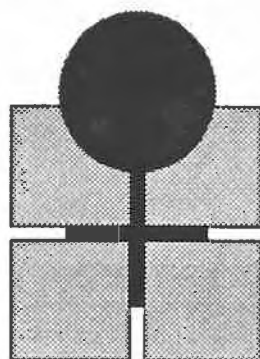


Feminist Research, Education, Development and Action Centre



FREDA

**SPOUSAL ABUSE IN THE
SOUTH ASIAN COMMUNITY**

Research conducted by:

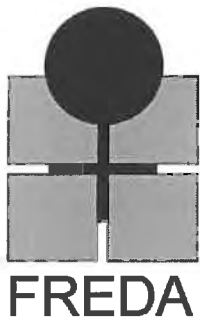
**Raminder Dosanjh
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For:

The India Mahila Association

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Feminist Research, Education, Development & Action Centre

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SPOUSAL ABUSE

Experiences Of 15 Canadian South Asian women



A Report
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August, 1994

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	1
2. RECOMMENDATIONS.....	6
3. INTRODUCTION TO INDIA MAHILA ASSOCIATION	10
4. INTRODUCTION TO THE REPORT.....	13
5. METHODOLOGY	15
6. PROFILE OF THE VICTIM.....	17
7. PROFILE OF THE ABUSERS	20
8. EXTENDED FAMILY.....	22
9. TYPES OF ABUSE.....	25
10. CIRCUMSTANCES OF ABUSE.....	28
11. IMPACT OF ABUSE.....	31
12. REPORTING ABUSE.....	35
13. SERVICES/SUPPORT.....	38
<i>FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE AND SUPPORT</i>	38
<i>GENERAL ASSISTANCE AND SUPPORT</i>	38
<i>FAMILY AND FRIENDS</i>	41
<i>TRANSITION HOUSE</i>	42
<i>POLICE</i>	43
<i>IMMIGRANT SERVICE AGENCY</i>	44
<i>WOMEN'S ORGANIZATION AND MEDIA</i>	45
<i>LEGAL HELP</i>	46
<i>FIRST APPEALS FOR HELP, AND WHY</i>	48
14. SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENTS.....	50
15. FURTHER RECOMMENDATIONS BY THE RESEARCH TEAM	51
16 REFERENCES	53
17. APPENDIX I.....	55
18. APPENDIX II.....	65

SOUTH ASIAN WOMEN AND SPOUSAL ABUSE

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

This report portrays the experiences of fifteen Canadian women living in the Lower Mainland area of Vancouver all of who were abused by their husbands, partners and in some cases their extended families. The women who participated in this study to share their perspectives of the abuse suffered in their relationships, demonstrated an extraordinary level of strength and courage in trying to overcome the severity and the complexity of the abuse and its impact on their lives.

The responses of the women in the interviews were very inclusive and addressed issues of immigration, settlement and integration process of immigrant women, role of extended family and the community in their lives, the availability of resources and support, the division of power and control in their relationships and the resulting inequities. They also addressed some of the needs and barriers they faced as victims of violence.

One of the major barriers identified by the women was their dependency on their husbands which was determined from the outset of their relationship. All except one of the women came to Canada as sponsored immigrants and while five were sponsored by a close relative, nine out of the fourteen were sponsored directly by their husbands. In these cases, the husbands abandoned their responsibilities of sponsorship support to help settle their wives in Canada. Instead, they transformed the sponsorship into a form of new power over their wives. The result created nearly insurmountable inequity in their relationship and made the women socially, psychologically and financially dependent on their husbands.

Another barrier that emerged from the sponsorship in the cases of these women is their multi-level dependency on their husbands and the resulting isolation of the women from the rest of society. This severely limited their decision-making powers. They were confined to designated contacts with only their husband's family and circle of friends. In the absence of their own extended family and with no accessibility to community networks to which they could turn for support, these women had very little opportunity to develop their own personal and social base.

On the other hand, majority of the husbands were sponsored by members of their own extended family. The husbands had stronger personal, social and financial positions in place upon their arrival to Canada and they were in no way dependent on their wives before or during the marriage.

Many of the women we interviewed also faced linguistic and cultural isolation due to their limited knowledge of resources available. These barriers further limited the women's participation in the broader Canadian community. The women cited that they did not know who to go to for help since they had limited opportunity to become informed and to develop relationships outside the extended family.

The dominance and control exercised by the women's husbands and their families, lack of language skills and familiarity with the Canadian society and resources available, all generated a multitude of fears in these women. They felt paralysed and trapped in their circumstances. We believe it was one of the reasons for the length of time they remained in the abusive relationships without reporting.

Through misinformation and manipulation, the women were told that if they took

action, they would suffer even more. Several of the women were told that they would have no money to live on, and if they applied for social assistance, they would not be able to sponsor their own family members to Canada.

They were also told that they would lose custody of their children and receive no share of their family assets. As the women had little or no knowledge of their rights and no one to turn to, these threats served as an effective control over them. In fact, the husbands became even more controlling during the abuse. The women's communications or interactions were closely monitored. In some cases, the husbands feared that the women may be influenced by the outside world and therefore prevented them from such things as watching television programs that provided basic information about women or resources available to women in crisis.

It was evident that the abuse had severe consequences for the women. They came to Canada, into a new relationship, family, community, and a new way of life. To leave behind their loved ones and everything familiar took a great deal of sacrifice, courage and trust, only to become victims of violence.

The reporting of the abuse thrust them into yet another unknown territory of different languages, values, customs, and way of life. Some viewed it as a refuge, while others viewed it as a displacement. This new world presented many difficult and overwhelming challenges for the women. New information to process, actions to take, and decisions to make. These challenges came at a time when they felt the most vulnerable and powerless.

To compound the circumstances, most of the women were solely responsible for their children. Some of the children had also been abused, while others witnessed the abuse faced

by their mothers. These children were in need of additional comfort and help. In two cases, the children were older and suffered serious depression as a result of the abuse against their mothers. The mothers stated their children were in need of professional services. Due to the nature and scope of our study we were unable to deal with these needs and services.

The options for the women were substantially more limited than for their husbands. For those who were employed, the women's employment was disrupted and unstable due to the abuse. Many of the women who worked outside of the home suffered from additional job related stress, low self-esteem, health problems, lack of child care, transportation, and emotional support. For those who were not employed, finding a job without appropriate training and Canadian experience, while caring for their young children presented many difficult challenges. Unlike their husbands, they were unable to look to their employment for security and stability.

The husbands were not forced to face any of the realities after the abuse. Their employment was not disrupted during or after the abuse. They continued to maintain their financial security. The majority of the husbands remained in their homes after the abuse.

As well, the husbands were not responsible for the day to day care of their children. Many did not take on the financial responsibility for the children until it went through a court process. Even then, some of them managed to avoid child support. The husbands were also able to hire legal counsel of their choice to defend them in court proceedings, whereas, many of the abused women turned to Legal Aid, which limited their choice of counsel.

Even when the husbands were charged for assaulting their wives, there were no convictions. In many cases, the women dropped the charges due to pressure from their

husband's family members. Lack of information about the legal system further impaired the women from exercising their rights.

Although there seems to be little mention of the children in these relationships, it was very clear that the women were solely responsible for them with very little assistance from the husbands. It appeared that the women often shared the pain and suffering with their children. If they were feeling it the children were feeling it. The women did not see the children as being excluded from their experience.

In several cases, the women feared that the husbands would take the children and not let them have access. Others feared that the children would be sent to India and they would have even fewer rights to the children particularly the male children. Since the grandmothers often play a significant role in child rearing, some of the women felt that the men would make the grandmothers take over the role of the mother.

Two of the mothers expressed deep pain and guilt because they felt they were not able to withstand the suffering for the sake of their children and their future. They also expressed remorse that when their children wanted their attention or wanted them to play, that they were always too preoccupied with their problems, and therefore unable to do so. In both these cases, it was observed that the mothers tended to give in to the child's demands even when they felt the child displayed inappropriate behaviour.

In conclusion, in the cases of the women who participated in this study, their partners, the extended family that they married into, the community and the society at large all posed different types of barriers for the women. As well, the barriers merged into one another making it even more difficult for the women to begin to address the situation.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

All of the women who participated in this study strongly agreed that violence in their lives remains a serious issue for them because it has robbed them of their dignity and has left permanent scarring on their lives. However, upon reflection, many of the women felt that the men needed counselling to deal with their problems and others felt that the ownership of violence against women should be broadened to include the extended family, community, and government.

Some recommendations made by the women are as follows:

- 1) Lack of information for women in general and immigrant women in particular was highlighted as one of the key areas of concern. As a preventative measure, they urged that information on their rights be made available and accessible. For those who lacked language and employment skills, it was suggested that information be offered in the different languages by means that are accessible to the grassroots.
- 2) Information needs to be more accessible before the abuse takes place to prevent those in positions of power from controlling and victimizing the women.
- 3) They also expressed the need for public education for abusers and the community.
- 4) Majority of the women expressed a strong sense of social humiliation after the abuse. Their feelings were directly linked to how they felt the community would view their situation. Most of the women felt there was a strong belief in the community that if the women failed in their marriages then they failed in their community. They felt that the women are left carrying all the burden, pain, guilt of the abuse as well as living in a cloud of shame. It is the women who are disfranchised from the community and not the men who abuse them. The women stated that the community leadership must help to shift the burden from the women to the abuser by taking an active position against violence against women.

- 5) The women felt that the community needs to introduce an important value of "zero" tolerance to violence against women and children. Only then, will the women in the community feel valued and validated and be able to reclaim their sense of identity and sense of belonging in the community.
- 6) The established community organizations can also assist by providing the emotional, social and financial support to women and children who are victims of violence. The women cited the role of women's organizations as extremely important particularly in empowering women by providing information, education and support specific to women's needs.
- 7) The participants had mixed responses about the services they used. It was evident by their responses that they had very little idea as to what to expect from the services. Some women indicated they faced language and cultural barriers when dealing with the services. Others expressed concern about confidentiality and thus chose to go to someone outside their community for assistance.
- 8) Some of the women felt very strongly that the government should have stronger punishment for men who abuse their wives and children. None of the men in these cases faced a conviction for abusing their wives.

FURTHER RECOMMENDATIONS BY THE RESEARCH TEAM

1. Comprehensive handbook (updated yearly) for women in simple language with information on topics such as:
 - a. Definition and types of violence
 - b. Progressive nature of violence and how to survive it.
 - c. Help and resources available for victims and their children.
 - d. Consequences of laying and not laying charges.
 - e. Rights and obligations.
 - f. Treatment and counselling programs for abusers.
2. Above information also needs to be disseminated in various languages and through popular media in order to reach the broader grassroots community, particularly those at risk, directly.
3. Comprehensive training dealing with issues of racism, homophobia, confidentiality and professionalism for all workers working with victims of abuse.
4. Mainstream service agencies must also take more responsibility in hiring and training staff that can cater to South Asian women's needs linguistically and

culturally.

5. Public Education to empower women, raise awareness in the community and promote zero tolerance on the issue of violence against women.
6. Funding for educational programs focussing on prevention and early intervention aimed at victims, abusers and those at risk.
7. Volunteer grassroots women's organizations with a track record of opposing violence be funded so they can effectively be involved in:
 - a) Helping raise awareness on the issue of violence against women with a focus on prevention.
 - b) Providing direct support to women who are victims and those who are in vulnerable position instead of having them listen to answering machines.
 - c) Empowering women so they are not vulnerable to exploitation..
 - d) Developing comprehensive programs to deal with violence against women.
8. Orientation for women in their countries of origin prior to immigrating and upon arrival in Canada, regarding their rights and obligations, be provided as a preventative measure. This information should also be provided verbally to ensure that those with poor or no literacy skills get the information directly and are not left at the mercy of their potential abusers to acquire it. This can be done in a cost effective manner in groups sessions.
9. Transition houses work closely with grassroots South Asian women's organizations to develop a comprehensive strategy to:
 - a) Develop culturally appropriate training for workers.
 - b) Make the houses more accessible and comfortable for South Asian women.
 - c) Reach out to the South Asian Canadian women and understand their situation.
 - d) Hire staff that is linguistically and culturally sensitive to the South Asian women's needs.
10. Ongoing and sufficient funding to services providing support to victims of violence so the workers get decent wages and staff turnover is minimized.
11. Coordination and Standardization of Services with some accountability mechanisms in place so gaps in services are assessed continually and services are provided by qualified staff.
12. Areas that need to be explored further:
 - a. Changing role of South Asian families within the Canadian context.

- b. Younger South Asian women and violence.¹
- c. Services for children who have witnessed abuse.
- d. Senior South Asian women and abuse.
- e. Development of a comprehensive regional client-centred framework for services to South Asian women, in consultation with the various stakeholders.

¹ During this project we came in contact with younger South Asian Women who had been victims of violence and who were very keen on being part of the study, but because of the nature and scope of this study we were not able to interview them.

3. INTRODUCTION TO INDIA MAHILA ASSOCIATION:

India Mahila Association(IMA) is a volunteer grassroots organization. It was established in 1973 to develop leadership and participation of South Asian women in Canadian society. Its membership comprises Canadian women of Indian origin from various parts of the world. It is an organization of working women, homemakers, married and unmarried women of all ages. While its membership reflects a wide diversity of religions, traditions and customs, the organization operates on secular principles.

The objective of the organization is to fight racism and sexism in society and in particular address issues affecting the South Asian women living in Canada. Violence against women is of major concern to us and we are committed to eliminating it. The guiding principles of IMA are to empower women and promote the unifying aspects of our culture while challenging those that devalue women.

Over the past twenty one years, IMA has taken on its fair share of community service on a totally volunteer basis. The **Education Committee** has concentrated its efforts on education and prevention. It has been instrumental in initiating a dialogue in the community and raising awareness on issues affecting South Asian Canadian women through public meetings, workshops, speaking at social functions, radio and television interviews. In 1990, IMA launched a campaign against the use of ultra-sound technique to select the sex of the fetus. Most recently it initiated the formation of a coalition of women's organizations against the practice of Sex Selection and the advertising campaign promoting this practice targeted at the South Asian community. The campaign resulted in raising awareness on the issue, and the offensive advertisements being pulled.

The **Victim Support Committee** of the IMA has provided support, referral and information to women in crisis at an individual level and been instrumental in disseminating information about resources available to the women through the use of popular media ie. community and multicultural television and radio programs. Members of this committee have also provided interpretation, support and referral to women in crisis situations in the evenings when most service organizations are closed.

The organization has an active **Youth Committee** in place to address issues pertinent to younger women. One of our most recent endeavours has been the establishment of our **Seniors Project**. Through this project IMA volunteers visit lonely senior women at home or in long term care facilities to help them overcome isolation and loneliness.

In 1989 the organization also undertook a research study 'Assessment Of Needs And Services To South Asian Women In The Lower Mainland'. This study is a culmination of three years of work combined with volunteer contribution of our members. It was motivated by the necessity to identify the needs of South Asian Women living in Vancouver's Lower Mainland. Highlighted in this report are the situations and needs of South Asian women alongside the perceptions and services provided by organizations in the Lower Mainland. Furthermore, substantive sections of the report contain the experiences and views of the two hundred South Asian women interviewed for the study.

Most recently IMA held a two-day conference '**Mahila Milan**'(a meeting of women) in February 1994. Over 200 women of all ages and backgrounds participated in this conference to network, share and address issues of violence, education and employment. Although the research study and the conference proved to be extremely useful in determining

the overall needs of South Asian women and the services available to them. The area of violence was identified as a critical issue that needed our urgent collective attention.

4. INTRODUCTION TO THE REPORT:

This community research was undertaken by India Mahila Association over a period of two months (July-August 1994), as a means to conduct in-depth consultations with a random sample of fifteen South Asian Canadian women, all of whom have suffered severe violence in relationships to determine the following:

1. specific needs/barriers of South Asian women as victims of violence(ie. language, cultural, educational, social services).
2. the impact of violence specific to South Asian women who become victims of violence.
3. the stages of resolutions/services accessed by South Asian women after the abuse (ie. 911, crisis line, hospital, transition house).
4. the role that family, community, services and government can play in protecting South Asian women against violence.
5. the perceptions and outcomes of the women interviewed.

As Researchers of this study and women of South Asian origin, we are educators and strong advocates for women. We have long time linguistic and cultural ties with both the South Asian and mainstream communities. Our background played an important role in creating trust and openness whereby the women shared their innermost views and fears. This became evident as many of the women chose to maintain their contact with us since the interview. Some of the interviews could not be finished in the two to three hours set aside for the purpose because once the women got over their initial hurdle of getting to know the

interviewers they wanted to pour their hearts out and continue talking.

It was our hope that through this consultation with women who had faced serious violence in relationships, we would give voice to their experiences and perceptions and facilitate the process for others to gain a greater understanding of the contributing factors, circumstances and impact of violence on these women's lives and possibly others in similar situations. Hopefully this understanding and insight will better equip all of us to deal with the escalating violence in society.

Experiences of the women in our study must not be used to generalize and stereotype the communities they come from. While the women in the study belong to the South Asian community, there was a lot of diversity amongst them and they do not in any way represent a norm or trend in the community. Hopefully experiences of the women in this study will help us understand the depth of the problem and find long term practical solutions to prevent and end the abuse.

5. METHODOLOGY:

A Snowball sampling technique was used to select the participants of this community-based research study. Fifteen women participated in the research. They came from three major language groups of the South Asian community in the Lower Mainland: Punjabi, Hindi, and Gujrati.

As stated in the previous section, although the women came from a certain ethnic background and shared certain similarities in terms of their ethnicity, the participants were not selected as a representative of any cultural or linguistic group of the South Asian community. There were other types of diversities among them in terms of their countries of origin, socio-economic backgrounds and length of stay in Canada. While some of their experiences may be shared by victims of violence from other cultures, others may be specific to women in their particular situations or their communities. It is important to note that a conscious effort was made to identify women who had suffered abuse and accessed one or more services. Therefore their views and perceptions and the findings of this study can in no way be used as a generalization of all South Asian women's lives or their community.

Referrals for the interviews were sought through women's organizations, immigrant serving agencies, transition houses, media talk shows, and community workers. All of the women we interviewed were abused in their relationships and had accessed one or more of the services in the Lower Mainland. Some of the women also suffered secondary abuse from members of their husband's extended families.

Under sometimes very difficult circumstances, the women participated in answering

over sixty questions relating to the abuse they experienced. To determine the social, educational and other differences between the victim and the abuser, in-depth personal profiles of each were established. The women answered questions about themselves and their husband's age, education, financial status, entry to Canada, sponsorship, relationship to extended family members.

Although the questionnaire was very extensive, it was used only as a guide. The responses of the women proved to be very expansive. They addressed many issues from their emotional state and the impact of violence on their lives to their lack of access into the labour market to getting involved in community work and fighting violence against women and children. The women shared their stories in different ways which was often determined by their needs and the issues that were a priority for them at the time of the interview.

6. PROFILE OF THE VICTIM:

The following data was collected to determine the circumstances of abuse specific to South Asian women who have been victims of violence. It pertains to the time of abuse.

- 1) 15 women were interviewed. They were chosen from the three major language groups of the South Asian population in the Lower Mainland:
 - a) Ten of them spoke Panjabi.
 - b) Three of them spoke Hindi
 - c) Two of them spoke Gujarati.
- 2) 13 out of 15 of the women were married, 1 was divorced and 1 was single.
- 3) All of the women were between the ages of 18 - 35 years.
- 4) Residency in Canada for all of the women ranged from 1 month to 18 years.
- 5) Two-thirds of the women were landed immigrants and one third were Canadian Citizens.
- 6) The women lived in various areas of the Lower Mainland: Vancouver - 5, Richmond -1, Burnaby - 1, Surrey - 5, Maple Ridge - 1, North Vancouver - 1 and Coquitlam - 1.
- 7) 9 women were sponsored to Canada by their husbands, 5 by a member of their extended family and one was an independent immigrant.
- 8) All of the women started their education in their countries of origin. 7 had a Bachelor's degree from India, 1 finished college in Canada, 1 got a Bachelor's degree in Canada, 4 completed high school in India, 1 had high school from Fiji and 1 had

finished Nursing in India. Three out of the 15 had attended ESL classes after arriving in Canada.

- 9) All except one of the women came to Canada in their late teens and twenties and one came at age 11.
- 10) 6 of the women were fluent in the English language, 8 had limited English, and one had no English.
- 11) 4 women were employed full time, 4 women had full or part time seasonal work, 3 worked part time and 4 did not have a paid job.
- 12) Of the women who were employed, they were employed in clerical and manual labour jobs.
- 13) With the exception of two most of the women who were employed, received minimum to low wages.

The one common thread they all shared was that they were all victims of violence in their relationships. Fourteen out of fifteen women we interviewed were abused by their husbands, one was abused by her boyfriend. Some of these women were also abused by other members of their partner's extended family.

Most of the women came to Canada in their young adult years of 15-29, and most of the women were abused in their relationships when they were 18-35 years of age. The number of years the women had been in Canada at the time of abuse ranged from 1 month to 18 years. Two-thirds of the women were landed immigrants and one-third Canadian citizens. Almost all of them were sponsored by their husbands and came to Canada for either the

purpose of marriage or to settle in Canada with their husbands.

The number of years in Canada or their immigrant status had little bearing on the type or severity of the abuse. However, several of the women stated that they felt particularly vulnerable and alone when the abuse took place and, in instances where the women had not secured their landed immigrant status at the time of abuse, the threat of deportation was used by the abusers quite often.

The women had up to post-secondary education from both rural and urban areas in their countries of origin which included Fiji, Pakistan, India and Iran. As well, three-quarters of the women we interviewed worked part or full time during the time of abuse. In most of these cases, the women either worked very long hours or felt they were under-employed. Other women were unemployed due to lack of English language skills and/or employment experience in Canada.

All of the women who were employed during the abuse, indicated that the abuse had a wide variety of negative impacts on their ability to work.

7. PROFILE OF THE ABUSERS²:

This research was designed to hear from women who had been victims of violence in relationships and it is their views and perceptions that are reflected in this study. The following data was provided by the women and pertains to the time of the abuse.

- 1) The ages of the abusers ranged from early 20's to early 40's.
- 2) The number of years in Canada of the abusers ranged from 4 to 19 years.
- 3) 8 of the abusers were landed immigrants and 7 were Canadian citizens.
- 4) 11 of the abusers were sponsored to Canada and 1 born in Canada and 3 came as independent immigrants.
- 5) All of the abusers who had been sponsored to Canada were sponsored by members of their own extended family, whereas a majority of their victims were sponsored by their husbands. Being sponsors put the husbands in a significantly powerful and controlling position. This was considered to be an important point by the women we interviewed and is also very consistent with other calls that the Victim Support Committee of the IMA has had from victims of wife assault.
- 6) The ages at which the abusers came to Canada range from age 8 to 29.
- 7) 7 of the abusers spoke English, 8 had limited English.
- 8) The education of the abusers ranged from grade 6 to university degree. Some were educated in their country of origin only and others in Canada as well.

² The data regarding the abusers was obtained through interviews with the victims.

- 9) The age of the abusers at the time of the abuse ranged from 22-41 years.
- 10) In all of the cases the men abused the women they were in a relationship with. In some cases, members of his extended family also abused the women.
- 11) The abusers were employed in a wide range of employment positions ranging from construction worker, drywaller, mill-worker, janitorial workers, truck owner, newspaper editor, professional, religious leader to financially independent businessman.
- 12) Most of the abusers worked during the time of abuse. They were both professionals and non professionals. An interesting but perhaps an obvious observation made by many of the women was that in all cases, the abuse did not disrupt his employment contrary to the effect on the victim's employment.

8. EXTENDED FAMILY:

All but one woman in the study either lived or had lived with their partner's extended family at some point. The definition of the extended family for the purposes of this report could consist of one or more of the following, his/her parents, grandparents, siblings, their spouses and children, and, in some instances, uncles and aunts and their offsprings.

According to Redway, in 1984, only 38% of all Indo-Canadian families in British Columbia lived as extended families. As well, research conducted by India Mahila Association, Assessment of Needs And Services To South Asian Women In The Lower Mainland, found that 70% of the women who participated in the study, preferred living in a nuclear family while 27% thought a joint family situation was better.

Whether South Asian women live in the extended family structure or not, the extended family features very strongly in a positive or negative manner in their lives. This was particularly evident in this study where fourteen of the fifteen women lived with their husband's extended family at the time of the abuse or when the abuse started.

In the case of these women each of the fourteen women stated that her husband's extended family did not provide the support, understanding and resources that she needed during or after the abuse. In three cases, the extended family did show support at the beginning of the relationship, however, it was conditional, often to get her to comply or to quietly accept or ignore the husband's behaviour.

In all of the cases, the women stated that they were affected negatively by the family relationships and influences of their partner's extended family members. The responses varied from denial to lack of acknowledgement of the abuse against them, lack of action and

support to stop the abuse, to justification for the abuse.

In the words of some of the women:

They (his extended family) did not support me. For them the battering was acceptable

They never said anything..... They would tell me not to say anything back to him. It will only provoke him further.

Mostly they wanted me to stay with him and not leave him. They always said to go back to him.

Most of the women stated that they were negatively affected by his extended family members while others did not receive any support. Four women indicated that they were directly abused by them. In comparison, Assessment Of Needs And Services to South Asian Women In The Lower Mainland, 1993 found 18% of the in-laws were involved in abusing the women, while in another study in Scarborough, Papp found 54% of the participants indicated their in-laws had been involved.

The participants in our study responded to a more general question of whether the extended family supported them or not at the time of abuse. Even though the question asked about extended family on either side, the women addressed lack of support from his family members.

While the lack of support from his family members was clearly revealed by the women in this study, it is not necessarily reflective of South Asian extended families in general. However, it is important for those working with abused women to note that when the extended family system breaks down the women may be in just as much danger of being abused by his extended family as by him.

Whereas the IMA research of 1993 found that 70% of the women said that their own extended family was supportive of her once they were told of the abuse. Women in this study did not have their own immediate families in Canada to support them. They stated that although they were the victims, there was overwhelming support for the abuser and little or no support for them. In two cases, the women returned to their country of origin, after the abuse, to gain support from members of their extended family. It was upon returning from their trips that they felt empowered to address the abuse and its consequences on their lives.

9. TYPES OF ABUSE:

There are many definitions of abuse or violence against women in relationships.

However, the underlying theme of all the definitions is that of power. Debrah Sinclair in her book, Understanding Wife Assault, defines violence against women in the following way:

Wife assault involves the intent by the husband to intimidate, either by threat or by use of physical force on the wife's person or property. The purpose of the assault is to control her behaviour by inducement of fear. Underlying all abuse is a power imbalance between the victim and the offender. (Sinclair, 1989)

There are also many types of abuse. According to the Ministry of Attorney General's report on Violence Against Women in Relationships, there are four basic forms or types of abuse inflicted on women by their partners. These are physical, sexual, emotional and economic abuse. Most women do not suffer just one or two of these types. In fact they experience a combination of all four types of abuse over and over again.

The types of abuse faced by the women in this study are consistent with those set out by the Ministry of Attorney General's report. We found that verbal abuse was prevalent in almost all of the cases and it either preceded or accompanied the other forms of abuse mentioned above. Following are some of the comments by women themselves that describe the physical, emotional, sexual and economic violence they were subjected to:

He tried to kill me three times - here and in (country of origin). He would call me names, swear at me and compared me to a prostitute. He was always putting me down.

He threatened to disfigure me so that no other man would be attracted to me or come close to me. He said he would scar my face and break my legs.

....he hit me in the face with force that it started to bleed. He never gave me any

money since I came from India. He would not even give me money to buy sanitary napkins.

He was womanizing - had an infatuation with pornographic films, nudity - everything.

My husband often said to me I can finish you off, and no one would know.

When they(my in-laws) found out I was having a girl, they started to abuse me.

My husband took a pornographic magazine to court to defame me and convince the judge that I was of loose character and read magazines like that instead of doing house work. He wasn't ashamed to lie at all.

One of the women was devastated when after reporting the abuse she had suffered for years one of the elders in the community said to her:

A good woman is better dead than divorced.

Some of the women interviewed faced more than multiple types of abuse. There was also evidence that they faced secondary abuse by other members of their partner's extended family. Although the research did not address the issue of abuse by extended family members in much detail, it did emerge as a reality for the women we interviewed. Types of secondary abuse experienced by some of the women ranged from threats, name calling, inducing fear, undermining the woman's self confidence, to physical and sexual abuse.

In one case, a woman cited the following as abuse from a member of his extended family:

My mother-in-law thought I was too westernized and she raised her hand on me.

Another woman told us:

I had to do all the house work, cook for his mother, brothers, nieces and nephews, do everyone's laundry. I was pregnant and if I ever lay down for a few minutes they (brother-in-law and mother-in-law) would say I am always sleeping and not working.

He wanted me to perform sexual acts that I didn't want to and then he would get uptight and not sleep with me for weeks, except when he felt like it.

Another woman was in tears when she told us:

My brother-in-law made sexual advances at me, but when I didn't respond and started ignoring him, he started complaining to my husband that I was being rude to him and did not show him any respect.

The situation gets further compounded for the women in this study as they go through settlement and integration processes. Many of the women who came to Canada through sponsorship faced language and cultural barriers, lack of knowledge of Canadian society, services and laws. They were also dependent on their sponsors for gaining this information and sometimes even prohibited from getting it. In the words of some of the participants:

Whenever there was a program on television regarding violence against women, or rights of women my husband would say it was nonsense and ask me to turn the TV off and go do my housework. But sometimes I found time to watch it when it was repeated in the afternoon because he wasn't home.

Another woman was referring to the locally produced television programs on the Multicultural Channel in which IMA members provided information on resources available to women who are victims of violence:

Sushma's TV programs were where I found out about Transition Houses, they were very helpful, before that I did not know anything.

10. CIRCUMSTANCES OF ABUSE:

The women cited a number of factors which they believed contributed to the abuse that they suffered at the hands of their husbands. They were:

- A. Alcoholism
- B. Finances
- C. Family conflict
- D. Dowry
- E. Pornography

A. Consistent with other research on abuse where alcohol is seen as a major factor connected with the abuse, eleven out of fifteen women in this study also cited examples confirming that this was true in their situation as well. In their words:

He would start drinking in the morning and drink until bed time.

He would get really abusive when he was drunk.

He always started acting up when he had had a few drinks and then he would start abusing everybody in sight.

However, according to Wife Assault: Victim Service Worker Handbook 1993,

Although many men use alcohol, alcohol is not the cause of violence. Research indicates that many assaulters drink in order to act out their violent wishes. The alcohol makes it easier to abdicate responsibility for their behaviour.

B. Women cited problems with finances as another factor associated with the abuse they faced. In their words:

He used to take all the money and my pay cheques too and still fight. He would not give me any money even for the kid's clothes. He even took the money I earned.

C. Family conflict was cited as another major factor contributing to the abuse. When there was conflict with the husband it resulted in conflict with his family members. The women stated that the abuser and his family members often tried to justify or excuse the abuse by saying that it was caused by stress, shortage of money, his or her unemployment or provocation on the part of the wife. In all of the cases, the reason for the abuse was either transferred to alcohol, drugs, stress or to the victim.

The Wife Assault Handbook makes a strong argument against the myth of 'provocation by women'.

Studies show that there is usually no argument before beating. In most cases the wife will try very hard not to do or say anything that might upset the abusive husband. In accepting the myth, it transfers the blame from the abuser to the victim. (Wife Assault, 1993.)

D. Dowry or the lack of it was cited by three women as closely associated with the abuse. Two out of the three felt that it was the main cause of the abuse.

I was constantly reminded by my in laws that I hadn't brought enough dowry. My father was not necessarily a very rich man, he was a school teacher. He gave us a good education because he felt it was the biggest dowry he could get us, but my in laws are not satisfied. They have been humiliating me about it all the time.

My in laws always complained about not bringing enough dowry. Anytime I wanted to get anything they would say, What did your father give you ? What did you bring with you that you are wanting to spend our money ?

E. Three women cited pornography as one of the contributing factors to the abuse they suffered.

He was womanizing....had an infatuation with pornographic films nudity - everything.

Regardless of what excuses were associated with the abuse, for the women in the study the underlying cause was related to control and power - men exercising control over women's bodies, minds, and finances .

Research shows that no matter what factors are related to abuse or violence, they are not the cause and should not be used as justification to abuse and commit violence against another person. Wife Assault: A Victim Service Worker Handbook 1993, explodes a few myths related to excusing of abuse through alcohol, provocation, finances, mental illness and violence learned as a child.

It is also important to note that the abuse was also extended to other members of the extended family and in some cases, it was directed at her extended family. One of the participants was afraid to get her parents involved or ask them for help because she feared reprisals against her family. She told us,

He always threatened me that he could have my family 'finished off' in India if they tried to interfere with his life. I have a young brother and sister in school, I don't want any harm to come to them.

11. IMPACT OF ABUSE:

All of the women were negatively affected by the abuse. In addition to the low self-esteem and by the lack of support, most of the women had wide range of fears which included:

- * loss of custody of children
- * fear for their own lives
- * fear of more abuse
- * fear of her own parents finding out and being upset
- * fear of bringing shame and a "bad" name to the family
- * fear of deportation
- * lack of support for childcare
- * loss of financial security
- * fear of the unknown/future
- * loss of honour
- * being alone
- * fear of what people might say if husband is convicted
- * children being kidnapped
- * language barriers and fear of not knowing where to go or what to do.

These fears have left all the women feeling alone and isolated. The women felt isolated not only from within the household but at work too. Some of the women felt ostracized by the community. One of the women vocalized her feelings as follows:

I received no love from anyone. I have become insecure, unsure, powerless and feel like committing suicide.

The abuse also affected the women's relationships with their children and family. In one case, the abuser told their small son to call the mother names such as "moti" meaning fat, and when she tried to discipline him, the abuser in turn disciplined her in front of the children and told the son to "hit her, tell mommy we don't like her." In another case, the

abuser and his mother encouraged the children to pull the mother's hair when they were attacking her.

One of the women admitted to being suicidal and one of the children actually attempted suicide. One of the daughters had been sexually abused by an uncle on the father's side of the family. When the abuse was inadvertently detected by the workers at the women's shelter, her in-laws and her husband accused the mother of lying and fabricating a story simply to get back at them rather than getting help and support for the daughter who had been abused. Eight of the women stated that their children had suffered deep emotional scars from becoming, "emotionally disturbed" to becoming "totally withdrawn." As one of the participants stated:

My children don't have friends and don't want to go out with anyone. They've become short tempered. Daughter does not want to get married. She is afraid of being subjected to violence.

In several cases, the abuser and his family members manipulated the children by blaming the mother for the abuse or for the breakup. In contrast with the powerful and intimate role of the mother in a traditional South Asian family where she is responsible for the total care and discipline of the children, one abuser's family would not allow the woman to assume her role and responsibility as a mother. They constantly undermined her authority as the mother. She wasn't allowed to exercise any form of discipline over her children. In fact she was abused in front of them. In another case, through counselling provided in a transition house, a young teen admitted that his father had been abusing him too. Although it had been several years since the breakup, this boy still refused to talk to his father or have anything to do with him.

Another woman claims she lives in fear all the time.

Some men have been harassing me at odd hours and knocking at the door where I live. I never let my daughter out of my sight, I keep her indoors because I am so afraid.

All of the women, although putting on a brave face, carry a host of physical, emotional and psychological scars. When the women were asked as to what their present situation was and if they felt it had been resolved. Three of the women told us they were back with the abuser although the situation had not been completely resolved, while the remainder were either separated or divorced. One woman had remarried but she felt even then "the situation is not resolved in my head" due to the traumatization of the abuse that she had suffered and the consequences thereof.

Two of the women who are separated have sponsored their parents. One of these women is working and supporting herself. She had to sponsor her parents as a single wage earner which in itself is a difficult, lengthy and expensive process. The other woman who sponsored her parents has a young child. She doesn't have a job or any income but she doesn't want to go on welfare for fear of jeopardizing the sponsorship application. So she survives by borrowing money from her relatives for her grocery, rent and other expenses.

Two other women have attended support groups which they found helpful in attempting to put their lives back together. Since many of the women came through the sponsorship of their husbands to live with his extended family, they are in an extremely vulnerable, dependent and powerless position. However, this position becomes even more jeopardized when whatever little support(such as childcare) that his extended family provided is also pulled away, leaving many women who do not have any members of their own family

to turn to in a further vulnerable position.

The abuse clearly had an enormous effect even on the women who worked outside the home. They felt they were at a greater risk of losing their jobs - as they felt they were not performing well on the job. As well, due to marriage break up they lost childcare support which was generally provided by members of the extended family. One of the women stated that even though she could arrange babysitting for her child, she felt that it was especially traumatic for the child. Because the child was accustomed to staying with the grandmother or the aunts, she did not relate well to the baby-sitter thereby making it very difficult for the baby-sitter to care for her. Also, the abuser did not pay child support voluntarily making it even more difficult for the working mother to work.

Three-quarters of the women we interviewed worked during the time of abuse. They worked long and irregular hours. All of them who worked outside of the home, stated that their employment was seriously affected by the abuse. Some of the examples they provide were: not being able to concentrate, worrying all the time, stress, lack of childcare, fear of losing their jobs, having no one to confide in, depression, low self-esteem and being constantly short of funds to support themselves and their children. In most of the cases, they faced combinations of the above-mentioned effects.

12. REPORTING ABUSE:

Few families will acknowledge the existence of the problem (of wife assault) when it is at an early stage; often by the time they approach outside resources for help the problem has reached calamitous proportions. (Ng 1985)

Reporting the abuse or having it reported was an extremely difficult task for the women in this study too. The women had been abused anywhere from a few months to twenty years before the abuse was reported. In fact, not in one case was the abuse reported the first time even when serious physical abuse had occurred. In all the cases, the abuse was progressive in severity and reported only as a last resort.

One of the most firmly held values about family life, whether the family is a nuclear or an extended family, is that what goes on inside the home is private.

Family problems are considered personal and private. Solutions are sought within the family, or sometimes with the assistance of close friends. However, in most cases, the doors are firmly closed to involvement by outsiders including professionals. (Waxler - Morrison, 1990)

For this reason, the women we talked to were also initially very reluctant to seek or accept any assistance outside the immediate family. Six of the women reported the abuse themselves and eight of the cases were reported through a neighbour, bystander at a shopping mall, friend, teacher and hospital. But the ones who reported it themselves did it when they felt their lives were at risk and there was no other recourse. In one case the husband himself called the police and reported that his wife was "mentally ill" after he had kicked her out of the house.

The reporting was done to the police, community worker, friend, counsellor, teacher,

and to immigrant serving agencies. Out of fifteen, criminal charges were laid in only two of the cases. However, there were no convictions. Two of the abusers left the country and in two other cases, there were pending charges on the abuser and the women were pressured not to call the police.

It is important to note that in most of the cases, the abuse was allowed to continue for a long time before it was reported. Even though we did not ask a question about this many women felt the need to explain why they had acted in this way.

The responses were as diverse as the women themselves. For some women, it was language barriers and the lack of knowledge about services available to them. These women did not have anyone outside the husband's extended family and friends to turn to for assistance thus further reinforcing their dependency on the abuser. Some women feared losing everything that they believed gave them their identity and place in the family and the community. Some of these included their house, honour, reputation and respect. Most importantly, the women were concerned about the future implications in regard to their children and their families.

Many of the women did not have the information about their legal rights within the Canadian system. With the exception of three women discussing their experiences in dealing with a lawyer during the divorce proceedings, there was very little reference made to the awareness of their legal rights. Two of the women did not have their permanent residence status at the time of abuse and were afraid to report the abuse for fear of deportation. The women stayed in a relationship because of financial security, fear of loneliness and in the hope that one day things would improve and he would change.

While the South Asian extended family structure often acts as a source of support, in some instances it may foster strong habits of dependence. As stated in a handbook for service workers

A young girl within a loving extended family is sheltered from the outside world by her parents. When she moves into her husband's home, she becomes dependent upon him. The prospect of then making her own choices can be very intimidating. The decision to leave means developing an entirely new approach to life at a time when her self-esteem has been destroyed by the abuse. (Wife Assault, 1993)

For most women, it was not one factor that delayed reporting the abuse. It was a combination of barriers which have already been mentioned (family, economic, social), as well as their own beliefs, learnt values and sanctity of family.

13. SERVICES/SUPPORT:

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE AND SUPPORT - Many of the women indicated that they had very little control of the finances which made them dependent on their husbands and extended family. There was evidence of financial hardship during and after the abuse. Some turned to friends for financial support, others went to social assistance. Even in the few cases where the women owned homes with their husbands the women felt they did not have any decision making power. However in all of the cases their husbands knew of and controlled the women's earnings thereby creating gross inequity in their relationship.

In summary, all of the women we interviewed had little or no influence over the family finances. They faced very weak financial circumstances during and after their marriages. They were not in control or in joint management of the family finance. The situation only worsened after the abuse. Most of the women stated that they were never involved in the management of the finances and in many cases did not know what their husband's earnings were and what he did with them. In other cases, they gave their own earnings to their husbands to manage as well.

GENERAL ASSISTANCE AND SUPPORT - As mentioned in the section under Reporting Abuse it was evident from the interviews that it was a major leap for women to step out of the abusive situations and seek help from an outside source. But when they did, their awareness of services had a lot to do with the services they accessed.

For ten of the fifteen women we interviewed the initial contact was police because they were somewhat aware that they could call the police for help and in other cases a by-

stander/neighbour called the police. One woman was taken to the hospital when she tried to commit suicide, and only four women actually accessed other services like transition houses, counselling or immigrant serving agency with respect to the abuse they were suffering. The four that accessed other support services were enrolled in other programs like an ESL class, job training program or had access to the ethnic television program through which they had learnt about these services and the assistance they provided. And when they were in need, they reached out to these sources for help. It was only through accessing another service or the television programs that they became aware of the resources that were available to them and were able to use them when they were ready to leave the abusive situations they were in.

Thus the need for effective outreach programs providing basic information regarding the rights and obligations of individuals can not be emphasized enough. It is also important that the means of delivering this information be those that directly reach the most vulnerable sections of our society, the women who are isolated and sometimes dependent on the perpetrators of violence for information. Getting the information directly to them is very important. Research shows that,

Personal factors, family ties, and long-term friendships play an important role in the way battering crimes generally are reacted to and dealt with in rural environments. Close personal ties between the battered woman or the batterer and people who are potential sources of help may inhibit the reporting of wife battering. In fact research suggests that victims of crime generally are less likely to report crimes in rural locations, especially in small homogeneous communities, because of the strong value the community places on maintaining relationships. (Macleod, 1987:22)

The experience of the women in our study shows that this is also likely to happen in situations where the only people you know are themselves the perpetrators of violence or influenced by them. We know that while the best of resources may exist, they are not much

use unless they are publicized well so the potential users know how to access them. One participant summed it up very well,

These services have to be advertised repeatedly, even knowledge of English is no guarantee. We live in denial to survive so we are deaf, blind and quite dead to the world.

Simply using print oriented approach to disseminating information through pamphlets or other print media to those who may have a number of linguistic and cultural obstacles does not always work. Also when you are leading very controlled and sheltered lives direct access to this information is important.

Another overriding concern the women had was one of **trust and dependability**. Many women pointed out that they were very fearful of the services because they were afraid of everyone in the community finding out about their problem and did not know what the services offered or how much the women could rely upon their help. But once they became aware and got over the initial hurdle of getting to know the service, they reached out for it in times of need.

All of the women we interviewed had sought help from, either one, or a combination of the following sources: family, friends, neighbours, service agencies, women's organizations, ethnic television program on the Multicultural channel, family doctor, police and transition houses.

Their experiences with these services were just as diverse as the sources they sought or received help from. While some women preferred to seek help from their immediate family and friends others went directly to the police or transition houses because they thought "family was too judgemental". Again while some felt a sense of appreciation for the help

received, others were completely turned off.

Following are their responses to the support received from the different sources:

FAMILY AND FRIENDS - Most of the women we interviewed did not have their immediate families living close to them. They were either in their country of origin or in another city in Canada. Eight of the women sought help from an extended family member from their side or a friend and found the support very helpful to somewhat helpful to not helpful at all. Some of their comments about the families were:

My mother was always there for me but she couldn't do much because she herself is a single woman.

I did not tell them(my family) too much. I did not want to burden them with my troubles, they are so far away they can't do much from there anyways.

Three women strongly indicated that they'd rather go to a transition house than a friend, because in their experience,

No Friends could do much though, some friends and relatives tried to help, but everybody is too busy and they can do only so much.

The family and friends do not have the expertise or the understanding. They think marriage is the only way.

Battering is too serious a problem for them to handle.

In one instance the woman got absolutely no help from even her own extended family. Two of the women with their side of extended families here(ie. uncles, aunts, cousins), felt that although initially their extended families tried to intervene and provide support, when the abuser did not listen to them, they shied away from getting involved and

weren't really helpful especially when it came down to concrete action in terms of providing shelter or real emotional and physical support.

As far as the abuser's family, in almost all cases they either remained silent or actually took part in escalating the abuse. In a couple of the cases the extended family of the abuser further victimized the victim by directly perpetrating the violence on her. One woman told us that her in-laws were *'very supportive and tried to help but the abuser never listened to them at all, so they couldn't do much'*.

The following quotes provide a sampling of their responses in this area:

my brother-in-law was also very abusive called me names and even struck me a few times, my older brother-in-law was a decent guy but my husband never listened to him so he used to say, 'just ignore him (my husband)'.

I would go to my family but not to his family.

My in-laws know I am right and their son is wrong, and they tried to talk to him but he never listens to them either.

What their experiences tell us is that although the family continues to serve as a source of strength and support for some, it can sometimes become a source of suffocation for others. We cannot assume that family is always the best or safest place to resolve the problems.

TRANSITION HOUSE:

Nine of the fifteen women had accessed a transition house. their experiences at the transition house were also very disparate. While one woman had high praise for the transition house.

Staff was very sympathetic and supportive and sensitive to my needs. They turned our lives around. They said it was not our fault, but there was nothing they could do to change his behaviour. They validated us and gave us safety and a sense of hope. They were wonderful.

Another woman, however, felt alone and violated at a transition house because of her limited English language skills.

Transition House was ok. But I was very lonely, there was no one to speak with and understand me. So I called a friend and left the same day. The women from the transition house were nice but I don't think they understood my situation therefore I could not explain everything to them.

I was satisfied for the most part but I wish the Transition House had more coloured faces, I mean the women working there it would have made it a lot easier.

Other non-Indian women smoked and drank. I could not eat the food. There was no one I could share my feelings with. I was very lonely - I could not speak or open my heart to anyone.

Although there were Indian workers there, they did not pay much attention to my needs. They were always busy with their own thing. One day I told a worker something and the next day everybody knew about it.

It is important to note that simply having someone who speaks the language is not enough the workers need appropriate training and must be sensitive to the needs of confidentiality.

POLICE:

Their response to the police was also mixed though most women generally felt satisfied with the assistance received from the police. However their encounter with the police was a very short one. When asked if they knew what the role of police was most of them were unclear. They indicated that they knew to call the police for help in times of crisis. They basically saw police as the saviours who were able to get them out of a life threatening situation.

Three of the women pointed out that the officers who attended the incident spoke their language which was a big help to them in expressing themselves and understanding what the officers told them. They had this to say:

The RCMP was very good.

I went to police, they were helpful.

I believe the Police are more aware. Their mandate has changed in past 5 years. Mandate is more forceful. Now it is not a woman's decision to continue with the charge. They protect women and arrest the abuser immediately and order him to stay away from the woman.

Two of the women did not share the above sentiments, and expressed their dissatisfaction with the police:

I found it very shocking that after the abuse when the police were called they told me to leave the house with two small children, while they left the husband drinking at home. They said I had to leave because he paid the rent.

Although I had a Restraining Order - they did not come right away. He would usually take off before they arrived.

IMMIGRANT SERVICE AGENCY:

Their comments in this area ranged from total appreciation to a little dissatisfaction in some areas. Women's encounter with the agencies came at a later stage than the emergency service provided by the police. Unlike their brief encounter with the police their relationship with the services was a lengthy one.

Those who accessed the immigrant serving agencies were very grateful for the assistance received. While some were relieved to have workers who spoke their language others were hesitant to go to these services because they were worried that one of the

workers might know someone amongst their family or friends. But areas that emerged as needing attention were that the staff was very busy and difficult to reach because they were never in the office, services lacked continuity in terms of their staff, Two of the women had very negative experience because they found the staff to be very condescending in their approach. Some of the women also pointed out that they did not know about the services until they were referred to them and that more outreach on the part of the services was needed. Their reaction to help received ranged from high praise to total dissatisfaction.

I really appreciate the ESL course that I am in. I would like to soon enroll in a training course and find a job. The workers have been very helpful.

I don't know what I would have done without their support

They are helpful but I think they are too busy. I don't think they have enough workers. Sometimes you tell everything to one person and next time you phone it is a different person. It is very difficult to repeat your story to everyone.

Once they sent a volunteer with me and the volunteer didn't seem to be interested in helping me.

I got some help but I was not fully satisfied - Some workers are too busy at(name of the service). Don't seem to have time did not really explain all options. You have to call them many times before you can get them.

my worker is always at meetings when I call.

WOMEN'S ORGANIZATION AND MEDIA: - Reference to women's organizations was made in the context of their work around public education. Women referred to some of the programs on the Multicultural channel where women's groups have been using the media to disseminate information and discuss topics such as violence against women and women's

rights in general. They found the programs to be generally very informative and empowering. Some women indicated that these programs were their first source of information regarding services available for victims of abuse.

Four of the women said they felt comfortable calling the women's organizations for help because they had seen the women on television and knew where they stood on the issue. Two women pointed out that when they phoned a woman's organization they had to talk to answering machines which was very difficult and it meant that they could not get help when they needed it most.

Following are some of their comments:

These women could not actually go with me anywhere because they were volunteers so they referred me to other services after giving me all of the information which was very helpful, but we should have women's organizations providing more services to women because they understood the problem so well.

I got a lot of information from TV and Sushma's radio(a 24-hour South Asian radio station that also has a daily open line talk show on various issues), although my husband always told me to turn the TV off when there were programs about women. I used to find time when the program was repeated and watched it when he was not home.

I see them(name of a woman's organization) on TV, it gives women a lot of the information even for those who are at home all the time. At least you know you are not alone.

LEGAL HELP:

One woman commented about her experience with her lawyer:

My lawyer was very useless, has not given me any information about what is happening. In spite of being notified of all assets of the abuser the lawyer did not freeze assets like money in bank, truck etc. So my husband sold everything and gave the money to his relatives so I wouldn't get anything.

In further discussion with the woman she told us that she wasn't sure of what to do when she was unhappy with the lawyer. Being on legal aid she thought she would be in trouble if she changed lawyers.

THE WOMEN IN THE STUDY WERE ASKED AS TO WHO THEY WOULD GO TO FOR HELP FIRST AND WHY ?

Their responses were again as diverse as their responses about their satisfaction with the services accessed. When asked to rank in order they found it difficult to rank them because they felt that sometimes they accessed two or more services simultaneously. Instead of ranking the services they listed almost all of the services as ones they would access when in need.

While some indicated they would go to a service where workers spoke their language, others said:

Sometimes its easier to go to someone you don't know.

Most women stated that they did not see themselves going to temples for help on the issue of violence, although they felt that it would be nice to have some information about services available at the temples because a lot of the people go there..

Temple is the last place I would go for help. They told me to commit suicide - that was their way. I was already so close to doing it - but who would look after my child? The temple was more concerned about their image in Canada, particularly since they had put my husband upon a pedestal.

The issue of confidentiality and trust in services came up again:

I would go to a Settlement agency(if my husband doesn't know anybody there)

Some of the women had difficulty answering why they would go to certain sources for help. As one woman put it,

I'm not sure - I'm still learning myself.

A few of the women indicated that their responses to where they would go for help were based on their personal experiences and that they were unsure of whether they would work for other women.

Their responses again contradict some of the widely held myths that 'South Asian women will not talk to an outsider or will not go to a transition house, or that families are the best support.'⁷ The key thing to remember here is that if they have the information, they are likely to use it in times of need.

14. SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENTS: - Their suggestions regarding the services and how they can be improved were very specific. When the women were asked as to how the services and support could have been improved, the following were suggested: Many of the women did not know what to expect from them before using them.

The following comments reflect their views:

- 1) more information on what my rights are and where I can go.
- 2) more assurance that confidentiality will be observed
- 3) public awareness by the leadership on the issue of violence
- 4) more punjabi-speaking and culturally sensitive workers at the Transition Houses
- 5) more accessible and culturally-sensitive childcare for women who have been abused
- 6) counselling programs for abusers
- 7) counselling by qualified Indian workers or professionals
- 8) employment training and retraining for women who have been educated outside of Canada
- 9) speedier delivery of services especially from immigrant serving agencies and the legal profession.

15. FURTHER RECOMMENDATIONS BY THE RESEARCH TEAM

1. Comprehensive handbook (updated yearly) for women in simple language with information on topics such as:
 - a. Definition and types of violence
 - b. Progressive nature of violence and how to survive it.
 - c. Help and resources available for victims and their children.
 - d. Consequences of laying and not laying charges.
 - e. Rights and obligations.
 - f. Treatment and counselling programs for abusers.
2. Above information also needs to be disseminated in various languages and through popular media in order to reach the broader grassroots community, particularly those at risk, directly.
3. Comprehensive training dealing with issues of racism, homophobia, confidentiality and professionalism for all workers working with victims of abuse.
4. Mainstream service agencies must also take more responsibility in hiring and training staff that can cater to South Asian women's needs linguistically and culturally.
5. Public Education to empower women, raise awareness in the community and promote zero tolerance on the issue of violence against women.
6. Funding for educational programs focussing on prevention and early intervention aimed at victims, abusers and those at risk.
7. Volunteer grassroots women's organizations with a track record of opposing violence be funded so they can effectively be involved in:
 - a) Helping raise awareness on the issue of violence against women with a focus on prevention.
 - b) Providing direct support to women who are victims and those who are in vulnerable position instead of having them listen to answering machines.
 - c) Empowering women so they are not vulnerable to exploitation..
 - d) Developing comprehensive programs to deal with violence against women.
8. Orientation for women in their countries of origin prior to immigrating and upon arrival in Canada, regarding their rights and obligations, be provided as a preventative measure. This information should also be provided verbally to ensure that those with poor or no literacy skills get the information directly and are not left at the mercy of

their potential abusers to acquire it. This can be done in a cost effective manner in groups sessions.

9. Transition houses work closely with grassroots South Asian women's organizations to develop a comprehensive strategy to:
 - a) Develop culturally appropriate training for workers.
 - b) Make the houses more accessible and comfortable for South Asian women.
 - c) Reach out to the South Asian Canadian women and understand their situation.
 - d) Hire staff that is linguistically and culturally sensitive to the South Asian women's needs.
10. Ongoing and sufficient funding to services providing support to victims of violence so the workers get decent wages and staff turnover is minimized.
11. Coordination and Standardization of Services with some accountability mechanisms in place so gaps in services are assessed continually and services are provided by qualified staff.
12. Areas that need to be explored further:
 - a. Changing role of South Asian families within the Canadian context.
 - b. Younger South Asian women and violence.³
 - c. Services for Children who have witnessed abuse
 - d. Senior South Asian women and abuse.
 - e. Development of a comprehensive regional client centred framework for services to the South Asian women in consultation with the various stakeholders.

³ During this project we came in contact with younger South Asian Women who had been victims of violence and who were very keen on being part of the study, but because of the nature and scope of this study we were not able to interview them.

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APPENDIX I

A. PERSONAL PROFILE AT TIME OF ABUSE

VICTIM

1. Relationship to abuser:

2.

a. Age _____

b. # yrs. in Canada _____

c. Canadian citizen ☐

d. Landed immigrant ☐

e. Visitor ☐

f. Other _____

3. City of residence:

4. STATUS:

a. Single ☐

b. Married ☐

c. Separated ☐

d. Divorced ☐

e. Widow ☐

f. Other _____

5. How did you come to be in Canada?

a. Born here ☐

b. Sponsored ☐

c. Independent ☐

d. Other _____

(IF NOT BORN IN CANADA, ANSWER
QUESTIONS 6 to 8)

6. Who sponsored you?

ABUSER

13. Relationship to victim:

14.

a. Age _____

b. # yrs. in Canada _____

c. Canadian citizen ☐

d. Landed immigrant ☐

e. Visitor ☐

f. Other _____

15. City of residence:

16. STATUS:

a. Single ☐

b. Married ☐

c. Separated ☐

d. Divorced ☐

e. Widow(er) ☐

f. Other _____

17. How did he/she come to be in Canada?

a. Born here ☐

b. Sponsored ☐

c. Independent ☐

d. Other _____

(IF NOT BORN IN CANADA, ANSWER
QUESTIONS 18 to 20)

18. Who sponsored him/her?

7. Where were you raised?

- a. Village ☐
b. City ☐

8. At what age did you come to Canada?

9. LANGUAGES: (limited, functional,)
or fluent)

- | | English | Other |
|------------|--------------------------|-------|
| a. Spoken | <input type="checkbox"/> | _____ |
| b. Written | <input type="checkbox"/> | _____ |

10. EDUCATION:

- a. Highest level _____
b. In Canada _____
c. Other country _____

EMPLOYMENT:

11. Did you work during the time you
were being abused?

- a. Yes ☐
b. No ☐
c. Type of work _____
d. Length of work _____
e. Salary range _____
f. F/T or P/T _____

12. Did the abuse affect your employment?
(loss/interruption, etc.)

- a. Yes ☐
b. No ☐
c. If yes, how?

19. Where was he/she raised?

- a. Village ☐
b. City ☐

20. At what age did he/she come to Canada?

21. LANGUAGES: (limited, functional,
or fluent)

- | | English | Other |
|------------|--------------------------|-------|
| a. Spoken | <input type="checkbox"/> | _____ |
| b. Written | <input type="checkbox"/> | _____ |

22. EDUCATION:

- a. Highest level _____
b. In Canada _____
c. Other country _____

EMPLOYMENT:

23. Did you work during the time you
were being abused?

- a. Yes ☐
b. No ☐
c. Type of work _____
d. Length of work _____
e. Salary range _____
f. F/T or P/T _____

24. Did the abuse affect his/her employment?
(loss/interruption, etc.)

- a. Yes ☐
b. No ☐
c. If yes, how?

B. EXTENDED FAMILY

25. Did you live in an extended family setting?

a. No ☐

b. Yes ☐

c. If yes, who lived with you?

d. What role did they play in supporting or not supporting you?

C. ABUSE

26. What kind of abuse did you suffer?

TYPE	FREQUENCY	SEVERITY
a. Verbal		
b. Psychological		
c. Physical		
d. Sexual		
e. Other		

Circumstances of Abuse:

27. Which of the following factors were connected with the abuse?

- a. Alcohol ☐
- b. Drugs ☐
- c. Finances ☐
- d. Family conflict ☐
- e. Cultural conflict ☐
- f. Unemployment ☐
- g. Parenting ☐
- h. Other _____

28. Where other members of the family abused by the same abuser?

- a. Yes ☐
- b. No ☐
- c. If so, who?

29. Was there a history of violence on your side of the family? Explain.

30. Was there a history of violence on his/her side? Explain.

D. REPORTING ABUSE IN GENERAL

31. Was the abuse EVER reported? Yes ☐ No ☐

32. How long had you been abused before it was reported?

33. Who reported it?

34. Who was it reported to?

35. Were criminal charges laid? Yes ☐ No ☐

36. Why/why not?

37. Was there a conviction?

a. Yes ☐

b. No ☐

c. Why?

38. Were you satisfied with the service/support received?

39. How could the service/support have been improved?

E. IMPACT OF VIOLENCE

40. What were your major fears at the time of abuse?
(E.g., more abuse/loss of financial security/deportation/loss of sponsorship/support/being alone/
children's/your future/other language barrier/knowledge of resources/reporting the abuse/
loss of honour/loss of custody of your children, etc.)

41. What impact if any did these fears have on you? (I.e., did it stop you from talking to anyone
or reporting the abuse?)

42. How did the abuse affect you? (Your relationship with your children, family, and friends or
emotionally, culturally, physically, financially, etc.)

43. What is your present situation? Is it resolved? Are you accessing any ongoing assistance?

F. ASSISTANCE/SUPPORT DURING OR AFTER ABUSE

Finances:

44. Did you own, rent, or share your residence at the time of abuse?

45. How was your financial situation affected by the abuse? (I.e., general financial situation, property, bank accounts, other assets, etc.)

46. How was the abuser's financial situation affected by the abuse?

47. Where did you seek financial assistance?

48. Were you satisfied with the financial assistance received?

49. Where did you go to seek help? (I.e., family, friend, neighbour, police, service, transition house, crisis line, temple, etc.)

50. Were you satisfied with the help you received?

a. Yes ☐

b. No ☐

c. Why/why not?

51. If you were abused today, who would you go to for help first? (Rank in order.)

- _____ Family
- _____ Friend
- _____ Neighbourhood
- _____ Police
- _____ Settlement agency
- _____ Transition house
- _____ Health service
- _____ Teacher
- _____ Women's organization
- _____ Temple

52. Why?

53. Where would you recommend another woman in an abusive situation go for help?

54. What are your reasons for making these recommendations?

AWARENESS OF SERVICES

55. Were you aware of the following services?

	YES	NO	NAME
Police	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
911	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
Crisis line	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
Settlement services	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
Women's organizations	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
Temples	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
Others _____			_____

56. What can the following do to end violence against women?

a. Women's organizations such as the India Mahila Association:

b. South Asian community:

c. Other organizations:

d. Government:

e. Other:

57. Interviewer's Comments:

APPENDIX II

CONSENT

Thank you in advance for agreeing to do this questionnaire. We appreciate that this is a very difficult exercise for you. As a form of protection, respect for your circumstances, to ensure anonymity, and to provide you with strict confidentiality, the research team of this project would like to express our commitment to assure you of the following:

1. To ensure your anonymity, each interview will be identified by a number. You need not give us your name or any other personal identification.
2. To provide strict confidentiality, any and/or all of the information you share with us will only be available to the research team and will be used for the purpose of this study. No one else will have access to the questionnaire.
3. To respect the difficulty of this process for you, if at any time during the interview and/or after the interview you become uncomfortable with the process, we will respect your decision to stop and withdraw.

As well, if you are in need of assistance, the research team will do their best to link you with the community, professional resources, and services.

Once again, we appreciate your cooperation and participation in this project as you are making an invaluable contribution in the area of violence against women and helping to be part of the solution.