slip into a behaviour pattern where the provocation is precipitated because she wants release from the tension. She knows that the 'violent episode' will be followed by a 'honeymoon period' where the perpetrator apologizes, promising that the violence will not happen again. But the honeymoon phase fades out. The violent episodes become more frequent and severe. Still she keeps hoping against hope that 'one day he will change'.
- ⇒ Women often stay in the violent relationship for the sake of the children as they feel it is their duty not to deprive children of a 'proper family'.
- ⇒ The woman who wants to protect herself from abuse is doing it almost single-handedly against all odds. The greatest obstacle she has to battle is 'loss of her self-esteem'. She does not have those internal resources to take this bold step. She is incapacitated due to socialisation.
- ⇒ There is a tendency on the part of others to blame the woman. This further entraps women.

The mindset is developed through early socialisation in the family. When women are coming out and narrating their personal pain, they struggle very hard within themselves to raise a voice against their near and dear ones. Those who do so point to the cracks in the institution of family and marriage.

Both men and women live polarised gendered realities. Men suffer the burden of a distorted concept of manhood. They do not learn to express their emotions. Their insecurities are generally covered up by the use of power. The constitution of masculinity does not provide human ways of expressing frustrations and helplessness except in the

form of violence. Women also carry a similar burden. Some of the conflicts within marriage arise out of these peculiar polarised mindsets. Still, conflicts need not result in violence. When they do, it is the power relation that matters.

The question most often asked is: why do men beat women? On the one hand, it is the result of inbuilt deep-rooted psychological conditioning; on the other, it is a social, economic, political and cultural phenomenon. The immediate causes of domestic violence could range from the petty (like food not being cooked properly) to the serious (such as the suspicion that the woman is having an affair). It could be that the woman is unable to bear a child, has produced only female children, and is not attractive to the husband, or too beautiful and therefore attractive to other men. It can be anything, everything or nothing.

It has also been observed that women are beaten for no fault of theirs. In other words, if women fail to abide by the norms set up by men, they face violence. Hence, we see that violence is justified as a means to maintain the power imbalance between men and the women. Men who beat women see that act as keeping the woman in her place. Violence is also projected and reinforced to be the socially, culturally approved way of resolving conflicts. Patterns of human relations are usually hierarchical in nature. The mind-set where violence has become part of the behavioral pattern, the philosophy that by thrashing your wife/child/student you can set the things right is the guiding principle. The police thrash a citizen, the teacher a pupil, the adult a child. Men thrash women in much the same way with the added advantage of acceptance provided by patriarchy!

### **Patriarchy**

Strictly laid down gender roles are an essential component of patriarchy. Patriarchy gives privileges to men and withholds them from women, resulting in their subordination. There is a power structure in each family specific to its economic, cultural and social background. All the members are on different levels of this power structure. It is usually the male members who assume power and control the other family members, especially women.

The kind of roles women are involved in have no economic returns — cooking, child raising, cleaning and mending for the family. This strict gender division of labour is the material basis of patriarchy. The work women do to maintain the family is categorised as 'housework' and is

always unpaid labour. One of the demands of the women's movement has been to draw the attention of society to this contribution of unpaid labour and to demand wages for housework.

In some families there may not be any violence but the assets and resources in the family usually belong to men. The resources are also transferred from one generation to the next through the sons of the family. As a result of not owning assets, women have limited access to resources such as education and health care. The family is also an economic unit. The male children in the family become the carriers of inheritance. The family is a carrier of the institution of private property. When the man perceives himself as the sole possessor of all property including his woman and children, he totally controls their lives.

The family in feudal as well as capitalist systems is the chief oppressor of women. The socialist feminists have stated the need to change the family set-up to realise women's liberation. Unless women are freed from their role of daily drudgery of cleaning, cooking, washing, caring, nursing and childcare, they will not be able to realise their potential as human beings. Community kitchens, laundry facilities and day care for children are some of the alternatives proposed in socialist society. Democratising relationships in the family and doing away with the institution of private property are closely linked.

### **Links of patriarchy with other systems**

Patriarchy is not limited to the family and marriage; it permeates all other institutions such as religion, education, health, the media, the judiciary and the police. Patriarchy permeates economic, political, cultural and social arrangements.

The economy, which is tagged to profit-making goals, is built on 'surplus value' that the worker adds through 'labour power', which is not covered in 'wages' received. Similarly, it is sustained on 'unpaid labour' overwhelmingly contributed by women world over in the form of 'domestic labour', which involves reproduction as well. The women's movement drew attention to this fact of gender-based sexual division of labour. Capitalism is no doubt less exploitative compared to earlier feudal systems. In capitalism, the worker is contracted only for specific hours whereas in feudalism it was not so. The possibility of realising human potentialities increased in capitalism. Both men and women have benefited from it. As societies moved from feudalism to the industrial phase, more and more of the general population began

asserting their rights. The women's rights movement is one such link in the process of moving towards an industrial society.

Another factor that added to the scope of freedom was scientific inventions in medicine that helped curb the mortality rate. It also allowed women to regulate their reproductive role. But the very same capitalism cannot hold its ground without unpaid domestic labour and surplus added by the worker. The recent phase of capitalism in the form of imperialism through the triad of liberalisation, privatisation and globalisation has been a harsh added burden on women. This is best expressed in the call letter of the national conference of autonomous women's groups in Kolkata in September 2006:

"More than a decade of economic 'liberalisation' has resulted in the withdrawal of the State from many essential sectors like healthcare, power and water. As they get privatised, the inequalities between the rich and poor are getting starker, large sections of the people are losing access to them, especially women and girls. Education is becoming dispensable for girls and women are becoming more migrant and homeless than ever before. Simultaneously, natural resources are being overused and polluted, forests degraded, rivers disrupted by cost-intensive and unviable mega-developmental projects, including tourism, and consequently, hundreds of thousands of people are being violently displaced by the State — destroying lives, livelihoods, and whole communities. The control and governance of forest-based resources and commons are being increasingly centralized in the hands of the State and subsequently set up for private commercial interests, displacing the existing subsistence use. Even within projects of urbanisation and industrialisation, it is the women who bear the brunt. The dismantling of labour laws and the growth of unorganised sector where large numbers of women work, has only increased women's economic vulnerability manifold."

Women head one-third of families worldwide and India is no exception to this phenomenon. This happens when women are deserted, divorced, separated, and displaced due to development projects, migrations for survival, riots, wars and many other reasons. In such situations, only adopting violent means strictly enforces the regime of power and control. When the state violently displaces its citizens, people from the lower strata of society and minorities are more likely to bear the brunt. And women are the worst hit. Thus it is clear that domestic violence is but one link in the chain of violence that is sanctioned on other levels.

Another dominant system that maintains strict boundaries is caste and religion. Increasingly, identity is constituted around caste and religion. The process leads to communal violence. In that process violence against women both in families and outside increases.

Let us take one example to understand the links in chain of violence. The woman is subjected to psychological and sexual violence in the family.

- ⇒ Religion tells her - 'the honour of the family lies in your silence.'
- ⇒ Customs tell her - 'only bad women talk about such matters.'
- ⇒ The law asks her - 'what proofs do you have?'
- ⇒ The police shrugs her off - 'it is a family matter so you have to go to court'.
- ⇒ The judge dismisses her — 'it does not constitute cruelty since the allegations are not substantiated.'
- ⇒ Education is already denied to her since she comes from a lower socio-economic strata and caste.
- ⇒ She can access the public health system with great difficulty where her complaint is unaddressed but at the most she receives some painkillers.
- ⇒ She is also Muslim. The police are proactive when it comes to thrashing her husband.
- ⇒ The health authorities tell her — 'you breed more children and are the real cause of all problems.'

The chain of violence continues. When we are trying to understand the causes of domestic violence, we have to take this phenomenon into consideration. Patriarchy operates on many levels both subtly and overtly.

Women who overcome these threats have to face poverty and lack of support structures. Lack of resources on social, economic, physical, psychological levels pose a major challenge. Women may seek assistance in ending the violence through formal intervention from a variety of sources, including the police, family members, lawyers and health care personnel. Frequently, it is the failure of these individuals and systems to provide adequate support which traps women in violent relationships and forces them to return to their violent homes. The breakdown of the family virtually means civil death for the woman. Single women with children become poorer. More often than not, there is simply nowhere else to go!

There is an inbuilt mechanism based on widely shared myths that lends ethical and moral support to the continuation of social evils like domestic violence. The myths work on multiple levels. Some are part of social memory that perpetuates silence, condone such acts and create barriers to understanding the issue. In fact, both men and women perceive the phenomenon through the prism of popular myths. It is the feminist movement which undertook evidence-based studies and brought the myths under public scrutiny that helped to dispel some of them.

### 'It is rare'

This is one of the most widely believed myths. In fact, domestic violence is not rare; talking about it is. In recent years, WHO statistics as well as nationwide and local surveys have revealed how common the problem really is. In fact, it may be much more severe than we can guess at since domestic violence happens within the home and women are still reluctant to talk about it.

To briefly review the scene, women in the reproductive age group of 15 to 44 years are at highest risk; 52 per cent of women in India suffer at least one incident of physical or psychological violence in their lifetime.<sup>7</sup> It happens in every class, caste, region and religion. It cuts across age, education and marital status. It happens in both the natal and marital family.

While it remains difficult to assess exact figures, a study<sup>8</sup> of the casualty register in the hospital shows that one third of all cases are definitely of domestic violence and another one third are possible cases of domestic violence.

### 'It is an isolated incident'

When women first began talking about the violence done to them in their homes, it emerged that they had been suffering over periods ranging from two months to 20 years. The enormity of the problem was revealed by the WHO in a multi-country study titled *Women's*

<sup>7</sup> See International Centre for Research on Women (ICRW) (2000), *Domestic Violence in India: A Summary Report of a Multi-site Household Survey*, New Delhi

<sup>8</sup> *Domestic Violence against Women. An Investigation of Hospital Casualty Records*, Mumbai. By Achala S. Daga; Shireen J. Jeejeebhoy; Shantha Rajgopal. 1998



*Health and Domestic Violence against Women*, 2005. Women from 15 countries as diverse as Bangladesh, Japan, Serbia, Montenegro, Thailand and Brazil were interviewed. It emerged that the lifetime prevalence of physical or sexual violence or both by an intimate partner ranged from 15 per cent to 75 per cent in the different sites. The survey pointed to the 'culture of silence' that prevailed in the matter of domestic violence. In all the countries, the interviewer was the first person many of the abused women had ever talked to about their partner's physical violence.

The experience of supporting survivors of domestic violence over decades has shown that

- ⇒ It is rarely a one-time occurrence and tends to escalate in severity over time when there are no direct interventions.
- ⇒ Almost all-physical violence is preceded and accompanied by emotional violence.
- ⇒ It is a matter of power and control within the family and marriage and an inherent feature of maintaining the power imbalance.

### **'Perpetrators are mentally ill'**

The problem of mental illness may in some cases play a part but it is not the cause of violent behaviour. There are no evidence-based studies to determine the mental health status of perpetrators. But the reports of survivors show that the men who inflict violence are not particularly affected by any mental illness. They function normally in other areas - in their jobs and social circles. In fact, labelling the perpetrators as being mentally ill prevents us from examining the process of how the power imbalance in society is maintained and how it is specifically reflected in the controls exercised in the family and in marriage.

Take the example of a young woman prevented from choosing her life partner just because he belongs to a lower caste. In such cases, the power and control mechanisms that exist within the family and community are activated to the extent of executing an honour killing. These are planned actions. Can anybody term the perpetrators as being seriously mentally ill? In fact, they are exerting their power and controlling members within the family.

Honour killings may be extreme example. What about the incidence of grown-up daughters expected to obey the many dictates restricting their mobility and choices? That is a much more familiar story, and yet the roots of control and power are the same.

It is therefore impossible to separate the violent man from the rest of us as being 'different' or a lunatic. He is one of us, like us and a carrier of the same social structures that give all men privileges in our society. For example, an investigative study done by Sakshi, a group working on sexuality and legal advocacy, showed that of the 109 judges interviewed for the survey, 48 per cent believed that there were occasions where a husband was justified in slapping his wife. And 74 per cent believed that the preservation of the family should be the woman's primary concern even if she faced violence.<sup>9</sup>

### **'The men can't control their anger'**

Most perpetrators are able to control their reactions in social situations, and are abusive only in the home. Most people who are violent in the home cannot be distinguished from other "normal" members of society. We live in a culture that teaches boys courage and responsibility in working life but not in close relationships. We teach boys football and physical games but we do not teach them how to be stable in their emotional life. Traditions of responsible and caring fatherhood are hardly in evidence, which is why many men in their emotional life are like immature boys. While one can understand the frustrations that men often experience in the gender roles imposed on them, for instance, as providers, one needs to ask: 'In the struggle for survival, women too are exposed to severe frustrations, but they don't usually beat the men in their lives. Why?'

Why is it also that men do not routinely beat their co-workers, relatives or neighbours when frustrated? The answer is that they know they can beat their wives and get away with it.

### **'It is a lower class problem'**

On the contrary, domestic violence is not confined to any specific caste, class, community, religion, region, ethnic group and nation. Many evidence-based studies have proved this. Perhaps in poor uneducated families it is not contained in the confines of four walls. There is less space and privacy, more visibility. Battered women from the low income group are more likely to seek assistance from public agencies such as hospital emergency rooms, the police and shelters because they have fewer private resources than middle and upper-middle income women. They are therefore more likely to be counted in official reporting statistics. More middle-class educated women cover up the crime against them because they fear social stigma.

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<sup>9</sup> Gender and Judges: A judicial point of view; Sakshi 1996



There is a tendency among the upper-middle educated class belonging to the majority religion to blame all social problems on those belonging to the uneducated lower class, to the poor and to minority communities. The process of 'othering' (blaming others) to explain social problems is very useful and expedient. All manner of social problems ranging from corruption, the population explosion, reservations, communalism, riots and terrorism are attributed to this stratum. The issue of domestic violence is no exception.

On this issue, the difference between classes relate to consequences and impact. Economic factors and educational levels play a part in tackling the problem. The studies do indicate that the educational and economic background of the reported domestic violence cases is low. It is likely that the upper class victims do not report it. Therefore it appears as though disadvantaged groups have a higher concentration of family violence, whereas it can and does exist at every level of society

#### **'It is a private affair'**

Yes, the family is a private space for all members. Every member has the right to a life free from violence in this private space. This right is trampled upon when domestic violence happens. It is the misuse of this private space that allows domestic violence to continue and escalate. If some members are violated it is a crime. The police are mandated to lay charges when there are reasonable and probable grounds. Domestic violence will rarely stop unless there is an intervention from outside the family. The woman who is beaten and violated needs to have some alternative to change her situation. Therefore, though the family is a private space, domestic violence is no longer a private affair.

#### **'Alcohol causes a man to beat his wife'**

Alcohol is not the cause of violence; it is a cover for violence. It facilitates the use of violence by allowing the offender to abdicate responsibility for his behaviour. Even under the spell of alcohol, the man is less likely to be violent towards his boss, co-worker, stranger or neighbour. He only loses his senses when it comes to abusing his wife. So even under the influence of alcohol a man is fully conscious of whom he can exert his power over. Men who are violent toward their wives or other female members of their family do so even when they are not drunk. All alcoholics are not abusers and those who abuse are not necessarily alcoholics.

#### **'The real problem is women's liberation'**

When the power imbalance within the family and marriage is challenged, many people feel insecure and threatened. They fear women's freedom. They believe that the institution of family and marriage will disintegrate. The material privileges and dominance of men will be undermined.

The mainstream media also projects a certain image of women's liberation. It conveys the impression that liberation is freedom without any corresponding responsibilities. But to reduce women's liberation movement in this way is to sideline the range of issues it has addressed. The women's liberation movement has highlighted the injustice done to women in the private and public spheres. Women form half the population. Neglecting them bars the growth of both men and women. It is not the women's liberation movement that is the problem, but the many issues that women face within the family, many of which are still unaddressed, that form the crux of the matter.

#### **'Women's education and employment is the real cause'**

Education and employment are social development indicators. 'Education and employment for all' is one of the fundamental rights enshrined in our Constitution. Education and employment are important ways of asserting oneself.

Even six decades after independence, 60 per cent of women are not literate (2001 census results) and the majority work in the informal, unorganised, poorly paid, agrarian sector. Despite their disadvantages, millions of uneducated women work hard for their survival and that of their families. But they are unable to save themselves from domestic violence.

Middle class women have the advantage of being educated and employed, which enhances their capacity for assertion. But domestic violence occurs even in this section of society. They too may be affected by dominant cultural norms regarding 'women's place' and afraid of the social stigma of being separated or divorced.

When a woman is educated and employed, her capacity to negotiate non-violence can increase if she overcomes the cultural norms to some extent. The consequences of violence decrease in severity when the woman is educated and employed compared to the woman who is uneducated and unemployed.

### **'The woman is responsible for the violence'**

This myth has many interconnecting dimensions. For example, it is easy to blame the victim and say that if the woman wanted to she could get out of the violent situation. There is also a presumption that the violence could not be that bad otherwise she would have left. Women encounter a judgemental attitude for not leaving and also for leaving!

But we must remember that poverty and lack of protection are real problems for women who choose to leave an abusive relationship. Single women with children can get impoverished. There is a threat to life and limb. The husband may threaten to maim or kill the woman and children if she attempts to leave. The victim's greatest loss is her self-esteem. Without that, she does not have the internal resources to take the drastic action necessary.

For the perpetrator this knowledge provides him scope to abdicate responsibility for his action. He ascribes his violence to the woman's failure to 'comply' with what he considers reasonable demands. He believes that it is she who provokes him and is the real cause of his violent behaviour. The woman herself begins to believe what society at large and her male partner dins into her, and she begins to blame herself for the violence she suffers. Self-blame is very difficult to overcome. Since the alternatives to change her situation are so hard to come by, she prefers to blame herself and take responsibility for 'lapses' she never committed. She may also blame her fate and undertake fasts and other rituals to seek relief.

Victims of domestic violence do not leave their abusers for a variety of reasons. These include fear and the lack of a range of services: affordable housing, reliable childcare, employment opportunities and effective legal protection from the abuser. Religious and cultural beliefs, family pressures and the desire to keep a family together also make leaving an abusive relationship difficult.

### **'Women are women's worst enemies'**

This is a very deep-rooted myth. In many cases, the mother-in-law and sister-in-law are named as perpetrators in police complaint. This is given wide coverage by the media. The electronic media thrives on women-against-women themes in all the popular serials, yet the truth is that all the crime records show that male members outnumber female members in perpetrating violence. Recent research on child sexual abuse also shows that it is men who are the abusers. This general truth aside, we must take a closer look at the power structure within

the family, for while women are rarely the prime abusers, they aid and abet the abuse of other women only when they have support of male members of the family. Thus, by blaming women, men escape accepting responsibility for their actions.

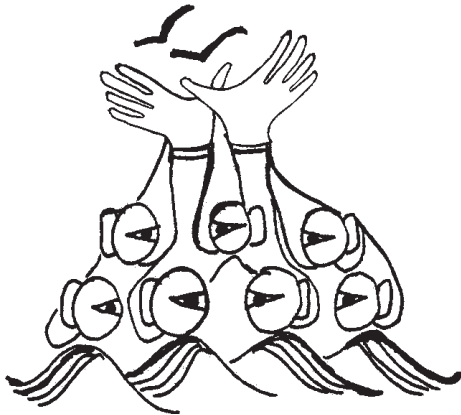
In the Indian family, the woman is supposed to 'merge' with the matrimonial family on her marriage. Strict gender roles drive female members to control the kitchen. The woman who enters a new family has to confront this power ladder where she is on the lowest rung. The mother-in-law has to accept and concede, at least to some extent, her earlier exclusive control. This is cause for tension. Besides, the two women also compete for the attention of the man who is husband and son. This psychological minefield is very difficult to negotiate. Both think that they need to have exclusive possession and attention of the man which in itself is a flawed situation.

In such a situation, men do not want to give up their privileged status of pampered son and husband, and may revel in the increased attention from both quarters. It is this skewed arrangement sanctioned by patriarchy that forms the root cause of strife between daughter-in-law and mother-in-law. The women are placed in such a way on the power ladder that they begin competing with each other. Instead of recognising the flawed foundation of our family arrangement, a convenient myth is created that 'women are each other's enemies'. The woman who gets the status of 'mother-in-law' little realises that she is the gatekeeper of patriarchy.

Any movement which takes up issues of the oppressed classes of society has to face such myths. For example, workers were blamed for the violence unleashed on them when the labour movement pressed for better working conditions. When the women's movement makes significant gains, blaming women is a sure way to diffuse the gains.



The prevalence, intensity, frequency, consequences and causes of domestic violence have become part of public knowledge. However, the remedies and responses emerged slowly. While the women's movement has acted as a catalyst in the process, long-term solutions involve creating alternatives on multiple levels, pressing for a change in social values and enhancing women's entitlements in the areas of property, education, health and employment. Institutions have to provide the necessary preventive measures, ranging from police follow-up to medical and legal services. Society as a whole must condemn and discredit domestic violence. And, to start with, the affected woman herself must acknowledge her position and resist it.



### 1. The woman herself can.....

The woman who faces domestic violence has to struggle hard before she can gather up her strength to resist. Often the lack of alternatives prevents her from making any protest. And, perhaps to keep her sanity in place, she keeps reminding herself that everything will be all right. Women need to recognise what is happening to them, name it, face it and then fight it.

#### Overcoming disbelief

At the outset it is difficult to accept that one is living in an abusive family because one would then have to attempt coming out of it into an unknown world. It also requires strength to accept that there is abuse since it comes from near and dear ones. If a woman is at the stage when she is wondering whether her situation is serious, she should ask herself the following questions. If the answer is yes, she is in an abusive family.

- ⇒ Am I afraid of my own family members?
- ⇒ Do I face any threat of physical hurt?
- ⇒ Are the things I care for being destroyed?
- ⇒ Is my partner threatening the children?
- ⇒ Am I being prevented from doing things like leaving the house, seeing friends and meeting my maternal family?
- ⇒ Is my partner forcing me to have sex?
- ⇒ Am I being blamed or called names when things go wrong?

- ⇒ Am I humiliated in front of others?
- ⇒ Are my finances being controlled?
- ⇒ Am I punished for 'misbehaving'?
- ⇒ Am I being falsely accused? Is my partner jealous, suspicious and always questioning my faithfulness?
- ⇒ Do I feel unwanted or unloved?

Basically, when an individual's sense of self is negated and there is psychological, physical, emotional and economic oppression, one has to conclude that there is abuse.

It takes a long time before any woman overcomes this disbelief. Women have endured long years of violent relationships because they were unable to accept that what was happening to them was abuse. In some cases, they did not come across concrete alternatives to change their situation.

A woman who resolves to change her abusive situation and leave the violent home needs to take practical steps like these

- ⇒ Take all important papers along: birth certificates, educational certificates, marriage certificates, photographs, ration card, children's school and health records, voter identity card, court documents if any. All these should be kept in a safe place that is easily accessible to her, with a person she trusts.
- ⇒ Bank account number, locker key and details, ATM cards, credit cards and documents of investments in her name.
- ⇒ Money.
- ⇒ Medicines and prescriptions if any, hers and the children's.
- ⇒ Phone numbers and addresses of family friends, doctors, lawyers, and others.
- ⇒ Clothing and comfort items for herself and the children.
- ⇒ Property ownership documents of husband, documents of property in her name
- ⇒ Register a complaint regarding the circumstances that forced her to quit and the things she has taken along with her.
- ⇒ Always take the children along if she wants to have their custody in future because it may be difficult later to get the children or anything else either.
- ⇒ But the most important thing for a woman to remember is never to let an emergency force the issue; never to take a last-minute decision; always to plan ahead and should keep all the necessary documents and personal effects in a safe place beforehand.

It helps to know police procedure. Before contemplating any legal remedies, a woman needs to create proofs of domestic violence. Therefore she should report the problem at the police station, writing out the incidents briefly and ensuring that they contain the name of the perpetrator. She should make two copies and get one endorsed at the police station by the police authority. Documentary proof is thus prepared if she seeks medical help after a violent episode.

Women who hesitate to leave their violent homes should weigh their situation realistically, assessing the threat to their life and safety. While waiting to take a definite step, they should at least take care to do the following

- ⇒ Keep a list of persons to be called in a crisis.
- ⇒ Write a letter describing what they are going through to a trusted relative or friend.
- ⇒ File a complaint (NC) with the police and go to the nearest municipal hospital to get an MLC (medico-legal case) registered and get medication.
- ⇒ Come out of the house immediately and scream so that people can come forward to help.

Identify places and people with whom temporary refuge can be sought in a crisis. Write down addresses and phone numbers and keep them handy. Above all, she should remember

- ⇒ **She is not alone**
- ⇒ **She is not to blame**
- ⇒ **She can get help**

### **Moving on**

An individual woman is sure to feel confounded and overwhelmed, but if she holds on to the thought that she is not alone, that the violence is not her fault and that she can get help, she will be able to resist violence and take the necessary steps to restore herself and her children to a non-violent life. Thousands have shown that they can do it. Because the main change and remedy lies at the psychological level, consciousness-raising groups emerged in the early phases of the women's movement where women were encouraged to speak about their intimate traumas. As the social, economic, cultural, religious and political roots of their 'personal' problems were identified, support groups and organizations were formed. These provided help through counsellors and specialists who listened and suggested strategies to move on with life. A list of such organisations is enclosed at the end

of the booklet, with phone numbers and addresses. Many women have successfully sought their help.

A word of caution: there are women's groups and women's groups. Choose the one that is known for its non-violent, democratic and liberal style of functioning.

The following lines by Neena Nehru express the pain a woman goes through in the family and how solidarity is created:

*Breasts bruised, brains battered,  
Skin scarred, soul shattered,  
Can't scream - neighbours stare,  
Cry for help, no one's there.*

*In the intervening silences,  
I gather up the jagged fragments,  
Try to re-arrange them into some semblance of  
The jigsaw puzzle I once called "me"*

*I see you've got some fragments too,  
If we put them together, can we start anew  
There are lots of pieces everywhere,  
But the picture we make is one we'll share*

## 2. Legal protection

One of the main responses to domestic violence from the state was to create new laws and amend the existing ones. The following civil and criminal laws that already exist can be used to resist domestic violence. Married women facing domestic violence can take recourse to civil law and apply for maintenance and divorce. It should be remembered that civil law provisions for each community are different.

### Section 498-A, Indian Penal Code (IPC)

Under criminal law, offenders can be prosecuted under 498-A. This provision, which also covers dowry-related harassment, helps the woman to seek immediate police action. But it must be resorted to with a lot of forethought. Getting involved in any criminal litigation is a drain on time, energy and money. Women have to weigh their situation and alternatives very carefully. If this provision is invoked, it is the public prosecutor who appears for the woman since it is a crime against the state. The public prosecutor has no particular interest in getting justice for the woman. In the long run, the woman lands up making a

series of appearances in court. During this phase, she usually depends on the natal family, which is initially supportive out of indignation or a desire for retribution but sometimes cannot hold out in the long run. Under prolonged pressure, violence has been known to erupt in the natal family as well. Therefore, this remedy should be sought after proper consideration of the pros and cons and after much counselling and thought.

### Section 304-B, IPC

This section addresses deaths due to cruelty and harassment for dowry. If a woman dies of "unnatural causes" within seven years of marriage and has been harassed for dowry before her death, the courts will assume that it is a case of dowry death. The husband or in-laws will then have to prove that they were not the cause of her death. A dowry death is punishable by imprisonment of at least seven years. When filing a First Information Report (FIR) in a case where there is suspicion that the woman is murdered after a history of torture due to dowry demands, the complaint should be filed under section 304-B.

### Section 306, IPC

This deals with abetment to suicide. It can be invoked when a woman commits suicide because of harassment and cruelty.

### Section 174, Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC)

This was amended by the Criminal Law Act, 1983, to provide for investigation by the police in cases of suicide committed by women or death of women occurring in suspicious circumstances within seven years of marriage.

### Section 113 and 133-B, Indian Evidence Act

These were inserted to emphasize that if a woman commits suicide within seven years of her marriage due to 'cruelty' by her husband or his relatives, the court may presume that such suicide had been abetted by her husband or by his relatives.

### Section 125 CrPC

This enables women to file for maintenance and to get immediate relief. Muslim women also can use this provision until they are divorced.

There is a specific doubt regarding the divorced Muslim woman's right to maintenance. Since 1988, various High Courts have held that a divorced Muslim woman has the right to a 'fair and reasonable

settlement' in addition to maintenance for three months. This was possible based on the interpretation of provision under section S.3 of Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Divorce) Act, 1986. Based on this provision many women have received a 'one time payment' as 'fair and reasonable settlement'.

### **Section 405, 406 IPC and Stridhan**

Under different personal laws, women have certain property and inheritance rights. These are far from equal. Since our family systems are rigidly patriarchal, women have hardly any means to assert these rights. So they are often left with no choice but to give up their share in property.

However, a woman can now make a police complaint under Indian Penal Code Sections 405 and 406 to take possession of her 'stridhan'. This remedy became possible after the Supreme Court passed a judgment (in the case of *Pratibha Rani v/s Suraj Kumar* reported in the *Criminal Law Journal*, 817 of 1985), which defines 'stridhan' as entrustment of the woman's property to husband or in-laws. The wife's absolute ownership does not stand transferred to co-ownership or partnership. The husband and in-laws being trustees of such property are bound to return it if and when demanded by the woman. Criminal proceedings for its misappropriation against husband or in-laws are maintainable under sections 405 and 406 of the IPC. Even police personnel do not know about this provision. But the woman can insist on these to exercise her rights.

In this context, a woman needs to know what stridhan is and how to go about getting it back. All gifts in cash and kind given by the natal and matrimonial family members and friends during and after marriage constitute 'stridhan'. This includes gold, silver, sarees, clothes, furniture, linen, utensils, and home appliances. She has the sole right over these items. According to an earlier tradition, all the valuables exchanged in marriage by both families were comprehensively listed. This tradition has now lapsed. Therefore, women do not have any documentation of all that they are promised and gifted.

This tradition needs to be revived. All women should keep receipts of the gold and other gifts bought for them by the natal family. This is useful if circumstances turn adverse and they have to retrieve their belongings. At such a time, a previously prepared list is helpful, but in its absence, a woman must make a written list before taking physical possession of her things. After retrieving her belongings, she has to go

to the nearest police station and submit the list to avoid being charged with theft.

### **Right to stay in matrimonial home**

Battered women are frequently rendered shelterless. They need to know what can be called their matrimonial home. It is the household that a woman shares with her husband – whether it is rented, officially provided, or owned by the husband or his relatives. Though there is no definite law in this matter, a woman's right to remain in the matrimonial home has been recognised, as long as she remains married. If a woman is being pressurised to leave the matrimonial home, she can ask the court for an injunction or 'restraining order' protecting her from being thrown out. It is generally advisable not to leave the matrimonial home provided there is no threat to life or threat of injury. It is easier to get a court order preventing a woman from being thrown out than to get an order enforcing her right to return to it once she has left or been thrown out.

### **Sexual violence**

Women are driven to a point of no return when they face sexual violence. They do not know how to resist it. It is taboo to speak about it. Sexual demands are perceived as the prerogative of males in marriage while women's sexual needs are not given any consideration. Since India does not have a law on marital rape, even if a woman's husband has sexual intercourse with or without her consent, he cannot be prosecuted for rape. However, excessive and unreasonable demands for sex or demands for unnatural sex have been considered forms of cruelty and may entitle a woman to seek legal remedies such as divorce or judicial separation.

If a woman is judicially separated, her husband cannot have sexual intercourse with her without her consent. If he does, he can be prosecuted under section 376-A of the IPC. Note that consent under pressure (threats to injure her or to stop paying maintenance) is not considered valid and she can take help of this section.

### **Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act 2005**

All the earlier legal remedies concentrated on violence in the matrimonial family. But the experience gained through women's narration is valuable since so many women have also reported violence from the natal family and from men with whom they have a live-in relationship in the nature of marriage. This Act extends protection to women in all these relationships. Another important contribution of

this Act is that it has made it difficult to render women shelterless or throw them out of the home. It also makes provisions to put in place the necessary structures that would make it easy to access and implement. It provides immediate though temporary protection from domestic violence. There is a provision to obtain protection orders if the woman applies for relief. This is a civil remedy with the provision to combine a criminal remedy if needed and is applicable to all women irrespective of religion.

The women's movement has made this Act a reality. How women will be able to use it and how the test cases will unfold remains to be seen. But now that the remedy is available, negotiating non-violence may become easier since the woman can make a direct application to the magistrate. It takes into account physical, psychological, emotional, verbal, sexual and economic violence. However, we must remember that legal recourse has its own difficulties. It consumes time, money and energy. Laws are enacted and amended with regularity but pervasive gender biases and poor implementation undermine them. Women who have to resort to legal protection face a tough fight and must prepare themselves psychologically to brave all these aspects.

### 3. Role of health system

Health care providers have a major role to play in the early detection and prevention of violence against women, including domestic violence. It is the only system that every woman comes in contact with at some point in her life. Women are likely to seek health services after a violent episode. Moreover, all types of violence impacts mental and physical health.

The world health community has begun to mobilise itself to meet this challenge. In 1993 the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) became the first international health institution to recognize violence against women as a high-priority concern. It resulted in all member governments establishing national policies and plans for the prevention and management of violence against women. In 1996, the 49th World Health Assembly followed suit, declaring violence a public health priority. Both PAHO and WHO initiated programmes on violence against women in the mid-1990s. Governments in various countries are responding to the need.

The understanding that domestic violence is a health issue with serious consequences for women's physical and mental health is slowly spreading. In India organisations such as CEHAT that are working on

health as a human rights issue have done a lot of work on the problem of violence against women. This has led to the issue receiving attention within the public health system which is accessed mostly by women from the lower economic strata. In a collaborative project with the Mumbai Municipal Corporation, a separate department called Dilaasa was set up in the peripheral hospital at Bandra in 2001 and later at Kurla. Women who report domestic violence are provided emotional and social support along with health care. Sensitising the health care givers through ongoing training is an important area of their work. The training helps health care providers to

- ⇒ Educate themselves to recognise physical, sexual and emotional violence.
- ⇒ Explore and question their own biases, fears and prejudices around the issue of violence against women.
- ⇒ Ask clients about abuse in a sensitive and respectful way.

As mentioned earlier (in Chapter 3) the casualty records of public health facilities show that one-third of women who seek health services are cases of confirmed domestic violence and another one-third are of suspected domestic violence. Health care providers can

- ⇒ Provide treatment and validate the woman's experience.
- ⇒ Maintain confidentiality.
- ⇒ Keep records.

To do this effectively, health care providers must do away with the medical model of health service. Under the new Act, they can prepare the domestic incidence report. If the woman agrees, they can name the perpetrator in the medico-legal papers. This kind of support from the health system will go a long way to help the woman in need and prevent violence against women.

### 4. Discrediting domestic violence

Each one of us has a role to play in changing the attitudes that condone violence. Prime among these is the view that violence is a 'private family matter'. Domestic violence certainly occurs in the most private space in an individual's life—the home—but it is in fact the worst kind of social problem. The tendency to blame the victim also has to change. Violence in any form should not be justified.

It is understandable that persons who wish to help may be diffident about intervening directly or individually, but they can provide the woman information about help lines, support groups, women's groups or individuals in the field. Creating an enabling atmosphere for both

men and women to learn to resolve differences in non-violent ways should be our goal.

For those who are willing to get directly involved in helping a woman facing family violence, here are a few pointers:

It is helpful to understand the situation thoroughly. Listen to the woman with empathy. Do not isolate her. Keep the communication with her going and convey that you care. Do not ask 'why' it is happening. The woman may begin to blame herself for her situation when in fact there can be no excuse for violence. You can accompany her if she needs to go to the police station or to a hospital where she can file a medico-legal case after an episode of violence. Whatever the path taken to help the woman in distress, only non-violent means should be adopted. It is also useful to know which organisations can help the woman further.

Domestic violence causes injuries that are very different in nature from those caused by accidents. So it is likely that there may be a mismatch between the story told by the woman to cover up her situation and the actual injuries. It is useful to know what the strong indications of domestic violence are

- ⇒ Injuries in areas where there are fewer chances of getting hurt in the ordinary course, such as the face, throat, neck, chest, abdomen.
- ⇒ Bruises, burns or wounds that are caused by using teeth, hands, belts, cigarette tips.
- ⇒ When the woman seeks medical help often.
- ⇒ When the woman does not seek medical help for serious injuries.
- ⇒ When she suffers from depression resulting in suicide attempts.

Every time a woman is beaten, starved, insulted, threatened or denied her human dignity, she struggles to be free of her bonds. In doing so, she is not attempting to break up the family but to democratise it. The institution of the family needs to undergo change, but not by asking women to sacrifice more and thereby denying them humane treatment. The family is for everybody— men, women and children as well. Today it is functioning mainly for men. It has to change in the direction of incorporating women and children as well. This change can come only when every member of society individually and collectively critiques the present structure of the institution of the family and resists violence. The existence of a strong women's movement is essential in strengthening this democracy.

As a society, we have to work towards a non-communal and non-revivalist atmosphere. The practices of sati, female infanticide and witch-hunting have been periodically revived in the name of preserving culture. This is a direct result of fundamentalism and revivalism. These incidents of violence have economic underpinnings. For instance, witch-hunting had land-grabbing motives behind it. Ideas of shame and honour are also associated with it. The control of female sexuality also lies at the root of much of the violence inflicted on women. Cultural notions and modern technology together execute the task of controlling female sexuality, often leading to extreme violence where women are killed. The caste system provides an added edge where violence is inflicted and justified.

Changing the power imbalances in the family, marriage and other institutions in society is a sure step towards evolving a new democratic order. All the members should be on an equal footing since the welfare of all is important. At present, women are supposed to make sacrifices to keep the family together and suffer in silence if need be. This is having a crippling effect on the family atmosphere. Our children are growing up in violent homes. The entitlements that male members enjoy due to patriarchy have to be reviewed and changed. They have to learn to take responsibility for violence. The foundation of the family should be dialogue, not dominance. This alone will democratise the family and make relationships harmonious and non-violent.

All the institutions in society are interlinked. Therefore there has to be perceptible change in other institutions as well such as the media, judiciary, police, and educational institutions. Women's position in areas of employment and health must be strengthened. Their position and portrayal in matters of religion have to undergo a major change if there is to be any dent in gender discrimination.

Preventing violence against women requires commitment and the engagement of society as a whole. All institutions and individuals have a role to play — the government, judiciary, police, the legal-economic-political and social system, political leaders, media, health services, families, social workers, gram panchayats, schools, colleges, young and old, men and women. Only then will it be possible to transform ideas, change attitudes, and bring about a better life for all.

The accepted patriarchal system is based on exploitation and oppression by dominant castes, classes and religious groups. In that system men teach a lesson to women, adults to children and older



people, landlords to labourers, industrialists to workers, police to civilians, majority to minority, one nation to another nation, the US administration to the whole world. And the vicious cycle continues. Violence gets legitimised on a massive scale—witness the ‘war against terror’. This could even escalate to a nuclear war! Therefore, working to prevent violence within the family is related to preventing violence outside, in society. Such an endeavour calls for nothing less than a total transformation of norms, values and attitudes.

A psychologist best expresses this

“My experience is that changing men is difficult but possible.

An alternative to violence means learning to act non-violently.

It means co-operation instead of competition.

It means respecting instead of degrading.

It means equality instead of dominance.

It means dialogue instead of monologue.

It means communicating instead of control.

It means love instead of fear, hate and contempt.

Men must take responsibility for their violence and dominance.”

*Per Isdal, Leading Psychologist,  
Alternative to Violence, Oslo, Norway*

The road ahead is long but we have to continue to struggle and resist. We have to remember that all of us have the right to live a violence-free life. Those who perpetrate violence are responsible for it. There is no excuse for violence. We all have a role to play in changing society. Women’s struggle inside the family is connected to broader struggles outside.

**Total transformation calls for solidarity.  
It is difficult but not impossible!**



## APPENDIX - A

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## APPENDIX - B

### List of organisations where help is available

#### MUMBAI

##### Women's centre

104 B, Sunrise Apartment,  
Nehru Road, Vakola,  
Santacruz (East),  
Mumbai 400 055.  
Ph. 26680403 (Helpline No.)  
Ph. 26685997 (Administration)  
[womcentr@vsnl.com](mailto:womcentr@vsnl.com)

##### Special cell

A) Special Cell for Women and Children office of the commissioner of police, Police Head Quarter, Room no - 36, A block, Gate no 5, Opp. Crawford Market, Mumbai 400 001.  
Ph. 22620111 Extn: 206  
[rc\\_vaw@tiss.edu](mailto:rc_vaw@tiss.edu)

B) Special Cell for Women and Children  
Dadar Police Station,  
Bhawani Shankar Road,  
Shaitan Chowky,  
Dadar (W), Mumbai - 400 028.

C) Special Cell for Women and Children  
Kandivali Police Station,  
Swami Vivekananda Road,  
Opp. Shatabdi Hospital,  
Kandivali (W), Mumbai - 400 067.  
Ph. 24691753, 2494 0303  
Extn: 181, 24691681

D) Special Cell for Women and Children  
C.B.D. Belapur Police Stn.,  
Sector - 1, Opp. C.B.D.  
Belapur Bus Depot,  
Navi Mumbai - 400 614.  
Ph. 2758 0255

##### Sneha

Society for Nutrition  
Education & Health Action  
Urban Health Centre  
Dharavi, Mumbai - 400 017.  
24042627 / 24040045  
[mcfhi@vsnl.net](mailto:mcfhi@vsnl.net)

##### Sakhya -

##### Women Guidance Cell

a) The Image - 1st Floor,  
Nirmal Naka, Nalasopara,  
Taluka - Vasai, Dist - Thane .  
Ph. 95250 - 2471540

b) Thane Civil Hospital -  
Ground Floor.  
Ms. Jyoti - 9224642560

##### Awaz E Niswan

a) 151, Princess building,  
flat - 13, first floor,  
R. Bhatt Marg,  
Opp. J J hospital,  
Mumbai - 400 003.  
Ph. 2375840/ 23758462  
[niswan@vsnl.net](mailto:niswan@vsnl.net)

b) Rehnuma Library Centre  
Darulfala Building, 1st floor,  
C Wing, Room No. 102,  
Mumbra, Kausa.  
Ph. 25490038

**Stree Mukti Sanghatana**

A) Family Counselling Centre,  
Near Matoshri Ramabai  
Ambedkar Marternity Home,  
Ramkrishna Chemburkar Road,  
Chembur Naka,  
Mumbai - 400 071.  
Ph. 25297198

B) Shramik, Royal Crest  
Lokmanya Tilak Vasahat,  
Road No. 3, Dadar (East).  
Ph. 24174381

C) Family Counselling Centre,  
Sector - 3,  
Cidco Communication Centre,  
Near Vashi Police Station,  
Vashi.  
Ph. 24174381, 27821564

**Swadhar**

Keshav Gore Smaarak Trust,  
Arye Road, Goregaon (W),  
Mumbai - 400 062.  
Ph. 28720638

**Aasra**

A - 4, Tanwar View,  
CHS Plot - 43, Sector - 7,  
Koparkhairane,  
New Mumbai - 400701.  
Ph. 27546669

**Maitra Helpline**

Shri Ganesh Darshan,  
9<sup>th</sup> floor, IPH, L.B.S. Marg,  
Opp Maharashtra  
Flywood Centre,  
Hari Niwas Circle,  
Naupada, Thane (W).  
Ph. 25433270 / 25366577

**Dilaasa**

Dept. No. 101, Opp. Casualty,  
K.B. Bhabha Hospital,  
Bandra (W), Mumbai - 400 050.  
Ph. 26400229 (Direct)  
26422775 / 26422541  
Extn. 4376 / 4511  
[dilaasa@vsnl.net](mailto:dilaasa@vsnl.net)

Department No. 15,  
K.B.Bhabha Municipal Hospital,  
Belgrami Road, Kurla (W),  
Mumbai - 400 070.  
Ph. 2650 0241 Extn.212

**PUNE**

**Susamvad - Sakhi - Helpline**

B1 Seema Apt, Shirole Path,  
Opp. Fergusson College,  
Main gate, Pune - 4.  
Ph. 9520 - 25448400/25538434

**Asha Sanstha**

Action for Self reliance Hope  
and Awareness  
Vishrmbag Police Station,  
Farasakhana Building,  
3rd Floor, Bhudhwar Chowk,  
Pune - 411002.  
Ph. 9520 - 24484535  
[ngoasha@gmail.com](mailto:ngoasha@gmail.com)

**Nari Samata Manch**

473, Sadashiv Peth,  
Pune - 411030.  
Ph. 9520 - 24473116  
[nsm@pn3.vsnl.net.in](mailto:nsm@pn3.vsnl.net.in)

**Swadhar**

C/o Niwara Devid sasan  
Anath Pangu Graha,  
96, Navi Peth. Pune - 30.  
Ph. 9520 - 24533452  
[swadhar@rediffmail.com](mailto:swadhar@rediffmail.com)

**Maheer**

Bhima Koregaon, Vadu Budruk,  
Taluka Shirud, Dist Pune-412216.  
Ph. 952137 - 252174  
[maheropn3@vsnl.net.in](mailto:maheropn3@vsnl.net.in)

**Masum**

Masum Sanchalit Sanvad,  
Family Counselling and  
Guidance Centre -  
Malsa Kant Society, Saswad,  
Taluka - Purandhar,  
Dist - Pune.  
Ph. 02115 - 222969

**Chetna Mahila Mandal**

13, Gururaj Society,  
Bhosari, Pune- 411039.  
Ph. 9520 - 26610516  
[jyotipathania@yahoo.co.in](mailto:jyotipathania@yahoo.co.in)

**Shramik Mahila Morcha**

101, Shivaji Nagar , Pune- 5  
Tel. 9520 -25533560,25534652  
M-09422530186  
R-24452053

**DELHI**

**Jagori - A Women's  
Organisation**

C-54 South Extension,  
Part Two, New Delhi.  
Ph. 91 11 2669 1219,  
+91 11 2669 1220.  
[jagori@jagori.org](mailto:jagori@jagori.org)

**Action India**

5/27A, Jangpura - B,  
Behind Rajdoot Hotel,  
New Delhi - 110014.  
Ph. 91 11 24377470, 24374785  
[actionindia@vsnl.com](mailto:actionindia@vsnl.com)  
[actioni@hotmail.com](mailto:actioni@hotmail.com)

**Shakti Shalini**

6/30-B, Lower Ground Floor,  
Kargil Park Lane,  
Jangpura B,  
New Delhi - 110014.  
91 11 24373636, 24373736  
[shakishalini@mantraonline.com](mailto:shakishalini@mantraonline.com)

**Tarshi**

11 - Mathura Road,  
1st Floor, Jangpura B,  
New Delhi - 110014.  
Ph. 91 11 24379070, 24379071  
[tarshi@vsnl.com](mailto:tarshi@vsnl.com)

**Rahi Foundation**

RAHI Foundation,  
M 50 Chitaranjan Park  
Ground Floor,  
New Delhi - 110019.  
Ph. 011-40536176  
[rahifoundation@gmail.com](mailto:rahifoundation@gmail.com)

## BANGALORE

### **Vimochana**

33/1-10 Thyagraj Layout,  
Jaibharath Nagar,  
Bangalore - 560033.  
Ph. 080-25492783  
[streelekha@vsnl.net](mailto:streelekha@vsnl.net)

### **Hengasara Hakkinna Sangha**

# 1024, 38th cross,  
25th main, 4th T block,  
Jaya Nagar Bangalore-41.  
Ph. 080-26639884  
[hhs@bgl.vsnl.net.in](mailto:hhs@bgl.vsnl.net.in)

## KOLKATTA

### **Swayam**

Swayam, 9/2B Deodar Street,  
West Bengal,  
Kolkata - 700019.  
Ph. 91 33 2486 3367/3368/3357  
[swayam@cal.vsnl.net.in](mailto:swayam@cal.vsnl.net.in)

## KUTCH

### **Kutch mahila Vikas Sanghatna**

11, Nutan Colony, Bhuj,  
Kutch Dist - 370001.  
Ph. 02832 - 222124/223311  
[kmvsbhuj@gmail.com](mailto:kmvsbhuj@gmail.com)  
[preetinbsoni@gmail.com](mailto:preetinbsoni@gmail.com)

### **Ujas Mahila Vikas Sanghatana**

Mundra dist, Sadou Road,  
KVK Campus, Mundra, Kutch.  
Ph. 02838 - 223104

### **Abdasa Mahila Vikas**

#### **Sanghatana**

Shiddheshwar Nagar,  
Bhind Post Office,  
Naliya Kutch - 370001.  
Ph. 028314 - 222165

### **Centre for Social Justice - Bhuj**

10, Meghmaya, Shardha Society,  
Bhuj, Kutch.  
Ph. 02832 - 223441  
[csjkutch@rediffmail.com](mailto:csjkutch@rediffmail.com)

## VADODARA

### **Olakh - A space for women**

A Feminist Documentation  
Resource and  
Counseling Centre  
8-A, Nivruti Colony,  
Opp. Jila Talim Bhavan,  
Karelibaug. Vadodara.  
Ph. 0265-2486487, 2466037

## JAIPUR

### **Vishakha**

9 Pratap Nagar,  
Near Glass Factory,  
Tonk Road, Jaipur.

### **Vividha**

A) Mahila Salaha Evam  
Surakshan Kendra (south),  
Gandhi Nagar, Mahila Thana,  
Gandhi Nagar, Jaipur.  
Ph. 0141-5172435  
[vividha\\_2001@yahoo.com](mailto:vividha_2001@yahoo.com)

B) Mahila Salaha Evam  
Surakshan Kendra (North),  
Mahila Thana (North),  
Dhabai Ji Ki Haveli,  
Hawa Mahal Road, Jaipur.  
Ph. 0141-5172008

## BHOPAL

### **Sangini - gender resource center**

G - 3 / 385, Gulmohar Colony,  
Bhopal - 462039.  
Ph. 0755- 4276158  
[sanginicenter@rediffmail.com](mailto:sanginicenter@rediffmail.com)

## MEGHLAYA

### **Voluntary Health Association**

Opp. 'Iarisa Cottage,  
Upper Nongrim Hills,  
Shillong - 793003.  
Ph. 0364-2522834,2522835 (Off.)  
[bj1975@rediffmail.com](mailto:bj1975@rediffmail.com)  
[vhamegh@rediffmail.com](mailto:vhamegh@rediffmail.com)

Lympung Ki Seng Kynthei  
Ph. 0364 - 2504233, 2220595

## LUCKNOW

### **Sahayog**

A-240 Indira Nagar,  
Lucknow 226016, UP.  
Ph-+91-522-2341319, 2310747

### **Humsafar**

"support Centre For Women"  
27, New Berry Road,  
Near Times of India,  
Lucknow- 226001.

