



Violence Against Women **All Pervading**

edited by **Ajit Jain**

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Release of this publication marks the first anniversary of the horrendous gang rape of 23-year old Jyoti Singh Pandey in a moving bus in New Delhi on December 16, 2012, and her sad demise in Singapore on December 28, 2012, as a consequence of physical injuries caused by six rapists.

The publication is also devoted to hundreds of thousands of women who are physically assaulted and raped globally every single day.



By Ajit Jain

Introduction

confidence reinforces the notion that rape is a largely invisible crime here, where convictions are infrequent and victims silently go away."

Those who assaulted and raped Jyoti have finally received capital punishment but the verdict has been appealed by defense lawyers. The perpetrators of the crime against the photojournalist have also been arrested and the case is currently before the court.

What about the two men, one of whom lured a 5-year-old girl child to a farm and the other who later raped her? The rapist was reportedly a friend of the victim's father. The tragedy occurred in April 2013, in Nagpur (Madhya Pradesh). The girl later died of cardiac arrest. "These men should be burned alive so that the whole world will see how such criminals ought to be punished," the victim's mother is quoted in published reports as suggesting. The police not only hesitated to register the complaint, they tried to bribe the parents with Rs. 2,000 (\$37), suggesting "they should keep quiet about the case." It is incidents like this that have led some people to suggest that the first thing that has to be done, at least in India, is to depoliticize the police and make it a professional force.

Every day and in all parts of the world, innocent women and girls are raped, tortured, physically assaulted, financially and emotionally exploited and harassed by their spouses or other intimate partners. It is not something that's confined to India or to the South Asian subcontinent. Intimate partner violence (IPV) "is known to be the most common cause of nonfatal injury to women worldwide," Dr. Mohit Bhandari, Trauma

Surgeon at McMaster University Hospital in Hamilton (Ontario), writes in these pages. "Four in ten women experience some form of abuse in their lifetime. Physical assault and rape are common. 35% of women experience abuse from their intimate partner such as a spouse or boyfriend. The World Health Organization has estimated that the cost of IPV in Canada alone is \$5 billion annually."

The most disturbing figures about violence against women come from the United Nations: "One in three women on the planet will be beaten or raped in their lifetime," and it translates to one billion women who "will experience some type of gender-based violence."

"In the struggle against violence against women, not enough has changed," Raminder and Ujjal Dosanjh write in these pages. "These days sound much like yesterday and the present is reminiscent of the past. The barbarity of attacks on wives, common law spouses, partners and just casual dates remains unchanged."

To Dr. Satwinder Bains, Director, Center for Indo-Canadian Studies, University of Fraser Valley in British Columbia, "the word 'violence' is embedded in the reality of a violation. Violation of self and the other are both intrinsically linked in the act when violence occurs" and "women come out of the act of violence with deep scars of pain, anger and rage leaving an indelible mark on the psyche that are extremely detrimental to her and our society at large." The sexual violence, she says, "has its roots in the imbalance of brute force that expresses itself in the most violent and violated physical manner – that of rape and

murder." Bains adds that South Asian women "have seen their share of tragic outcomes in this very behavior and in the aftermath, their children have become afraid of the very men in their lives who are wrongly portrayed to be guardians and confidants." As she points out, "This sad, heartbreaking betrayal cannot be explained in any manner of logic or faith, either to our children or to our society."

Widely published reports reveal that "a woman is beaten every 15 seconds; every six days a woman in Canada is killed by her intimate partner. One in five women who are married report being physically abused and 25 per cent of the perpetrators of physical violence against their spouses or girlfriends justify violence. Intimate partner violence is a global issue: one in every two women is from either India or China."

One report suggests people should "treat rape as a desecration against mothers, irrespective of race, nation, and culture, caste. It stems from the imagined 'power' of males over females."

In this respect, what happened to Jyoti is "one of the most brutal examples of a violence that is perpetrated against women of all ages daily and in every part of the world," says Dr. Alok Mukherjee, Chair of Toronto Police Services Board. He cites some troubling statistics: In the US, a rape occurs every 6.2 minutes; and in South Africa, one in four men admit to having committed rape. In dismay and sadness, he says, "India has an unenviable record of sexual violence against women that is surpassed only by the United States and South Africa."

"There's an increase in sexual violence in

India," agrees Dr. Prabhat Jha, Director of the Center for Global Health Research, St. Michael's Hospital in Toronto.

What's the root cause of violence against women? Some experts say in the South Asian subcontinent and in Muslim countries, women and girls are deemed inferior to men. That explains why families celebrate the birth of a boy and don't do anything when a girl is born. It is widely known that in India, as well as in the South Asian community in Canada, US, etc., women in growing numbers are aborting female fetuses.

That's also the explanation for the fact that the men/women ratio in India, as an example, is skewed. There are more men than women (914 women against 1,000 men) because 4 to 12 million female fetuses have been aborted during the last 30 years; 6 million during the last 10 years alone, Jha reveals.

Jha has done extensive studies on India's demography, gender gaps, etc. On that basis, he agrees that "selective abortion of girls is growing in India" but he attributes this "to the preference by families to have at least one son." Families use ultrasound technology to determine the gender of the fetus, mainly during a woman's second pregnancy when the first birth in the family was of a girl. "So, it is not girl discrimination. It is their interest in having at least one boy."

I interviewed half a dozen recent immigrant women in Toronto (see their stories in subsequent pages). One of them came to Canada from Nigeria. She says she escaped from the clutches of her husband, a police officer, who constantly assaulted her physically. When she gave birth to a girl, her husband was not happy: "A girl! You can't give birth to a son?" Her mother-in-law made the same remark.

This bias against women is widely spread and not simply confined to India. And it's because of this bias against women that men develop their superiority complex and take it as their right to abuse women. In the case of this immigrant from Nigeria, whom I named Amina, her husband Husain once told her, "you better wash my feet and that's the water you should drink... You should worship me."

One of these women interviewed, who's an Indo-Canadian, says her husband would beat her if she didn't cook the food he liked. He would pick up the telephone and make a long distance call to her parents in India to complain about her poor cooking.

This bias against women is ingrained in patriarchal societies. In such societies, "violence against women ...is often condoned by various social mores, cultural values, and religious beliefs that dictate male dominance in gender relationships and create separate codes of conduct for men and women," write Drs. Sepali Guruge, Usha George and Vathsala Jayasuriya.

"There's the inevitable influence of a patriarchal mindset, with many Indian villagers living in deeply conservative societies," writes S. Nihal Singh, India's well-known journalist and author of *Ink in my Veins: A Life in Journalism*. "A male in such a society feels a sense of entitlement."

That religion is used to justify deeply rooted patriarchy in South Asian society is illustrated by the recent ban of the book *My Name is Malala* in schools in Pakistan. Malala Yousafzai is a 16-year old girl from Pakistan who, through her conviction and courage, risked her life by steadfastly supporting education for girls.

Nobody would disagree with Dr. Jean Augustine when she says "enough is enough and a proactive approach is needed to eradicate this social disease (of violence against women) from our midst." To her, "the most effective tool is empowerment. Women need to support each other and speak out." In some cultures, this former Canadian parliamentarian says, "keeping family matters behind closed doors runs superior to bringing the perpetrators of violence to accountability. In many cases, the victim sympathizes or makes excuses for their violent partner. This needs to stop."

Judy Sgro, Liberal Member of Parliament in Canada, agrees with Augustine: "The prevention of all forms of violence against women and girls starts with education and empowerment and must become a priority for all levels of government.... All women need to feel there are public supports in place for them that will not only aid their

situation but also be sensitive to their unique and important cultural realities."

"We have to talk about this in schools; we have to talk in the society in general terms and see where these examples (of discrimination against women) are coming from," explains Dr. Paula Bourne of the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto. In an interview, she tells me, "In terms of gender equity, when you recognize that everybody is on the same playing field, equity in terms of issues of race, ethnicity and so on; if we talk about gender equity, yes, it can be a very important contributor in terms of reducing violence against women."

Susmita Vaidya is a family counselor at the Elspeth Heyworth Center for Women (EHCW) in Toronto and she regularly talks with battered women, women abused and exploited by their husbands, boyfriends or others. In her article here, she discusses three such cases, two of them being Indo-Canadians and the third a White Anglo-Saxon Canadian. Despite her advice that they should leave their abusive relationship and seek the help of the police or social service agencies, all three are hesitant to leave their husbands. "I want to give him one more chance," all three told Vaidya, who wonders, "What's this power of love?"

That power of love, clubbed with the fear of the breakup of their marriage, induces many women to continue to endure their spousal cruelty which comes in various forms. Aruj Butt is a woman activist in Toronto who was among participants at the symposium on women's issues that EHCW organized on February 15, 2013. "I was just 13 when I told my mother that she needed to leave my father. She left him now, when I am 32 (after 19 years). She's still being abused as what happened to her still has psychological ramifications ... (for her) he's still the superior partner."

At the same symposium, Dr. Mohit Bhandari, who was among the keynote speakers, said we can heal the bones but emotional and mental wounds remain forever.

One shudders to think that such an act, as was perpetrated against Jyoti in Delhi in December 2012, could happen to any innocent human

being. But the sad reality is that such occurrences are taking place in various forms all over the world. A woman continues to be "an object of fun in male gatherings and most men are smug in their belief that they are simply superior beings," Nihal Singh rightly puts it. "The male mindset remains the same in most societies" as women are the subject of "locker room jokes in New York, London or Sydney."

All said, it is important that we all should learn "to deconstruct our biased and gendered socialization, think about why we think the way we do and why men believe that it is okay to violate those they should, in all reality, love the most," explains Dr. Satwinder Bains. "There needs to be a commitment to a better society where fear as a visceral reaction is not delegated to those that live with us and amongst us... (as) a society free of violence against women reaps rewards that are beneficial to all segments of our world, not just the individual."

I earlier quoted from a UN study that says one in three women would be beaten in their lifetime, which translates into one billion women. That's the basis of the worldwide campaign "One Billion Rising for Justice". As they did in 2013, on February 14, 2014, organizers are calling on women and men everywhere "to harness their power and imagination to rise for justice, and demand an end to violence." If you don't speak out, you become complicit, so their demand is "please break that silence."

After the brutal gang rape of Jyoti, India's President Pranab Mukherjee spoke about this tragedy. The platform he chose was his address to the nation on India's Republic Day (January 26, 2013): "The brutal rape and murder of a young woman, who was a symbol of all that new India strives to be, has left our hearts empty and our minds in turmoil. We lost more than a valuable life, we lost a dream. When we brutalize a woman, we wound the soul of our civilization."

"All quotes are from articles by different authors in this publication. Dr. Paula Bourne of the University of Toronto is the only one who has been quoted outside this publication."



By Sunder Singh
Executive Director,
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Abuse Of Women

in our own family occurs, we should take note of it and try to do something about it. We can't ignore it. I would like to briefly illustrate a real life story.

I know of a friend who had fallen in love in her youth with a fellow student from the university that she was studying in. Her father wanted her to marry an army officer, who was his drinking buddy. This friend of mine quietly went and married the man she loved. Upon discovering this, her father actually tried to strangle her. She was fortunately rescued by her brother. She ran away to save her life and hid at a friend's place. The irony in all of this is that the father forgot that his was also a love marriage. He had defied the wishes of his own parents.

Abuse against women is happening everywhere in the world today, because society is accepting it. This can change when we begin to say it is not acceptable.

When you experience violence in your home and you do not report it to the police, you are accepting the crime and become an accessory to it.

The change in our behavior must start from the core. The core of the society is parents. The basic thinking at the parental level needs to be overhauled and re-oriented. This can only be achieved by de-programming what our ancestors have taught us. We have been programmed to treat the girl child as something less than the male child. It is this generation of programming that has resulted in what's happening in the world today, which is open gender discrimination.

Here are some simple examples of attitudes that must change:

- The daughter washes the dishes, while the son plays a video game.
- The daughter helps her mother in cooking, while the son watches TV.
- While the brother and sister are eating together, the brother orders the sister to get him a glass of water. The parents watch and accept this behavior.

Each year, the Elspeth Heyworth Center for Women attends to nearly 400 cases of domestic violence. Many of these cases involve newcomers and immigrants who are struggling to settle in Canada, facing unemployment, underemployment and cultural shocks. These lead to anger and violence at home. Women are the most vulnerable. They find themselves alone and isolated.

To raise awareness of the rights of women in Canada, last year 137 women participated in EHCW's "Reduce Abuse Program", including actively building skills in financial literacy.

One of the participants wrote: "You have given me such relief and the courage to deal with my broken marriage and abuse. Emotionally and mentally, I was shattered. But you gave me back my confidence, my trust in good things, good people. My gratitude goes beyond words." Another woman wrote: "Thank you very much for your help and encouragement for showing me the bigger picture of life, giving me hope."

Repression of women is a serious societal problem. We are all collectively responsible for the attitude we hold towards women. When an incidence of injustice against any female member

- A wife works 8 hours a day, comes home and cooks a meal, while the husband watches TV.

A distortion occurs when we teach our girls that they must be submissive, adjusting, obedient and dependent, and blindly believe in the teachings of parents and our society, even though these teachings are lopsided. Women know that these teachings are not adequate. Yet, paradoxically, it is the women who become the agents in perpetuating this culture, from generation to generation. A woman who was suppressed by her mother-in-law, will, in turn, suppress her daughter-in-law equally or more.

Sadly, is there no country, no faith group in the world that gives justice or equality to women? Ironically, it is the women who latch on to faith more than anyone else. This behavior is akin to the Stockholm Syndrome, where the person who is being hurt gets attached to the person who is hurting her. It is she, the woman, who supports the patriarchal belief that a woman's place is below that of a man. The sad part is we, as women, accept this.

According to Statistics Canada, one out of every 5 women in Canada has experienced some sort of violence, sexual harassment, assault, rape, etc. in her life. Many such cases are not reported by victims to the police.

I call upon all parents to make your children aware at a very early stage in their lives that boys, girls, women and men, should live in harmony and love, without fear and without hatred. Teach your children every day that brothers and sisters should respect the dignity of each other. If you could do this seemingly simple task, you will bring your temples, churches and mosques into your homes. You will never have to go anywhere else and women will not have to listen to anyone telling them that they are lesser human beings, which they are not.

Humanity is an integral whole. Every individual action has an extensive impact. For example, the 2012 gang rape in India has had a world-wide effect.

Women who are abused, what is your responsibility? Although gender justice is basically the responsibility of the society, it is essential that the woman abused takes firm action when the incidence of abuse occurs by lodging an immediate report to the police. If a woman does not take firm action, if she does not condemn the unacceptable, if she cannot see the injustice, if she does not ignore the community stigma and cry out full throated for immediate help, she will allow permanent damage to her physical being and her mental state.

An abused woman takes the beating, for the sake of her family, for the sake of her children. It shakes her spirit, but she bears the humiliation and pain. She gets kicked, until her spirit dies. It is only at this point that she calls for help. By this time her bones are broken, she has been raped, abused, assaulted, and humiliated. She picks up the phone and belatedly cries for help.

Within the Girl Guides of Canada, right from a very young age, girls must take an oath that they will fight back every being that touches them in the wrong way, and that they will report such actions immediately, to their parents, teachers, friends, neighbors and everyone they trust. I suggest that every parent must provide the same pattern of training at home. Parents can also render a huge service to their daughters if they encourage them to take up martial arts. Every girl must be equipped with this defense mechanism. Its value will become evident whenever she faces violation of her person and dignity.

In Canada, abuse is faced within every ethnic group. The largest numbers of victims, however, are refugees, newcomers, immigrants and people with low income. With this in mind, I have a suggestion for the leaders of Canada. Every refugee and new immigrant, upon arrival in Canada, should be made to attend a mandatory full day workshop on their rights and responsibilities. They must be made aware of the legal consequences of any sort of abuse - be it physical or emotional - of a partner, male or female. This mandatory education will reduce violence in Canada.



Violence against women is a global issue. Most of our contributors have analyzed it from that perspective. So, an article in **Section 1 Canada** doesn't mean it is all Canada specific. I have chosen it that way because the article has emphasis on issues in Canada.

Same is applicable to articles that appear in **Section 2 India**.

Section 1 Canada



By Ajit Jain

Physical Violence Is A Common Occurrence

problems started soon after she landed in Toronto.

"First my mother-in-law started troubling me in the kitchen, for any little thing. She had created trouble even in his first marriage. My husband was at home as he was laid off and he blamed me for that. Within a few weeks, after coming to Toronto, he started beating me. He used to call me all kinds of names," says Shashi.

"Once I took courage and I said I must call the cops. When I started dialing 911, Raju snatched the telephone from my hands and started thrashing me left and right, shouting at the top of his voice. 'How dare, how dare... you call the police,' and that he would teach me a lesson so that I 'could never dare to try to repeat that.'"

Shashi lost her first child due to a miscarriage, the result of physical assault by Raju. She was again pregnant and now has a 2-year-old son. Raju stopped his physical assault for some time during the second pregnancy, but the abuse started again. It wasn't important to Raju that Shashi was pregnant and might suffer another miscarriage. "He kept on abusing me physically. Despite this, I kept on hoping things would change for the better but it never happened. He would lose his temper for no reason and would throw things, anything in his hand. He would say, 'You wanted to marry me because you wanted to come to Canada.' Raju would say, 'I am a Canadian citizen and you can't do anything to me.'"

Shashi has an undergraduate degree in Commerce and she used to work as an accountant in Mumbai; however, Raju wouldn't allow her to work in Toronto. "He wouldn't allow me to go out for work. He wouldn't allow me even to socialize with other people."

The names of the women I interviewed have been changed to protect their identity.

Elsbeth Heyworth Center for Women (EHCW) recently invited half a dozen battered women to their office to narrate their stories of spousal abuse. They were all unanimous that they were subjected to physical and emotional abuse by their husbands and/or boyfriends.

Shashi

"I was hoping the beatings would stop, that Raju would change one day, but it never happened," says Shashi. She migrated from Mumbai (India) to Canada in December 2009.

Raju has a diploma in mechanical engineering and he used to work for an auto manufacturing company. Shashi was introduced to him by a common friend. His mother Reena was opposed to this marriage. In any case, they got married and the

She finally reached the stage where enough was enough. "He would tell me to give him one more chance. But things never changed," explains Shashi about her marital problems. "What do I do? Now the baby is involved. In the case of my first pregnancy, Raju even accused me of getting pregnant somewhere else, that I had relations with another man..."

Shashi and Raju have finally separated. Their divorce papers are in the family court in Toronto. He still goes to Shashi's place to spend time with the son and also to take him out.

"The cops have told me there could be restraining orders but that those have to come from the family court."

She sounds happy now as she doesn't have any relationship with Raju. They have separated. She's finally receiving help from experts at the EHCW.

Karina

Karina, 28, is from St. Vincent. She doesn't have much formal education. She landed in Toronto in 2005 without any legal immigration papers. Once she just met a man and they started talking. After a few weeks – that was in 2009 – Karina started living with George, a Jamaican by birth, who was working for a shipping and receiving company. He's a landed immigrant.

"I wanted to go back to school but couldn't as I didn't have legal papers. I wanted to work but couldn't for the same reason," Karina explains.

"Our relationship was okay at first but he started abusing me. For no reason he would hit me. Emotionally it became too much for me and so I wanted to end our relationship. We were not married. We were just living together."

As she didn't have – and still doesn't have – any legal papers and as she has no status in Canada, Karina kept on taking abuse from George. "I would have in my mind I have no family here. I have nowhere to go. I don't know what to do, where to go. So, I kept on taking physical and emotional abuse. I had seen my parents. They, too, had problems in their relationship and they used to constantly argue and fight. So, I said to myself, it is okay. My mom also said it is okay. 'Some problems will always be there in any relationship.' Some women say it is their fault and they deserved it (beating)."

But when you talk to other women, friends or acquaintances, "You realize it is not okay," says Karina. "This is not the kind of life you should be living. You have a right to do what you want to do and you should feel free like other women. Don't let the man make you feel that you are nobody. Other people used to ask me 'What's going on' and they would suggest 'It shouldn't be acceptable.'"

"We did talk but George said he didn't care. 'When you don't have any status in this country, you are nobody,' George would tell me. I didn't want to report this to the police as I would say to myself, where am I going to go. They will send me home anyway."

But enough was enough. "I couldn't take it anymore. I said to myself it doesn't matter if they send me home or keep me here. I have to talk to the police. When we would have a fight, George would take my phone away and not let me talk to the police. One day I finally telephoned the Help Line and they put me in touch with some people."

Karina says she's better now. She no longer has

a relationship with George. He still comes to the house, "Because of our daughter and I forgive him. I don't have problems any more. I am able to do what I couldn't do before. I feel different from before."

Yasmeen

She's 28 years old and a Jamaican by birth. "I came here by myself but then I met a man here in 2009. Vincent is also a Jamaican and is very, very good looking. For about one year he was a gentleman. In 2010, we moved in together. In 2011, we got married. Later on I found out he was having affairs. He got upset that I found out as I was not supposed to find out," explains Yasmeen.

When she became pregnant, Yasmeen says she would let Vincent go out. "I said, he's a young guy. I would tell him, 'You can go out and socialize with your friends. You don't have to be confined to the house and to me. I don't mind that. You have a social life.' But then I found out whatever be the weather conditions, he would always go to one particular club. 'Why do you have to go always to that place?' I would ask him. 'You know I am pregnant and I need company, also. The only company I had in the house was the fish and I can't talk to the fish.' One night he was going out. I said, 'I don't want you to go,' but he insisted on going. I started crying. So, he went to the kitchen and made a call to his friend. I was mad. I cried the whole night. He said, 'This is what I am. I am not going to change.'"

"My loving husband was doing all kinds of things behind my back. It was not just one girl but different girls. I confronted him. 'You are not having just affairs but having sex with several women.' He said, 'You know what I am - a man.'"

Since then, which was in 2011, "Our relationship started going downhill."

Once there was a fight and Yasmeen called the cops. "I was trying to leave the house and Vincent followed me. He said I can't go. He slammed me against the door and we started fighting. The cops came and gave him a warning. They took statements from both of us. They told him, 'It is a first time offence and you will not be arrested.'"

On her daughter's birthday on November 4, Vincent choked Yasmeen and so she called the cops. He was arrested.

They are no longer living together. Vincent now lives with his mother. "We are not divorced as yet.

I am done but he doesn't want to let go."

"I feel happy. Everybody is making it look as if it is my fault. My pastor at church says it's my fault. He says I shouldn't have called the cops. They don't understand it has been going on for so long. They are all Jamaicans. They don't go against each other. His mother told me - 'I shouldn't have called a cop as no good woman calls a cop.' But they don't realize it had been escalating. I know who he is. He's unpredictable. I don't trust him. I have seen him standing next to me while I'm sleeping. I wake up not being sure of what he will do."

Yasmeen says she's not working. She receives only \$180.00 a month from the government to take care of her daughter. "It is not enough. I have no formal education. I didn't finish high school back home. I applied for college here. I was put on a waiting list. I hope I get admission next September. I can't afford to hire a baby sitter. I want him to understand that the relationship between us is done. Once I get a job, then the situation will be different."

Yasmeen tells other women in abusive relationships that "Change will not come overnight but one should be willing to change. Violence is not going to end. It will only escalate. Please seek help."

Amina

Amina, 31, is a fashion designer from Nigeria. She's been in Toronto for four years. She was married to Husain, a Nigerian police officer, for four years when she lived in Nigeria. The relationship became so abusive that she literally escaped from there and ran for her life, with her daughter, to Canada.

"Once I was coming back from school when Husain and his friends met me. He said, 'Oh, I like that girl.' So, he came to me and he started talking to me and we started dating. He was so wonderful and then he said he would like to marry me. We got married. After marriage, I opened my own fashion house. People would come to my shop - men and women. He said 'Why should you talk to men?' I said to him, 'That's my profession. I have to be with different people.' The man would keep constant watch over me. He would send his assistant to spy on me, to keep surveillance and then my dear husband would ask me in the evening, 'What the hell are you doing, talking

with such and such men,' and so on."

"He repeatedly said, 'You are not allowed to talk to other men. I don't care you have this business.' And that's when he would beat me. I had had a miscarriage for that reason. He would beat me in front of my customers. Once he tore my clothes and I was almost naked," Amina says.

After the miscarriage, it was too much for her. She was bleeding.

"But the beating was still going on. I had no place to go. Husain threatened me, 'Don't think of leaving me. I am a police officer and I will kill you. You can't call your parents.' So my own family was scared to call me. They said, 'You decided to get married with him and so you have to pay the price now.'"

"After the miscarriage I was really, really sick. I asked him, 'Why are you tormenting me?' He said, 'You have no right to talk. Don't even talk.' I said I had to tell him how I feel. He said, 'No, don't even speak.'"

Amina became pregnant again and gave birth to a girl. Husain took exception to that. "You can't give birth to a male child?' His mom came and said, 'Girl? You can't give birth to a male child?'"

"When I came back from the hospital, there was no food at home. I couldn't even walk. He asked for food. He said, 'I don't care if you are going to die.' I said, 'I can't cook for you.' I was in pain."

"When I talked to the police in Nigeria, they said it was a family matter and moreover he was a police officer. He again threatened that he would kill me and nobody would be able to find out."

Someone suggested to Amina that Husain would really kill her and that she should leave the country. "He would always search my bag for money. He opened my bank account and so he had access to my account. I didn't have any where to keep the money. He would collect money from me. Whenever I wanted to buy something I had to ask him for money."

Husain would tell Amina that she should wash his feet and that's the water she should drink. 'You should worship me,' he would often tell Amina.

In Toronto, Amina is happy. "What a joy for me to be with my daughter in Canada! I was initially on medication for a long time. This organization (EHCW) is so good. They suggested you can do anything. I keep on doing what they suggest. It takes time to get over what happened in my home country."

Amina now has a boyfriend, also from Nigeria. "I have no connection any more with Husain," who continues to live in Nigeria.

Her advice to other women in abusive relationships is "Don't allow any man to beat you. Please call the cops at the first instance of physical assault."

There was yet another black woman who also came to speak with me. She was quietly listening and at one stage she got very emotional and left without talking with me. She wouldn't even say anything to the counselors of EHCW.

It happens many times. She came with the intention of sharing her story - whatever is her story - but didn't summon up the courage to speak out even though the meeting was in a private room and no outsiders were listening.

Police officers in Canada and other countries agree with Amina: You have to take action at the first sign of any spousal violence, violence from your boyfriend or from any man. Don't say to yourself, 'Oh, it is just one incident and maybe I am at fault and it won't happen again. I have to make this marriage or this relationship work.' Yes, but that has to come from both sides.

You compromise once, then you compromise a second and a third time, thinking it would change, but it doesn't work that way.

Women in such abusive relationships should take the first opportunity to talk with their spouses, their boyfriends and tell them that "No abuse is acceptable - physical or emotional."

If you are confused and you don't know what to do, you should seek help from an expert, a family counselor or a police officer and follow their advice. If you as a victim don't speak out, the abusive relationship will get worse, rather than improve.

Yasmeen says even the pastor in her church blamed her. A respectable woman doesn't call the police, he cautioned her. Even her mother made a similar suggestion.

They talk about family honor and all that. Nobody talks about how any woman can survive in an abusive relationship, especially when there's violent physical abuse. If you are amongst them, please move out of such a relationship; go to a halfway house or go to a shelter where you will have full protection.

Woman's Body As The Site Of Patriarchal Violence: Bi-National Reflections In The Wake Of The Rape In Delhi, December 16, 2012



By Alok Mukherjee
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This culture war is just one type of conflict in which a woman's body is the site of violence. The world over, a woman's body is a conflict zone where domestic, social, cultural, religious, communal, ethnic, political or economic scores are settled. These conflicts may be waged on the home front involving two individuals, in a dark bus involving groups of otherwise ordinary men or the battlefield involving forces of the state arrayed against those of another state or against any group that has run afoul of the state. These conflict zones exist in countries that are apparently at peace within or at war with a foe – be they civil wars, insurrections, ethnic or communal conflicts or regional wars. There are, in other words, a whole host of situations in which men, individually and collectively, use violence to settle disagreements, take revenge, express anger, frustration or insecurity, put down or eliminate those they hate or fear, or assert their superiority. And in all of these situations, a woman's body is a prime battleground.

Rape in its various forms and degrees is the most acute weapon deployed in these wars. The woman's body is literally laid bare, symbolically stabbed and subjected to the vilest indignity. The "enemy" is destroyed in body, mind and spirit, in a metaphorical as well as a literal sense.

What happened to Jyoti Singh on that dark night of December 16, 2012, in Delhi was one of the most brutal examples of a violence that is perpetrated against women of all ages daily and in every part of the world. In the United States, for example, a rape occurs every 6.2 minutes.¹ In South Africa, one in four men admits to having

February 14 is Valentine's Day. In the Hindi film "Baghban", made a few years ago and starring veteran Bollywood actors Amitabh Bachhan and Hema Malini, there is a scene in which Bachhan, playing a retired banker separated from his beloved wife by their ungrateful sons, leads a roomful of young people through a most enchanting song and dance sequence in celebration of Valentine's Day. In real life India, every year on this day, scores of self-appointed guardians of an imagined Indian culture wage a battle against this "Western import" by intimidating, molesting, assaulting and abusing young people who celebrate the day by publicly expressing or showing their love for each other or having a good party. Properties of establishments that host these events are damaged and destroyed, and various indignities are inflicted upon celebrants in the name of preserving the purity of culture.

committed rape. And so, on February 14, 2013, as romantic love was celebrated to commemorate Valentine's Day, there was yet another observance. It is known as "One Billion Rising". One billion women around the globe rose on the same day to demand an end to violence against women. In support of this movement of a billion women, artists danced, sang, and gave testimony about gender-based crime.

One of these artists was Anoushka Shankar, daughter of the late sitar maestro, Ravi Shankar, and herself a musician of note. In a video prepared for the occasion, she admitted to having been sexually abused as a child. She said, "As a child, I suffered sexual and emotional abuse for several years at the hands of a man my parents trusted implicitly. . . . Growing up, like many women I know, I suffered various forms of groping, touching, verbal abuse and other things I didn't know how to deal with." Anoushka added that she was taking part in the One Billion Rising, a movement started by American playwright Eve Ensler, "for the child in me who I don't think will ever recover from what happened."² As someone who grew up in Delhi, London and California, Anoushka speaks to the global scope of sexual crimes against women.

Sadly, India has an unenviable record of sexual violence against women that is surpassed only by the United States and South Africa. India ranks third in the world in terms of rape and Delhi has been dubbed the "rape capital of India".

Rape and other forms of sexual violence against women, whether a child or adult, a stranger or the perpetrator's spouse, in a public or a domestic space, is not a new phenomenon in India, as Anoushka Shankar's testimony reminds us. However, according to Shankar Sen, a distinguished retired senior police official who served as the Director General of the National Police Academy as well as of the National Human Rights Commission, "It is a fact that there has been an exponential increase of crimes against women not

only in Delhi but all over the country." In a recent article, 'Responding to Rape,' Sen notes:

During the year 2011, 228,650 incidents of crime against women were reported as against 213,585 during the year 2010, registering an increase of 7.1 percent during the year 2011. There was also a sharp rise in the incidence of rape all over the country. There were 24,206 cases in 2011 as against 22,172 in 2010 and 21,397 in 2009. Delhi has earned the dubious distinction of being the country's rape capital. In 2012, 635 cases were reported against 572 in 2011 and 507 in 2010.³

Reports from across the country paint a deeply disturbing picture. Horrible and tragic as the crime in Delhi was, it was not an isolated incident. Others, reported in the Indian media in the recent past, include the rape of a minor girl, 13 years old, in Odisha; rape by an elderly man of his younger brother's wife; the rape and murder of a girl studying in grade XII in Haryana; the rape of a 3-year-old girl by her father in Jammu, leaving her in serious condition; and the gang rape by eight men of a 22-year-old woman in Maharashtra. These are but a handful of cases selected from a very long list of occurrences from across the country reported to the police.

In fact, as the following table shows, incidents of rape in Delhi have doubled since the brutal gang rape of December 16, 2012. With one exception, there has been a significant increase in every category of violence against women.⁴

NO CITY FOR WOMEN					
CRIME	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013 <small>Up to Oct 15</small>
RAPE	469	507	572	706	1,330
MOLESTATION	552	601	657	727	2,844
EVE-TEASING	238	126	165	236	793
KIDNAPPING/ABDUCTION	1,655	1,740	2,085	2,210	2,906
CRUELTY BY HUSBAND AND IN-LAWS	1,297	1,410	1,585	2,046	2,487
DOWRY DEATH	141	143	142	134	123
DOWRY PROHIBITION ACT	6	15	7	15	14

Source: Delhi Government.

This is by no means to single out India. As I have said earlier, as far as rape is concerned, its incidence is even higher in the US and South Africa. It is a global problem. Statistics from Canada are sobering, lest anyone draw the conclusion that Canada does not have a problem.

As Kirk Makin noted in a recent article, sexual violence, including rape, "happens to women in Canada every 17 minutes." Makin goes on to say:

Some of those women place calls to services such as the Vancouver Rape Relief and Women's Shelter – about 1,400 of them last year alone.

"These are not just women who live in poverty or need," says Summer-Rain Bentham, one of the counselors who answer their calls. "These are women who are teachers, doctor (sic) or lawyers; women whose husbands may be police officers or judges."

But if these women are hoping for more than support – if they are hoping for justice – the phones might as well keep ringing.

Less than half of complaints made to police result in criminal charges and, of those charges, only about one in four leads to a guilty verdict.

Women know this. Which explains why, according to the best estimates, roughly 90 per cent of sexual assaults, even those referred to crisis lines, are never brought to the attention of the authorities.⁵

Makin provides some important statistics:

- 17 minutes: How often a woman in Canada has intercourse against her will
- 80: Percentage of sexual assaults that happen in victims' own homes
- 62: Percentage of victims physically injured in attacks
- 98: Percentage of charges laid for the least severe form of assault
- 2: The number of years sexual assault offenders are sentenced to jail on average

There is considerable scholarly and journalistic work on what makes men of all classes, races,

cultures, religions and educational backgrounds commit these dastardly acts. The reasons range from a lack of moral compass to issues of patriarchy, masculinity, misogyny, power, social inequality, inadequacy, insecurity, ethnocentrism, genocide and more. It may or may not be possible to eradicate these root causes. I do, however, believe very strongly that societies have an obligation to ensure that these acts are carefully monitored, recorded, investigated and prosecuted. While education, awareness and prevention are, no doubt, very important, effective investigation and prosecution are, in my view, critical requirements.

Those who are the targets of these vicious crimes must have confidence that law enforcement agencies will take their accounts seriously, treat them with respect and care, and conduct thorough, prompt, bias-free and professionally competent investigations to gather the best evidence needed for successful prosecution. They must believe that the courts will guard against subjective value judgments, base their decisions strictly on evidence and law, and ensure the dignity of those seeking justice.

It must disturb all of us when a senior police officer like Shankar Sen says that crime figures or police statistics about gender-based crimes, including rape, are "misleading" and "constitute only a tip of the iceberg." According to him, "A large number of crimes against women are not reported and, if reported, not registered. On a very conservative estimate, at least 30 per cent of the cases are not registered. Because of the attached stigma or shame, rape remains one of the most misunderstood and unregistered crimes and this is not a uniquely Indian phenomenon. The National Crime Victim Survey in Australia found that only 32 per cent of rape victims had reported the assault."⁶

I do not agree with Sen that stigma or shame is the only reason why the crime of rape is under-reported. Poor, harsh, biased or dismissive response by law enforcement agencies also cannot be discounted; indeed, this type of response contributes to the sense of shame and stigma that Sen refers to. However, he is quite right that this under-reporting does not happen in India only. It is generally conceded that this very much is a reality here in Canada also. In

Toronto, for example, under-reporting of the crime of rape is acknowledged to be an issue. And as Makin claims in the article quoted above, when all types of sexual assaults are counted, the rate of unreported incidents in Canada rises to an astounding 90%.

The onus rests on lawmakers, governments and all those responsible for law enforcement, including police organizations, prosecutors and the judiciary, to take appropriate and necessary corrective action. We in Toronto have made a serious effort to learn from past mistakes in the reporting and investigation of rape, enhancing our policies and procedures, significantly strengthening and expanding training in investigation of sex crimes and treatment of victims, and dedicating specialized expertise to this category of crime. We have done these with the advice and help of experts from the community, including "Jane Doe," a woman whose rape by a predator gained national attention and whose legal action against the Toronto Police established significant case law. "Jane Doe" is now one of Canada's leading experts on the handling of sexual assault on women. In spite of these efforts, it is accepted that even in Toronto, we probably see only the tip of the iceberg, to use Sen's description.

But the reason for such massive under-reporting is not only the shame or stigma socially attached to rape. As commentators and community advocates have argued, many women do not report because of their unwillingness to put themselves through a potentially humiliating investigation, their lack of trust that investigators will possess the necessary sensitivity and empathy, and their memory or fear of a tough, grueling and uncaring judicial process. Underlying all of these concerns is a deep sense that the investigative and judicial processes do not understand that rape is an exercise of a misogynous patriarchal power as they are themselves fundamentally patriarchal systems.

Evidence suggests that this is a factor that must be considered with respect to the situation not just in India but also in countries like Canada. There have been numerous deeply disturbing reports of deficiencies in the attitude to and handling of rape cases by the police and the

judiciary, reflecting a patriarchal culture.

There is, first, an attitudinal problem, otherwise known as "blaming the victim." Critics like Meena Kandasamy accuse the police of legitimizing rape as a result of this attitude and give several examples of the ways in which it manifests itself.

The Delhi-NCR police have legitimized rapes in the region earlier too, speaking their mind to hidden cameras, saying "she asked for it" and "it is consensual most of the time". They blamed young women for not staying within their boundaries, for wearing short skirts, for not wearing stoles, for drinking vodka, for enticing men.⁷

These attitudes are not confined to the Delhi police solely, but exist much more widely; indeed, they can be found worldwide. Law enforcement personnel, regardless of what position they hold, are, after all, drawn from the society and carry with them the ideas, beliefs and values that circulate around them. I will cite two infamous examples.

Michael Sanguinetti is a young police constable in the north-west of Toronto. On January 24, 2011, he and a colleague were giving a presentation at a campus safety information session for the students of Osgoode Hall Law Faculty of York University. They were giving practical tips on how female students could stay safe on the sprawling campus. The presentation had gone well. As they were wrapping up, Constable Sanguinetti decided to offer a tip of his own on how to avoid sexual assault. "I have been told that I shouldn't say this," the constable acknowledged, and then proceeded to offer a personal tip, which was not part of the officially approved presentation. He said: "Don't dress like a slut."⁸

The audience was stunned and dumbfounded, not knowing how to react. An associate dean of the law faculty, who was present at the session, wrote to the police brass, notifying them about the incident. Eventually, students informed the campus student newspaper, *Excalibur*, and a firestorm of controversy broke out. An annual international consciousness-raising event, "The Sluts Day," developed from the episode. Constable Sanguinetti apologized and admitted that he was

embarrassed. He was disciplined by the police service for misconduct. All the same, damage was done to public trust. The police officer's remarks reinforced the public perception that police organizations were still blaming the victim.

For many, this spontaneous and unsanctioned advice was a telling example of how deeply-embedded misogynous ideas are in the minds of even those who have been trained and educated to deal with the consequences of such ideas. It is in such unguarded moments that one gets a glimpse of those societal beliefs, assumptions and values that make effective action against sexual violence aimed at women so difficult. In turn, the perception that such beliefs, assumptions and values are present in the members of law enforcement organizations, negatively affects the willingness to report incidents.

A more recent example of this phenomenon is the throwaway comment by Ranjit Sinha, the Director General of India's Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), the agency that often plays a critical role in the investigation of incidents of rape, like the gang rape of Jyoti Singh. During a panel discussion on illegal sports betting in Delhi on November 12 of this year, Director General Sinha reportedly expressed the view that if the government could not prevent illegal betting through enforcement, it may as well get some revenue by legalizing it. "If you can't prevent rape, you enjoy it," he is reported to have said by way of analogy.⁹

Like Toronto Constable Sanguinetti, and in very similar language, the CBI chief has issued an apology. He has professed to be embarrassed and assured the public that he has a "deep sense of regard and respect for women" and "commitment for gender issues."¹⁰ His assurances may well be true; certainly his employer, the Government of India, appears to think so, since there is no evidence that any kind of disciplinary action has been taken against Sinha. However, it is the impact of the expression of such views and beliefs on public faith in the agencies that exist to keep communities safe and prevent victimization that should be of concern.

These types of comments are typically made in unguarded moments and, thus, bring out assumptions, beliefs and values that lie deep

in the speakers' consciousness. When revealed, they provide a glimpse into the enduring nature of patriarchal and misogynistic ideas in our societies. While these may not always be apparent on the surface, it is feared that attitudes such as the ones expressed in the above comments have an effect on how sexual crimes – and in particular, rape – against women are treated.

As Shankar Sen says, even when a crime of rape is reported, it is not always registered. Consequently, no proper investigation takes place. There are too many instances in which a case was registered only after sustained and strong pressure, often led by women or members of minority communities. In the Delhi case of Jyoti Singh itself, though the government, the police and the judiciary have moved with exceptional alacrity, the fact remains that their actions came only after tremendous public demand that threatened to immobilize Delhi.

This does not happen in every instance, of course. However, it is not only in India that action has come only after public or judicial pressure. There are a number of celebrated cases from Canada that point to the same problem.

The first is the ongoing controversy related to the disappearance of almost 685 Aboriginal and First Nations women. As a report submitted in June 2013 to the United Nations Committee for Elimination of Discrimination Against Women points out, despite persistent community advocacy, effective investigation of these murders and disappearances, many involving sexual violence, remains elusive.¹¹ It is now the subject of annual national protests and demonstrations.

Then there is the shameful case of Robert Pickton, the serial rapist and killer from Vancouver, British Columbia, who raped, murdered and buried in his backyard at least nine sex workers from downtown Eastside Vancouver. Despite numerous demands and pleas by the families and friends of these young victims, Vancouver Police and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police failed to take the matter seriously and conduct a proper investigation. What were some common characteristics that these young women shared? They were poor, several of them Aboriginal and all of them sex workers with drug addictions.

The botched investigation became the subject of a high profile inquiry by a former Attorney General and BC Appeals Court Judge, Wally Oppal. In his report, Mr. Oppal concluded that "had the victims not been poor, drug-addicted sex workers, the police would have done more to investigate what happened to them."¹²

It is a classic example of how unspoken ideas, assumptions and beliefs affect the response of law enforcement agencies to sexual crimes against women. When those who harbor these also have power over people's lives, their actions or inactions can have disastrous consequences for women and others without power. The reaction to Constable Sanguinetti and Director General Sinha is, therefore, not a protest merely against thoughtless individuals making politically incorrect statements; it is an expression of the concern that they occupy positions of power in institutions that women look to for safety. The reluctance to report can be caused by the chilling effect that utterances such as those that came from these two individuals can have on trust and confidence.

The second factor that negatively affects reporting and investigation of these crimes is definitional. It must be understood and accepted that rape takes many forms. All too often, a very narrow definition is applied as to what constitutes rape, resulting in a refusal or failure to pursue the most serious instances of gender-based crime. To quote Kandasamy again:

Rapes are not just numbers (24,206 in 2011), but categories: first, there is the not-a-rape marital rape. Then, the easily dismissible she-asked-for-it rape to be applied to urban women. There is patriotic rape: singular nights of horror courtesy the Indian army as in Kunan-Pushpora and Shopian in Kashmir; its second cousin, the long-lasting disciplinary rape to teach a lesson to a population seeking self-determination such as by the IPKF in Eelam, or the AFSPA-empowered army in Manipur; the minority rape as in the rape of Muslim women in Gujarat; custodial rape as in what happened to Chidambaram Padmini and, above all, the commonplace, everyday caste-Hindu rape

of Dalit women, as in the rape of Surekha Bhotmange and her daughter in Khairlanji, and a thousand other instances.¹³

Kandasamy makes an important point. Rape occurs in the privacy of the home, in the context of a conflict pitting community against community, and in the course of military or paramilitary action to deal with an insurrection or a civil war. Whatever the context, it must be unambiguously accepted that gender-based crime in any form will not be tolerated by society and its perpetrators, no matter who they are, will receive the most severe penalty.

Yet, there are numerous instances where the protector became the perpetrator, either directly or by condoning the crime. One thinks of Bhanwari Devi of Rajasthan, Soni Sori of Dantewada, and the women of Khairlanji, Chattisgarh and Manipur.¹⁴ The vast majority of these come from Dalit and Adivasi backgrounds, continue to await justice and have often experienced retribution for their troubles. How can there be trust in an organization whose members are not held to a higher standard, allowed to go without any consequence for their actions, given protection, treated differently and even rewarded? For that is what happened to the senior police officer who ordered the torture of Soni Sori, the Adivasi school teacher from Dantewada. While she was stripped naked, given electric shocks, had stones shoved in her vagina and rectum, and rots in jail accused of being a Maoist, Superintendent of Police Ankit Garg, who was responsible for this inhumanity and brutality, received a gallantry medal from the government.¹⁵

The situation is further exacerbated when law and the judicial process are also found to be inadequate. This is the third consideration I want to draw attention to.

Take the case of Rajasthan's Bhanwari Devi, a Dalit woman who was determined to bring literacy to the women of her village. Gang raped by the influential men of the village who wanted to put this uppity woman in her place, she persisted with the support of her husband, and the men were brought to trial. The Government of India bestowed national honor on her. Yet, despite all evidence, the trial judge acquitted the rapists

on the completely subjective and manifestly specious ground that as men of a higher caste, they could not have touched an untouchable woman! Analyses of judicial decisions like these have shown many similar instances where a judge's personal values – especially pertaining to factors like gender, caste and class – have improperly colored the judicial decision.¹⁶

If the Indian justice system failed Bhanwari Devi, its Canadian counterpart let down Helen Betty Osborne, a 19-year-old Cree woman from Norway House Indian Reserve, going to high school in The Pas, Manitoba. Betty Osborne was abducted, raped, brutally beaten and killed by four young white men in the early hours of November 13, 1971, because she refused their demand to get in their car and "party" with them. It took 16 years to complete the investigation and bring Osborne's killers to trial in December 1987. At the end, the trial by jury culminated in life sentence for only one of the four, Dwayne Johnston – with eligibility for parole after serving 10 years. Another, Norman Manger, was never charged while a third, James Houghton, was acquitted. The fourth, Lee Colgan, received immunity in exchange for testifying for the prosecution.

As the account of the sad saga by the Aboriginal Justice Implementation Commission notes,

Many Manitobans asked why it took 16 years to bring people to trial for this brutal murder. It was suggested that many people in the town of The Pas learned the identity of those responsible, some within a very short time after the murder, but chose to do nothing about it. It was suggested that because Osborne was an Aboriginal person, the townspeople considered the murder unimportant. Allegations of racism, neglect and indifference, on the part of the citizens of the town, the police and of the Attorney General's department, were made.

The trial and its outcome focussed public attention on the Osborne case and led to widespread calls for a public inquiry.¹⁷

As the comment suggests, the handling of the rape and murder of Betty Osborne by the criminal justice system was, in many ways, a reflection of the assumptions, beliefs and values of the society. A similar observation can be made about the judicial treatment of Bhanwari Devi. The institutions of the criminal justice system are often a reflection of the societies to which they belong. It is not an accident that the worst victims of these systems have been women who are Dalits, Adivasis, Aboriginal and poor. These are the women who are most frequently the targets of societal stereotypes, biases and prejudices, and deemed to be the architects of their misery. As a result, a crime that spares no woman becomes even more vicious when targeted towards women like Bhanwari Devi and Betty Osborne.

Sexual crimes against women are thus a global reality. Good, effective and bias-free policing and judicial support are vital if this challenge is to be met successfully so that all women can live, grow and carry on with their pursuits in a climate of safety, security and freedom.

This is as true of India as it is of Canada, and every other country. Here in Toronto, we have made some progress, as I have said before. The one thing our police services board, as the governing authority of the police service, has done is to make it very clear that those who work for us are expected to meet a higher standard and will be held accountable, no matter what their rank. Thus, a very senior member of the Toronto police service was prosecuted for sexual misconduct against a subordinate. Our board also takes a very serious view of anyone who is accused of engaging in domestic violence on the basis that he or she must show the same care and consideration at home that they are expected to show outside the home. I would like to think that these are good measures that should contribute to enhancing public trust in the police.

That trust is essential for encouraging people to come forward with the confidence that they will be heard, treated with respect and provided with the level and quality of service that their situation requires.

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How To Stop Domestic Violence

By Jean Augustine

Fairness Commissioner of Ontario,
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keeping family matters behind closed doors runs superior to bringing the perpetrators of violence to accountability. In many cases, the victim sympathizes or makes excuses for their violent partner. This needs to stop.

Given Toronto's cultural diversity, a greater emphasis on outreach is needed to discuss openly domestic violence issues and the remedies and support that are available in a multilingual platform. Religious leaders of all faiths need to counsel their respective adherents about zero tolerance for violence in its many forms – physical and mental abuse. Religious leaders must be educated around the issue. Religious leaders themselves must understand that abuse is not limited to the physical, as mental and verbal abuse can be just as harmful.

The tragic issue of domestic violence has been a scourge on human history from time immemorial. No country, no culture is immune from this human disease that has afflicted so many, primarily women and girls, throughout the centuries.

There has been research on the root causes of domestic violence and modern societies have tried to abate the problem through education, public awareness campaigns, law enforcement and legal remedies; yet the problem persists.

Despite our modern tools to combat this plague on women and families, it seems that within the confines of a home, many women are isolated. Progress has been made in identifying the root causes of domestic violence, from psychological and physiological diagnoses, alcohol and drug usage, economics, religious sanction, cultural acceptability and so on.

Regardless of the causes that may lead someone to abusing a spouse, partner, child, parent or friend, enough is enough and a proactive approach is needed to eradicate this social disease from our midst.

The most effective tool is empowerment. Women need to support each other and speak up. The greatest tragedy of domestic abuse is that many women, for various reasons, suffer in silence instead of reporting the abuse to the police, a religious leader, a doctor or social service agency.

In some cultures, the cohesion of family or

Many women continue to suffer out of an obligation to their children or for financial security or for fear of being stigmatized in their respective ethnic communities. This is the wrong approach as it does little to mitigate the actions of the aggressor or the negative impact on their children. Victims need to reach out and speak to someone before the violence escalates and turns fatal.

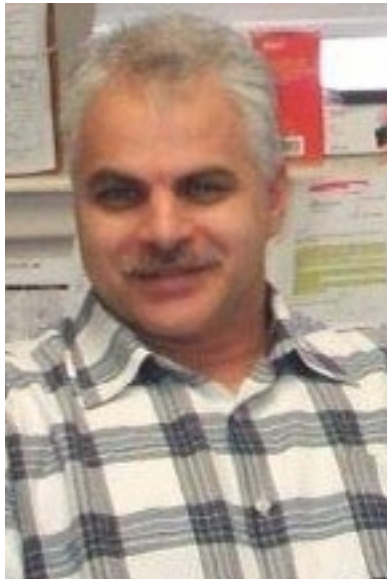
As a former Parliamentarian and educator, I have had the pleasure of meeting people from many diverse cultures. As humans, we all share a common wish for a better future for our children and to live in a healthy and safe environment.

Domestic violence needs to be addressed through forums supported by government programs; public service announcements; enhanced journalistic coverage; social media; public meetings and with discussions in our schools and places of worship.

According to a newly released study (February 2013) by Statistics Canada, 173,000 women in Canada have been victims of domestic violence with many victims being disproportionately younger and Aboriginal. These numbers are alarming yet do not reflect every case of domestic violence, as many go unreported or ignored.

Domestic violence is evil. The perpetrators or persons doing the violence need long-term help but they have to be held accountable to the fullest extent of our judicial system.

The time to act is now. Silence is not an option.



Toronto Police Service Focus On Domestic Violence

The Toronto Police Domestic Violence Advisory Committee is presently represented by thirty external agencies and twenty internal members. This committee, through cooperative and collaborative engagement, continues to develop appropriate initiatives to assist those affected by domestic violence.

The Toronto Police Service has been involved with the community to educate youth about healthy relationships through numerous outreach programs.

One of these programs is an eight year partnership with domestic violence shelters involved with the Toronto Recreational Out tripping Outreach Program (TROOP). This experience allows for children currently residing in domestic violence shelters to enjoy the outdoors with police, community members and youth who find themselves in similar life circumstances as a result of domestic violence. This program is made available free of cost to children who qualify.

The Toronto Police Service cooperatively works with many external agencies to assist those affected by crime.

One such agency, Victim Services Toronto (VST), offers numerous programs and services to assist victims.

Programs offered by VST include but are not limited to:

Abusive Relationships (T.E.A.R.)

Project T.E.A.R. is an education and prevention outreach program directed to youth 12-18 years of age who are currently enrolled in middle and high schools throughout the Toronto area. The project's free 60-90 minute presentation uses media clips and music videos to illustrate the devastating effects and unique dynamics of domestic violence. By highlighting the warning signs of abuse and healthy relationships, youth gain the necessary tools to make informed and positive choices and also learn how to avoid or end abusive relationships. During each presentation, a safe environment is created for youth to recognize

they are not alone, reach out for help and disclose abuse. Project T.E.A.R.'s goal is to empower youth to end the cycle of violence, and also take initiatives in their own communities to educate the public and their peers.

Victim Crisis Response Program

Victim Crisis Response Program assists people in crisis, 24 hours a day, seven days a week in the immediate aftermath of crime or tragedy. VST provides on-site or over the phone crisis intervention. While each person's reaction to trauma is highly individual, people who have been victims of a crime or tragedy often share a sense of having lost control over their lives. In the initial stages of any crisis, most people want to speak to someone who will understand their immediate need for information pertaining to personal safety and options available to them. VST intervention ensures the victim is safe, emotionally stabilized and connected to the appropriate support services. Referrals to community agencies that offer on-going support are also provided.

Victim Services is unique in that they are the only agency in Toronto that provides: immediate on-site crisis, trauma, safety and support services to victims of crime and sudden tragedies. The immediacy of this service allows VST to aid in mitigating the harmful effects of trauma on the victim and their loved ones.

High Risk Support Services

High Risk Support Services promotes the safety of individuals and their families who are at a high risk of experiencing violence by an intimate ex-partner. VST staff work with the client(s) to create a comprehensive safety plan. Additionally, clients who meet the eligibility criteria will be provided with a personal home alarm or emergency 911-linked cell phone.

The project is a partnership between Victim Services Toronto, the Toronto Police Service, Ontario ministry of the Attorney General, ADT Security Services Canada Inc., and Rogers Ericsson.

Victim Quick Response Program

The Victim Quick Response Program (VQRP) understands that it is essential for victims of violent crime to receive effective and compassionate support in the immediate aftermath of a crime.

The Program provides short-term Intensive

Case Management Services to victims of major crimes and their families. The Program responds to the urgent needs of victims by offering emotional support, practical assistance, and advocacy, assistance in managing bureaucracies and immediate financial assistance for funerals, counseling and emergency expenses.

Limited financial assistance is available to victims of violent crimes who require immediate assistance that cannot be obtained through other sources. The VQRP team will meet with victims, assist with the application process and ensure that they have the proper community supports they may require. The program is designed to fill the gap between the time a crime occurs and when the victim receives longer-term support services.

Scarborough Family Justice Initiative

The Scarborough Family Justice Initiative (SFJI), assists victims of domestic violence and is based out of 41 Division located at 2222 Eglinton Av. E., Toronto.

This two year initiative funded by Justice Canada has brought Victim Services Toronto, TPS, and twenty external agencies together to work collaboratively to assist victims of domestic violence.

This initiative enables police to focus on core policing responsibilities when investigating domestic violence and allows for a victim services advocate to engage victims on support and needs assessment.

The advocate then coordinates the appropriate resources with external community agencies to assist victims and their families as required.

This holistic approach to assisting victims of domestic violence and their families has proven extremely successful and discussions for expansion of this initiative are ongoing.

It is recognized by the Toronto Police Service that the social issue of domestic violence cannot be addressed successfully through enforcement measures alone.

Continued collaboration between law enforcement, Violence against Women service providers, education officials and corporate support is critical to the success of domestic violence prevention and awareness initiatives.

Through continued research, education, community engagement and progressive partnerships, dynamic risk can be reduced for those affected by domestic violence.

Police Chief William Blair believes that the Toronto Police Service must continue to work closely with their community partners to ensure that victims of domestic violence and their children get the help and support they need to leave abusive relationships and rebuild their lives.

The Toronto Police Service recognizes that domestic violence is a serious social problem that is not limited or restricted by marital status, sexual orientation, occupation, vulnerability, age or gender.

The Service views domestic violence as a preventable crime.

Community Engagement

Focusing on violence against women is a Service priority. The goals in relation to domestic violence of improving the support, follow-up information, referrals to victims, as well as to increase reporting by victims, remain fundamental in developing a victim based support strategy.

The Service's procedure that governs the response to Domestic Violence reflects legislative requirements and also the input of community based consultations.

The Service relationship with the community continues to be forged by corporate and locally led initiatives.



Woman: A Third Force, Stronger Than Sword & Pen

By Judy Sgro

Member of Canadian Parliament

"No nation can ever be worthy of its existence that cannot take its women along with the men. No struggle can ever succeed without women participating side by side with men. There are two powers in the world: one is the sword and the other is the pen. There is a great competition and rivalry between the two. There is a third power, stronger than both: that of the women."

Mohammad Ali Jinnah

founder and first President of Pakistan

On April 17, 1982, Liberal Prime Minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau signed the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms into law, and, in so doing, caused Section 15 to take effect. That Section assured Mr. Trudeau's quest for a "just society", for a world in which "every individual is equal before and under the law and has the right to the equal protection and equal benefit of the law without discrimination..." While the Charter signing

ceremony took place under the capital's cloudy skies, its impact was to provide a ray of sunshine for women and girls struggling against the odds. For the first time in our history, the constitution formally recognized that men and women were to be viewed as equals in every way under the Canadian law. But there was still much yet to be done along the road to equality.

Today, three decades after Mr. Trudeau's historic move, Canadian women and girls continue with their efforts to attain full gender parity. For most people there is a clear understanding that inclusion promises tangible benefits, both socially and economically, for the nation as a whole.

Canada's economy can be strengthened immensely by employing more women and by ensuring their entrance into vocational fields traditionally occupied by men. For example, in November 2012, the Canadian Chamber of Commerce published a report on skills shortages in Canada. Their report verified that the skills shortage is a critical economic issue affecting Canadian productivity and, ultimately, competitiveness in a global market. Despite this obvious opportunity, the number of women attending programs in the fields of Science, Technology and Trades has only slowly increased during the past 20 years. As evidence of the potential within this field, the Association of Community Colleges (ACCC) has reported that the construction sector will need approximately 260,000 new workers over the next decade alone. Construction is not the only industry that will suffer without skilled workers, and the advanced skills shortages, if properly targeted, could yield tremendous advantages to those willing to enlist and proceed with these careers.

Unfortunately, after having children, many women are reluctant or financially unable to return to a full-time career. Public policy options directed at measures such as funded childcare programming would go a long way towards providing women with a chance to avail themselves of these openings, while simultaneously balancing their careers with new family demands.

Additionally, affordable housing remains a critical issue for many women across Canada. This applies not only to women escaping workplace harassment and domestic or spousal violence, but also to women contending with non-traditional family circumstances. Studies have repeatedly demonstrated that women continue to shoulder a disproportionate level of responsibility within the home, especially where children are involved, so any measure directed there promises to yield concrete benefits to all women. While it is true that women may face domestic challenges and adverse social circumstances for a range of reasons, attitudes and market-based realities continue to block access to gainful, full-time employment. The solution to these ills must begin at the foundation; that being the ability for all to secure and exist within urban areas. The planning and funding needed for these initiatives are considerably harder to attain in rural and remote areas of Canada. A planning and funding strategy for all regions, including smaller areas with lower populations, should be revised in the context of a national affordable housing strategy.

From a different perspective, yet still in keeping with the theme of economic challenges, the whole of our national support structures for women and girls must be reviewed and reinvented as women

continue to expand beyond traditional gender roles. For example, women in the military not only maintain their traditional role of caregiver but are concurrently saddled with peripheral demands. Finding adequate and reliable healthcare options in each new location in which they are posted and functioning without pre-existing support structures top the list of challenges. Although there are Military Family Resource Centers located across Canada, these centers are not-for-profit organizations and rely on intermittent or sporadic community funding, which inevitably affects the quality and variety of services offered. The service quality and capacity of organizations that rely on unstable funding tend to vacillate in accordance with larger economic trends that often run directly counter to needs. Ergo, funding increases during robust economic times, yet, as the economic climate and funding sources deteriorate, need increases within the community.

Aside from the economic implications of gender parity, women continue to face significant social barriers. Women's health and safety concerns cover a spectrum of issues, including maternal health and family planning, childcare and household management (including budgeting and healthcare, not only for themselves but for their children). As previously mentioned, studies have repeatedly demonstrated that women continue to bear a disproportionate level of responsibility for caregiving within the home, especially where children are involved. Moreover, as the population ages, women will also be increasingly called on to care for a parent or elderly loved one.

Additionally, objectification, discrimination, and violence in every domain of life remain top-of-

list when it comes to the ongoing quest for real equality. The prevention of all forms of violence against women and girls starts with education and empowerment, and must become a priority for all levels of government. It has been estimated that nearly 7% of all people currently in a relationship, and who are over the age of 15, experienced spousal violence in the five years prior to 2004. Of that number, 83% are women. This represents nearly 1.2 million Canadians who have faced the terror of abuse and violence in the one place we should all feel safe – at home. Worse still, domestic violence is most predominant within Aboriginal communities. Aboriginal people are three times more likely than those who are non-Aboriginal to be victims of spousal violence.

21% of Aboriginal people said that they had suffered violence at the hands of a current or previous partner in the five-year period ending in 2004. Overall, domestic violence is a scourge that accounts for 12% of all police-reported violent crime in Canada. This makes victims of victims and governments at all levels must work to end domestic violence forever.

Human trafficking continues to be a problem, both globally and domestically. Statistics in this area are not reliable, as victims of trafficking are reluctant to seek help for fear they will be prosecuted or recaptured. But all reputable sources indicate a growing crisis. Within Canada, trafficked women are largely lured from small towns or native reserves with the promise of a better life via employment or education. These women often find themselves thrust into a hidden world dominated by illegal drugs, indentured servitude, and sexual slavery, all of which are difficult to escape. Laws and attitudes must be changed so that victims of human trafficking can feel confident in reaching out to police authorities for help without the fear of reprisal or judgment based upon social stigmas.

In this context, and in the shadow of the "Highway of Tears" discussion, the challenge facing Aboriginal women (particularly those living on reserves) is that they are not only caught in a cycle of poverty and violence, but also in a society where men generally are the ultimate decision makers. Unfortunately, with this imbalance of power, Aboriginal women and youth are left with low self-esteem and the inability to make confident decisions. Efforts must be made to empower these women. All women need to know there are public supports in place for them that will not only aid their situation, but will do so with sensitivity to their unique and important cultural realities.

For thirty-two years, Canadians have come together with citizens from around the world to mark November 25th as a day for ending violations of women's most fundamental rights. Similarly, 2013 marks the 31st anniversary of the entrenchment of gender equality rights in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedom. Despite these important milestones, women and girls' human rights are still too often ignored. As a result, thousands suffer physical, sexual, or mental violence, both in their public and private lives.

Like most Canadians, I find this situation abhorrent and I would like to take this opportunity to reaffirm our steadfast commitment to the universal safety, health, and equality of all women and girls. So, today, I call for specific measures to address these abuses, including an affordable housing strategy, action to tackle human trafficking, and a strong violence prevention strategy.





Reducing Abuse... Moving Healthcare Professionals To Action!

By Mohit Bhandari,
Professor & Academic Head
Canada Research Chair
Division of Orthopedic Surgery
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Injuries are the leading cause of death for females aged 1 to 34. 43,000 women die from injuries and approximately 1 million women are hospitalized for injuries annually. It is important that we search for ways to prevent these deaths and hospitalizations. Additionally, injuries may provide a window into something much more serious than a simple accident.

Ten years ago, much research had been completed on intimate partner violence; however, there was very little, if any, in the field of orthopedic surgery. IPV is now known to be the most common cause of nonfatal injury to women worldwide. According to the American Medical Association, IPV can be defined as a pattern of coercive behaviors that may include repeated physical abuse and injury, psychological abuse, sexual assault, progressive social isolation, deprivation, and intimidation. Four in ten women experience some form of abuse in their lifetime.

Physical assault and rape are common. 35% of women experience abuse from their intimate partner such as a spouse or boyfriend. The World Health Organization has estimated that the cost of IPV in Canada alone is \$5 billion annually. IPV can also affect the children of women who experience abuse. It is essential to note that child protection services are only involved in 50% of all cases of IPV. The United Nations states that 1 in 3 women on the planet will be beaten or raped in their lifetime; therefore, over 1 billion women will experience some type of gender based violence.

Our research group's interest in IPV began nearly a decade ago with a study of injuries in women at a women's shelter. We discovered, much to our surprise, that injuries to the bones, joints, and surrounding tissues were the second most common injury caused by IPV. These include fractures, dislocations, and sprains which are serious injuries treated by an orthopedic surgeon. We believed orthopedic surgeons had a real opportunity to play an important role in helping women who have experienced IPV.

Although the medical environment provides a major opportunity to address concerns related to IPV and abuse, too often, issues surrounding IPV are not addressed to the extent that they should be. Typically, the first interaction with injured women comes in the hospital emergency department. Unfortunately, for a variety of reasons, women who have experienced IPV are infrequently identified in an emergency room setting. Many of these women who sustain physical injuries, like broken bones, are referred onwards to specialist orthopedic surgeons. Therefore, identifying victims of abuse in orthopedic clinics provides a critical second chance at assisting these women.

Our current research has catalyzed action within the orthopedic community. The Canadian Orthopedic Association has published a position statement that encourages its members to

educate themselves about IPV and considers it good medical practice to take steps in assisting and identifying women who we can help with IPV-related issues. One must look at the current atmosphere in orthopedics to assess the feasibility of these initiatives. Our group surveyed orthopedic surgeons in Canada and the US to determine their attitudes toward IPV. The mindset of this population often proves to be a barrier to improvements in IPV. The majority of surgeons suspected that less than 1% of injured women were victims of IPV, a number that in no way represents the true prevalence of this group. Furthermore, 1 in 5 surgeons held misperceptions that the victim usually did something that initiated violence against them and 1 in 6 surgeons believed the victim chose to be a victim. However, many surgeons (almost 1/3) survey supported greater education and resources surround IPV.

Our research group believed that IPV was grossly underestimated in orthopedic practice. Our response to demonstrate the prevalence of IPV in orthopedic injury clinics was the large scale, multi-center research study; PRevalence of Abuse and Intimate Partner Violence Surgical Evaluation (PRAISE).

We began with a small pilot PRAISE study which identified nearly 300 injured women at two trauma centers in Ontario: St. Michael's Hospital in Toronto and the Hamilton General Hospital. One in three of these women screened positive for IPV and about one in twelve said that they had been physically abused in the past 12 months. 2.5% of women indicated that the cause of their current visit was directly related to physical abuse. In other words, more women, than we thought previously, were coming into our fracture clinics with fractures and bad sprains because their partner physically abused them. None of these women were asked about IPV by their treating orthopedic surgeon. Typical orthopedic surgeons see about 100 patients on a clinic day. If half of them are female,

they should expect to treat one woman in every clinic who is there because of a serious injury related to IPV.

After the shocking discoveries during the pilot PRAISE study, we decided to complete a global study of IPV prevalence in 2,945 women around the world. This important study was recently published in the Lancet and confirmed our pilot study findings. IPV is indeed a global issue: 1 in every 2 people is from 1 of 2 nations--China or India. China is the most populous country on the globe with a population count of 1.3 billion, and followed closely by India with 1.2 billion people. We have an opportunity to widen our lens and focus on gender-based violence as a global issue. Actions have already been taken; organizations such as One Billion Rising India propelled nearly 200 countries to dance in the street to increase awareness about violence towards women. Though these initiatives may seem small, it is essential to note that such actions do push towards policy and societal change.

Physicians must be aware that IPV is no longer an issue that can be ignored. The initial actions that must be taken are reaching out to the patients. A common response that patients provide when asked about why they had not shared their plight earlier is that if they had seen something in the physician's office about IPV, they would have felt more comfortable mentioning it. Secondly, education is crucial to awareness and agency and therefore, surgeons should educate anyone who will listen about IPV.

Remember that domestic violence is the leading cause of injury to women between the ages of 15 and 44 in the United States – this number being more than the incidence of car accidents, mugging, and rapes combined. A woman is beaten every 15 seconds. On average, every six days, a woman in Canada is killed by her intimate partner. We must remember, always, she is our patient, and therefore IPV is our issue.



Let Each Home Stand Up



By Raminder & Ujjal Dosanjh

Raminder Dosanjh is a women's activist; Ujjal Dosanjh is also an activist; former Premier of British Columbia and former Federal Health Minister of Canada.

decades. The portrayal of women as sex objects in television, movies, literature and the Internet must stop. Education begins at home. Our homes and schools should be the nurseries of equality, including gender equality. We mustn't always expect only the government to show leadership in finding solutions. Let each home stand up and be counted. Vigilance against inculcating gender inequality through all our governmental and nongovernmental institutions must be at the core of our society, as should be the positive messages and actions of gender equality.

The political parties must embrace and involve more women in positions of responsibility and real power. It is not enough to simply preach gender equality, though that in itself is better than doing nothing. We must do more. The corporate world must own up to the fact that even in countries like Canada, the number of women in the upper echelons of that segment of our society is miniscule relative to the fact that 53% of our population is women. Leadership in politics at the federal level in particular is still very much a man's domain, as is the leadership in the world of big finance and big corporations.

More must be done in preventing violence before it happens. The machinery of law enforcement and justice comes in after the fact. That, too, can be further sensitized and strengthened, both in terms of policy and laws. In British Columbia, experience has shown that the police and crown, working together in the context of vigorous and rigorous enforcement of laws against abusive and assaultive spouses, does have a significant deterrent effect.

All of this has been said before and much more eloquently by many others. We want to touch upon

In the struggle against violence against women, not enough has changed. These days sound much like yesterday and the present is reminiscent of the past. The barbarity of attacks on wives, common law spouses, partners and just casual dates remains unchanged. Brutal rapes and gang rapes are either merely reported more often than before or happening more than before. It seems that way, no matter where you look in the world, be it east, west, north or south. Not that each part or region of the world is equally afflicted, but afflicted it is for certain. Technologies like the Internet have resulted in the proliferation of and easy access to inherently abusive and degrading child and adult pornography.

The crusaders against this violence have been saying the same things for the last several

something of which we, too, have been guilty. Those of us asked to comment upon violence against women in different minority communities from time to time often resort to a familiar refrain. The commentator almost invariably begins by reminding the intended audience that "Violence against women is not unique to this community. It happens in the other communities, too, including the mainstream." Yes. Duhh...But what exactly is the commentator's point? Has any responsible person or official ever denied that? If not, why do we continue to repeat that ad nauseam? The defensiveness implicit in the preamble dulls any ameliorative impact of the commentary. We understand the problem of some reporting that leaves the impression that whole communities out there are barbarians. But the answer to that is not the minimizing of the violence inherent in that oft repeated preface. It is our contention that to begin the commentary by saying it happens in all communities gives the audience a sense of the normality about such violence. The message to the one who needs to change may be "I am no worse than others, therefore there is no urgency to change." Is that the message we are trying to send? If not, we must stop this practice.

Such defensiveness in commentary may also hurt the credibility of the anti-violence commentator/crusader. The audience may believe the commentator is not addressing the issue head on or that he/she is not "leveling with me". That cannot be good for the commentator, the community or society at large.

It might be controversial to argue as we have. We believe it needed to be said. Political correctness will stop us from being blunt and honest with ourselves every time. We need to be honest with ourselves and others. Canada is not perfect, nor is any other country in the world. No community or society is perfect, either. If Canada were perfect, the violence against women would occur only at the hands of the immigrants born and raised in other lands. That is certainly not the case.

Canada is not free from violence against women. In the way we address it, we must advance the struggle against it. We must become a society with zero violence against women; not just a society with zero tolerance of such violence.





Living In Fear: Violence As A Societal Scourge

By **Satwinder Bains**

Director, Center for Indo-Canadian Studies, University of Fraser Valley

I was in India in December 2012 when the news broke about the gang rape of a young woman in Munirka, Delhi. Shocked and disheartened to the core of my being, I remember thinking and asking myself that if there were freedom from violence against women in the world, what might our society look like? It might be apropos to assume that women, children and men would greatly benefit from an emotional and physical connectivity and engagement free of fear, violations, considerable pain, separation and unimaginable costs. But this utopian view does nothing to hide the enormous impact that violence against women has had on our society in the past and continues to do so in the present. Every day in our communities all over the world, we hear incidences, statistics, stories and personal accounts about distressing violence against vulnerable women in our society perpetrated by

men who have lost the way on their own journey to be and become better human beings.

Within the word 'violence' is embedded in the reality of a violation. Violation of self and the other are both intrinsically linked in the act when violence occurs. Women come out of the act of violence with deep scars of pain, anger and rage leaving an indelible mark on the psyche that are extremely detrimental to her and our society at large.

It would be appropriate to state at the outset that South Asian women in Canada are just as vulnerable, neither more nor less, as any other woman in the world. However, there are certain circumstances that might exacerbate the probabilities of violence against them. As well, in Canada, it is difficult to talk of South Asian women as one monolithic group as the diversity of experiences precludes such a narrow view. What we can do is to understand the issues that make South Asian women vulnerable in the first place. The exploration of causes is long and winding as the gambit of concerns that one might be faced with are complex, institutionalized, systemic and long-standing.

To explore a few concerns requires a nuanced approach that might lead to a greater appreciation of the many difficulties that manifest themselves in the daily lives of so many women. As we can well imagine, many immigrant women, both young and old, face isolation like none they have ever experienced in their lives as they settle into a new country. For young women who marry and move to Canada to build a home with a spouse, this isolation is felt more keenly when the primary relationship does not yield the kind of support, empathy, love and care deserving of the sacred

institution of marriage. Whether the marriage is one of arrangement or not, it is a sorry state of affairs when the couple's problems stem not from an incompatibility of nature or person but from an aggression steeped in violence. The ensuing broken dreams, the incomplete desires, the pain and suffering endured, sometimes for a lifetime, can only produce heartache and despair. The isolation exacerbates the impossibilities faced by the young woman who not only has no one to seek redress from, but who also internalizes the pain and starts to harm herself in ways that the violence aggravates – by believing that she is deserving of it. This long-lasting effect can wreak havoc on her spirit, her body and her mind, leaving her more vulnerable than ever to the massive and insidious effects of the violence.

We are all aware of the traditional socio-cultural nature of South Asian societies, who, once they have migrated, become entrenched sometimes in old ideas and mentalities of "culture" and "ethos" that dictate all sorts of inequitable interactions between the genders on many different fronts. Fear of the encroachment of western thoughts and ideas keep communities paralyzed and fear of the unknown leads to the detriment of community progress, personal growth and normal curiosity. Patriarchal norms of power narrowly define both the private and public sphere, wielded with a precise and vice-like grip on women and girls who may not have the ability to exercise their own agency, let alone empower their children. Violence against women is seen as a means of control – intellectually and physically. In this age of information, the one gift of knowledge is kept under tight control so as to assuage the need for complete power to be in

the hands of men. This violence of the mind leaves whole families in a state of perpetual ignorance, much like Pluto's allegory of the cave where only the shadow becomes real and the beauty of reality itself is never experienced.

It is no longer important to just quote the facts or the statistics for us to understand the degrading and extremely harmful nature of sexual violence. Sexual violence has its roots in the imbalance of brute force that expresses itself in the most violent and violated physical manner – that of rape and murder. South Asian women and families have seen their share of tragic outcomes in this very behavior and in the aftermath, their children have become afraid of the very men in their lives who are wrongly portrayed to be guardians and confidants. This sad and heartbreaking betrayal cannot be explained in any manner of logic or faith either to our children or to our society. A most private and loving act becomes the most vile and reprehensible conduct known to man. It would appear that we have not moved even one millimeter in time or space from the dark ages to this age of enlightenment. We must ask ourselves - what has really changed?

A rights based approach taken by self-help and women's groups has been rightly taking the stand that no man has the right to hit a woman. No right whatsoever. Period. Full stop. What they have been saying is that the anger that triggers the violence needs to be addressed and explored in a constructive setting, and for it to be replaced with tools that can assist in a deeper understanding of the triggers and commands that keep men in the defunct spaces of emotional darkness. How do we get to this realization for young men to understand that recognizing their weaknesses

are indications of strength? That knowing your limitations and looking for ways to broaden that understanding is a sign of intellect, not weakness. That the society of men has to take responsibility for their gender biased view of the world and look for true and equitable sharing of both personal agency and personal desires. Parents have to ask themselves - how are we raising our boys? Does the traditional focus of female protection blind us to the fact that machismo has overshadowed our sense of female agency? Where are these urgent conversations taking place – in our homes, in our schools, in our communities? Sadly, nowhere is this happening in any significant manner, except after the fact – after a woman dies, after a woman is raped, after a woman leaves the supposed sanctuary of her home. It is too late, too little and too insignificant to make a difference for many. Is this the way we envision our legacy and our future as a human species?

So what should we do? We know intrinsically that we can do much, but we must have the will to shift our paradigms of thought, action and deed. Men must be willing to look at our collective world through a new pair of lenses – those of truly well-meaning equitable gender relationships and shared dreams, wants and needs. We do not want a one-sided, power-based world of male dominance – not just physically, but also in the social and cultural realms of our worlds. We must learn to deconstruct our biased and gendered socialization, think about why we think the way we do, why we act the way we do and why men believe that it is okay to violate those they should in all reality love the most. Anthropologist Franz Boas investigated cultural relativism through an understanding of how to escape the unconscious bonds of one's own limitations of culture with its

built in biases and how to make sense of a new world or ideas. I believe the time is before us where we need to move beyond the metaphysical knowing of our own space to one of an epistemological connectivity to truth, belief and justification. We are justified in wanting a world free of violence, it is our belief that such a world is possible and it is the universal truth of basic needs being met that will ultimately set us free from our own confines. Unless and only if we understand that violating another is indeed violating oneself, will we have turned the corner of our own frailties. There needs to be a commitment to a better society where fear as a visceral reaction is not delegated to those that live with us and amongst us. I reiterate – a society free of violence against women reaps rewards that are beneficial to all segments of our world, not just the individual.



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Intimate partner violence (IPV) is defined by the U.S. Center for Disease Control and Prevention as the threat or experience of physical, sexual, and/or emotional/psychological abuse/violence by a current or previous marital or non-marital intimate partner.¹ IPV is a human rights violation that crosses all social, economic, racial, ethnic, and cultural boundaries.² It creates major health, social, and economic costs to victims, their children and other family members, as well as to communities and societies. Considerable efforts have been made to address IPV through legal, policy, and health interventions; however, it continues to be pervasive in many countries around the world.

Intimate Partner Violence Among Immigrant Women In Canada

Although IPV can take place between same sex partners and also be perpetrated by women against men, this chapter focuses on male violence against women in heterosexual relationships with a particular focus on immigrants in Canada. The 2006 Census enumerated 3,222,795 immigrant women in Canada. They comprise 20.3% of the country's female population.³ This chapter summarizes some key points from the literature pertaining to IPV among immigrant women in Canada.

Prevalence

Estimating the 'true' prevalence of IPV is challenging due to its private nature, a lack of consensus about how to define IPV, and social, cultural and religious interpretations of what constitutes IPV. Despite these challenges, several attempts have been made to understand the magnitude of IPV in Canada. The well-known Violence Against Women Survey was conducted in 1993 with 12,300 randomly selected women across Canada, 51% of whom reported having experienced physical or sexual assault at least once since the age of 16 years.⁴ The General Social Survey (GSS), conducted in 2004 among 13,162 Canadian women (15 years and older), reported that 7% of participants had been physically or sexually assaulted by a current intimate partner at least once during the previous 5 years; another 21% had experienced violence by an ex-partner during this period.⁵ More recently, the Canadian maternity experiences survey of 6,421 women (15 years and older) who gave birth in 2006 reported that 10.9% of participants experienced IPV within two years of the survey.⁶

To date, no primary empirical studies have examined prevalence rates of IPV among immigrant women in Canada. Attempts to estimate the prevalence of IPV among this population using

secondary analysis of GSS data have produced varying results. For example, Ahmad, Ali, and Stewart⁷ reported prevalence rates of 14.7% for emotional abuse among immigrant women compared with 8.7% for Canadian-born women. Du Mont and Forte⁸ estimated that approximately 18% of immigrant women experience one or more types of IPV with 15% having experienced emotional abuse, 4% financial abuse, and 5% physical and/or sexual violence. Because the GSS excluded women who did not speak at least one of Canada's two official languages (English or French), it most likely eliminated a significant proportion of immigrant women from participation in the survey. It was also a phone survey, and thus, excluded those without access to a phone as well as those who did not want to discuss this sensitive topic on the phone.

Health effects

Women who have experienced IPV face many physical and mental health consequences that can last long after the violence has ended. These include physical injuries,^{9,10,11} chronic pain syndromes, headaches, gastrointestinal disorders,^{12,13,14,15} psychological health consequences such as depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder and suicidal ideation^{16,17,18,19,20} and substance use and dependence.^{10,21,22} IPV during pregnancy is associated with increased risk of miscarriage, premature delivery, malnutrition, low birth weight, and other reproductive health problems, including sexually transmitted diseases and chronic pelvic pain.^{23,24,25}

Etiology

Theories about why IPV occurs tend to focus separately on the level of the individual (e.g., biological and psychological explanations), the couple (e.g., family interactions theory), or the society (e.g., social learning theory and feminist theories).^{26,27,28} It is more likely that factors at a number of levels contribute simultaneously to IPV. Violence against women in patriarchal societies is often condoned by various social mores, cultural values, and religious beliefs that dictate male dominance in gender relationships and create separate codes of conduct for men and women.^{29,30} However, not all men in such societies commit

IPV. Status inconsistency theory is one approach to explain why some men turn to violence. This theory posits that variations in the distribution of resources among family members that threaten men's status and power may lead some to use violence, threats, and coercive control as strategies to compensate.^{31,32,33} This theory has been used to explain IPV in the post-migration context. Un/underemployment and associated downward economic mobility, men's difficulty fulfilling their traditional role as the main breadwinner for the family, gender role changes, and loss of status at home, which can occur in the new setting, along with other stressors such as minority status, discrimination, and social isolation, can substantially increase the risk of IPV for immigrant women.^{33,34,35,36}

Risk and protective factors

Clarifying risk factors for IPV among immigrant women is a complex task because IPV in the post-migration context is produced by the interaction of multiple and multi-level factors in women and men's lives in the pre-migration, border-crossing, and post-migration contexts.^{35,37} The heterogeneity among immigrants and the diversity of migration pathways contribute to the challenge of identifying common risk factors. Some factors identified in the limited literature available on the topic include: exposure to war and multiple traumas in the pre-migration context;^{35,38,39} experience of various forms of violence during border-crossing;³⁷ loss of or limited social networks and support; deskilling and de-professionalization; and changes in gender and sexual relations in the post-migration context.³⁶ Limited effort has been made to identify protective factors among immigrants.⁴⁰

Barriers to seeking care and services

Despite IPV's frequent and severe effects on health, many immigrant women do not seek care or access services for personal, legal, contextual, and cultural reasons and systemic barriers. For example, women may not want their families to know about the challenges and difficulties they are facing and they may be ashamed to tell their friends about the abuse because of social pressure to appear that their lives in Canada are going well. Immigrant women arriving as dependents of their husbands may worry about legal ramifications if abuse is reported to the authorities. In particular,

those who do not have legal immigration status (e.g., refugees and undocumented women) may not seek services for fear of deportation. Contextual issues may be related to a lack of access to a phone, transportation, money, or other means to leave the home to seek care and services. Cultural barriers may be related to collectivist beliefs that women should make sacrifices for the goodness of the family (immediate and extended), and/or the belief that children need both a mother and father to be raised 'properly'. More often than not, however, barriers to help-seeking are systemic and related to the services themselves. Guruge and Humphreys⁴¹ reported a number of systemic barriers that negatively shaped abused immigrant women's access to and use of formal supports, including unfamiliarity with services, non-fit of services/intervention strategies, lack of culturally-safe and linguistically-appropriate services, lack of portability and seamlessness of the services, confidentiality concerns, and various discriminatory and racist practices embedded in services and service delivery.

Practice, policy, and research implications

There is an urgent need for increased research, practice, and policy action towards recognizing IPV among immigrant women in Canada as a serious public health problem. Highlighted next is a set of key practice, policy, and research implications.

Practice: Healthcare professionals should address the immediate concerns of women and their children affected by IPV through identification, documentation, risk assessment, safety planning, reporting, care, and referral. Immigrant women require culturally-safe and linguistically-appropriate services that address the immigration and settlement concerns that often make them vulnerable to IPV and keep them in abusive relationships. In order to address their concerns, healthcare professionals need to collaborate with social and settlement workers, and with community leaders to develop effective community-based health promotion programs. These programs must include education and skill building to enhance communication within and outside the couple unit, (re)negotiate expectations regarding gender and sexual relations between the couple in the new context, understand the effects of violence

against women and children and break the silence and stigma about IPV, and engage men and communities in violence prevention.

Policy: Immigration and settlement, employment, and health sectors, in particular, need to re-examine their policies to: address de-skilling and de-professionalization, un/under-employment and resultant economic insecurity; facilitate language training and update employment skills for women and men; provide quality and affordable childcare; offer a better and faster family reunification system; and make available affordable and more public housing, shelters, and long-term transitional housing for women and children. Further, these services need to be offered as coordinated efforts in one place, reducing piecemeal approaches to services and eliminating service eligibility criteria such as proof of citizenship. We need to re-examine the Canadian immigration policies that impose/promote financial undertaking within the sponsor/sponsored dyad and the threats of deportation for when such expectations are not met in order to reduce the vulnerability of those at risk.^{41,42}

Research: Over the last two decades, there has been a substantial interest and increase in health research about IPV in Canada. However, significant gaps in research persist. There is an urgent need for research about immigrant women's exposure to and experiences of IPV that takes into account factors that can affect their understanding of IPV and their responses to it, including their diversity in terms of their country of origin, category of migration, length of stay in Canada, racialized status, socio-economic status, knowledge of English/French, and education and employment prior to and following migration to Canada. Researchers also need to explore IPV in the contexts of pre-migration, border-crossing, and post-migration violence against women with attention to preventive interventions. Such research could provide important knowledge to guide care, support, and service efforts for immigrant women living with IPV. Further, insights gained through research could help change existing policies, eliminate structural barriers that negatively affect women's health, and facilitate the development of public policies that better promote health and well-being in this context.

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By Ajit Jain

Reduce Abuse: The Change Begins

Hamilton, Ontario. He treats women "with signs of abuse: broken limbs, bruises and scars all over their bodies." He says, "Domestic violence is the most common cause of non-fatal injuries to women. Over four of ten women (in Canada) are likely to have experienced one or more forms of violence." Bhandari has led a study of 282 injured women attending two trauma centers – Hamilton Health Sciences, Hamilton General Hospital and St. Michael's Hospital in Toronto.

Sunder Singh, Executive Director of EHCW, introduced the subject of the abuse of women. Speakers included Preeti Saran, India's Consul General in Toronto who's now India's ambassador to Vietnam. She defended her country with regards to rape cases, admitting that they occur but that this is not confined to India – it happens in many countries.

After keynote presentations, there was a lively interaction between the audience and the keynote speakers. This portion provides a glimpse of remarks made by the audience.

Vinod Sharma (board member of EHCW): In regard to violence against women, it is important to discuss the relationship between medical practitioners and the police. Under the Child Welfare Act, if a child is abused, it's the responsibility of the person who learns about the abuse to report to the police immediately. The medical community should, I hope, be doing likewise.

Ragini Sharma (expert in child welfare): The medical community has an obligation to report to the police when a woman with broken bones comes to the hospital. If there is the merest suspicion of domestic violence, doctors have to

It was a one-day symposium held on February 25, 2013, at the 31 Division of the Toronto Police Service. The auditorium was packed.

The horrendous tragedy of a 23-year-old physiotherapy student in New Delhi on December 16, 2012, made headlines in the international media. She was gang raped in a moving bus by six men, including a minor. Four of them have received capital punishment, a verdict that their attorneys have appealed to the higher court. One of the men committed suicide in his jail cell.

The Elspeth Hayworth Center for Women (EHCW), sponsor of the symposium, is a non-profit organization that provides counseling to abused and battered women. They come from all strata of society, rich and poor, and from all religious and ethnic backgrounds. Many of the clients are South Asian Canadians.

The keynote speaker was Dr. Mohit Bhandari, Trauma Surgeon, at McMaster University in

report the matter to the police.

I believe there is a \$1,000 fine if doctors don't report the matter. If there is a child present with an abused woman, the child can often get caught in the violence. I have actually attended babies with broken bones, the result of domestic violence.

Sonali Shah (audience member): My husband has broken my arm twice, and my child has also gone through this experience once. I was also harassed by my mother-in-law.

In India, the mother-in-law doesn't do things directly. She provokes and instigates her son. I discussed these things with my counselors, with the cops. They said they could not do anything because the mother-in-law doesn't do it directly. But the fact is mother-in-laws are part of it. They invariably create problems between husband and wife.

I couldn't talk to my doctor when I had gone to the emergency ward with bodily injuries. My child was with me. I couldn't discuss my injuries with the doctor because maybe I was trying to save my husband or maybe I was trying to save my marriage, etc. And my doctor didn't ask me whether the injuries on my hand and face resulted from physical assault by my husband.

My husband has abused me in front of my child. My husband would push me; beat me whenever my child was in my arms. Now I cannot carry my own son in my arms. But the family on my husband's side says if I tell the judge that I can't carry my son in my arms and that husband and wife are having problems, I may lose custody of my child or the judge may award joint custody. I don't want my child to grow up in that situation.

John Valerio (Domestic Violence Unit, Toronto Police Service): Our policy is very clear in regards to domestic violence. If the threshold is met and a criminal offence has occurred, we will charge the offender. If we have someone that states that an assault did not occur, but the evidence indicates that an offence has occurred, once again, if the threshold is met, the officer will charge the offender.

There are a number of new initiatives taking place in Toronto to assist victims of domestic violence. One such initiative is called the Integrated Domestic Violence Court. It combines family court with criminal court and, therefore,

one judge presides over both matters.

An audience member made some disclosures with regard to a third party getting involved in her personal domestic situation. It was explained by the detective that if a third party has committed a criminal offence, including intimidation or issuing threats, that person may also be charged once all the evidence is reviewed.

I wouldn't discuss her personal situation in an open forum but I am inviting her to speak with me after the symposium. I am suggesting that there's a mechanism in place to review her interaction with the police. So if you don't believe the call was handled to your satisfaction, I would be more than happy to discuss it with you afterwards. But again, I'm not going to talk about your situation because it's not proper to do so in front of everyone here. I can assure you that the Toronto Police take domestic violence very seriously. Our policy is very thorough and I believe we are among the leaders in the field of domestic violence and assisting victims.

Ishnan Kaur (Ontario Ministry of Education): Every new person immigrating to Canada should undergo some sort of education to understand what's right in Canada and what's not. I would suggest that people who migrate to Canada as adults should be given cultural training. That way, the mother-in-law would learn what is acceptable here and what is not acceptable. What's acceptable back home in India and elsewhere is not acceptable here. Until someone tells them they will never learn.

Secondly, education is the great equalizer. Everybody needs to push their children to get as much education as possible. That's so crucial for our daughters and our sisters, because they have to understand that this is a different world. Without that, these new immigrants will not learn that things can change. This change has to start from the top. It has to start from the bottom. We can make that change happen.

We have also to understand the role that religion plays in our everyday lives. A large number of women feel they are letting their community down, letting their religion down and letting their families down. I believe our religious institutions should take a strong stand on the issue of violence against women. That would make a significant difference in society.

When we go to the gurdwara, you may encounter some member of the congregation who is celebrating the birth of a boy. They should talk about the birth of a child and not the birth of a boy.

The congregation should be aware of what's really happening amidst them. They need to provide support for women; they need to provide support for children; they need to provide support for the youth, which is really floundering these days.

Aruj Butt (audience member): Some people say there are cultural biases amongst medical practitioners while dealing with victims of domestic violence. I work with the South Asians and the Muslim communities. I see there are definite cultural biases.

I am 32. When I was just 13, I told my mother that she needed to leave my father. She left him now, when I am 32. So she struggled for 19 years to save her marriage. She's still being abused as what happened to her still has psychological ramifications. And my mother still agrees with my father's code without him being there.

(In an interview, Butt explained her father's code that had one basic rule and that being he was right and they were wrong. "Anything that happened against his wishes, even a haircut, would make him angry. As far as my mother was concerned, he was the superior partner, he was educated. She was not. He was cultured and intelligent. She was not. His family was better than her family. For 30 years, she was not allowed to meet with her family. I didn't even know until I was 27 and in Canada how many brothers and sisters my mother had.

"Throughout the marriage, the specter of divorce hung over her head and to please him my mother killed her desires and personality. She used to be an independent minded person with a sense of adventure and a zest for life. Because of this marriage, she became engulfed in fear, fear of reprisals from my father if she displeased him in any way. Even now she cooks and cleans the house to perfection as though my brothers have taken my father's place and she needs to please them with her housework just as she used to try and please my father. This is despite the fact they have tried repeatedly to stop her from stressing out over housework. She thinks her sole purpose

is to sacrifice herself for her family by burying her needs and desires just as she used to with my father. She considers herself an illiterate woman who doesn't know how to function properly in a cultured society. She would deny the truth about him to my face because she fears somehow he will learn that she thinks ill of him and he will return to abuse her. Fear ruled her life when my father was around and now fear rules her life in a different way. He's not physically present in her life but he is present in her mind.")

It's the trauma that we are talking about. In my work, I deal with mental health issues as well. The trauma, which is the physical issue, is tied to the mental issue, unless that goes unmeasured within the community.

One of the biggest problems that we face is the fact that families will not disclose if they have someone in the family that has a substance abuse problem. Typically when such people, with substance abuse, come to our organization or go to other organizations, they don't get effective treatment and end up almost near death.

The pharmaceutical companies spend millions of dollars developing drugs, but they don't help us to help people with substance abuse. So, it is a great opportunity to get together and speak and discuss such issues. It takes one person to make a change, to make a difference, not necessarily an entire group, and someone knows of the situation or someone is in a situation where he/she can make a difference. That empowers other people because it unites people; and such discussions result in creating social awareness and consciousness that things won't change easily.

There was recently a discussion on CBC TV about the larger significance of six female premiers in Canada. They were being asked questions as to 'How are you going to date now?' 'How are you going to continue your personal life?' What does their personal life have to do with governing a province? I think we have to speak out against that.

I am a proud Muslim. I am educated about my rights, about my religion and about Canada and how the two interact. I go to women in my community, using the Quran as a basis for their rights. They ask me whether the law of the land is greater than the Quran. That's sadly their way of defending the abuse.

I reach out to my friends, women of my age who are educated or married. When I start talking to them about sex, sexuality, abuse by their husbands, etc, they just shut down and don't talk. These are not religious topics. Religion is wonderful, God is wonderful and I am going to pray to Him. It has nothing to do with your rights.

I explain to these Muslim women that there are two forms of rights: God's rights and human rights. God forgives if you mess up with His rights but He won't forgive you if you mess up with human rights.

The community doesn't feel comfortable if a Muslim woman is wearing a skirt, irrespective of her profession. The skirt is like the end of the world. It doesn't matter whether this woman is a doctor or she's actually helping the community. It's such a deep-rooted problem in society.

We are in denial. So much is happening in the Muslim community, in the South Asian community but it is shocking and saddening that we don't admit it, we don't talk about it.

Tanya (audience member): I was on the table of empowering women who are victims of domestic violence and promoting institutions, programs and distributing handouts in that respect. However, it doesn't matter how much information you have. It's not lack of marketing or awareness, but it is the woman who has to open her eyes.

Here's my story: Six months ago, I left my husband because of abuse and took my baby. We had an 11-month-old baby then, so it came as a surprise to many people. When we had our child, everybody thought ours was a perfect marriage. I felt the same way. But I was so blind and one day I called the Domestic Violence Hotline. They guided me to Cross Cultural Catholic Services. They helped me in making my safety plan to leave my abusive relationship, leave the house. My counselor was afraid as I had a then 5-month-old baby with me. I was subjected to all kinds of abuse – emotional, mental, and verbal. I had threats to my life. Finally, I left the house without my husband noticing it.

My mother was also abused. Laws alone don't stop violence. What is needed, as many have said from the floor, is taking our responsibilities. Someone gave the example of when a victim was lying in the middle of the road for 2-3 hours, people walked by and didn't take notice of that.

We should ask ourselves in what kind of society we are living. We need to change the way we take responsibility for each other. We all belong to each other. We have to treat each other as brothers and sisters and from that, change is going to come.

Dr. Bhandari: I have no doubt cultural biases exist in the medical community. The stereotypes are absolutely ingrained in healthcare. And the second point raised from the floor is another critically important one. In healthcare, we focus not so much on what we can measure, a broken bone, as on how a broken bone heals. The women that I have interacted with have often said to me, 'My bones heal but the psychological impact and the emotional abuse last forever.' So we have been learning from that and trying more and more to engage and learn more about that.

We are actually starting a number of projects where we're trying to learn. The sad part is the funding to work in this field, to help women, does not exist in any meaningful way. Drug companies will fund billions of dollars to see the next drug to make the bone heal but they won't give you \$10.00 to actually try to understand how we can improve the safety of women in our clinics and that is the challenge I think we all face.

When a patient comes to the hospital with broken bones, it triggers a series of events, including doctors having to report it to Social Services in the hospitals. Then Social Services take over the investigation. If there's a child with the woman victim, the child may be taken away by Social Services.

It is a controversial issue for most doctors. They try to act in the best interest of the woman. We have to ensure the safety of the victim. We reassure the victim that what happened is not her fault. We discuss with her a plan for her safety. We try to find resources available to her should she want to take advantage of those resources. But it is not part of our mandate to call the police or Social Services unless the victim so desires.

John Valerio: I have heard a lot of discussion with regards to what is perceived by some that we as police are not doing. I want to address what, in fact, we are doing in response to domestic violence. I have been with the Toronto Police for 25 years. I can give you some background from where we started 25 years

ago, in response to domestic violence, to where we are now. There have been some monumental changes. For example, 25 years ago, if there was a stalking situation and the police were called to investigate it, the criminal code then had a section called Watch and the police had to actually find the person committing the offence. The criminal code has been changed to include the offence of criminal harassment which allows police to lay charges on reasonable grounds rather than 'finds committing'.

I want to share some details of some of the positive changes that are coming in response to domestic violence. From a provincial standpoint, there is something called the Domestic Violence Risk management report. This provincial response is for every police service and will be required to complete the DVRM to assist in determining risk assessment. The provincial government recognizes that such a risk assessment is required to help safeguard victims.

In Toronto, the resources and response to domestic violence is perceived by some as under marketed. We, as a service, are actively working on a community engagement and communication strategy to assist in getting this information out to the community.

We have more agencies here in Toronto than probably most places in the world to assist those impacted by domestic violence. We need to make sure that people know about them and how to access resources. For example, we are piloting a program out of Toronto West Courts to standardize the Written and Revocable Consent process for victims of domestic violence. Victims can get written and revocable consent conditions imposed that empower them to speak to the offender if they wish to do so or to revoke the consent if deemed appropriate.

There has also recently been the implementation of the Scarborough Family Justice Initiative in 41 Division. The SFJ1 deals with victims and children who find themselves in domestic situations. Social welfare and other agencies are involved in the program. We now also have interview rooms at 41 Division that are deemed victim 'friendly' to conduct interviews.

So, there are lots of initiatives that we have taken and we are taking on this issue of domestic violence. But we haven't marketed such initiatives

well and so many people don't know what is going on.

Michael Federico (Deputy Chief, Metro Toronto Police): Fighting against domestic violence is a priority of the Toronto Police Service. This priority cuts across the cultural boundaries and geographical boundaries in the city. But it has to be a collaborative approach between the police and the community. So, it is helpful that discussions such as this symposium are taking place. These discussions help the Toronto Police Service continue to improve its response. The Service is committed to being a partner with our community and we will respond promptly, effectively, and with sensitivity to the families that are subjected to violence.

One example of how the community and the Toronto Police Service are building effective partnerships is the creation of what we call centers of excellence or hubs. One such hub is Focus Etobicoke, a project where government and community based agencies, prosecution services, and police provide a unified response to particular family violence cases – helping the victims and managing the offender. This program is being watched carefully by the community and care providers to see if it achieves its promised outcomes of better service and reduced incidents of crime and community harm.

Sunder Singh: As Dr. Bhandari says, we can heal the bones but emotional and mental wounds remain. My message to women who have faced violence is that the best healer is to help others and prevent the violence for other people and it will heal you.

All parents, all women take the responsibility of bringing up children properly and directing them to the right path. Put the faith aside. Make your children realize that we are all human beings. We are all connected and to live in this world, you have to give love and do not teach them ideas about this and that. We are all in this world together. Once children begin to realize this, you will find that violence will start to decline.

I hope you are taking lot of information back from this symposium. I hope we will now start to make changes. Women out there: please make the change. It's a slow process. It will take an entire generation. But we can make the change. We can do that together.

The following photos are from the 'Reduce Abuse, the Change Begins' Symposium organized by the Elspeth Heyworth Centre for Women at 31 Division - Toronto Police Services, February 15, 2013.









They Are Beaten, They Are Assaulted, Yet The Husband Is Still The Best Person & They Love Him

By Susmita Vaidya
Counselor,
Elspeth Hayworth Center for Women

He tried to choke her; he pushed her down the stairs twice. Her back has been damaged. The man would tell his wife what to cook and if she didn't obey, he would thrash her and even call her parents in Mumbai to complain.

It's baffling to me. Our client still says she loves him and wants to give him one more chance. As a counselor, I can only give advice and guidance to our clients, many of whom are battered women and are new immigrants from various parts of the world. I can't make a decision for these women and I can't force them to follow my advice.

Here are three cases in which the women – two Indo-Canadians and one white Anglo-Saxon – approached our center, the Elspeth Heyworth Center for Women (EHCW), because they were desperate. Despite beatings, emotional and financial violence, they are still hesitant to leave their husbands. They hesitate to call the police. How can we help such women? We can only help if they are ready to leave the abuser and accept

our advice. We put them in touch with family lawyers. We refer them to the Toronto Police at the 31st Division with whom EHCW collaborates on issues involving violence against women.

I believe violence against women is increasing. I say this based on the fact that more women are coming to us for help. It could also be because more women are now becoming aware of their rights in Canada.

The Cases

1 Champa, 29, is originally from Mumbai. In 2010, she married Surender, a computer engineer working for a reputable Canadian company. It was an arranged marriage. Surender sponsored her and Champa migrated to Canada in 2011. Soon she discovered he was very controlling: she was not allowed to go anywhere, she couldn't answer the telephone and she was not allowed to cook against his wishes. He would tell her what to cook and if she didn't do that, she received a physical beating. Her back has been injured. Twice she was pushed down the stairs and he choked her several times. He would pick up the telephone and complain to his in-laws in India, saying "What have you taught your daughter?"

Champa is an electronics engineer and comes from a middle class family. Both her parents are teachers and are well-educated. She came here with lot of dreams and a promise by her husband to continue studying in Toronto. However, within six months of her arrival, her dreams were shattered due her husband's aggressive, short-tempered and violent behavior. She was scared of her husband as she was new to the country. Somehow she got our number and that's how she

came to us for help. When she approached us the first time, it was difficult for her to even walk, which, I believe, was the result of the beatings.

I advised her to talk to the police and explained about the safety plan and other essential support which the EHCW can offer her and which she is eligible for. However, she wouldn't do that. Her response was, "I still love him and I would like to give him one more chance." It is so frustrating and depressing.

Last month again something happened in the night. He slapped her and became very violent, so she left the apartment. The building watchman saw her going out late at night. She went to a friend's house. In the morning, her husband went to the police station and lodged a report that his wife is missing. The police investigated and found her at a friend's place. They saw the bruises all over her body and Champa reported her entire story to the police. They came to the conclusion that she was being abused physically, emotionally and financially. Finally, her husband was arrested for filing a false report as well as for physical abuse.

A family lawyer, to whom Champa was referred, says, "Her physical condition is severe because of constant physical abuse. This man could be sentenced to jail for at least two years in light of the charges the police levied against him." The worst part is, she still wants to give him one more chance. What's this? What can we do? As a counselor, it is so frustrating. What's this power of love? Champa is still telling her lawyer that she's willing to sign a peace bond with her husband and give him one more chance.

2 Jennifer, a 30-year old white Anglo-Saxon Canadian, originally from Newfoundland, came to EHCW six months ago. When she met me, Jennifer was a bit doubtful as to how this brown counselor would be able to help her. She questioned whether I know Canadian laws and my ability to talk to the police. As a professional, I tried my best to ensure that she received the most appropriate advice and help, and finally, she was ready to disclose her situation to me.

Jennifer met William, 33, through the Internet and they dated for 18 months. Jennifer's parents were not in favor of her marrying him as she would have to move to Toronto where William lived. However, the couple decided to tie the knot. William comes from an affluent family with

interests in real estate and farm houses. Jennifer herself has an undergraduate degree in office administration.

After their marriage seven years ago, Jennifer moved to Toronto. Within six months, she realized that William is very domineering and aggressive, with the habits of the rich and the high profile. He didn't allow her to socialize, nor would he allow her to work; financially, he was controlling her life. Jennifer also realized his interest in night life and that he was having affairs with other women. In the meantime, she became pregnant with their daughter, who is now six years old.

William became more careless and his violence magnified. Whenever our client argued with him and asked about his relationships, the very first thing he would say was, "If you don't accept my behavior, you are free to leave." Jennifer hesitated to take any action or report the abuse to the police because she feared it would involve the custody of their daughter. She also knew that having married against the wishes of her parents, returning to Newfoundland wasn't a viable option.

Like most women in abusive relationships, our client thought her husband would change one day and her life would become normal.

William once returned home in the middle of the night, holding hands with another woman, and went straight to his daughter's room, telling the 6-year-old, "Here's your new mother." "New mother!" shouted Jennifer, who saw and heard what was going on. As she later reported to me, William slapped Jennifer in front of the other woman. He then told her, "You have to accept this woman or leave the house and I won't let you take the baby with you." As it was already the middle of the night, Jennifer kept her cool and allowed the other woman to stay in her house for the night, hoping she would be able to resolve it next morning.

Jennifer somehow got our telephone number and called us for help. When she came to our office, we took her to the 31st Police Division, and she reported everything. Her husband was arrested.

Jennifer was so distraught that she even attempted suicide twice. The way she used to talk to us and behave, I came to the conclusion that general counseling wouldn't work in her case. So, after consulting with my Executive Director, we referred her to the community health center for clinical counseling. Now she's under treatment

and is happy. She lives independently and, fortunately, has her daughter with her.

In one of EHCW's women's groups, Jennifer shared her story. We were shocked that this white Canadian woman, born and brought up here, can have this kind of problem. The fact is that intimate partner violence can happen to anyone, anywhere in the world.

3 **Raminder**, 31, is from the Punjab. In an arranged marriage, she married Baljit, 33, an Indo-Canadian computer engineer. Baljit sponsored her and she got her landed visa quickly. Raminder has an undergraduate degree. She's smart and has very good communication skills. She has found a job with Tim Horton.

The sad truth is that Baljit drinks heavily. She would talk to him and ask why he drank so much. That's when Baljit started physically and emotionally abusing Raminder.

They now have a 7-year-old boy.

One night, he choked her. Several other things happened as he continued to physically abuse his wife. One day, she called 911 and the police came and arrested her husband. The next day, she approached us. We referred her to a family lawyer who helped Raminder to file her papers in family court for separation and custody of their son.

There's always pressure from parents, in-laws and relatives. Raminder was under duress and so she agreed to give Baljit a second chance. Baljit also said, "I will behave normally. I won't trouble you, so please give me a second chance." It's outright emotional blackmail. And Raminder said, "Okay, I'll give you another chance and let us try for another six months."

They started living together again. After just fifteen days, Baljit returned home in the middle of the night, completely drunk and carrying a full bottle of alcohol. When Raminder saw him, she couldn't believe his condition. She asked, "You promised me that you won't drink and what's this?" He got angry and started beating her. As a further insult, he called the police. When the officers arrived at the apartment, they saw Baljit lying on the floor with the bottle nearby. Their 7-year-old son had seen everything.

The police recorded Raminder's and Baljit's statements. They reported the matter to the Children's Aid Society (CAS), who interviewed the boy. He was asked about his relationship with his parents and whether he could draw a picture of

his dream house. He drew pictures of his father, with a bottle of alcohol, and his mother with blood all over her, and he put a question mark on his own picture. The CAS case worker asked him about the question mark on his picture and the blood on his mother. The child described how his parents constantly fought, pointing out "my father always slaps mom. One day I was so scared and asked why I am here." That's when Raminder really got scared, because she realized how her son was being negatively affected and at such a young age, as he's seeking his identity.

Baljit physically abused her to the extent that her collar bone was damaged. Even then, she was not willing to leave him.

As a counselor, I always offer the victims and clients different options to escape the abusive relationship. However, emotionally they are so involved that invariably they find it difficult to make a final decision. They continue to cling to their relationships, despite being physically and emotionally abused by their spouses.

What do we say to such clients? These women, with good education and good family backgrounds – Indian and others – are reluctant to leave their husbands and they continue to endure physical and emotional abuse.

I find that women from war-affected countries, e.g. Nigeria, Iraq, Libya, Somalia, etc, are bolder, emotionally strong and practical. They are stronger than South Asian women. They boldly accept that emotions alone won't solve their problems. Whether or not they have an education, they are stronger.

Abuse of women is not confined to India. It encompasses all strata of society in all countries. And abuse is not only physical – there's financial abuse and emotional abuse, too.

It has been observed that many men treat women as if they are inferior. I strongly feel that it depends greatly on their family backgrounds and their upbringing. If they have seen their father misbehaving and treating their mother badly, they grow up with the attitude that this is the normal way to treat a woman. Unless and until we change our mind-set about women, laws alone cannot reduce abuse against women.

(To preserve their anonymity, we are using these assumed names)

Gender-Based Violence: System And Society

How Serious Is The Problem?

If one in ten men says it's okay to hit a woman in case she makes him angry, it is a serious cause of concern. Gender-based violence is a huge problem in Canada. On average, every six days a woman is killed by her intimate partner. In 2011 alone, 85% of victims in reported spousal homicides were women.³

These figures reflect the enormity of gender-based violence and its prevalence is not restricted to any specific ethno-cultural group, racial communities, income or age group, religion, or a particular province. When it comes to violence, it is a problem that defiles the social fabric of the entire country as one entity and raises a question about women's safety in Canada.

Provincially in Canada, Alberta and Saskatchewan have the highest number of self-reported incidents of spousal violence. In 2011, the rate of violent crime against women in Nunavut was nearly 13 times higher than the national rate of violence against women.⁴ In addition, Aboriginal women are 3.5 times more likely to be victims of violence compared to non-Aboriginal women.⁵ Younger women are even more prone to victimization. The rate of violence among women between the ages of 15 and 24 is 42% higher than that of women between 35 to 44 years.⁶

Quadruple Handicap of Immigrant Women

Immigrant women may be more vulnerable to domestic violence due to economic dependence, language barriers, and a lack of knowledge about community resources.⁷ In the case of certain ethnic groups, women's skin color becomes the fourth

By Trina Joshi

Women's Rights Advocate

By Gita Das

Edmonton-based Clinical Psychologist

Examples of gender-based violence are plenty in Canada. While it is a matter of perception and ingenuity with which one presents a case in the court, it would be unwise to shut our eyes to the reality of violence against women in the country.

If there are 582 known cases of missing or murdered Aboriginal women in Canada, there is evident criminality involved and those cases await justice.¹ Likewise, if there are 460,000 police-reported incidents of sexual assault in just one year, someone is responsible for committing that crime.²

In order to get a holistic view of the gravity of the situation, one needs to delve in to the reasons or sources of gender-based violence. A careful diagnosis of those sources, which emerge from within our society, may suggest solutions. But the first step in that direction is to acknowledge the severity of the problem and understand the real definition of gender-based violence.

handicap. A study with young women of color in Toronto found that one in five experienced racism in the health care system which included cultural insensitivity, racial slurs, and poor quality care.⁸

Triple Trial for All Women

Women are put through triple trials. First is the trial of time and strength where women have to endure the injuries that result from such violent acts. Second, if they are brave enough to stand up for justice and seek legal help, they must prove the credibility of their claim in the court of law, the outcome of which may not always be favorable.

Finally, there is the third trial of facing society that, by and large, thrives on blaming the victims. In a study conducted by Alberta Council of Women's Shelters about their perceptions on violence against women and their own role in helping contain it, 40% of men in Alberta believed that women put themselves at risk for rape.

Defining Gender-Based Violence

The United Nations defines violence against women as: "Any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life."

This broad definition identifies violent acts against women in various sub categories like:

- a) Physical Abuse: Slapping, choking, or committing murder.
- b) Sexual Abuse: Using threats or physical force to impose unwanted sex on her.
- c) Emotional or Verbal Abuse: Threatening to kill her, children, or pets. Also, confining her to the house or restricting her freedom.
- d) Financial Abuse: Stealing or controlling her money or valuables. Also, denying her the right to work.
- e) Spiritual Abuse: Using her religious or spiritual beliefs to manipulate, dominate, and control her.
- f) Criminal harassment/stalking: Following her or watching her in a persistent, malicious, and unwanted manner.

Contributory Factors

Violence, of any kind, feeds on a particular mindset of people and certain cultural trends or practices that influence the whole social ethos. The biggest source of violence against women is the skewed power equations between men and women in our society. Human activities that establish social relations like politics, religion, media, cultural and professional norms are plagued with gender inequality.

Culture of Impunity: Although not so much in Canada, the culture of impunity that encourages men to instigate violence against women does assume importance with respect to domestic violence. Wives that are subjected to such violence at home are either reluctant to lodge a complaint, fearing dishonor to the family, or lose court cases for lack of admissible evidence. Abusive men stand to benefit from such situations as the low conviction rate in such cases of violence fails to set any precedence and does not break the continuum.

Gendered Social Conditioning: From childhood, girls are conditioned to be submissive and less assertive, whereas most boys are raised to believe that they are more powerful than women in every respect. In addition, the notion that women are weak and vulnerable, and that it is a man's responsibility to ensure women's safety, is another factor that contributes to the belief that men have a right to control their women, even if it amounts to resorting to violence. Certain men even treat women as their property, which gives rise to dating violence and spousal or previous intimate partner violence.

Consider the following: In 2011, police reported about 78,000 incidents of violence against women by current or previous intimate partners, including those by spouses and dating partners.⁹ The overall rate of intimate partner violence against women was 542 per 100,000 women, which was four times higher than the rate of men.¹⁰

Fear of Honor: In addition to this social conditioning of the two genders, society's tendency to associate family honor and shame with a daughter's behavior and actions, and the obsession with female virginity, make women more vulnerable to violence. Violence is seen as a means to make women toe the line that has been set by her persecutor.

Harmful Cultural Practices: Among certain ethnic communities in Canada, forced marriages, the practice of dowry, honor-related violence, and female feticide are widely practiced. These are some of the factors that corrode the social fabric even further as they lead to violence committed by abusive parents, siblings, and in-laws.

Inhuman Activities: Human trafficking that leads to forced labor and prostitution is another source of violence against women. About 80% of sex trafficking victims in Canada are women and girls.¹¹ In addition, online bullying and cyber crime are dangers that loom large for both young boys and girls. In the recent past, cyber bullying has claimed the lives of more girls than boys. Amanda Todd, the British Columbia teenager, recently committed suicide following a long spell of cyber bullying. In the same vein, Rehtaeh Parsons and Todd Loik are not just names that must die with time. Ironically, these preventable social problems are penetrating the very foundation of our society.

Public v. Private Debate: In cases of domestic violence, the notion that such violence is somebody's private matter, rather than a public concern, is too dangerous for any corrective measure to succeed. There is a need to dispel this notion for three reasons:

- a) Gender-based violence is a violation of a woman's human rights. And any such violation by anybody becomes a matter of public and state interest as Canada is a signatory to the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights.
- b) The economic cost associated with domestic violence is borne by everybody through the tax payer's money. The cost of violence against women in Canada for healthcare, criminal justice, social services, and lost wages and productivity has been calculated at \$4.8 billion per year.¹² In Alberta alone, a recent study estimates that over the past five years, domestic violence has cost Albertans over \$600 million in basic health and non-health support to the victims.¹³

c) Any act of domestic violence has a lasting intergenerational impact that influences young children. What they see at home, they learn for life and tend to repeat as adults. It is this vicious cycle that ensures a linear growth of violence against women in society

Private becomes public when a matter bleeds over the household boundaries, creates ripples in the community, and engages an entire province to provide monetary and systemic support. For the sake of this article, however, the scope of the discussion is narrowed down to the problem of gender-based violence in Alberta.

Alberta Experience: Problem, Support, and Remedies

Alberta has the 5th highest rate of police reported intimate partner violence and the 2nd highest self-reported spousal violence in Canada. This violence is ongoing and has intergenerational impacts that are devastating to victims and their families, and society as a whole.¹⁴ Nearly one in ten Alberta men believe it's okay to physically assault a woman if she does something to provoke him.¹⁵

However, the Government of Alberta is strengthening its grip on the problem and developing an active crisis response model. Over the past two decades, Alberta has introduced legislation at the forefront of violence protection measures both nationally and internationally. Legislations like Protection Against Family Violence and the Children (PAFVA) and the Youth and Family Enhancement Act (CYFEA) have dramatically improved police and judicial responses to all aspects of domestic violence and enhanced protection. They also send strong messages that abuse will not be tolerated in this province. PAFVA has dramatically improved victims' access to protection orders in emergency situations, while the CYFEA address children's exposure to domestic violence.¹⁶

Changing Together, a charitable organization based in Edmonton that assists immigrant women, helps at least three women a week whose lives are at risk. The agency reported that they counseled approximately 400 women over a 12 month period, mostly related to abuse. Of those women, about eight were sent to women's shelters. Most women

had experienced spousal abuse. Some were daughters who had refused arranged marriages, or wanted to marry someone against their parent's wishes.¹⁷

For the last three years, the City of Edmonton has been doing community development work by bringing all possible stakeholders to work together to reduce violence against women in South Asian communities. They had recently organized a conference to address the culture-specific features of violence against women from South Asia.

Daughters Day (DD) is a community initiative to highlight the importance of daughters in everyone's life. With the effort of some committed volunteers and social activists, the City of Edmonton proclaimed September 1 as Daughters Day in 2012. Ever since, the day is observed as a community event to celebrate the lives and achievements of all daughters across Canada. The DD Committee members are committed to the belief that every girl and woman is a daughter and that there must be an end to all discrimination and human rights abuses against women.

The Indo-Canadian Women's Association (ICWA), an immigrant-serving organization in Edmonton, offers counseling and support to women who are victims of violence. Since its inception in 1984, several female victims have benefitted from the organization's support in providing access to legal aid, police, and service providers.

For the last three years, the ICWA is working in the areas of honor-based violence, trafficking under the guise of marriage and non-consensual forced marriages that are against the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedom. This immigrant-serving organization is also working with the Calgary School of Social Work to develop a training module for social workers to respond to the victims who live in multigenerational families and face abuse by in-laws.

Conclusion

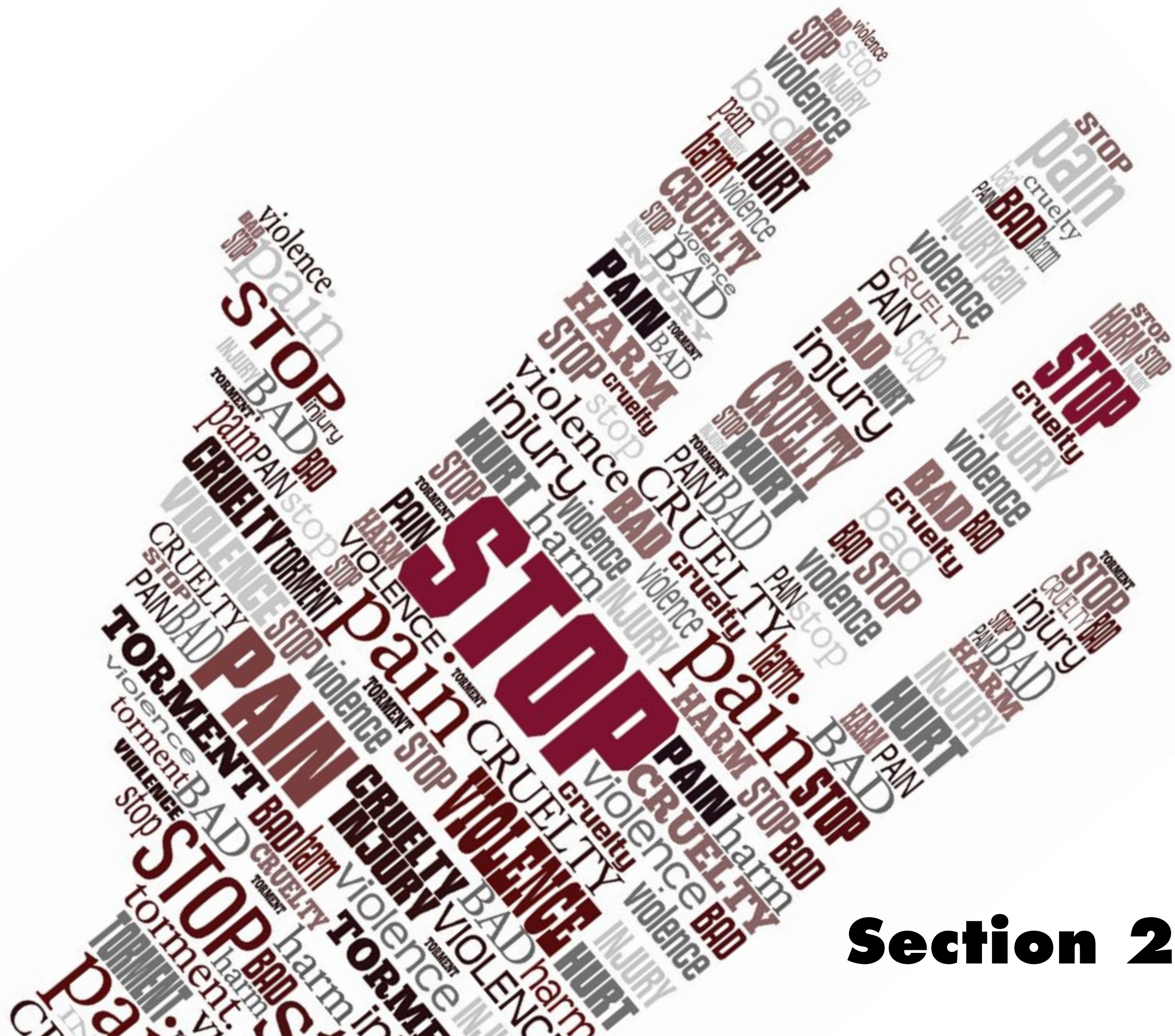
In Alberta, as in other parts of Canada, every hour of every day, a woman undergoes some form of domestic violence from an ex-partner or ex-spouse. In response, the province is strengthening the criminal justice response system through innovative legislations.¹⁸

It is equally noteworthy to state that the police, as first responders, are being trained in a way to deal with gender-based violence issues with a more humanistic approach. The Edmonton Police Service, for instance, is committed to diversity in their hiring process in order to efficiently cater to its diverse ethnic clientele. The presence of a police officer of the same ethnicity or gender is reassuring for a woman in distress. Such strategic changes in a service make the system more sensitive to the needs of the people.

Gender-based violence has unique origins and forms of manifestation. To this end, it must be dealt with holistically and differently with special legal provisions. The conviction rate in domestic violence cases is not commensurate with the number of cases that are tried in the courts. And most victims pay the price of certain systemic lacunae, such as untimely access to services that help provide corroborative evidence. It is imperative to focus on those victims that fall through the cracks. Due to the lack of timely legal aid, easy and secure access to service providers, a narrow definition of what is admissible or inadmissible as evidence in court, limited awareness-raising programs are certain factors that fail the system at multi levels in guaranteeing justice to the victim.

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Section 2 India

Remembering Jyoti Singh Pandey



By Mamta Mishra
Executive Director, World Literacy of Canada

Organization's recent report, 35% of women worldwide have experienced either intimate partner violence or non-partner sexual violence in their lifetime. The Indian public expression of love and sorrow for Jyoti showed the world that by "shining a light" on violence against women, India acknowledges its failings and wants to find solutions to great wrongs. The protest was a moment of pride for India.

It is a fact that too many Indian girls are married even before they reach puberty; that maternal deaths are on the rise; that kidnapping and rape are on the increase; and that incest and domestic violence are hidden truths. These conditions are not India's alone – they are part of a global crisis.

I have had the privilege to serve World Literacy of Canada, a charity that provides excellent poverty reduction and gender equality programming in Uttar Pradesh. With a population of 200 million, UP is India's most crowded state. As I said earlier, this is where Jyoti was born and it is also the state I come from. It is because of my pride that I want to help, in a small way, to bring hope and opportunity to the working poor women of UP.

Here are some of my suggestions for remembering Jyoti:

- 1** Develop a park in Jyoti's name, with a giant statue of Jyoti, in Delhi. It can be a place for teachers to take students to teach them about the horrors of violence against women and to inspire them to be the change they wish to see.
- 2** Issue a Jyoti postage stamp as a national reminder that this was not an isolated incident.
- 3** Run a Jyoti poster campaign on Delhi's transit services to draw attention to crimes against women.

Imagine what any of these remembrances would mean for Jyoti's mother and family, who live with the horrible memory of what happened to their daughter on December 16, 2012.

I was in Delhi when Jyoti Singh Pandey was brutally raped and murdered. As the tragic story surfaced in the news, the only "heartening peace" was found in the spontaneous collective expression of grief and love. This public outrage made me, and I suspect others who felt terribly broken, proud to be Indian. The horror of the story was too much. The pain Jyoti endured was felt by each of us, individually and collectively. I cried, like others, for Jyoti, for her mother and family, for her male friend who witnessed the horror on the bus.

There were headlines about the tragedy in the Indian papers. In fact, tremors were felt globally about how such a horrendous act could have been perpetrated by people on an innocent human being. There was nothing in those headlines that shamed India. On the contrary, those headlines raised India's dignity as a nation that was no longer going to remain silent about any form of violence against women. I say that public protest helped to strengthen India's democracy, and that a free press that reported on protest could never be wrong.

Like Jyoti, I am from Uttar Pradesh and I take great pride in my eastern UP heritage. Jyoti's story is a "wake up call", not just for India, but for the world to pay attention to the pain and sorrow inflicted on so many women. Women have it bad the whole world over and statistics bear this out. According to the World Health





Violence Against Women is Not Culture Specific

experiences and professions including feminist, lawyer, philosopher, film maker, office-bearer of a research organization, political scientist and state parliamentarian.

The Institute Français, a co-sponsor, even brought out its big gun in the field of women's emancipation, Najat Vallaud-Belkacem of Moroccan origin, who is minister for women's rights and is the spokeswoman of the French government. The one disappointment of a highly nuanced debate was the fact that the session on "Women and Power" dealt with women's problems in positions of authority in private and economic organizations, rather than grappling with issues relating to women wielding political power, a subject of immense possibilities. Perhaps the association of the German and French governments in sponsoring the debate was an inhibiting factor.

The French philosopher Genevieve Fraisse made an interesting point that women had now progressed from being excluded to being discriminated against. India's Mrinal Pande felt that the import of western models of state had distorted women's problems; she juxtaposed the unrepentant male against the invisible woman and pointed to male prejudices in the failure to give fair representation to women in legislatures. Nor is it wine and roses for women in prosperous Germany. According to Professor Ute Klammer, legal equality of the sexes is not matched by the ground situation, with women mostly in poorly paid part-time jobs and receiving half of men's pensions.

The French film maker and essayist Caroline Fourest pinpointed the problems imported by

migrants from the former colonies bringing their macho culture and compensating for their subculture in ghettoized suburbs by committing rape, often against their own women, whom they view as being not properly dressed. On the other hand, in the view of German political scientist Brigitte Triems, violence against women was not culture specific. Indian lawyer Vrinda Grover suggested that women's rights be equated as human rights. She recognized the role of feminism in India and said all crimes, not only violence against women, had risen in the country. She said misogyny and patriarchy were the worst aspects of the Indian scene. In a swipe at her western colleagues, she said there were no international takers when women fought economic injustice.

The German Greens parliamentarian Andrea Lindlohr pointed out that there was 36 per cent representation of women in the Bundestag (Parliament) today, but said as an aside that women tended to avoid one to one situations.

Martha Crawford-Heitzmann, of mixed French-American nationalities, who has a set of formidable academic degrees and holds a senior position in AREVA research, avoided questions of politics and power.

One of the tri-nation dialogue's organizers is the symbol of Indian feminism, Urvashi Butalia, director of the Zubaan publishing company who co-founded Kali for Women in 1984. She has focused on the oral history of the subcontinent's partition, publishing *The Other Side of Silence: Voices from the Partition of India* in 1984. She wondered how far this unique dialogue will go in giving fillip to the feminist movement while noting that it certainly gives a new dimension to women's problems in the country. India, after all, is part of a universal problem accentuated by the prevailing levels of poverty. But the macho culture is not unique to the Indian male.

Perhaps the next dialogue will focus on the fascinating subject of women and political power. Women politicians have made their

mark in the politics of several countries. Take Germany's Chancellor Angela Merkel, who has just won a new term in office. India's own Indira Gandhi became an icon in her lifetime. Her conduct of the Bangladesh war with Pakistan and her diplomacy preceding it won her the admiration of the Bharatiya Janata Party leader and future prime minister, Atal Bihari Vajpayee, who compared her to the Goddess Durga. The imposition of the internal Emergency was the other side of the coin.

There have been other remarkable women leaders, such as Britain's Margaret Thatcher, who won renown as the Iron Lady until she was dethroned in a party coup. Women who exercised power largely behind the scenes, such as Argentina's Eva Peron, are perhaps in another category although she later assumed office. The greater pity, therefore, is that this area was left unexplored in an otherwise path-breaking conversation among women of distinction from three countries. The next dialogue should be expanded to include participants from other nations.

The India International Centre in New Delhi, one of the sponsors of this dialogue, can perhaps seek the help of generous donors who are uninhibited in discussing political power and the world of women. For instance, the one trait that women in political power share is their reluctance to treat questions of governance as gender specific.

Beyond seminars and discussions, the seminal horrific event in the Indian capital on December 16, 2012, galvanized the country over a rape as never before. A young aspiring physiotherapist took a bus ride with a male companion after seeing a movie. It was not an ordinary fare-paying bus, but one of several that ply after their contract duties to earn a little extra. What happened on that bus, as it cruised around the streets of New Delhi that night, is a horror story etched in the Indian consciousness. The driver and his companions first incapacitated the companion

and set about raping the girl by turn with a savagery almost impossible to imagine. At the end of this sadistic exercise, the brutalized naked girl and her battered companion were thrown out of the bus and abandoned on the street before finally being rescued by a police patrol.

The girl was admitted to a Delhi hospital and then flown to Singapore for specialized treatment. Unfortunately, she could not be saved. Rapes are regrettably a common feature in the Indian capital as they are in most cities of the world. But it was the pathos and human tragedy of the event that struck an unmistakable chord. Here was a small-town girl seeking to make good in the big city, the almost fairytale-like story of the aspiring poor knocking at the door of the middle classes to enter a new secure world. And the savagery of a group of men cut short her life.

For the first time, a rape gripped the imagination of young and old across the country. There were candlelight vigils on the expansive lawns of India Gate, the central war memorial in the capital, with men and women carrying defiant posters. Such was the intensity of the protests that the police used staves and water cannons to bring the situation under control. Indeed, it was a unique event in Indian social consciousness.

But, unsurprisingly, rapes haven't stopped. Another horrific event was the rape of a young Mumbai photojournalist on the grounds of a derelict textile mill. Here again, a group of men first constrained her companion and then took turns to rape her. The guilty in the two cases are in the process of being punished in the courts of law. But these two incidents go beyond crime and punishment because they raise uncomfortable questions of social behavior and the specter of armies of often unemployed and semi-literate men, influenced by bright city lights, on the loose in India's cities and towns.

Many elements come into the mix. There

is the inevitable influence of a patriarchal mindset, with many Indian villagers living in deeply conservative societies. A male in such a society feels a sense of entitlement and is fed on the story-book romance of Bollywood films that whets his appetite without providing him with the resources or social status to fulfill his dreams. The adverse female-male ratio in the country, thanks to the evil female feticide, makes the task of finding a mate for the underprivileged that much more difficult.

As the tri-national discussion in New Delhi so eloquently pointed out, there are no simple solutions to women's problems and their welfare in the workplace and in societies. The levels and intensity of their problems vary from country to country, depending on economic and political circumstances, but the male mindset remains the same in most society, as locker room jokes in New York, London or Sydney would testify. A feminist is often an object of fun in male gatherings and most men are smug in their belief that they are simply superior beings.

Obviously, it will require time, money and toil to sensitize men to women's issues and their right to a place in the sun together with men. Though not unique to the developing world, the problems are more acute in developing countries because the population pressure from the young is immense and most countries cannot adequately cope with providing good education to all. And the weight of tradition and the past weighs that much more heavily.

In India, the catalyst of a new beginning has been provided by the December 16 atrocity. The task of Indians – male and female – is to use this horror symbol to begin the long task of educating the male. Underprivileged or otherwise, the male must be schooled in the virtues of giving equality to women.

A portion of this article first appeared in *The Tribune of India*.



Interview with Prabhat Jha
By Ajit Jain

Professor Prabhat Jha, Director of the Center for Global Health Research at St. Michael's Hospital in Toronto, finds it "absolutely atrocious that there's sexual violence in India." To curb this, his suggestion is to depoliticize the country's police. "The police should remain a professional service but the politicians in India have made it into a political service."

Jha, who has done a great deal of work in India on smoking-related and HIV-related deaths, and on why the gender ratio in India is skewed, believes that "much of these crimes against women are related to the consumption of alcohol. Men get drunk and then believe it is no problem to act roughly. In this case of the girl (Jyoti Singh) in Delhi, who was raped (on December 16, 2012), all of those men (in the moving bus), except for the driver, had been drinking." Therefore, his suggestion is that one way the government can

Sexual Violence In India Is Atrocious

"curb sexual violence by men, is to substantially restrict binge drinking" and that can be done "by restricting the availability of alcohol after hours."

In an interview, Jha, who's also the University of Toronto Chair in Disease Control, discusses violent crimes against women in India, including sexual violence, and how to build a safer society for women.

Q: Is there an increase in sexual violence against women?

A: The National Crime Bureau (NCRB) uses police records to record murders and other violence; they also report on violent crimes against women. The NCRB reports a steady increase in India in the last two years in sexual violence. One of the concerns is whether it is really an increase or is it just better reporting and the people are capturing more of what was earlier unreported. We don't yet know that fully. We believe that the increase is real.

The second thing that we need to know is if the possible social disruption is from having many single men in India. Evidence from other populations – China and Latin America – suggests that if you have large groups of young men growing up with fewer women, social unrest will increase. There's evidence that it will have an impact on HIV. Men without suitable partners are more likely to hire a prostitute or a sex worker because of their sexual demands. Similarly, where you have large groups of men, either migrating or living in places where there are fewer women, the use of sexual workers increases. That's fairly clear. What's not clear is whether it also leads to an increase in sexual violence and rape. In any event,

STOP Violence Against Women

Female Illiteracy
Human Trafficking
Sexual Abuse, Rape
Poor Access to Health
Dowry Death – Bride Burning
Domestic Violence, Homicide
Economic Exploitation
Foeticide, Infanticide
Genital Mutilation
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By Rama Singh

Department of Biology and Center for
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Remembering Nirbhaya, Rape Victim's Agonies Shocked The World

of the cases, the victim was a minor. The rape crime statistics of New Delhi for the first two months of 2013 confirmed this. There were 59 cases of sexual assaults reported, of which 16 (25%) involved minors and children.

In the country as a whole, over 100,000 cases are said to be pending in the court system. The 2013 Delhi district court statistics shows 1,047 cases of rape and 47 cases of gang rapes pending in the court. Unfortunately, most cases of rape go unreported because the victim's fear of the stigma attached and threats to their life. Generally, less than 1 in 10 rape cases are reported in the city; the percentage is even lower in rural areas. If a rape victim is brave enough to go to the police, she is likely to be laughed at and sent home with a threat not to come back.

Rape statistics in India show an alarming increase; according to the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), the number of registered rape cases rose from 2,487 in 1971 to 24,206 in 2006 - an increase of 833.3%. It's the epitome of lawlessness that rape cases were being reported from other parts of the country while the protest was going on in New Delhi.

The immediate reaction in such cases is to blame the tragedy on the "criminals", the "mentally sick" or on "socio-pathological deviants". However, the fact is that the majority of these murderers and rapists are not pathological deviants; rather, they are products of a sex culture that has taken over the mass media and entertainment industry. Rapists are all too often everyday ordinary people, often your boy next door. The sex offender is known to the rape victim in 92.9% of the cases in India. Women and children are being

Last December, New Delhi earned the black mark of being the rape capital of the world. On December 29th, 23-year-old rape victim Jyoti Singh died of her gruesome injuries. Two weeks earlier, on December 16th, a group of six men savagely beat her with an iron bar and raped her in a moving bus, causing serious head, abdominal and genital injuries. As never seen before, the New Delhi rape galvanized the entire country.

By any comparison, the New Delhi rape was a heinous crime. The public cried for justice; they called for tougher sentences for sexual crimes. Laws have been passed allowing sexual abuse cases to exact harsher punishment, including the death penalty in the case of rape leading to death. But the rapes continue.

Last February, during a trip to India, I began making a list of rape cases that were reported daily in the national newspapers. Sadly, in 25-30%



raped by men who are supposed to provide them protection, i.e. police, hotel staff, army men, college friends and neighbors.

Rape is not new to India. But gang rape is a new phenomenon. It's as if, all of a sudden, all social, ethical and moral controls have been thrown out.

The rape of Jyoti and its consequences that resulted in days and days of headlines in international media has created a perception that rapes and gang rapes happen only in India. Far from the truth. Sadly it is a global phenomenon. Mass rapes have been perpetrated by the Congolese army on their own women; a woman was raped, with a gun to her head, in a moving van in Brazil; and in July, a Norwegian woman was raped by her employer in the United Arab Emirates. In a bizarre twist, she was punished for having engaged in consensual sex and was put in jail.

In India, people avoid talking about the social and political milieu that feed violence against women. Rising cases of rapes and gang rapes are a culture-specific response to the changing socio-political structure of the country. Whenever a major tragedy occurs, there is a tendency to explain the incidents as evils instead of confronting the more serious questions: Why are we producing so many evils in the first place and why are there so many gang rapes in India?

Unfortunately, punishment alone will not act as a deterrent to rape and we will need more than quick justice if there is going to be a lasting change in public safety. The problem

of rape demands cultural change. And cultural changes are hard to come by. Not a single group raised their voice on why we have so many rapes happening in India. They think severe punishment will solve the problem of rape. Interestingly, many women groups in India thought otherwise; they are against the death penalty for rapists and maintain that the surety of punishment, rather than its severity, would be a more effective deterrent.

In his report, Justice Jagdish Verma remarked that "Women must enjoy freedom and should not be intended to act as carriers of 'perceived honor.'" Try telling that to the millions of poor, homeless, and shanty-town women whose daughters are snatched away from their arms in the middle of the night. They keep quiet because family honor is all that they have left.

I am proud to see that Indian youth, men and women took part side by side in their support of the Delhi rape victim. What is needed is a social revolution. The single most effective solution to the problem of violence against women would be to ignite the rage of women, all women – mothers and daughters, young and old, urban and rural. Women are the single most effective but underutilized social force in the world. Imagine if the women of India, from cities and slums, marched out from their homes and hamlets and demanded safety and security for themselves and their daughters. If women could rise, they have the power to do away with all forms of violence against them.

Stop Violence against Women: Campaign Canada

Rape is, of course, just one aspect of violence against women. A woman's life, not always the same woman, represents a cycle of violence – from birth to death, around the clock, around the globe. Some countries have more of one than the other, but they all have it. No country is an exception. Some of the most horrible and significant acts of violence committed against women are listed on the poster.

Violence against women, in all forms, is so pervasive worldwide that it has become embedded in the fabric of our society and is invisible. Most, if not all, cultures take pride in their women and do not see the injustices done against women in their own society. Until recently, all institutions have been, and most still are, sexist and they are aware of it.

Countries around the world are enacting legislations to empower women to protect them from violence as well as to help them in the areas of education, participation in politics, small business and social affairs. In spite of these legislations, however, hundreds of millions of women remain deprived of even the most rudimentary form of humane treatment and decency. For every one Jyoti, there are tens of thousands whose cries go unheard.

So, we need a multi-pronged approach to eliminate it - educational, social and political – to tackle this problem. Violence against women is a problem of men and it is more than the results of

a few uncivilized husbands or mad hoodlums. It is, in fact, the result of our society having gone mad and not realizing that what we need is an overhaul of our outdated norms of human behavior in regard to gender relations.

This year, Hamilton-based Gandhi Peace Festival's theme was: "Stop Violence against Women". A number of events were held, including a Malala Day, where a video of her speech at the United Nations was screened and a Skyped- community dialogue was held with her father in England. A one-day conference on "Stopping Violence Against Women" was held at McMaster University, and a follow up is being planned for International Women's Day in March to "walk the talk". This year, the Annual Gandhi Lecture was delivered by Ela Bhatt, Founder and President of SEWA (Self Employed Women's Association). Her topic was Women and Poverty: The hidden face of violence with social consent.

Canada is not free from violence against women. There are the unsolved cases of murdered or missing Aboriginal women of Canada. There is significant domestic violence in Canada, especially in the immigrant communities. Much of it is rooted in the cultural milieu of these communities.



Interview with Rami Chhabra
By Ajit Jain

Gender-Based Violence: System And Society

into focus a searing picture of discrimination and deprivation – higher mortality and morbidity of women and girls, lower life expectancy, a declining sex ratio, etc."

"Since then much has happened but unfortunately it has happened too slowly while not enough has happened to transform and make matters come right," explains Chhabra.

"Battle that was lost was waged again, thanks to Mahatma Gandhi, which brought women out of their homes and made them full participants."

Q: How do you react to two recent events of gang rapes in India?

A: These are not isolated episodes to look at. I am very concerned about the huge rising wave of crimes against women. There is a tremendous increase in these incidents. With regard to the tragedy in Delhi, there was an unprecedented outpouring of people into the streets condemning the tragedy. Both, because the crime was so brutal and horrific and also its circumstances, the timing just after an evening movie show and the fact of an ordinary young middle class couple seeking public transport on a busy road to go home, perhaps brought home to people in the city the possibility of something like this happening to anyone, anywhere, anytime. Because of this huge outcry we did get reform of the law.

The Verma Committee that was then set up to make recommendations did a tremendous job within its month's mandate. Thereafter, government too moved swiftly to enact. There have been substantive changes that have legally expanded and made more explicit the whole area of what constitutes sexual violence and the procedures to deal with matters arising from it. But

so much more still needs to be done.

More than anything else we also need to look at root causes. The rising crimes against women symbolize a breakdown of the social fabric and the rule of law. As I said earlier, these two incidents are not isolated. Such incidents are happening all over the country, all the time. I am not one of those who will buy the idea that such incidents are being reported more. They are in point of fact happening more. Why? That is what has to be examined and understood so that while we tighten the procedures for punitive actions, we work as much, if not more, on the preventive. There are a whole lot of things that have to be done – reforms in the police, streamlining the working of the judicial system, challenging unfair patriarchal traditions, these are matters out in open discussion now, although sadly there's slow remedial action. But I think we also have to look at other less discussed root causes - the kind of role being played by the hyper-sexualization of the country through a hyper-sexualised media, the gross commodification and objectification of women taking place across the media, the titillation and trivialization throughout satellite television and in most Bollywood/Hollywood films. Besides, the whole wave of pornography on the internet, even through cell phones and sleazy smut now widely available in the bazaars and streets.

I believe these issues are being swept under the carpet because vested interests are strong, although these constitute very significant factors in the breakdown of the social fabric.

Q: What do you say about the plight of women in India?

A: Women's issues have been at the forefront since the 70s. To begin with India's Constitution gave us a wonderful framework of equality – for the like of which women in the West had to battle for years. But the translation of the Constitutional intent and spirit, and the implementation of the laws framed under it, has been excruciatingly slow. It was in the 70s that we first realized this, that progress was bypassing the larger mass of women - issues that are now being talked about by

eminent people like Amartya Sen and others which have brought helpful renewed focus on women's issues in India. But much earlier, in the 70s, there was the report: Towards Equality, the report of the Committee of the Status of Women in India set up at the start of the seventies that placed the first comprehensive review of the situation of Indian women on the table in 1975, the first International Women's Year. It brought into focus a searing picture of discrimination and deprivation - higher mortality and morbidity of women and girls, lower life expectancy, a declining sex ratio, resulting in so many millions of women just "missing" – the huge demographic gap that in its one statistic expressed the suppressed, subordinate situation of the female sex in India, harsh to the extent of the decimation of large numbers. It triggered the second women's movement in India of which I am proud to have been a part. The first, as you know, was the freedom struggle itself.

Since then, much has happened. But unfortunately it has happened too slowly while not enough has happened to transform and make matters come right. So there is this situation that women continue to be still discriminated against in many ways by society; now further compounded by a severe commodification and objectification of women through the modern media, so that there is a pincer assault. Today, I am even more concerned about this latter aspect because not enough is being written or talked about it.

Q: During the 70s Indira Gandhi was the prime minister. Could she not as a woman bring about any reforms on women's issues?

A: Indira Gandhi never identified herself strongly with women's issues. She was a prime minister who happened to be a woman, that's all. It was only after 1975, when these issues came up in international fora with the United Nations' International Women's Year Conference in Mexico City and there was global attention that she too looked at them a little more carefully. So, I don't really link the fact of a woman at the helm of the country in India with substantive attention to the rights of women. So much more really happened

for women during the freedom struggle when Gandhiji brought women out of their homes and center stage in the freedom struggle with non-violence and satyagraha or the pursuit of truth as the weapons.

Q: As a woman prime minister, one would say she will have more sensitivity to women's issues.

A: For women at the helm – at that point of time – it was important not to be seen as particularly subjective to the sensitivities of their own sex. It was important for women to demonstrate they were competitive competent leaders and not lay any special emphasis on the fact of their being women and concerned about women's issues.

Around that time Golda Meir was Prime Minister of Israel and like Indira Gandhi she too was described as the only man in her cabinet.

The battle which was waged by women of my generation really came as a follow-up to the role and participation of masses of women in the freedom struggle which had gifted us constitutional equality. The way Mahatma Gandhi brought women out of their homes and made them full participants in the freedom struggle – there was enormous respect and recognition in society of women's contribution. Because of it a lot automatically happened for women at Independence. But then we came to realize that though much had been given there were huge gaps between precept and practice, the intent and reality, the situation of the few and the many. It was not going far enough. It was not penetrating down to the women working and toiling in the field and to the vast unorganized, invisibilised labor contributing to the country's growth. So much of it was also because of sheer poverty and women shouldering even more responsibilities in scarce conditions. The family was poor and deprived and within it the woman took the greater burden, while her contribution remained largely unrecognized, unquantified.

So, when this kind of realization came that was the beginning of a new battle for a whole new set up. We tried to get women's issues with specificity

into the planning process, special policies and programmes, institutions and mechanisms created to redress the imbalanced situation now that our eyes had been opened to what was happening. But in hindsight whatever was suggested, whatever was done failed to devise effective enough policies and programs to radically change the situation. A large segment of society has remained disadvantaged and discriminated and within it women are the doubly disadvantaged and discriminated against.

Q: Violence against women globally cuts against all strata of the society.

A: Yes, it happens all across. But when I am talking of poverty I am talking about the violence of the secondary situation, the unequal access to education, to the family's limited resources even in daily basics like food: the quiet violence of this discrimination when women and girls eat only after the men and boys have had their fill from amounts that are inadequate to start with, the gross malnutrition, morbidity and mortality that results. I am also talking about other root causes like the dowry phenomenon which makes a girl seem a liability – "paraya dhan", someone else's wealth as the people call a girl, a plant reared to bloom and yield fruit in another's garden. But dowry which women of my generation worked so hard to eradicate has in fact deepened in today's hedonistic consumption society. We said we wouldn't give dowries for our daughters and we wouldn't take dowries for our sons. We wouldn't go to weddings which are large, ostentatious, displays of conspicuous consumption. I, for one, swore never to go in a barat – the procession the bridegroom's family takes to the bride's family to be feted and fed, sometimes for days. I have kept that pledge for the last 35 years or more. I didn't organize a barat for my son's wedding, didn't accompany my various nephews' barats, although there was a lot of resentment within my family to that stand. But no matter such protests, it has gone the other way. Dowries have become bigger, the demands more crude. This is a huge factor in the denigration of women's status.

Q: This way and by aborting female fetuses women are joining hands with men in committing violence against women?

A: How can you blame the woman when there's so much of resentment against the birth of a girl? You can't blame the mother. You can't tackle female feticide in the wrong way. You can't go round and loudly proclaim that feticide is murder. We have termination of pregnancy as a woman's right. So, how can you say that this is her right to terminate pregnancy and then talk about feticide as murder? It confuses the issue. Also it jeopardizes the fundamental right of the woman to decide whether she wishes to bring an unintended pregnancy, unwanted for whatever reason, to become a continuing life-long responsibility that she finds herself unable to cope with.

As I keep saying the real battle should be against the root causes that make the female of the sexes less desired by society. Why do people not want more daughters? On one side, there is talk of the Hindu Dharma – and the term Hindu legally embraces several other faiths like Sikhs, Jains, etc – in which the tradition gives enormous respect to Kanya-daan, the giving away of the daughter in marriage as a high act of religious sanctity, so traditionally, sons were wanted but we wanted a daughter too.

Q: We wanted daughter too but we wanted more sons?

A: Yes, earlier many surveys showed the desired ideal family consisted of two sons and one daughter. You have to look at why this desire for a daughter has changed.

Q: But woman still continues to be inferior in the society.

A: That's exactly what I am talking about. We should look much more at the root causes. There's tremendous gender disparity and that's one of the root causes of this violence. There are now efforts to bridge this disparity. Education is one basic frontier for without equality in education discrimination and disparity in gainful employment and in holding positions of status and authority will

continue. Female literacy - terribly disadvantaged as we set out post-Independence – is therefore a primary building block. We realized this yet didn't do enough fast enough. More recently, there has been tremendous increase in enrolment of girls in education, gender parity has been achieved at the primary school level but this should have happened 40 years ago. We have come to do things. But too little, too late.

Q: What has been done since 1975, when you founded Streebal, to achieve the betterment of women in India?

A: Streebal is a very small organization. What we have done is to work continuously for the past more than forty years at the community level demonstrating one small model of multifaceted basic services for the local community; alongside we have carried out advocacy for women's policy issues at the national level. Major changes cannot come about through small organizations like Streebal. Here I have been talking about the political policy and program failures so that the greater mass of Indian women failed to be uplifted. Indeed, women have been let down by our political leaders in a major way, particularly in the past decades.

When you first asked me about Indira Gandhi being at the helm the point I was making was you don't need one woman at the helm. Women have to be present in critical numbers in the political processes to bring about a different perspective sensitive to women's particular requirements as a major national task. This alone would achieve the complete transformation of society for without galvanizing the full potential of that half of society - the women's force how can there be total national development and the betterment of all society? To achieve that vision of constitutional equality we need women's representation in significant numbers at all levels of the political process. It is a very important strategy.

Rajiv Gandhi did manage to bring in representation of women at the Panchayat – the grassroot local level. But it has remained an unfinished revolution, as all efforts to bring about

similar representation in the State Legislatures and the Parliament have failed. The battle has now gone on without success for more than 15 years. It is recognized as a key prerequisite to take the country forward.

Q: After sixty six years of independence, nobody has been able to do anything substantial so far?

A: We have done something but not enough.

Q: As a senior bureaucrat at the national level what were you able to do on women's issues?

A: I was ruled out, even in the narrow population field for which I was brought into government. One of the key matters I brought to the fore at that time was the whole issue of seriously implementing the minimum age of marriage. I am talking of 1986-89 when I served in Government of India at the invitation of the then Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, as Additional Secretary and Advisor in the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare. The idea was right but unfortunately it seems the time was not ripe for it then, more than 25 years ago. It is only now that the issue of teen/preteen brides and mothers is being internationally highlighted as unacceptable. But in the past 25 years two generations have lost out.

It was one of the first issues I took up – broadening family planning from the contraceptives approach - pointing out the far greater demographic significance of the inter-generational gap, as also the human rights issues at stake as girls married below the minimum age –losing out on their health and further development, getting locked into malefic cycles of repetitive childbearing and ill health. At that time I could launch a massive media campaign through galvanizing free air time on government television, radio and other field publicity channels that made the country widely aware of the legal age of marriage - 18 for girls and 21 for boys, but I could not secure the wide array of development programmes needed to back the communication thrust to bring real change at the ground level.

Even now nearly half of the girls are being married in their teens as the national mean age of marriage is only 20 and still more than half marry below the legal age of 18 in the populous Hindi heartland – Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, Rajasthan – the higher end of the mean age being contributed mostly by the southern states. There's not only a lot of teenage marriage still but also a loosening of sexual mores that is leading to growing pre-marital sex, a problem that was hardly an issue for Indian society earlier.

Q: How does one explain this difference between one part of the country with the other?

A: If you look at the literacy levels you will have that answer. Kerala is a good example as to how, due to high levels of literacy, social development could take place. In Tamil Nadu too social movements started right from the 60s that concentrated on education of the girls.

Q: What used to be your emphasis in your columns on 'Feminist Viewpoint' in the Indian Express?

A: Interestingly my column 'Feminist Viewpoint' in the late seventies/early eighties emphasized a great deal on political issues, political representation of women for one. I emphatically pointed out about the low representation of women in the whole political arena. These columns at that point of time served the purpose of promoting debate on the creation of institutions and mechanisms like the National Commission on Women, special policy plans for women's literacy, employment, that we thought would be useful to get this movement for equality off the ground.

Family Planning was another issue that I focused upon – the heightened vulnerabilities for women and children because of the post-Emergency neglect of the family welfare programme. But what I am now saying is that no matter what we wrote and spoke and did to try and bring about change in the end it hasn't amounted to much, to what should have been.

Q: You also attended women's international conferences. Through your interactions did you find that this gender-based violence is a global issue?

A: Yes, of course, and that's why we mustn't see it as India's particular problem – you know all these advisories about women's lack of safety seem almost racist sometimes. When you look at the global published figures of rape – and everywhere the published figures are just the tip of the iceberg – you see it is happening everywhere and that the figures are even far worse in the United States and some other parts of the western world. The police and justice systems there may be more efficient but that's not enough. Indeed there has been a tremendous backlash going on against women globally and I do not find the Western model anything that we need to ape.

The issue on which I am picking up again and again is the whole negative role of the electronic media in this post-modern information age society. The electronic media is now all pervasive in most societies, India included. And sadly the media is not playing a responsible role about sex which it uses blatantly as an instrument of its commerce. Media commodifies and objectifies women to such an extent in its images, programs and advertisements, that even though there may be some sensible debates on women's issues on one front, these are lost in the sea of denigrating imagery that distorts the scene, degrades women, deepens misogynist sexist male mindsets.

I firmly believe a lot of violence against women is happening because of the effect of this type of imagery that is a staple of the media.

Q: Would you say more Indian women are not reporting to the police when any form of violence occurs against them?

A: More and more women are stepping out and talking about it. But my question is: are we concerned about their talking about it or with ensuring that these things don't happen in the first place? If we are concerned that these things just don't happen then alongside the

streamlining of the legal system, the police, the help lines and other steps to protect women as they go about their business in the streets, we have also to decry this women-violative imagery encountered everyday in the media and the outright depravity of pornography online, coming right into our homes.

For years I have argued that India's political leadership should lead to ensure in international and technical fora that the issue of pornography is placed on par with issues of privacy and piracy that concern the West and industry. Unlike the US First Amendment, the Indian Constitution is clear that freedom of speech is a qualified right with restraints that protect public order and moral decency. It is incumbent upon us to find the ways to follow our own Constitution's directives and not plead helplessness before technologies coming in from outside. Now finally, because the British Prime Minister has finally taken up cudgels on the issue of child pornography there has been an Internet Summit and the senior-most leaders from Google and Microsoft have immediately fallen in line, agreed to initiate steps to block child pornography sites. They have placed a couple of hundred engineers on the task to ensure blockage of such sites and platforms and to explore improved technologies that can further help. This should have happened years ago. And it should happen not just for child pornography but all pornography. For pornography per se is degrading of values and debases women.

Q: According to the United Nations, one in three woman will be beaten or raped in her lifetime, which means over one billion women will experience some type of gender-based violence. So women are not safe anywhere.

A: Yes, but why are we not talking about the sex industry fueling a most pernicious outlook about sex and women? I have the feeling that the media is afraid of talking about it. Also about issues such as the global promotion of mal-strategies to tackle HIV/AIDS, strategies that have virtually linked in with the sex industry and the prophylactic and

pharmaceutical industries that stand to gain from a mechanistic value-neutral approach to preventing HIV/AIDS. It advocates non-judgmental attitudes – even the creation of enabling environment – for what is basically promiscuity, casual and commercial sex and therefore has contributed to the breakdown of social values and mores of sexual restraint and responsibility that were the pattern in most of the Asian countries.

I have documented this issue in my memoirs of my professional work: 'Breaking Ground: Journey Into the Media...and Out.' Some of us made enormous efforts over the past two decades to highlight these issues, pointing out years ago that the HIV/AIDS figures and projections were grossly and deliberately over-hyped and did not need the knee jerk reactions demanded by HIV/AIDS lobbies to "normalize" casual and commercial sex, the latter as "sex-work" and to promote the condom as a magic bullet for prevention. I for one, found to my horror, that when I began to focus on these issues - on the issue of the sex industry, the issue of pornography, the mal-formulated AIDS Control Program creating a paradigm shift in society to virtually legitimize if not legalize prostitution as "sex work" and the single-minded focus on condom-promotion almost like a magic bullet that could safeguard society from AIDS-spread - I found myself silenced both in the electronic media, in which I had had the presence and in the print media where I had had columns over the years. So I simply stopped writing as I didn't believe in writing on anything else when I couldn't do so on what I foresaw to be major destabilizing forces on our society.

Q: How has the attitude of the police and law enforcement agencies changed in regard to gender-based violence?

A: In the end, I would say there are lots of positive things that have also happened. We have now 100 per cent enrolment at the primary school level. One of the most heart warming sights that

you come across when you go out in the remote areas and mountain regions is of young girls in their school uniforms, backpacks filled with books, walking in knots of twos and threes to or from school. Young women in large numbers are now visible in very different and many areas of work. These are very positive sights. But if women are to emerge as a force in society, we will have to ensure their safety and security. We will have to combat the greater vulnerability that has also come about because society is crystallizing in another direction in such a negative manner. This other trend could setback the entire movement towards educational parity, later age at marriage, the ability of women to participate fully and freely in all avenues of work and life.

Hand-holding through terrible traumas is necessary but cannot ever substitute for ensuring the dangers do not arise. These are complex issues before us and we will have to deal with them in their complexity.

Q: You are optimistic?

A: No, at this point of time NO. I believe the problems are huge. The global media will pick up something and they will amplify it for a while but they are not looking at issues from our own context and understanding, from the way we need to bring about change in our own society here at this moment. Large sections of our media and society is on a plainly West-imitative path that has already proved far from satisfactory to thinking men and women in Western society. We need to re-find our own voice and perspective before we are colonised another time.



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The Roots Of Violence Against Women

women, and the particular brand of violence embedded in South Asian culture and tradition.

What struck me was that I did not read anywhere in the Indian press excuses that this kind of violence is a worldwide phenomenon. The few comments by politicians that attempted to dismiss the incident were harshly criticized. Rather, commentaries and letters in the press after the fatal and gruesome incident, which took place on a bus in urban Delhi, indicated shock and deep introspection: "Today, I am ashamed of being an Indian."

Both women and men in India reacted in a profound way that questioned the very foundations of Indian society. Within three months, the Indian parliament passed an impressive bill that expanded the definition of rape and imposed substantially increased punishment for criminals, as well as for police officers found to be neglectful. It criminalized offenses like stalking, voyeurism, acid attacks and other types of sexual violence previously dismissed as "eve-teasing." Never before had there been so much public outcry and demand for the severest punishment as for the perpetrators who were swiftly caught in this case: the death penalty, life imprisonment, 'bobbittization', chemical castration and so on. While news that the culprits would receive the death penalty (with the exception of one juvenile who was not tried as an adult) brought applause and euphoria in the streets of Delhi and other Indian cities, we have no reason to believe that such consequences will deter these types of crimes in the future. More importantly, these punishments do not do anything to address the root causes of violence against women.

What has more promise, on the other hand,

Since the horrific news of the gang rape and the violent death of a young woman in Delhi in December 2012, much has been written about women in India. A recent article in the New York Times by Ellen Barry started off by saying that the theme of violence against women in India is "sucking up all the oxygen this year." I agree and I think it is imperative to keep up this momentum. I arrived in India on the same day that the infamous Delhi gang rape incident took place. Over the next six weeks that I was in the country, the Indian media as well as foreign channels reflected the shock that rippled across the globe.

Women's inferior status to men and their relative powerlessness is a global phenomenon. Rape, even gang rape, happens in all societies and classes, and this could have happened anywhere in the world. In fact, this incident brought to the forefront the global issue of violence against

were the calls for sensitization of youth by upper levels of government, resulting in a focus on the school curriculum and the introduction of human rights and gender studies as an elective course in classes XI and XII. In addition, values education and gender sensitivity are to be introduced from the early school years. Teachers need training in critical methods to impart values of gender equality. Handbooks may be hardly enough to fully sensitize even the teachers to existing inequalities because these are so deeply embedded in 'traditional' South Asian society that they have been 'normalized'. Custom and religion are used as the rationale to perpetuate differential treatment and violence against women.

That religion is used to justify deeply rooted patriarchy in South Asian society is illustrated by the recent ban of the book *My Name is Malala* in schools in Pakistan. The book is by the 16-year-old activist for women's rights and education, who stunned the world when she raised her voice in multiple platforms after surviving an attack by the Taliban in the Swat Valley in Pakistan. The authorities in Pakistan called her a tool of the West and declared that her book is designed to eradicate the values of Islam. Women's empowerment is often dismissed as Westernization.

In the largest South Asian country, India, the population is made up of a diversity of religions and Hindus make up the majority. In his 1954 book *The Wonder That Was India*, A.L. Basham wrote that the Indian woman is "at once a goddess and a slave." Yes, indeed: for Hindus, the goddess Lakshmi is a symbol of wealth; Saraswati is an icon of wisdom; Durga is the supreme power representing the victory of good over evil; and Kali, the fierce aspect of the goddess Durga, is an annihilator of evil forces. These images do not translate, however, into an exalted status for women in Indian society.

The irony that wealth, wisdom and power should be represented by women in a country where the majority of women suffer indignities in their daily lives, and increasingly face violence in many forms, was recently brought out in an ad campaign during an annual festival devoted to the goddess Durga. The advertisement highlighted violence against women by using a shocking

image that showed three of the above goddesses with battered faces. Despite controversy surrounding the appropriateness of this ad, many women thought it made an important point: rather than be treated symbolically as goddesses, women need to be treated with dignity as human beings in real life and not subjected to violence in its many forms.

Internationally, India ranks 132 out of 187 countries on the gender inequality index, according to the United Nations Development Program's Human Development Report 2013. Reasons for ranking just above Afghanistan and lowest among other South Asian countries is partly due to its skewed sex ratio, with only 914 females for every 1000 males, according to Indian government data – an index of prenatal selective violence against females. India also fares badly in terms of women's education and health, as huge gender inequalities in income and caste remain major issues. Despite a strong women's movement that initiated progressive legislation and many positive changes, and the election of 1.4 million women in local self-government at the village level panchayats (village councils), the fundamental problem of women's devaluation still has not been tackled. This is why Indian girls and women are so vulnerable to sexual violence. The fundamental root is embedded in an asymmetry of power tilted against women in Indian - indeed in all South Asian societies.

Violence against women is rooted in patriarchy. Throughout history, difference has been used as a justification for subordination, be it colonization, slavery or modern versions of racism, sexism, and other forms of discrimination. Women continue to endure sexism, and despite increased literacy rates the world over and higher levels of education, women still have lower status as compared to men in all societies.

The Indian woman's situation is complex due to several layers of hierarchy in society, and women are caught in a patriarchal web of feudal traditions. The position of women in India must be understood in the larger context of society and the social relations within which they exist. Not only is there a very complex diversity in regional, urban/rural, cultural and religious factors, there are also very wide economic, class

and caste disparities. This means that there are stark regional and socio-economic differences on how girls are treated within families. Regardless of religious differences, there is a common Indian culture in which several Hindu practices, such as caste and dowry, have permeated the practices of other religious groups also. For example, notwithstanding that dowry has been illegal in India since 1961 (Dowry Prohibition Act) and criminally punishable since 1983, its demand is increasing and dowry deaths are rising. Dowry related violence is not confined to rural areas and the poor or to Hindus. It is common even in states like Kerala, which has the highest literacy rate; and it has become customary even among Muslims and Christians in India. This illustrates how, on the whole, societal attitudes of both men and women are still largely traditional and influenced by the patriarchal system. As Martha Nussbaum has pointed out, the causes of women's misery in India are the interrelationships between culture, custom and tradition.

Although globalization has brought tremendous changes to India in terms of economic prosperity, this has not significantly changed the traditional patriarchal values. The impact of capitalism has intensified with globalization, and dowry is a vital source of income for families that are upwardly mobile and want to own consumer goods at all costs. Studies show that about 80% of dowry related violence occurs in the lower middle class, which is upwardly mobile. The groom's parents make outrageous demands to the bride's parents before the marriage for the payment of dowry; and even after marriage, the demands often continue, often times resulting in abuse of the bride when these demands are not met. The need for more money among those who aspire to more can be related to dowry, violence against women, female infanticide, and the devaluation of females. The attraction of consumer culture and social mobility increases the need for more money for consumer products.

The urgent need for economic goods brought about by globalization has escalated the situation that makes girls an economic burden for parents and a source of dowries for those who have boys. And, unfortunately, there is still plenty of statistical evidence of women's lower value/status

in society. Data indicate a dramatic increase in female child marriages (often before 14), early childbirth, infanticide, dowry deaths, rape and violence, and a declining female population even when these incidences are underreported. Not only is the preference for a boy demonstrated before birth through acts such as feticide, and after birth as infanticide, but also the differential treatment of young girls and boys ultimately escalates to severe discrimination of adult women in society. Yet statistics cannot relay the stigma, the blame, and the psychological effects of violence, or the qualitative effects of the lack of nutrition, disease, and overwork. This obnoxious cluster is responsible for the fact that India has one of the highest rates of death of women during childbirth; higher, even, than in sub-Saharan countries.

Other factors also stand out in the violence against women in South Asia in general and India in particular. Social and cultural diversity means that the position of women varies from area to area and that progressive changes are not equally accepted. This results in differences in opportunities for education and employment.

But beyond the patriarchal culture, the devaluation of women persists because women themselves are partially responsible for its continuation in Indian society. Amartya Sen, among others, has pointed out that gender inequality survives and flourishes because women themselves perpetuate it. In India, traditional inequalities and violence against women continue because both women and men discriminate against women by supporting traditional beliefs without questioning them. For example, both men and women get involved in dowry crimes, sex selective abortions and the preference for a boy, as well as in strict behavioral control of girls. And both sexes have traditionally upheld sacrifice as a woman's greatest virtue.

As patterns of values, morality, and honor are rooted in beliefs and cultural constructs, Indian women's consciousness is still influenced by the traditional ideal of femininity, which bargains women's subservience for an imagined esteem and respect. It is a paradox that token women have come to hold top positions in the country (Indira Gandhi is just one example), as the majority

is among the most underprivileged in the world. Why, for instance, does India have the largest number of illiterate women in the world? After all, numerous laws exist to protect women's rights; India has ratified UN conventions that protect women; and the Indian Constitution has enshrined very progressive rights for downtrodden groups of people, including women. Clearly, the failure is in implementation in the face of cultural constraints and a reluctance to educate girls, especially in rural areas, where most of India lives.

The majority of Indian women, even educated ones, accept their lot without question. Indian women are now more aware of access and opportunity, but they still accept the patriarchal framework of male responsibility for social control and upholding family honor through female chastity. This indicates that morality in India is still defined in sexual terms. So, women and girls may potentially bring dishonor to the "clan" or extended family if they show "independence" in controlling their own sexual roles and making decisions about their lives. Such thinking pervades social norms, even if modernization and globalization are changing attitudes towards marriage, education, and employment. Thus, girls internalize attitudes based on normative social beliefs and perpetuate traditional attitudes, behavior, and practices.

Similarly, feudal codes of morality are measured by female chastity, not by corruption, deceit or criminal activity. With a rapidly growing middle class and large-scale rural migration to cities, village moral codes are brought to urban areas within the country (and even to other countries). Khap panchayats exert great power in the rural areas, and these codes of morality involve tight control over women's conduct and mobility. Such restrictions are brought to urban spaces, and shame and ostracization are used as tactics to force girls and their families into compliance. But globalization has a paradoxical effect because it is also spurring on economic mobility and the empowerment of women, Indian men – who have traditionally drawn their power from "masculine" forms such as strength, vigor and family honor – are feeling more emasculated and thus humiliated. This helps to explain the preponderance of violence against women: it is an attempt to keep women in "their place".

At the same time, it is because of these patriarchal values that most instances of violence

against women are hushed up, as they would bring dishonor to the family or clan. Countless rape cases result in the suicide of the victim or the father of the victim, who feel that they cannot face the societal stigma. Yet the availability of technology and consumer goods, and the creation of "needs" for them through the media, has only accelerated violence against women in all classes of society. Whereas poor, lower caste women in rural areas are perhaps most vulnerable, the stranglehold of patriarchy may indeed be strongest among the middle classes. This is because the hypocrisy of "silence" surrounding the Indian family, which strives to preserve its public image of sanctity at all costs, makes violence against middle class women so difficult to deal with and to change.

What is more, violence against Indian women is certainly not confined to urban centers within India itself. For example, a recent report (October 2013) released by the Conseil de statut de la Femme in Quebec points out that violence against women, such as through forced marriages and honor killings, is increasing in Quebec and in the rest of Canada, along with other forms of violence. But according to the report, honor killings involving beating, stabbing, shooting, or strangulation tend to be linked to immigrant groups from patriarchal cultures such as India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka. These crimes are notable in that, like dowry killings, members of the family are complicit. Contrary to the popular image of honor killings among Muslims, these killings also take place in Hindu, Sikh and other families.

Finally, we must recognize the danger of another key factor related to trends in violence against women: India's declining sex ratio. A low male-to-female sex ratio indicates fewer girls than boys and India has a disproportionately low number of female births in comparison to the normal ratio of 105 girls to every 100 boys. There are various causes for fewer girls than boys, but sex ratios at birth or among the adult population may be considerably skewed by sex-selective abortion and infanticide, which are the two major causes for the shocking statistics on the imbalance in the population in India. Other less dramatic causes are related to day-to-day social and cultural practices, such as poorer nutrition and health care for females as compared to males.

In the 1990s, Amartya Sen raised the alarm

about the phenomenon of what he called "missing women" to draw attention to the devaluation of Indian women at every stage of their lives, including fetal development. Others have simply called this genocide. That is because estimates of missing women who should be part of the population but have been aborted or killed range from 50-70 million. Before birth, amniocentesis is used with an ultrasound machine to detect the female fetuses, which are then aborted. Although this is forbidden by the Pre-natal Diagnostic Tests (PNDT) Act, instituted on January 14, 2003, it is hard to implement due to the lack of co-operation by medical professionals who make a lot of money on this practice. Demographer Ashis Bose calls sex selective abortion the unholy alliance between tradition (preference for boys) and technology (ultrasound machines). But even after birth, female infanticide is common. Although the United Nations estimates about 100 million missing females in the world, the largest numbers are attributed to India and China. In some of the richest states in India, for instance, certain villages report as few as 300 females per 1000 males. That this practice should also be widely practiced in China shows that it exists irrespective of religion.

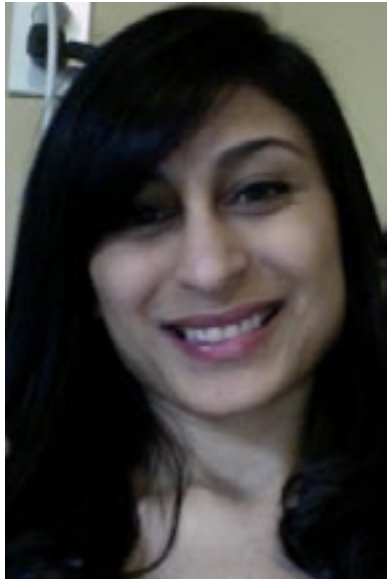
What is worse, there is evidence that even educated women show a preference for boys, and crimes of female feticide are highest among women with university degrees. In fact, research has found a positive correlation between educated parents' preferences for small family size and male children. In addition, mostly educated people who can afford technologies for sex-selection are using easy access to medical technology. This means that education plays a paradoxical role, as the education of women in India does not necessarily develop women's voice if it fails to promote the freedom or ability to challenge their subservience. The combination of disposable income, the availability of certain medical technology, and the injection of consumerism into traditional attitudes towards women and family has produced a lethal recipe for Indian women and for Indian society.

In effect, the surplus of men and the shortage of women in Indian society does not lead to positive consequences for women, even if economists might suggest that the value of resources increases as they become scarce. On the contrary, India's low sex ratio has created a subclass of young adults because only men with

money, education, and jobs are able to marry; leaving the illiterate, unskilled, and poor without mates. And these unmarried men are potentially violent. The media is replete with suggestions that the alarming rise in rape cases in India is related to the boredom of unemployed young men who are "out having fun" or make a game of it. The recent horrific gang rape of a young journalist in Mumbai (several months after the Delhi rape case) exemplifies the routine nature of the repeated crimes against silent victims. But crimes of violence against women often get dismissed in courts and the criminals go unpunished.

If India is to be a successful economic power and democracy, it cannot continue to marginalize approximately half of its population, who live in fear of the alarming increase in rape and other cases of sexual violence. Inequality may be ingrained in all South Asian societies, and legislation can go a long way in helping women. But legislation cannot immediately change deeply entrenched attitudes, especially with public education systems that are uncritical and substandard. The basic ability to read and write is necessary but not sufficient to develop an agency for challenging discrimination and brutality. Education should not merely give a voice to the voiceless, but connect their voices to political strategies aimed at social change.

A multi-pronged approach is needed, but gender equity (balance in power relations) is the single most important factor in changing the status of women. Indian women are slowly beginning to exercise their own choice in marriage partners, unlike those in previous generations, whose choices were almost exclusively made by their families. The profound reaction to the Delhi gang rape created a momentum for stricter laws, and even attempts at gender sensitization in schools in India. These are necessary but certainly not sufficient conditions to provoke genuine change in attitudes towards women. As Nehru said, 'No people, no group, no community, no country, has ever got rid of its disabilities by the generosity of the oppressor... (women) will have to fight for their rights'. Intergenerational solidarity and cooperation among women is essential in gaining voice and agency in making decisions affecting their lives. Women must help themselves by challenging the social system that renders them powerless.



The Reality Of Intimate Partner Violence In India

of abuse. In fact, most women cite more than one occasion of abuse, and often frequent events (WHO, 2005; Ghosh, 2007).

Investigations about violence against women have attempted to illuminate conditions under which violence in India appears to be accepted. The second National Family Health Survey (NFHS) reported astonishing statistics regarding women's beliefs about violence: 40% felt violence was justified if the house or children were neglected, 37% if husbands were not informed of whereabouts, 34% if in-laws were disrespected, and 7% if natal families did not comply with a husband's demands for money (IIPS and ORC Macro, 2000).

Independent studies in men report similar findings. An Uttar Pradesh study found that two thirds of the men interviewed felt their wives should heed their instructions and 25% felt physical violence was justified if this was not the case (Evaluation Project, 1997). Another study found that almost 80% of the men interviewed justified violence if their wives were sexually unfaithful, 75% if wives were disrespectful to family elders, and 77% if wives were disrespectful to them (Duvvury, Nayak & Allendorf, 2002).

What are the implications on health?

Globally, the health burden from violence against women between the ages of 15 and 44 is comparable to the burden from HIV, tuberculosis, cancer or cardiovascular disease in the same age group (Jejeebhoy, 1998). Intentional deaths have often been a focus of studies characterizing violence against women. In India, a 2009 study by Sanghavi, Bhalla & Das estimated 106,000 out of 163,000 fire-related deaths to have occurred in

women between the ages of 15 and 34. The authors purported domestic violence as a contributing factor to these deaths (Sanghavi, Bhalla & Das, 2009). In 2004, Mohanty, Panigrahi, Mohanty and Das assessed 162 homicides, 39 of which were female victims, and found victims to have most frequently been killed by their spouses. Argument (33%) and dowry (31%) were the most common reasons. Furthermore, a majority of victims (85%) were killed in their home (Mohanty, Panigrahi, Mohanty & Das, 2004). Children are sometimes accidental victims and suffer from injuries intended for their mothers. A study conducted at a pediatric practice of 553 mothers found that children of abuse victims were 57 times more likely to be harmed than other children (Parkinson, Adams, & Emerling, 2001; Plitcha, 2001).

Aside from the implications for physical health, there appears to be a consistent relationship between worsened general health and abuse. In a national study of women younger than 65, women who have experienced abuse were more likely to rate their own health as fair or poor (Plitcha, 2004). Additionally, evidence from literature suggests that victims of abuse are also more likely to display poor health behaviors, such as smoking, use of prescription drugs, and drinking alcohol (Plitcha, 2001). Evidence linking violence to mental ill-health in India is limited but studies from other parts of the world have suggested that perhaps the most long-lasting and persistent effects of violence are mental health outcomes such as depression, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), and suicidal behavior (Patel, Rodrigues & DeSouza, 2002; Golding 1999). While some instances of existing depression may be exacerbated by incidents of violence, evidence shows that first episodes of depression can be triggered by such violence and evidence of depression lessening with decreased incidents of IPV (Campbell, 2002).

Who is at risk?

Although violence spans boundaries of race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status (SES), there are certain high risk groups (Crowell & Burgess, 1996). These groups comprise of women between the ages of 16 and 30 years (Guth & Pachter, 2000), women who are pregnant (Zillmer, 2000), and women who have a prior history of abuse. Additionally, substance abuse by the perpetrator and their experience of childhood abuse also contributes to increased risk (Guth & Pachter, 2000). Data from the NFHS suggest that affluent women are less likely to experience violence, but this should be interpreted with caution because women from a higher SES may be less likely to disclose abuse (INCLIN, 2000). Other insights from the NFHS II include: women residing in urban areas of India report less abuse than women living in rural areas (17% compared with 23%, respectively) and women with no education report a greater experience of violence than women who have completed high school (26% compared to 9%, respectively) (IIPS & ORC Macro, 2000).

What should be done to prevent violence?

Violence against women is a multimodal problem and therefore needs to be addressed through various avenues. From a healthcare perspective, screening for IPV by primary care practitioners can identify victims of abuse and promote the healthcare setting as a resource for those experiencing violence (Astbury et al., 2000; Taket, Wathen, & MacMillan, 2004; Yam, 2000). There are concerns about the potential harm from screening women who may not be ready to disclose abuse (Taket et al., 2004). Screening may make her feel uncomfortable and can discourage her from confiding in physicians in the future. Violence can also be worsened if the perpetrator became aware of the disclosure. Studies designed to systematically explore

whether screening led to a reduction in violence have been undertaken. McFarlane and colleagues as well as Krasnoff & Moscati reported statistically significant reductions in violence over time and a corresponding increase in safety behaviors after screening and referral (McFarlane et al 1998; McFarlane et al 2000; Krasnoff & Moscati, 2002). But a randomized control trial could not replicate this reduction (MacMillan et al., 2009). Although recommendations regarding universal screening (MacMillan, Wathen, & The Canadian Task Force on Preventive Health Care, 2001; Ramsay, Richardson, Carter, & Feder, 2001; Ramsay, Richardson, Carter, Davidson, & Feder, 2002) are unclear, screening in women considered high risk is supported by the medical and academic communities (Ramsay et al., 2002; Taket et al., 2004).

In the legal realm, it is imperative that laws which acknowledge various forms of violence and which offer women legal protection be proposed and implemented. Additionally, employees and arbiters of the law, such as police officers and judges, should be sensitized to the issue of violence against women. Attention should also be given to developing and popularizing mandatory behavioral programs aimed at perpetrators of violence. Ultimately, it is important to recognize that women are the experts of their own lives and should be empowered to make healthy life decisions.

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Statistical Information

(all based on published sources)

UN Statistics reveal one in three women will be beaten or raped in their lifetime which means over one billion women will experience some type of gender-based violence. It means women are not safe anywhere.

Intimate Partner Violence is a global issue. One in every two people so victimized are either from India or China.

On average, every six days a woman in Canada is killed by her intimate partner. In 2009, 67 women were murdered by a current or former spouse or boyfriend.

Every 17 minutes a woman in Canada has intercourse against her will.

On any given day in Canada, more than 3,000 women (along with their 2,500 children) are living in an emergency shelter to escape domestic violence.

Each year, over 4,000 arrests result from domestic violence – that's about 12% of all violent crime in Canada. Since only 22% of all incidents are reported to the police, the real number is much higher.

Domestic violence is the leading cause of injuries to women between 15 to 44 years of age.

In 2011, 85% of victims of spousal homicides were women.

80% of sexual assaults happen in victims' own homes.

62% of the victims are physically injured in attacks.

A woman is beaten every 15 seconds.

A report in the Toronto Star reveals that less than 0.5% of sexual assaults result in conviction in Canada. There were 460,000 sexual assaults in 2004 of which the police recorded only 21,821. Only 8,279 people were charged; there were 1,994 sexual assault prosecutions per year.

Another disturbing part, Toronto Star reveals, is that police in Ottawa refused to press charges in sexual assault investigations, dubbing the allegations 'unfounded' more than 30 per cent of the time.

One in five Indian women who are married report physical abuse.

1.6 million women die from violence yearly – global figures

25% men justify physical violence against women

80% men justify violence if their wives were sexually unfaithful

163,000 fire-related deaths of women occur in India each year

In urban areas of India, one out of 10 women who are subjected to intimate partner violence report to the police. In rural areas, this number is one in 20 women victims of violence and rape report to the police.

Dr. Mohit Bhandari, Trauma Surgeon at McMaster University in Hamilton (Ontario), says, "There's no evidence that alcohol or mental illness causes men to be violent against women. Men who assault their partners rarely assault their friends, neighbors, bosses or strangers.

Dr. Prabhat Jha, Director of Global Health Research at St. Michael's Hospital in Toronto, disagrees. He's asking for a ban on after hour sales of alcohol or binge drinking in India.

He disagrees that will reduce violence against women.



