Indeed, these are excellent strategies to treat the symptoms, but how do we go even further back to treat the cause of the evil? Fatma Zahra, Domestic Violence Program Advocate at Sakhi says: "The most effective strategy in raising awareness about domestic violence is to talk about the issue. Knowing the different manifestations of domestic violence is integral to understanding that emotional, verbal, and financial abuse can often be just as painful as physical violence." In line with that, community education and awareness of domestic violence should start early, at the school level, emphasizing equal value of girls and boys.

As long as men and women have unequal rights in society, the problem will continue. "After all, whether it is class, caste, race or gender -- those who have the power frequently define the way things should be, oppress, and have interest in maintaining the status quo," says Abraham. Permanent change will be thus initiated when we start to re-define the role of women in our culture, and negate marriage as the fulcrum of a woman's adult life.

If nothing else, let numbers speak the truth. Approximately 1.5 million women are physically assaulted by an intimate partner in the United States, annually. Since many women experience multiple victimizations every year, an estimated 5.9 million physical assaults are perpetrated against US women annually.[3] In the US, thirty-seven percent of women who sought treatment in emergency rooms for violence-related injuries in 1994 were injured by a current or former spouse, boyfriend or girlfriend.[4] Each day, more than three women in the United States are murdered by a male intimate partner.[5]

It is imperative to take these figures seriously, and to protect our daughters, sisters and friends from entering into relationships that can cost their lives. Under all circumstances, do not fail to investigate a foreign proposal exhaustively, and do not turn away should the marriage turn abusive. Each one of us can help -- start now by breaking the silence.

For specific information on domestic violence please visit www.sakhi.org

FACTS & FIGURES

- Around the world, at least one in every three women has been beaten, coerced into sex, or otherwise abused during her lifetime.
- In the US, thirty-seven percent of women who sought treatment in emergency rooms for violence-related injuries in 1994 were injured by a current or former spouse, boyfriend or girlfriend.
- Approximately 1.5 million women are physically assaulted by an intimate partner annually in the United States. Since many women experience multiple victimizations every year, an estimated 5.9 million physical assaults are perpetrated against U. S. women annually.
- Each day, more than three women in the United States are murdered by a male intimate partner.

MYTHS AND FACTS ABOUT DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Myths	*Facts*
DV victims like to be beaten.	DV victims desperately try to end the violence in their lives through multiple strategies (Dutton, The Dynamics of Domestic Violence, 1994). In some cases, silence maybe a survival strategy, and/or a measure to protect the children.
Batterers abuse their partners or spouses because of alcohol or drug abuse.	Alcohol and substance may increase the severity or frequency of violence in some cases (Jillson & Scott, 1996), but are not the main causes of violence. Therefore, requiring batterers to attend substance abuse treatment programs will not effectively end the violence.
Children are not affected when one parent abuses the other.	Studies show that in 50-70% of cases in which a parent abuses another parent, the children are also physically abused. (Bowker et al., 1988) Some children (espe cially boys) who experience domestic violence in their homes grow up to repeat the same behavioral patterns. (Hotaling & Sugarman, 1986).

Courtesy of the American Bar Association Commission on Domestic Violence

1 Heise, L., Ellsberg, M. and Gottemoeller, M. Ending Violence Against Women. Population Reports, Series L, No. 11., December 1999.

2 Raj A, Silverman J. Intimate partner violence against South-Asian women in Greater Boston. Journal of American Medical Women's Assoc. 2002; 57(2).

3 National Institute of Justice & Centers For Disease Control, National Violence Against Women Survey, 1998.

4 US Department of Justice, Violence Related Injuries Treated in Hospital Emergency Departments, August 1997.

5 US Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics, Violence by Intimates, 2000.

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