

**Domestic Violence against  
Women in Ernakulam District**

**Celine Sunny**

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**Kerala Research Programme on Local Level Development  
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Thiruvananthapuram**

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# Domestic Violence Against Women in Ernakulam District

Celine Sunny

## 1. Introduction

The Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women, adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1993, 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 private life”. Paragraph 117 of the Beijing Platform for Action states: “The fear of violence, including harassment is a permanent constraint on the mobility of women and limits their access to resources and basic activities. High social, health, and economic costs to the individual and society are associated with violence against women. Violence against women is one of the crucial social mechanisms by which women are forced into a subordinate position compared with men”.

Gender-based violence is clearly based on unequal power relation between men and women. The status of women in India is not equal to the status of men in terms of access, participation, and reward. This situation owes its existence to the patriarchal and feudalistic structure of the society. Gender discrimination manifests itself as violence in the family, community, and society. It takes the forms of female foeticide, female infanticide, abuse of the girl child, social harassment, mental torture, physical violence, and cruelty affecting body and mind of women.

### Domestic violence

Family, the basic unit of society, which should be a major source of nurture, emotional bonding, and socialisation, tends to become in reality a source of inequality, exploitation, and violence.

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The National Family Health Survey, 2000 (NFHS-2) reports about the inequality and violence pervading in our country. Sixty-eight percent of the women under the survey reported that they needed permission from husbands or in-laws to go to the market and 76 percent had to seek consent of their husbands before they could visit friends or relatives. Only 60 percent could use money the way they wished. In addition, one in every five women experienced domestic violence from the age of 15 onwards.

Domestic violence happens most of the time against women in the household. The offenders are, in the majority of cases, the men folk, particularly their marital partners. Aggressive behaviour under the influence of drugs or alcohol is often at the root of male violence against women. Domestic violence is not only on the increase, but is also assuming subtler forms every day.

Earlier, victims of domestic violence did not lodge complaints, as they feared that such complaints might create a hostile home environment. Very often, women used to suffer violence against them in silence for fear of adverse repercussions.

Violence is wilful criminal behaviour punishable under law. Domestic violence against women constitutes physical assault or mental torture.

The various forms of physical violence include the following:

- (i) Female foeticide and female infanticide;
- (ii) Incest rape within marriage, connivance and collusion of family members for sexual abuse of women in the household;
- (iii) Physical torture like slapping, punching, grabbing, and killing;
- (iv) Burdening of women with drudgery;
- (v) Neglect of women's health problems.

Psychological violence takes different forms:

- (i) Curbing the freedom to associate with the natal family, neighbours, and friends;
- (ii) Curtailment of right to self-expression;
- (iii) Promiscuity of the husband;
- (iv) Accusing the women in the household of unchaste behaviour;
- (v) Irresponsible behaviour and alcoholism of the husband;
- (vi) Humiliating and victimising women;
- (vii) Fleecing women and their parents of their money and assets by compulsion coercion and threat and squandering of money for non-household purposes.

Physically-abused women live under constant fear, threat and humiliation. They are potential candidates for personality disorders and psycho-somatic problems. The Indian woman feels the entire responsibility of preserving the family as her duty; hence she endeavours to adjust herself to the atmosphere and the mores of her husband's home. Women subjected even to extreme physical and psychological violence do not ordinarily seek divorce and suffer the

onslaughts in silence as they feel that their trauma and that of their children is the price they have to pay for the sake of the family. The National Family Health Survey (NFHS-2) findings released at the end of the year 2000 point to this fact. The survey reveals the extent to which women lack autonomy; more than 50 percent justify, or even accept, violence within the home as normal. About three out of every five women considered wife-beating justified at least on one of the six grounds – neglecting the house or care of children, going out without permission of the husband, showing disrespect to in-laws, not cooking food properly, infidelity and failure to bring home enough money or goods.

However, a brighter picture seems to be emerging. Women have broken their silence by coming out and complaining about violence and harassment. Though international covenants, human rights legislation and constitutional and legal provisions exist to protect women, most women used to be unaware of them. Even in cases in which they were aware, they lacked the resources - money, skill, time, confidence, contacts, and coverage - to invoke these provisions. Thanks to legal literacy campaigns, efforts of social activists and social work institutions, government initiatives towards gender sensitisation for all level of administration and strengthening of the enforcing machinery of existing legislation on violence against women, women are becoming increasingly confident to register complaints against atrocities against them by members of the family.

Ernakulam, the area of the present study is one of the advanced districts of Kerala in terms of education, income, and urbanisation. The Ernakulam district was formed in 1958, by taking out regions from Thrissur and Kottayam districts. The district comprises parts of the erstwhile states of Travancore and Cochin and the Madras presidency. The total area of the district is 2,407 sq km.

The Ernakulam district consists of the Cochin Corporation, 7 Municipalities, and 86 *panchayats*. The total population of the district (2001 census) is 31 lakh with 15.4 lakh men and 15.6 lakh women. Nearly 93 percent of the population (96 percent of men and 91 percent of women) in the district are literate. But, even with such high rates of literacy and rapid rates of modernisation, the status of women seems to be low.

Domestic violence has attracted the attention of the general public and the judiciary in the district due to a series of unpleasant incidents – the loss of life and threat to life in several parts of the districts. Several cases of ill-treatment of women have come up, tortures and murders not excluded, in the name of refusal or failure to meet the demands of the ‘head’ of the family.

*Deepika* newspaper reported on 18 October 1998 of a case in which the Parur Court convicted a man for seven years of imprisonment and a fine of Rs 5000 for severely abusing his own daughter aged 16 years. The death by hanging by a woman in Parur following harassment by her husband and in laws was reported by *Malayala Manorama* on 23 July 1998.

It is against this background that the present study, for analysing the different forms, causes and after effects of domestic violence against women is undertaken.

## Review of literature

Violence against women within the family is a global phenomenon. However, its ramifications are more complex and its intensity much greater in India. The most pathetic aspect of such atrocities is domestic violence.

The steady decline in the sex ratio noted for over a century in India from 972 females for 1000 males in the population in 1901 to 927 females in 1991 and the prevalence of female foeticide in at least 10 States of India are critical indicators of violence against women. Female foeticide and female infanticide are basically socio-cultural problems and not just a law and order problem. UNICEF reports that 40-50 million women are missing from the Indian population due to foeticide (1991).

A study carried out in a private clinic in Bombay shows that, of the 80,000 abortions done after the parents determined the sex of the foetus, only one was male. Violence towards women starts from the foetal stage. The practice of female foeticide continues to spread to other parts of India at an alarming rate.

Another study on female infanticide conducted by Adhiti, a non-government organisation in 1995 reports that in Tamil Nadu fresh female babies were murdered by despicable methods such as covering their faces with wet clothes and feeding them poisoned herbal milk. Thirty-five *Dais* in a town called Kathihar in Bihar testified that each of them killed three to four babies per month using such and similar heinous methods. *Adhiti* pointed out that there are at least 5, 30,000 *Dais* in the State. These cold-blooded murders take place in private hospitals also with the connivance of doctors (Usha Rai, Indian Express, 1995)

*Economic Times* reports that after the Latur earthquake there was a rush to the hospitals of women to re-analyse their fallopian tubes. This is consequent upon the ultimatum given by some husbands to their wives to produce male heirs to replace the ones lost in the disaster.

The National Crime report of 1991 reveals that in every 33 minutes a woman is abused by her husband. It also reveals that in 1989 a dowry death occurred in every 125 minutes. In 1990, 1991, 1992, and 1993, the corresponding figures were 109, 102, 106, and 90. These numbers indicate the magnitude and the pace of increase of dowry deaths in the country.

Rapes within marriage, wife battering, incest, and overwork are other areas of gross violence on a woman's body. Children who become victims to incest and forced sexual relationship freeze with fear and guilt after the traumatic experience. Studies have shown that in 70 percent of the rape cases of children, the offence is committed within the child's own home in the absence of parents and that the culprits happen to be close relatives, friends, and neighbours.

A woman in the home has multiple roles to perform: of mother, cook, tailor, laundry person, nurse, housekeeper and so on. To perform excellently in all the roles is a strenuous task that affects her health adversely. India ranks as a medium-risk country in terms of women's overall health and reproductive health. India has a reproductive risk index of 39.5, a figure

worked out on the basis of several factors including the number of births, abortions, pregnancies, anaemia and other illnesses and maternal deaths, per woman. While maternal mortality rate per 100,000 live births in 1980-1992 was 8 in the UK, the corresponding figure for India was 460. This situation is comparable to that of in UK in 1928 when the maternal mortality rate had been 400 (UNDP, 1995). Eighty percent of the women are anaemic in India. Out of the 5 million abortions performed in India 4.5 million is performed illegally (*The Hindu*, 1996). About 61 percent of abortions in India are induced abortions and it is well known that most of them are instances of female foeticide (*The Hindu*, 1995). The threat to girl child is obvious from the fact that of the 15 million girls born every year, almost a quarter does not live to see their 15<sup>th</sup> birthday (Pamela Philipose, 1996)

Within the past few decades, women's activism in various parts of the world has slowly increased the visibility of domestic violence as a social problem. Despite this, violence against women within the family/home, till very recently received little attention as either a social or a public health issue. The sensitivities and stigma associated with domestic violence, the perception that it is primarily a judicial and legal issue, and the lack of data on the dimensions of the abuse, have hampered understanding and the development of appropriate interaction (Heise, et al; 1994), Research to address these factors is of very recent origin.

Within the public health literature, epidemiological studies have largely focused on estimating the prevalence of physical violence. In a 1986 study, nearly 30 percent couples in the United States reported experiencing at least one violent episode in their marriage (Strauss and Gelles, 1986). In 1990 family planning survey in Kenya found 42 percent of women reporting experience of beating by husbands (Human Rights Watch Global Report). In China, Xu (1997) found conclusive evidence of wife-beating. The Nepal maternal mortality and morbidity study reported that 4 of 132 maternal deaths were suicides. Almost 16 percent of the deaths in pregnancy were caused by domestic violence according to a community and hospital-based prospective study in India conducted during 1993-'95.

In terms of economic loss due to domestic violence, a Canadian study showed that the total cost to abused women and to government due to domestic violence was more than \$3.2 billion in 1993 (Greaves, Hankisky, and Kingston – Richers, 1995).

Women in India are subjected to violence not only by husbands but by members of both the natal and the marital homes as well. Girls and women in India are usually less privileged than boys in terms of access to material resources. Nevertheless, there are regional and community variations. Women in the North have relatively less autonomy and enjoy fewer opportunities for control over economic resources than their counterparts in the South (Karve, 1965).

Although there are some differences in reporting by region, women in the South report fewer beatings than their counterparts in the North; in-depth qualitative studies have found, however, considerable under-reporting (Rao, 1997)

Studies on the factors underlying the existence of domestic violence remain meagre; but the few that exist point repeatedly to the lack of women's autonomy as the key factor.

Spouse disparity in educational attainment level or marital age, lack of autonomy within the home, dowry pressure, childhood abuse, unemployment, alcoholism, and poverty are linked to high rates of domestic violence in India (Jejeeboy, 1998; Ahuja, 1987; Mahajan and Madhurima, 1995).

Dowry problems add to the complexity of domestic violence against women in India. Despite the Dowry Prohibition Act of 1961, research indicates that there had taken place a 169.7 percent increase in dowry-related deaths from the year 1987 to 1991 and a 37.5 percent rise in acts of cruelty by husband and relatives (National Crimes Record Bureau, 1995)

In India comprehensive household data are not available on the prevalence and costs of domestic violence. The multi-site study by the International Clinical Epidemiologists Network (INCLLEN) is a pioneering effort to estimate comparable rates of violence within and across the countries: Chile, Brazil, Egypt, and the Philippines. The multi-site household survey conducted by INCLLEN was a part of the three-year research programme conducted by the International Centre for Research on Women (ICRW) on Domestic violence in India (1997-2000) in partnership with researchers from a range of Indian academic and activist organisations.

In India the study by INCLLEN was undertaken between 1997 and 1999 at seven diverse and regional sites: Bhopal, Chennai, Delhi, Lucknow, Nagpur, Thiruvananthapuram, and Vellore. According to this study, domestic violence in India comprises 36.9 percent physical violence and 35.5 percent psychological violence, while for Kerala the corresponding rates are 62.3 percent and 61.6 percent respectively. In the rural areas, the overall figure for India is 51.7 percent of physical violence and 49.7 percent of psychological violence as against 68.8 percent and 68.9 percent in Kerala.

A study conducted in Kerala (Thiruvananthapuram) by Raj Mohan of R-CERTC and M.K.C Nair of the Child Development Centre, Thiruvananthapuram found that 45 percent of women had at least one incident of physical violence in their lifetime. More than psychological and physical violence were reported by women who have less social support. Despite the violence more than 95 percent of women remained in their marriage. The study also analysed that if the difference between the educational and employment levels of the husband and the wife is large, (especially if the woman is more educated and better-employed than her husband), the chances of psychological and physical violence are also great. A violent episode results in an average Rs 2000 of lost wages and cost of health care for injuries. Violence against women spans all geographical regions, economic strata, educational levels, and age and employment status. It is seen that despite its high literacy status and universally acclaimed social model of development, Kerala tops the list in domestic violence.

## **Relevance**

The foregoing discussion is a sure indicator of the prevalence of domestic violence in the Kerala society, a situation which is in stark contrast to the UN Human Rights Declaration (of which India is a signatory) and our constitutional and legal provisions envisage. But most women are not aware of their rights to protection of life and liberty. Even if they were, they

would lack the resources in terms of money, skill, time, experience, confidence, and courage to invoke these provisions. Moreover, traditionally women have been trained to tolerate harassment at home.

The present study attempts to examine the causes and extent of domestic violence as well as its manifestations and consequences in a selected district in Kerala. It is hoped that the findings of this exercise would help the local level administrative bodies to form policies to ensure safe and secure lives for women at home.

Domestic violence is to be perceived not as a law and order problem alone. Basically it is a socio- cultural problem. A dominant socio-cultural norm of the society is the patriarchal system in which women are put in subordination. Women are getting increasingly educated and empowered and men and women have to pass into a system of mutual support. Local bodies and NGOs have a role in sensitising not only women, but more importantly, men, in this matter.

## **Objectives**

### ***General Objective***

The general objective of the study is to do a situational analysis of domestic violence among women in a selected district in Kerala.

### ***Specific Objectives***

1. To identify and examine the extent and the types of violence prevalent in Ernakulam district;
  - (i). To study the major types of violence prevalent in the region in terms of
    - (a) causative factors,
    - (b) nature, manifestations, and frequency, and
    - (c) consequences.
  - (ii) To study the services agencies, which address problems of domestic violence in terms of their availability and effectiveness and to suggest measures for improving them, and
  - (iii) To suggest suitable measures for reducing the occurrence and prevalence of domestic violence.

The agencies, from which the preliminary data were collected on cases of domestic violence, were found to have registered them under different causes. Hence in this study, types of domestic violence are identified and classified on the basis of cause. Violence includes both physical assault - violence on the body - and psychological torture - violence on the mind. Manifestation of physical violence may be in the form of hitting, beating or knocking whereas psychological violence may take the forms of threatening, condemning, cursing or abusing. In this study, parties affected in domestic violence cases include husband, wife, children,

and in-laws. This study has looked not only into the consequences of violence in the personal lives of the victims but also in their families and their immediate societies too.

## **Method**

The universe of the study comprised all women victims of domestic violence in the study area. In order to identify the various typologies of domestic violence an enlistment survey was conducted by contacting the Women Cell, the Family court, Police Stations, Counselling Centres, and NGOs working for women in which cases of domestic violence are reported. Care was taken to include only those cases that were registered since January 1998.

From among these 11 types, five major types – Alcoholism, Dowry, Economic Crises, Infidelity, and Personality Disorders – accounting for 120 cases were selected for the enquiry.

### ***Sample size***

Out of the five major types of domestic violence identified, and selected, five victims/cases from each type were chosen as the sample. Thus a total of 25 cases were selected for intensive analysis.

Ten persons representative of the key personnel involved in the empowerment of women representing Family Courts and (1), Family Counselling Centres (two each) and Women Cell, NGOs, Social Worker, Women Activists, and the public (two each) were also interviewed. Thus interviews were conducted with 25 victims and their families and 10 key personnel.

Enlistment schedule, Interview schedule, and Interview guides were the major tools of data collection used in this enquiry. The schedules and guides were pre-tested and suitably modified. In-depth Interviews and discussions were conducted to elicit information from the respondents.

### ***Enlistment schedule***

An enlistment schedule was used to collect data on the different types of domestic violence prevalent in the district.

### ***Interview Schedule for Victims***

A pre-tested interview schedule was used to collect detailed information from the victims of domestic violence.

### ***Interview Guide for Key Personnel***

An interview guide was prepared for gathering information on the viewpoints and receive suggestions regarding the various aspects of domestic violence.

**Table 1.1 Types of Domestic violence Reported, since January 1998: Ernakulam district**

<b>Causes / Types of Domestic Violence</b>	<b>No. of Cases of Violence</b>
Alcoholism	30
In-laws	18
Rape	7
Property dispute	7
Marital Maladjustment	12
Infidelity	22
Personality disorders	20
Drug Addiction	5
Dowry	25
Economic Crises	23
Others	7
Total	176

### **Sources of data**

Both primary and secondary sources of data were gathered for the study. Secondary sources included documents, books, reports of surveys and studies, literature pertaining to domestic violence and other relevant publications.

### **Training**

The five investigators selected for conducting the interviews were given a one-day orientation at the Rajagiri College of Social Sciences. An introduction to the concept and the types of domestic violence was given followed by detailed discussions of the tools for data collection, namely enlistment schedule, interview guide, and interview schedule. A mock interview was conducted to ensure collection of the maximum information possible from the respondents.

### **Limitations of the study**

Many of the organisations refused to reveal the identity of the victims reported by them since they held that it would be against their professional ethics to do so. Another limitation is that even in the cases in which the identity of victims was revealed, the victims were reluctant to divulge information. In order to surmount this barrier, the investigators had to make repeated visits and spend more time than had been planned.

The presence of family members during interviews also proved to be a great handicap; the victims refused to open up and to furnish all the details, which the investigators attempted to elicit. Emotional breakdowns of the victims during their reminiscing of their harrowing experiences were heart-rending and caused lengthening of the duration of interviews.

## 2. Types, Factors and Victims of Domestic Violence

This section discusses the different typologies of domestic violence prevalent in Ernakulam district on the basis of the socio-demographic characteristics, causative factors, manifestations and frequency of violence.

### Types of domestic violence

Violence against women is on the increase in Kerala, according to Dr Alexander Jacob IPS, Director, State Women's Commission. Only 2000 cases had been reported between 1983 and 1993, while in 1997 alone, 7306 cases have been reported. Within the first two years since the Women's Commission was formed in Kerala, 15,000 cases came before the Commission. In contrast, during the same period, the corresponding number was only 600 for all the other 11 State Women's Commissions in the country taken together and 2000 cases for the National Women's Commission (Deepika, 1998).

In order to identify the types of domestic violence prevalent in the Ernakulam district, an enlistment survey was conducted. Information was collected on the types of cases registered with the Family Counselling Centres of the various NGOs, Police Stations, Family Courts, and Women's cells (refer list of agencies/personnel in Appendix II). The types identified were those related to Alcoholism, Dowry, Financial crisis, Extra-marital affairs, Rape, Personality disorders, Intrusion of in-laws, marital maladjustment, property disputes, drug addiction and divorce (Table 2.1).

**Table 2.1 Types of Domestic Violence**

Types	Number
Alcoholism	30
Intrusion of in-laws	18
Rape	7
Property Dispute	7
Marital Maladjustment	12
Extra-marital affairs	22
Personality Disorder	20
Drug addiction	5
Dowry	25
Economic Crisis	23
Divorce-related issues	7
Total	176

Source: Field Survey

From these 11 types, 5 major types were selected for the study: Alcoholism (Type 1), Dowry (Type 2), Economic crisis (Type 3), Extramarital affairs (Type 4), and Personality disorder

(Type 5). It was observed that cases of Alcoholism, Financial Crisis, Marital maladjustment, and Personality disorders were normally reported to Family Counselling Centres whereas dowry and rape cases used to be reported to police stations.

There has been a rising trend in alcoholism. Owing to rapid socio-economic changes, life has become highly competitive and tension-ridden. Society as a whole is becoming increasingly materialistic. The traditional methods of meeting stress seem to have become inadequate or unsuitable; as a consequence many resort to alcoholism for relief, a trend which in turn leads to family disorganisation of, and violent behaviour in, the family.

The existence of dowry and the role it plays in the abuse of women provide an additional dimension to domestic violence in India. The dowry system reinforces the concept of woman as property rather than as an individual. Available evidence indicates that dowry-related deaths registered an increase of 16.7 percent during the quinquennium 1987 to 1991 (National Crimes Record Bureau, 1995).

Economic crises arise from several reasons: unemployment, indebtedness, loss of sources of livelihood, destitution arising from natural calamities like floods, earthquakes, and cyclones. They may also be a result of factors like unwillingness to work, profligacy, fatalism, disablement, and alcoholism and other addictions. Psychological problems such as inferiority complex may also result in abuse and violence at home.

Extra-marital affairs of spouses lead to violence owing to greater opportunity for men in the world outside home than for women, most of whom are home-bound (though this is changing gradually), men fall more often than women, into infidelity. Moreover, as society considers extra-marital affairs of women unpardonable while those of men are viewed lightly, husbands turn violent against their wives who suspect or find fault with them, for infidelity.

Most of the victims under the 'personality disorder' type are paranoiac cases. In psychiatry, paranoia is defined as "functional psychosis in which there are delusions and hallucinations and feelings of outward pride and hatred, all of which are logically systematised, so that an individual actually believes his disordered perception". The person loses touch with reality but seldom realises that he/she has a problem. The cause of this psychosis is not assignable to any single source; it may spring from a wide variety of sources and usually a multiplicity of converging influences. It is a part of the dynamic social process that may be understood only in relation to the personal, social situation and the sequence of events and experiences of which it is a part. However, key factors may be broadly identified as personality characteristics, home and family conditions, and other socio-economic and cultural factors.

Though the cases of domestic violence taken for the study have been classified depending on the major cause of each, violence is caused in the majority of cases by more than one factor. The causes may be highly inter-linked in the same way; the nature and manifestation of violence also shows similarities among the various types. So too are the effect of violence on the victims of the different types of cases. The socio-demographic profile of the victims,

the causative factors, nature and manifestation of violence and its consequences for all the five major types of violence, are discussed below.

### **Causative factors**

The various factors that were identified as causing violence in the family were alcoholism, extramarital sexual affairs, personality disorders, suspicion (on the fidelity of wife) and job dissatisfaction of the husband and wife, economic crisis in the household, difference in social status between husband and wife, wife's lack of interest /negligence of household chores/care of children, property dispute in the family, sexual maladjustment, physical illness, lack of privacy, and employment of wife. Of these, alcoholism and economic crisis were the most common causes i.e., in 20 cases of the total 25. This might be because these two factors are highly inter-related. Squandering on alcohol may lead to lack of resources for purchase of even essentials. Husbands steep further into drinking for 'relief' from misery at home and wife-torturing for 'ventilation' of their frustration. Fourteen cases referred to 'wife not attending to household chores' as the major cause. Eleven cases pointed out lack of privacy and husband's suspicion of wife as the significant causes. Dowry, 'husbands' job dissatisfaction,' and 'not looking after children' were mentioned by 10 of the respondent victims. In seven cases, 'differences in social status' and 'mental disorder of the husband' were the causes reported. Six of the respondents reported 'extra marital affairs' as the major cause. The number of victims who noted 'employment of wife', 'physical illness', 'property dispute', and 'sexual maladjustment' as factors causing violence was below five (Table 2.1). In all cases, wives were tortured by their husbands, while in a few cases; in-laws too subjected the woman to domestic violence.

Paranoid persons were also found among the torturing husbands. Such persons were under illusions – they think somebody is broadcasting their thoughts and somebody is forcefully inserting thoughts into them. They also get delusions of jealousy, and hatred, which they target towards someone, who usually is the person's wife. They are not able to reason out and they turn violent towards the target.

It was learnt that, apart from paranoia, there were also other psychological causes for violence. Suspicion was found to be one such cause; husbands who suspect infidelity of their wives, used to ill-treat them.

In sum, the more important factors contributing to domestic violence were found to be 'alcoholism', 'economic crises', 'not looking after household chores', 'job dissatisfaction of husband', and 'husband's suspicion of wife'. Of these 'alcoholism' and 'economic crisis' were the most frequent.

The victims belonged to different levels of education. Most of them had education of less than high school. Three victims were found to be illiterate. There were only six persons who had college education among the 25 respondents. One of them was a post-graduate. Domestic violence was prevalent among all educational groups, but was more so among the less educated.

**Table No. 2.1 Causative Factors of Violence**

	Type I	Type II	Type III	Type IV	Type V	Total 2
Alcoholism	5	4	4	3	4	20
Dowry	1	5	2	2	0	10
Difference in Social Status	0	4	1	1	1	7
Employment of Wife	0	0	1	2	0	3
Extra-marital affairs	0	0	0	5	1	6
Economic crisis	4	4	5	4	3	20
Job dissatisfaction of husband	2	1	3	3	1	10
Lack of privacy	1	5	0	4	1	11
Mental disorder	0	0	1	1	5	7
Not looking after children	2	3	2	0	3	10
Not attending to household chores	3	3	2	4	2	14
Physical illness	1	0	1	0	0	2
Property dispute	3	0	1	0	0	4
Sterility	0	0	0	0	0	0
Sexual maladjustment	1	1	1	1	0	4
Suspicion	1	2	3	1	4	11

#Type I -Alcoholism  
 Type II -Dowry  
 Type III -Economic crisis  
 Type IV -Extramartial affairs  
 Type V -Personality disorder

Though the majority were full-time housewives, there were a few (six) who had taken up employment outside home. Employment was mainly in low-paid occupations such as casual worker and housemaid.

Though employed women are not immune to domestic violence, wife's employment may make a difference. Among these six, four had an income ranging between Rs 1000-3000 per month, while one earned a monthly income between Rs 5000-7000 and another between Rs 3000-5000. The high rate of unemployment among the victims points to the fact that employment of women could act as a factor for their autonomy and release from domestic tyranny.

The victims came both from extended and nuclear families. It is seen, however, that the incidence of domestic violence is higher in extended families, particularly in the case of torture in the name of dowry and economic crisis. In nuclear families, the major causes

were found to be extra-marital affairs and personality disorders. It is possible that extra-marital affairs are kept suppressed in extended families due to fear of admonition of elders in the family.

Domestic violence prevails in all families irrespective of religion.

### **Marital status**

Regarding marital status of the victims of Type I (Alcoholism), four out of five had arranged marriage while only one was a case of love marriage. The duration of marriage of three of the victims in this category was more than 15 years. In these three cases, they had suffered the battering of husbands for a long time; violence increased with the increase of intake of liquor over the years. All the victims of Type II (dowry) were married. Three were now living with their own parents separated from their husbands; however they were not legally divorced. The duration of marriage of these five couples was in the range of one-and-half years to five years. In the case of dowry-related cases, torture begins from the early years of marriage.

Torturing wife in the name of economic crisis at home has led three of the five wives to live separately from their husband. In the case of the victims of torture in the name of the extra-marital affairs of the husband, four out of the five are living separated from husbands.

Of the 25 respondents 24 had arranged marriage, only one had a love marriage. Except for one, all marriages were with the consent of both the partners. All of them were legally registered. Though many of the victims were separated from their husbands, none of them was legally divorced, may be due to fear that divorce would affect their children's future. It might also be in the hope that, at some time, the differences with their husbands could be bridged and they would be able to live together again.

### **Educational status of husband**

Among the husbands 8 had passed SSLC, 11 had only primary education, 2 were illiterate, and 4 were college-educated, among whom there were 2 graduates and 1 postgraduate. Thus we find the perpetrators of domestic violence came from all educational groups, though the majority had only low levels of education.

### **Employment and income of husband**

Seventeen of the 25 husbands of victims of domestic violence were daily wage earners who had income in the range of Rs 1000-Rs 3000 per month. Seven were either employees in private firms or petty traders who had incomes in the range of Rs 3000-Rs 7000 per month. One of the husbands was unemployed. Thus we find that all of them came from the low income or low middle-income categories.

It is seen that the majority of the victims in this study belong to the lower socio-economic strata of society. Being less educated, less income-earning, and physically more fragile than

their husbands, they become the subjects of harassment and torture. Poverty, low social status, and low education make their men frustrated and annoyed. Traditionally, in patriarchal societies, women enjoyed only a role subordinate to that of men in both home and society. It is only natural that the cumulative result of these circumstances was cruelty on the part of men on their wives primarily to give vent to their suppressed feelings of deprivation, exploitation, and humiliation. Domestic violence in households of the higher social strata is most often hushed up and kept confidential for fear of losing face before relatives and friends.

### **Nature, manifestations, and frequency of violence**

Domestic violence takes many forms; it could be physical, psychological or both. It causes damage to the victim's physique and psyche.

Violence may be any act of verbal or physical force, coercion, or life-threatening deprivation directed at an individual woman or girl by a family member that can cause physical or psychological harm, humiliation or arbitrary violation of liberty and perpetuates female subordination. Psychological violence is less amenable to quantification, difficult to standardise and may have different meanings across cultures. Yet both aspects of violence are inter-related and need to be taken together for study in order to have appropriate interventions.

Physical violence was assessed on the basis of six types: slapping, hitting, kicking, beating, threatening to attack or attacking with weapons, and forced sex. Psychological violence was reckoned in terms of humiliating, threatening, abandoning or betraying.

### **Physical violence**

In 22 of the 25 cases, beating, biting, and slapping of the wife were the major types of domestic violence. The victims had experienced this sort of harassment and offence at least thrice during the 12 months that preceded the interview with our team of investigation. The violence was often associated with other types of abuse such as forced sex, perverted (unnatural) sex, strangling, and even threatening to kill. In a few cases, the paranoid husband suspected even his daughter of illicit sex and thrashed her black and blue (Table 2.2).

### **Psychological violence**

Hurting the feelings of the spouse through use of foul language and abuses, and humiliating them in all possible ways was a device resorted to by the majority (22 out of 25) of the husbands of our respondents. Another device was desertion of the household for lengthy periods of time. Eighteen of them had deserted their home and children for varying periods of time during the one-year period prior to our interview. Some husbands had done so three times during the period.

**Table No. 2.2 Physical Violence: Nature, manifestations, and frequency**

<b>Manifestation &amp; Frequency</b>	<b>Types</b>					<b>Total</b>
	<b>Alcoholism</b>	<b>Dowry</b>	<b>Economic Crisis</b>	<b>Extra-Marital affairs</b>	<b>Personality disorder</b>	
<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>Hitting</b>						
None	1	0	3	0	1	5
Once/ Twice	1	0	0	0	0	1
Thrice/ more	3	5	2	5	4	19
<b>Kicking</b>						
None	1	0	2	0	1	4
Once/ Twice	0	0	0	0	0	0
Thrice/ more	4	5	3	5	4	21
<b>Beating</b>						
None	1	0	1	0	1	3
Once/ Twice	0	0	0	0	0	0
Thrice/ more	4	5	4	5	4	22
<b>Slapping</b>						
None	1	0	3	0	1	5
Once/ Twice	0	0	0	0	0	0
Thrice/ more	4	5	2	5	4	20
<b>Attacking with Weapon</b>						
None	4	3	3	3	2	15
Once/ Twice	0	0	0	0	1	1
Thrice/ more	1	2	2	2	2	9
<b>Forced sex</b>						
None	3	4	4	4	4	19
Once/ Twice	0	0	0	0	0	0
Thrice/ more	2	1	1	1	1	6

### **3. Consequences of Victimisation**

Domestic violence is the result of a combination of social and individual factors and its consequences may be visualised as constituting four concentric circles. The innermost circle represents the personal history that an individual brings to the relationships. The second circle represents the immediate context in which abuse takes place, the family or the intimate relationship. The formal and informal institutions and social structures in which relationships are embedded - neighbourhood, workplaces, social networks, and peer groups - are shown as the third circle. The fourth and outermost circle is the economic and social environment, including cultural norms. In this study the last two circles are combined into one to represent the consequences at the societal level.

#### **Personal level**

At the personal level, the consequences of violence have been examined in terms of 'emotional breakdown', 'mental depression', 'physical injuries', 'deprivation of basic needs', 'suicide thoughts', and 'degree of control over spending money and taking decisions of the family'.

It is observed that the consequences do not vary among victims of the different types of violence. The major consequences are found to be emotional breakdown, depression, deprivation, and physical assault. The intensity and incidence of physical violence varies marginally among the victims of the different types; the worst sufferers being wives of persons who had extra-marital affairs and/or personality disorders. The majority of the victims reported that they were haunted by thoughts of committing suicide, the only difference among them being the frequency and intensity of such thought. In fact, one of them had made an attempt at suicide, but did not succeed. In sum, the victims of domestic violence were found to be a dejected and frustrated lot.

#### **Family level**

Family is a network of relationships and violence in the family affects these relationships in multiple ways. In order to analyse the after-effects of victimisation at the family level, the following factors were taken into account: 'intimacy with husband', 'intimacy with child/children', 'education of child/children', 'interaction among family members', 'home environment' and 'meeting basic needs'.

It was observed that, except for two victims of domestic violence, their attachment to and intimacy with their husbands had been affected badly. In this respect, much difference is not seen among the different types.

The relationship with the child/children was kept unaffected by most of the mothers in our sample. Only in two cases were the intimacy and care for children observed to have been affected adversely. It seems that the victims took great pains, to see that their mishap did not affect their children.

The education of the child/children was also taken care of and kept unaffected in most of the cases. Only in six cases were children's education marginally affected.

The home environment was affected in all the cases, moderately in 15 cases and severely in 10 cases. The cases in which the home environment had been severely affected were mostly of the Personality Disorder and Dowry types.

Domestic violence ruptured the home atmosphere and the victims were increasingly estranged from the other members in the household.

The victims also found that they were getting deprived of the means to satisfy even their basic needs.

In short, other than the relationship with child and education of child, all other relationships at the family level were affected in the majority of cases under study.

### **Societal level**

The consequences of victimisation at the societal level were examined in terms of 'relationship with neighbours', 'relationship with friends', 'relationship with residents', 'relationship with colleagues' (if applicable), and 'behaviour of society towards the victim'.

In the majority of cases, domestic violence did not lead to grave consequences in terms of the relationship of the victims with their neighbours or friend's. However, they felt the loss of some degree of warmth in the dealings of their friends and neighbours with them. Victims of violence in the extra-marital affairs' category had a different experience. They experienced much more estrangement from friends and neighbours than the others. It was the Type III victims (Economic Crisis category) who had been the least affected at the societal level. The few employed persons among the victims did not find any ill-will or alienation from their colleagues.

In general, it may be noted that, the consequences of victimisation at the societal level are not so marked as those at the personal and family levels.

### **Agencies addressing domestic violence**

In this part, we discuss the responses of the key personnel and the victims, regarding the services rendered by agencies, which address issues relating to domestic violence, in terms of availability and effectiveness and to offer suggestions for improvement.

#### ***Key personnel***

A wide variety of agencies exist which offer services in cases of domestic violence viz. Family court, *Vanitha* cell, Police station, Family Counselling Centre, Women's Commission, People's Council for Social Justice, and religious institutions. Among the non-governmental organisations *Darshan*, *Mythri*, and *Santhwana* were the prominent ones in Ernakulam district.

In addition, political organisations, de-addiction and rehabilitation centres also cater to redressal of problems arising from domestic violence.

Counselling by the Family Counselling Centres were the most widely accessed service agency because their services are rendered free to the victims. Most of the other services were not as much popular. Moreover, the activities of some of the private agencies were confined to specific types of cases. A few other organisations in the field did not show consistency in their services and had only poor follow-up services.

Most of the victims approached either Family Counselling Centres or NGOs. The majority of the victims were often reluctant to approach institutions such as Family Courts and Police Stations due to fear of harassment or to stigma attached to such approach. Agencies, which were consistent with regular follow-ups and with trained and experienced professionals, were reportedly functioning effectively in the area.

In order to increase the awareness level of the people about the agencies and their services legal literacy camps, *neethimelas*, and community outreach programmes have to be organised. The media and the propaganda and organisations should develop a holistic approach and reach out to people at all levels. They should render their services through trained and experienced personnel. Effective follow-ups and regular periodical evaluation of the agencies, and their activities would facilitate improvement of the services.

### ***Victims***

It could be seen that among the 25 cases under study, most had approached Family Counselling Centres (FCCs) and NGOs. Other agencies of help such as Rehabilitation Centres and De-addiction Centres of religious organisations and private psychologists were also approached by a few. In some cases, the nearest Police Station was approached. The only one among the samples, which had approached the *Vanitha* Cell, was of the view that the cell was not easily approachable due to cumbersome formalities. These are instances in which a particular case was presented before more than one agency.

The victims suggested that in order to improve the services of the different agencies, it would be desirable to make these services available free of charge. Legal advice or legal support from the agencies and their help in finding solutions to the problems would increase the trust reposed in them. Awareness should be created among the general public about activities of the concerned organisations. Efforts should be made to avail the services of the community representatives to act as liaison between the community and the agencies.

### **Suggestions**

Unlike in the past, men and women are more aware about the prevailing gender equalities. The status of women has to be raised through consistent effort, which should begin at home and followed up through education at different stages. Value education classes should be a part of the curriculum. This would in turn help character-building and create a sense of respect for the opposite sex, lack of which was one of the main reasons for violence between sexes.

**Table 3.1 Agencies Approached for Help**

Approached Agencies	Type of Violence					Total
	Alcoholism	Dowry	Economic Crisis	Extra-marital Affairs	Personality Disorder	
Nearest Police Station	0	1	1	2	0	4
NGOs	4	4	3	0	1	12
FCC	1	1	4	3	4	13
Others	2	2	1	1	2	8

Educating of girls should aim at strengthening their inherent abilities and utilising them for their own development as well as for the society's development. This empowerment will help improving the status of women and raising voice against atrocities and harassment.

Special efforts should be taken to identify personality disorders like paranoia at a very young age. Pre-marital counselling has become popular nowadays; but post-marital counselling is essential. Group sessions of married couples may facilitate better interaction and inter-relationships among them. This would result in better understanding of the problems and underlying causes. Setting up of *Grama sabhas*, church groups, legal literacy camps in susceptible communities, and self-help groups would help women open up their problems and find solutions. Help from service organisations should be made available to all concerned irrespective of caste, creed, and status. Mobile family courts to settle disputes should be initiated. Representatives from communities having link with various agencies to spot cases could also be adopted as a mechanism to reduce the occurrence of domestic violence.

According to the victims men should understand the value of women and have respect for them; only then could violence be prevented. Boys and girls should be educated to have enough confidence to react to atrocities against women. Women should be made aware of their rights and privileges. Pre-marital counselling would enable couples to have better understanding of the rights and responsibilities of married life. The majority of the victims were of the opinion that there should be more laws to protect women and that existing laws should be properly reinforced. *Neethimelas* should be organised to solve the disputes occurring between marital partners. Above all, effort should be made for strict enforcement of laws for prohibition of vices such as alcoholism, drug addiction, and dowry system.

## **4. Recommendations**

The following recommendations are drawn on the basis of the analysis of the case studies, discussions with the key personnel, and interactions with the respondents.

### **Awareness generation and sensitisation**

- (i) Awareness about gender equality and women's rights should be instilled in boys and girls from a very early age in order to bring about a change in the mindset of the future generation;
- (ii) Stigma attached to victims of domestic violence should be removed by conscientising the community through outreach programmes;
- (iii) Legal literacy camps should be conducted on a regular and systematic basis at the local community level;
- (iv) List of NGOs and governmental organisations dealing with women's issues should be made known to the public;
- (v) Health care providers such as doctors, nurses, and other para-medical staff should be properly sensitised to treat women experiencing violence;
- (vi) Sensitisation programmes should be organised for the policy makers, judiciary, and enforcement agencies in order to make them responsive in handling cases of violence against women;
- (vii) Media should be made use of, for conducting awareness campaigns on violence against women.
- (viii) Frequent legal awareness camps for women empowerment and spreading social awareness creation should be organised in rural areas.

### **Health care support**

- (i) Domestic violence should be recognised as a health issue;
- (ii) The prevalence and the health consequences of domestic violence should be documented;
- (iii) Special care should be provided to women seeking medical help following episodes of violence;
- (iv) The health care providers should show patience, forbearance, and empathy in examining the cases of victims of violence.

### **Counselling**

- (i) Pre-marital counselling should be made compulsory; post-marital counselling is to be arranged as follow-up, in order to prevent breakdown of families.
- (ii) Vulnerable communities should be identified and services like counselling, and legal aid be made easily accessible to them, free of cost;
- (iii) Preventive counselling centres should be set up in each district;

- (iv) Mobile counselling should be introduced as an effective strategy to provide consolation and comfort to victims.

### **Laws**

- (i) Separate laws should be enacted to deal with domestic violence;
- (ii) There should be strict laws for the prevention of vices such as alcoholism and drug addiction and social evils such as the dowry system;
- (iii) Laws should be simplified and made victim-friendly.

### **Judiciary**

- (i) There should be a special court with a woman judge and magistrate in each district to handle domestic violence cases;
- (ii) Only women magistrates should try cases of violence against women;
- (iii) Mobile courts should be introduced as an effective strategy to provide justice to the victims of domestic violence;
- (iv) Law enforcement should be done by the co-ordinated efforts of police administration and judiciary;
- (v) Proper atmosphere should be provided in the family courts for conciliation and for providing atmosphere congenial for the women to present their cases.

### **Role of NGOs**

- (i) Facilities such as short-stay-homes for women in distress should be provided and emphasis should be laid on vocational training to rehabilitate them;
- (ii) Women in backward communities should also be given free vocational training;
- (iii) Children of affected women should be given special care and attention for promoting their education and enabling them to discharge their social functioning;
- (iv) People's Planning Programmes through self-help groups and neighbourhood groups should be encouraged to facilitate mutual sharing of ideas and experiences among women.
- (v) Measures should be adopted for building up women's self-confidence, enabling them to use avenues for redressal of atrocities against them;
- (vi) NGOs working in different fields should be made proactive to the issues of domestic violence so that prompt assistance could be rendered to the victims;
- (vii) NGOs should have experienced, skilled, and committed manpower to deal with different categories of domestic violence in an effective manner.

### **Role of Government**

- (i) Government should ensure proper enforcement of existing laws related to women's rights;
- (ii) Women should be made aware of Women's Commission; offices of the Women's Commission should be opened at the district and lower levels; women volunteers

should be encouraged to register their names in these offices; they should be organised as groups for taking up development programmes;

- (iii) The assistance of NGOs should be availed by the government agencies to create awareness about domestic violence;
- (iv) Special legal aid cells and special officers should be appointed in all police stations to provide assistance to victimised women.

### **Role of police**

- (i) Police should be trained to be respectful and courteous to women in distress;
- (ii) A separate wing of police may be opened for dealing with women's issues, in all police stations and personnel of this wing should be exempted from other duties;
- (iii) Only women police officials should be allowed to handle cases involving women;
- (iv) Police force should be given orientation training for handling delicate issues carefully and conscientiously to instil confidence among the public to approach the police without fear;
- (v) Police need to be sensitised to treat domestic violence cases seriously. They should be given special training for handling such cases as there is a need for promptness and careful handling of the victim who is traumatised by the violence;
- (vi) Many acts of violence against women especially dowry deaths are hushed up and registered in the name of other false cases. Hence in such cases even before the launch of the investigation, police should associate themselves with other agencies that render services in the matter of violence against women.

### **Role of Media**

- (i) Discussions on women's issues with victims and key personnel could be promoted through the media, to give a new venue to the airing of the complaints and finding solutions to the offences;
- (ii) Media should be used to sensitise the officials and the public about domestic violence so as to develop a positive attitude towards women in general, and women victims, in particular;
- (iii) Censoring of the programmes should be implemented effectively, so that violence and negative impact programmes do not get undue attention of the public.

## **Appendix 1 Case Studies**

### **Alcoholism**

#### **No: 1**

**Rani (wife): 45 years**

**Rathan (Husband): 52 years**

**Religion: Hindu**

Rani and Rathan have been married for 26 years. They have two daughters (22 yrs and 18 yrs) and a son (24 yrs). Both husband and wife have only elementary education. Rathan and Rani are agricultural labourers each earning about Rs 1000 per month.

Their early years of marriage were happy. However, Rathan began consuming alcohol occasionally and Rani did not pay much attention to it. Gradually he became addicted to alcohol. After having three children, it became difficult for them to finance the needs of children. So Rani started going for work as an agricultural labourer. Rathan became furious and could not digest the thought of Rani going to work. He started suspecting her of having love affair with someone outside. He often used to follow her to the workplace and on seeing her talking to other men, he used to beat and hit her up severely. They also became sexually maladjusted. At present he talks about her in abusive terms.

Rathan spends his entire money on alcohol. Their elder daughter was married off with Rani's efforts. Even after many years of married life, they do not have a house of their own. Recently Rathan started taking Rani's earnings without even leaving a single penny for her. Rani is anxious about getting her younger daughter married. And out of despair she once poured kerosene on herself, but her daughter prevented her from burning to death. Her son is also an agricultural labourer and earns Rs 1000 per month. He supports the family, but his income is hardly enough to make both ends meet.

Their neighbours and friends are very helpful. She has also applied for financial help from a religious institution to get her daughter married off. Rani approached a family counselling centre for help and has been undergoing counselling. After attending regular counselling she has become optimistic and hopes that her daughter's life would not become miserable as has happened in her case.

#### **No.2**

**Valsa (wife): 37 years**

**Vinod (Husband): 42 years**

**Religion: Christian**

Valsa was married to Vinod in 1989. Valsa lives with her father-in-law and mother-in-law and also has two daughters (9 yrs and 8 yrs) studying in primary school. Valsa has passed SSLC and Vinod, ITI. He is the only earning member and works as a machine operator earning around Rs 7000 per month

After few months of courtship, they got married and the marriage was legally registered.

The major part of Vinod's income goes to toddy shops. Valsa has no say in the financial matters. When drunk, Vinod hits and kicks Valsa and forces her for sex. Vinod accuses her for not bringing dowry and talks ill of her. Her in-laws are very supportive and help her in looking after the children. Because of Vinod's drinking habits the family is going through severe financial crisis. Vinod often complains that Valsa does not look after their kids properly. He is determined to sell away his property, but his parents have somehow managed to stop him from doing so. All these have disturbed Valsa and led to the creation of an unpleasant atmosphere at home for the kids.

She socialises with her neighbours and they manage to take her to an NGO for assistance in terms of counselling and moral support.

### **No.3**

**Manju (wife): 36 years**

**Manoj (Husband): 42 years**

**Religion: Hindu**

Manju and Manoj have been married for 15 years; her in-laws live with them. They have a daughter and a son aged 14 and 11 years respectively. Manoj has passed the 10<sup>th</sup> standard and Manju stopped studies after middle school. Manoj is a contractor earning Rs 4000 per month.

Manoj is an alcoholic and suspects Manju of infidelity. He tortures and harasses her physically and mentally. He comes home drunk and kicks the food; as a result Manju and kids are left to starve many a day. Manju is enduring the life of torment and trauma for the sake of her kids.

Manoj abuses Manju in all possible ways. He blames her for not looking after their children and not giving proper attention to the household affairs. Her in-laws, though had not demanded dowry during marriage, now find fault with her for not bringing dowry. Manoj forces her for sex almost every day but reposes no trust in her at all. Now she is not in talking terms with her husband and in-laws. All these have made Manju psychologically upset and weak, as a result of which she becomes harsh with her children.

Even though she keeps a distance with her neighbours, they are sympathetic and offer her every possible help. Recently with their help she has approached an NGO (Mukthisadan) for support.

### **No.4**

**Sharon (Wife): 20 years**

**Samanth (Husband): 24 years**

**Religion: Hindu**

Sharon married Samanth, a carpenter, six years ago. It was a love marriage. They have a son (5 years) and a daughter (3 years). Sharon and Samanth have only primary education. Samanth earns around Rs 3000 per month.

Samanth is an alcoholic. He often slaps, kicks, and beats Sharon in front of their kids and neighbours. All his income is squandered on drinks and he does not bother to buy even essential goods for consumption in the household. Sharon faces financial problems and borrows money and consumption materials from neighbours. Samanth bashes up Sharon whenever he is a drunk and even abuses his children. Consequently Sharon is emotionally and mentally upset; she vents her frustration on the children by cursing and thrashing them, an act she knows is wrong. Though a counselling centre has offered her help and has registered her case, she is reluctant to take to counselling and has doubts about its possible results.

#### **No.5**

**Nikhil (wife): 44 years**

**Naijon (Husband): 50 years**

**Religion: Hindu**

Nikhil was given in marriage when she was barely 15 years-old to a person of 44 years of age. Her husband passed away when she was expecting her second baby. She entered into a second marriage arranged by her parents. This time she got married to Naijon, a mason. It is already 25 years since then. She does not have children from the second marriage. Her eldest son works as a manual worker and earns around Rs 1500 a month.

The second marriage did not bring her any solace either. Immediately after marriage she came to know that Naijon was an alcoholic. He treated her with utter cruelty, and often bashed her up. Often, the physical abuse resulted in injuries and bruises. Naijon swears at her and her sons and threatens them with grave punishment.

After a few years of marriage, she got to know that Naijon was supporting another woman in his native place. This made Nikhil furious and she decided not to remain a silent sufferer any longer. She too started beating up Naijon, whenever he tried to beat her up. And her retaliation gradually reduced the physical violence inflicted on her.

Now that she has started giving him back in the same coin, he thinks that she is getting support from some, he knows not who, local men. Naijon remains drunk always and accuses her of having relationships with the local men. He often forces her to have sex with him, much against her will. Though she finds it not worth living with him, she does not want to sever the relationship. She manages to maintain a good rapport with her sons. Her relationship with her neighbours is not, however, warm or intimate; she believes that the neighbours are much to blame for Naijon's alcoholism.

She has approached a social worker for help; she was given counselling and was directed to take Naijon to a de-addiction centre. But she still has not been successful in convincing her husband of the need to go to the de-addiction centre.

#### **No.6**

**Jainy: (wife)**

**Jack (Husband)**

**Religion: Christian**

Jainy and Jack are a Christian couple who got married in 1996. They have two daughters aged three years and two years respectively. Theirs is an extended family. Jainy's mother in-law stays with them. Jack has only primary school education whereas Jainy has studied up to Pre-degree level. They had been lovers but their marriage was arranged by their parents. Jack is the only earning member in the family. He works as an agricultural labourer and earns about Rs 5000 a month.

Jainy brought dowry as was demanded by her in-laws. But they were not satisfied with the amount she brought. Jainy was treated with cruelty and subjected to harassment in the name of dowry. They used every social or religious occasion for raising demand for additional dowry. Jainy belongs to a family having better social and financial status than her husband's family.

Both husband and mother in-law forced Jainy to get more money from her parents. Jack always looks for some reason to harass her. She gets beaten up by her husband and in-laws that result in physical injuries. They never bothered to give her even first aid for her bruises. Jack suspects her fidelity too.

Jainy is blamed for not taking proper care of her children and the household. Neighbours are quite sympathetic towards her. Jainy has now left her husband and in-laws and stays with her parents. She is emotionally and mentally broken, fails to take proper care of her kids and loses temper on them for no reason. However, she does not seem to have lost all hope.

Her parents have taken her to an NGO for help. They are counselling her and they are trying to get her husband also for counselling.

#### **No.7**

**Santhi (Wife)**

**Santhosh (Husband)**

**Religion: Hindu**

Santhi was married to Santhosh around five years ago. They have a daughter and a son, 4 yrs and 2 years of age respectively. Theirs is an extended family. Santhosh's mother and sister stay with them. Both Santhi and Santhosh are graduates. Santhosh is the only earning member in their family. He works in a private company and earns Rs 3000 month.

Santhi had brought dowry to her husband's home as was demanded by her in-laws. But after marriage they expressed unhappiness about the small amount of dowry she brought. Santhi's family background was a little lower than that of Santhosh. They asked her to go to her parents and get more money by way of dowry.

Santhosh had been initially very affectionate towards Santhi but now he has turned cruel towards her. He ill-treats and beats her black and blue. He once knocked her head against the wall. It was their neighbours who then took her to the hospital where she had to undergo surgery. Santhi reports that her mother-in-law demands more jewellery and money for hoarding them for her daughter's marriage. Her in-laws find fault with her for several reasons, most

of them imagined. For instance, a constant complaint is that she does not take proper care of the household. She feels so emotionally and mentally broken and depressed that she has thought of even committing suicide. Her in-laws and husband deny her even her minimum needs such as food and clothing. Sometimes, she goes without food for days. Her relationship with some of her neighbours is strained. But there are a few who are sympathetic towards her.

Recently she went back to her parents but they are trying to pacify her and send her back to her husband and in-laws. She has approached the police who in turn have warned her husband. Now she is looking for a job so that she can become financially independent.

**No.8**

**Sanya (wife): 27 years**

**Sagar (Husband): 40 years**

**Religion: Christian**

On January 1, 1999, Sanya was married to Sagar much against her wish. Right from the start Sanya was unhappy about the marriage. There was large age difference between husband and wife. They live in a large extended family with father-in-law, mother-in-law, and sister-in-law. The earnings members in the family are Sanya's husband, father-in-law, and brother-in-law. They are daily wage labourers who earn around Rs 1500 a month each. Both Sanya and her husband have only primary education. They have two children a son (1½ year) and daughter (4 months).

Sanya had brought some dowry as was demanded by her in-laws. But after a few weeks of her marriage her in-laws started complaining regarding the dowry and demanding for more. They also forbade her from meeting neighbours and friends. Her husband was an alcoholic who used to torture her physically and heap abuses on her. They often sent her to her natal home asking her to return only with the dowry that they demanded. Her parents who are not in a position to meet their demands are shattered.

Sanya is blamed for not looking after her children and not attending to the household chores properly. She always feels depressed and mentally wrecked. There were times when she thought of even ending her life. It is only because of her children that she wants to continue. Sanya believes that her in-laws, who keep finding fault with her, are at the root of all the tension created between her and her husband.

She believes that a cordial relationship would be possible with her husband if he gets de-addicted. She sought help from an NGO and also visited a de-addiction centre. She dreams of a better tomorrow when everything would turn fine, once Sagar undergoes treatment at the de-addiction centre.

**No.9**

**Salim (wife)**

**Salma (Husband)**

**Religion: Muslim**

Salim and Salma had an arranged marriage 11 years ago. Theirs is an extended family with her father-in-law, mother-in-law, brother-in-law, and two sisters-in-law. They have a daughter, two-and-half year old. Salim has passed SSLC and Salma has done her pre-degree course. Salim is the sole earning member of the family, working in a private company and earning around Rs 4000 a month.

Salim's parents had taken dowry at the time of the marriage from Salma's parents. But after marriage demands were raised by her-in-laws for more dowry. They keep on heaping curses on her and telling her that she had brought dowry of a much lower amount than they had expected.

Salma has no control over the financial matters of the household nor is she consulted in taking any major decisions. Salim is an alcoholic and is dissatisfied with his job and the salary. He hits, kicks, and beats her, goaded on by his mother and sister. He has also warned her not to seek any legal help from any source lest he and his parents should land in trouble. Once he even strangled Salma just because she had told them that her father was not able to meet their demands and that if they persisted in harassing him he might go to the police.

Though she suffers a lot, she has not yet lost hope. She tries her maximum to give the best possible to her child. Her sister-in-laws often harass her and shower abuses on her. Her relationship with her neighbours is adversely affected because her in-laws always speak ill of her.

She had approached the police station once for help and they directed her to the People's Council for Social Justice (PCSJ). At present she is seeking help from PCSJ in the form of counselling. This has helped her to handle situations in a much better way than earlier.

### **Case Study No.10**

**Mary (wife): 25 years**

**Mathew (Husband): 28 years**

**Religion: Christian**

In the year 1996 Mary was married to Mathew. Theirs was an arranged marriage and legally registered. They have a daughter. He works as cleaner and earns around Rs 1500 per month. Mary has done her schooling till the ninth standard and Mathew has passed SSLC examination. They both belong to comparable socio-economic background.

In 1997 Mary's mother-in-law came to stay with them. Since her arrival, there began a torrent of demands for money and materials from Mary's parents. Mary's parents had given some amount of money and jewellery by way of dowry at the time of marriage. That money which her father had saved from his meagre income was totally frittered away by Mathew on alcohol. Mary protested and quarrelled. In consequence, she had to undergo torture and torment from Mathew. She had even to undergo starvation for days together. She was offered food only on condition that she would fetch more money and jewellery from her parents. On many occasions, she got beaten up badly by her husband and mother-in-law too.

Mary's mother-in-law scolds her for no reason. She finds fault with Mary in whatever she did. Under his mother's instigation, Mathew promptly begins his daily game of hitting and thrashing Mary.

In all, these six years of marriage, she experienced only humiliation. She is worried about the way her daughter would be affected by the unhealthy environment at home. She used to meet some small demands of her daughter from the money her parents give her without the knowledge of her in-laws. Mary remained depressed and felt shattered and helpless till very recently. She keeps a distance from her friends and neighbours though they all like her and she likes them too.

Mary recently approached an NGO for assistance. From the job she has managed to get through their help, she is now able to meet her bare minimum needs. This improvement has restored in her some confidence and she now feels more optimistic about life.

**No.11**

**Anju (Wife): 47 years**

**Jayan (Husband): 51 years**

**Religion: Hindu**

Anju and Jayan got married 26 years ago. They do not have children. Both of them are illiterate. Jayan earns Rs1500 a month as a driver.

Though they had started married life happily, Jayan soon got addicted to liquor. He has sold all his property for liquor and the couple used to have serious quarrels about his waywardness. Since Jayan is an addict, he seldom gets hired as a driver. He abuses Anju, threatens her and beats her up. She has no say in money matters and Jayan forces her to do all the work by herself at home. They often starve due to lack of money to buy food. Whatever happens, Jayan thinks only about his daily dose of liquor. Anju used to feel that her life was in peril. Absence of children aggravates Anju's frustration and she has had thoughts of suicide. Even though the couple shares one roof, they live as strangers. The neighbours often come to help and console Anju and they also give her food occasionally. The neighbours advised her recently to approach an NGO offering counselling services. She has been receiving counselling for a few months as a result of which she has gained some emotional strength and confidence.

**No.12**

**Zeenath (wife): 32 years**

**Asif (Husband): 36 years**

**Religion: Muslim**

Zeenath who got married to Asif in 1990, used to live with her father-in-law and mother in-law. The couple has a son (9 yrs) and a daughter (7 yrs). Both husband and wife are degree holders. Asif has his own business and earns around Rs 3000 a month. Zeenath is employed in a private sector firm and earns around Rs 2500 a month. Her father-in-law is a flourishing businessman who earns Rs 10000 per month.

Asif is an alcoholic and spends more than his income. At present this couple is facing financial crisis. Though her in-laws are financially sound, they have refused any help, even to give Asif his share of the property. Zeenath and Asif now live with Zeenath's parents. Asif beats up Zeenath, when he is drunk; but when he is sober he is all love and concern for her and children. Zeenath has complete independence in running the household. Both of them are equally concerned about their children's future. They quarrel often and blame each other for not looking after the kids properly. Asif fights with his parents for his share of property.

While she was staying with her in-laws, Zeenath maintained good relationship with her neighbours. Out of despair, once she tried to hang herself but stopped the attempt halfway.

She has approached an NGO for help. Counselling has made significant difference in her attitude and has lessened her frustration to some extent. They have also given her some guidance for seeking financial help, but she has not yet made any move in that direction.

### **No.13**

**Rakhi (wife) 22 years**

**Ramu (Husband): 27 years**

**Religion: Hindu**

Rakhi got married to Ramu, her cousin, in 1999. Theirs was a love marriage and was legally registered. Both of them have high school education. Rakhi lives with her father-in-law, mother-in-law, and sister-in-law. They have a son (one year old). Ramu works as an agricultural labourer and earns around Rs 2000 per month.

Though theirs was a love marriage, Rakhi had taken dowry to Ramu's parents, on which she has absolutely no control, it being entirely under the custody of her mother-in-law. Ramu used to give his full salary to his mother who brooked no interference in her decisions on spending money. She used Rakhi's dowry for building a house. Ironically Rakhi and Ramu do not have any right in the house; this shocked Ramu a lot. Ramu, the only earning member in the family finds his monthly income far too inadequate to meet the domestic needs.

Ramu is very affectionate towards Rakhi, but gets upset by her negative comments about his mother and sister. Rakhi's mother-in-law and sister-in-law are unkind to her and threaten her with physical hurt. They blame her for not performing all the household chores, and even for not looking after the children properly. They also want her to find a job for herself.

All these have caused her severe emotional problems, depression, and frustration. On several occasions, she even thought of ending her life. There is no proper interaction among the members and the household atmosphere is tense. Her contacts with neighbours are moderately affected, because her in-laws always talk ill of her.

At present Ramu has left her in her parents' house and is searching for another job so that the couple could move away from his mother and sister, and live independently. On realising the situation an NGO has offered her necessary assistance to find a suitable job for Rakhi. The couple is receiving counselling services from the NGO to gather strength to face the problem with courage and more realistically.

**No.14****Manu (wife): 27 years****Madhav (Husband): 37 years****Religion: Hindu**

Manu and Madhav were married six years ago. They are both graduates. Madhav is running a business of his own. Madhav's mother used to stay with them. They have a son (5 yrs) and a daughter (2 yrs).

Though running a profitable business, he cared little for its upkeep. He was addicted to alcohol and squandered most of his income on liquor. He rarely attended to his household responsibilities. Once drunk, he hits, kicks, and beats his wife and often forces her to have sex. Her mother-in-law used to blame her for not attending to household chores and for not looking after children.

Manu's mother-in-law coerced Madhav to raise a heavy loan from a moneylender. The loan amount was spent away by her mother-in-law even without the knowledge of Madhav. And Madhav has to repay the loan, which he finds unable to do. The debt has become a heavy burden for him and family. Manu and Madhav often have serious quarrels between them. Manu is broken and thinks of ending her life. Her mother-in-law did not allow her to mingle with her neighbours.

At present Manu and Madhav live with one of Madhav's friends. Madhav's business is wound up and he is now without a job. Manu has approached an NGO for help and they have promised to help him find a job.

**No.15****Latha (Wife): 28 years****Laiju (Husband): 34 years****Religion: Hindu**

Latha was married to Laiju, a gardener, four years ago. Laiju earns Rs 2000 a month. Latha also works as a housemaid earning Rs 1000 a month. Both have only primary education. They do not have children.

Latha's sister-in-law stays with them. She is mentally handicapped and a lot of money goes for her treatment. They approach several non-medical persons, sorcerers, godmen, and miracle-makers for cure. Laiju himself being a heart patient, his medical bill also turns out to be huge. Owing to these problems, Laiju feels disgusted and heaps his anger and frustration on Latha. He occasionally beats her too.

Laiju is satisfied neither with his job nor with his wages. Because of the huge medical expenses they find it very difficult to meet even the bare minimum needs of their family. Latha feels disheartened and desperate. Though she decides most of the family matters she feels dejected. Latha and Laiju quarrel occasionally mostly on monetary issues. But they try to maintain a good relationship with neighbours.

Latha has approached many NGOs expecting some financial help. But she could not avail of any till now.

**No.16**

**Rakhi (Wife): 30 years**

**Raskan (Husband): 35 years**

**Religion: Muslim**

Rakhi and Raskan have been married for seven years. Their marriage was arranged by their parents but with the consent of both of them. They live with Raskan's parents and have two sons, six years and three years old respectively. Raskan works as a bus conductor and earns Rs 3000 per month. Both of them hail from families of similar economic background.

Raskan had an affair with the neighbour's wife during his pre-marital days, a relationship which he still maintains. His parents do not blame him for this, because they are scared of their son's rage and fury. Whenever Rakhi advises him, he comes drunk, batters her, and calls her names. At the same time Raskan suspects Rakhi's fidelity too. Raskan keeps all the money and Rakhi has no say on spending it. At present Rakhi and children are staying with her parents consequent on strained relationship with her in-laws.

She feels emotionally shattered and is deprived of the means to meet even her basic needs; occasionally she has thoughts of ending her life. While in her in-law's house, she had good relationship with her neighbours, except the woman with whom her husband kept on illicit relationship.

When she approached the nearest police station for help, they directed her to a family-counselling centre. The assistance received in the form of counselling has motivated her to persuade her husband to attend the counselling sessions. However, he is very reluctant to approach the centre for help.

**No: 17**

**Sachin (Husband): 37 years**

**Sandhya (Wife): 34 years**

**Religion: Hindu**

The marriage of Sandhya and Sachin took place about nine years ago. While she has passed SSLC, he has only primary education. Sachin works as a head load worker and earns around Rs 2000 a month.

Four years ago, Sandhya found that Sachin had an affair with one of her cousins. Since then, he started abusing her both mentally and tormenting her physically. This has made her feel insecure. Sachin spends most of his income on satisfying the whims and fancies of the other woman. As a result, the family is now facing serious financial problems.

Although Sandhya has started to work as a housemaid, she still finds it hard to meet the family expenses. She is depressed and frustrated. However, she never allowed her misfortune to affect her relationship with her children. Recently Sachin has eloped with his paramour

and nobody knows whither. After this mishap, Sandhya is more of a recluse and has drastically reduced her contacts with neighbours. She is now mentally shattered.

Sandhya has approached the police for help and have lodged a complaint. She now waits and hopes for Sachin's return.

**No: 18**

**Athira (Wife): 30 years**

**Azhar (Husband): 35 years**

Athira (Hindu) was married to Azhar (Muslim), a manual labourer five years ago. Their marriage was legally registered. Theirs is an extended family with mother in-law and sister-in-law. They have a daughter who is three-and-half years old now. Azhar has only primary education while Athira has passed SSLC examination.

Azhar earns around Rs 2000 a month. It was only after marriage that Athira got to know about Azhar's bad habits. He used to go with other women of shady habits and spend all his income on them. She was surprised to see that his parents kept silent in the matter. His misadventures landed the family, in due course, in financial problems. Azhar and Athira quarrelled quite often. He even physically assaulted her. As a result, she became a mental wreck. Of late, he has deserted her and has taken all her money and clothing along with him. Her in-laws and neighbours blame Athira for what has happened. All these developments have ruined her emotionally.

She has sought help of an NGO for counselling and emotional support. She is looking for a job to earn an independent living for herself and her child.

**No.19**

**Sandra (Wife): 32 years**

**Sanjith (Husband): 38 years**

**Religion: Hindu**

Sandra was married to Sanjith, 19 years ago. Their marriage was an arranged one. They have a son (12 years). Sandra comes from a family of higher socio-economic status than that of Sanjith. Both have only primary education. Sanjith is an agricultural labourer earning around Rs 3000 per month.

Sanjith is an alcoholic and spends most of his income on drinking. Sandra believes that he has an illicit affair with one of her neighbours, with whom Sanjith keeps on comparing Sandra. Sanjith always demands Sandra to dress up, walk, talk, and conduct herself like this other woman.

As Sanjith finds no job satisfaction in any work, he keeps on shifting from one job to another. As a result, there are times when he remains jobless. This has made Sandra feel insecure about her future.

Sandra and Sanjith keep quarrelling, which often ends up in Sanjith beating, kicking, and slapping her. Sandra has become emotionally and mentally disoriented. Once she tried to commit suicide. Her neighbours like her, but she maintains a distance from them because of the embarrassment that conversations with them might bring up Sanjith's foul ways.

She approached a family-counselling centre recently and is getting its moral support. She feels relieved now and open up during the counselling sessions. This has strengthened her will power and, of late, she has started feeling positive and reassured.

In the above cases, it was seen that the victims were psychologically abused severely. The fear of being abandoned by the husband is great amongst these women. A sense of insecurity haunts them always as a result of which their mental stability gets affected.

**No. 20**

**Rasia (Wife): 47 years**

**Rahim (Husband): 50 years**

**Religion: Muslim**

Rasia was married to Rahim, an agricultural labourer about 24 years ago. Their marriage was an arranged one and was legally registered. Both of them came from similar socio-economic background. Theirs is a nuclear family. They have two daughters and a son who have crossed 18 years of age. Rasia and her first daughter work as housemaids and together earn around Rs 1000 a month. Her son works as a sales man and earns a monthly wage of around Rs 1000 a month. Rahim earns Rs 1500 a month.

It is since the past one year that Rahim started staying with another woman. Though Rasia was aware of his habit of having illicit affairs ever since their marriage, she never thought that he would desert her. His abandonment has totally shattered her. Rahim used to beat her and neglect his household responsibilities. His heavy drinking left little amount for giving to Rasia. So it was with Rasia's money the household used to be run. Faced with severe financial problems she had to discontinue her children's education.

In her anguish and frustration, Rasia loses her control and treats her children badly. Rasia and children have never maintained any close relationship with their neighbours. She has approached an NGO for help and they have helped her in finding a job for her daughter. She has no hope that her husband will ever return. Her only prayer is to give her children a better deal than hers.

**No: 21**

**Neetha (Wife): 30 years**

**Nithin (Husband): 37 years**

**Religion: Hindu**

It has been 13 years since Neetha and Nithin got married. Theirs is an extended family with

father-in-law and mother-in-law staying with them. They have two sons, twelve years and eleven years old respectively. Both Neetha and Nithin have only primary education. Nithin works as a head-load worker earning about Rs 1000 per month.

Nithin and Neetha are cousins. They fell in love with each other and after two years of courtship, their parents got them married. Initially Nithin was very fond of her; but after about two months, Nithin started showing his true colours. He was a drunkard and was very suspicious of Neetha. Neetha's in-laws knew that Nithin was paranoiac, but ignored the problem in the hope that marriage would set things right; however they were sad to see things turning beyond control as days passed by. Since her own aunt and uncle had concealed the reality Neetha felt betrayed and kept a distance from them and refused to talk to them.

Nithin started quarrelling with Neetha for mingling with her own relatives and also beat her up in front of her children and in-laws. In addition, Nithin did not allow Neetha to go back to her parents. Nithin spent all of his money on alcohol and so the household often find it difficult even to meet its bare subsistence requirements.

Neetha is particular that these misfortunes do not affect her children. She maintains good relationship with her neighbours and friends without Nithin's knowledge. And they, in turn, sympathise with her. Recently she approached a police station for help and was referred to a family counselling centre, which has helped her to re-orient her interaction pattern. As a result, her relation with her in-laws has improved and now she is in talking terms with them.

**No: 22**

**Reeta (Wife): 45 years**

**Rahul (Husband): 52 years**

**Religion: Christian**

Reeta and Rahul were married to each other 25 years ago. Their marriage was legally registered. They have three daughters 22 years, 18 years, and 14 years of age. Both Reeta and Rahul have received only primary education. Rahul is a driver and earns a monthly income of Rs 3000. One of their daughters is also working as a sales girl earning Rs 1000 per month.

Rahul is very dominating and possessive in nature; he is also a schizophrenic. He is an alcoholic too. He does not allow his daughters to move out of the house and even beats his daughter who goes to work. He spends all his money according to his whims and fancies. Reeta is not allowed to talk even to her neighbours; if she does, he beats her and inflicts injuries on her. He also picks quarrel with neighbours who are sympathetic towards Reeta and her children.

Reeta and her children had to starve many a time. Rahul even goes to the extent of taking away his daughter's salary. Owing to all these, Reeta has become an emotional wreck. She believes that because of tensions and dejection, she fails to take proper care of her daughters. Their neighbours stay away from them for fear of Rahul's outbursts.

Through Reeta has registered the case in the nearest police station and received some

temporary help, she has not approached any other institution or organisation for advice or assistance.

**No: 23**

**Maya (Wife): 42 years**

**Mani (Husband): 45 years**

**Religion: Christian**

Maya and Mani are married for 18 years. Their marriage was legally registered. They have a 16-year old daughter. Both of them had primary education. Mani is a construction worker and earns Rs 3000 a month.

Mani is an alcoholic and often turns violent towards Maya. He is a very suspicious and paranoid person; he does not allow his daughter to go out, even to the school. He physically hurts both Maya and daughter without any provocation. Both Maya and her daughter, because of the abnormal behaviour of Mani, are scared of him. He never allows her to take decisions regarding household affairs. Mani also looks with suspicion who ever passes by their house.

Their daughter was very much affected by Mani's behaviour and she has suddenly developed depression. Now she has become taciturn and withdrawn. Maya was terribly upset and shifted her daughter to her brother's house. Later Maya also left Mani and went to her mother's house. Mani visits them and creates repulsive scenes there also.

Maya is totally broken emotionally and thinks of ending her life. Realising her pathetic condition one of her neighbours has directed her to a nearby family-counselling centre. After a series of sittings with the counsellor, she feels better now.

**No. 24**

**Jolly (Wife): 42 years**

**Jerom (Husband): 48 years**

**Religion: Christian**

Jolly and Jerome got married in May 1985. It was an arranged marriage. Jolly belonged to a family of lower socio-economic status than that of Jerom's. They live in an extended family. They have two sons who are now 15 years and 11 years old respectively. Both Jolly and Jerom are highly qualified and educated. Jerom has completed his post graduation and is working in a private firm. Jolly is also a post-graduate and works in a private company.

Jolly's husband and in-laws do not like her going out for work. They keep abusing her for not bringing enough dowry. Jerom has a split personality. He indulged in perverted and unnatural sex and forces her to do his bidding. He also developed suspicion of her. He cannot even tolerate her talking to outsiders. Jolly undergoes severe trauma from this behaviour and finds it very difficult to cope up with the situation. However, she manages to maintain a meaningful and intimate relationship with her children.

She approached a Family Counselling centre and a few clinical psychologists for availing

their services; they have helped her to a great extent. Though she has got some mental relief, her husband's psychological disorders are bothering her. She has taken enormous efforts to convince her husband of the need to meet a psychiatrist, but she is yet to succeed.

**No. 25**

**Sanya (Wife): 30 years**

**Saritha (Husband): 32 years**

**Religion: Hindu**

Sanya was married to Sarjith, around 11 years ago. Theirs was an arranged marriage but held with their consent. They have a son (10 years) and a daughter (7 years). Sarjith and Sanya have passed SSLC. But Sarjith works as an agricultural labourer and earns Rs 1500 a month. Sanya came from a family of higher socio-economic status.

Sarjith is alcoholic and he physically assaults Sanya. He also threatens and abuses her. He is extremely possessive and paranoid. He always complains that Sanya never takes proper care of their children. Sarjith never helps Sanya in running the household. He does not even buy them vegetables or other essential household items. At the same time, he does not even allow Sanya to go out of home and make the purchases. If ever she goes, he slaps and beats her at the market place itself.

Owing to the turmoil, Sanya feels desperate; she even tried once to hang herself. She has become extremely bad-tempered towards her children. She does not mingle with neighbours but the society in general has a sympathetic attitude towards her. She recently discovered that he has been having psychological disorders for a long time. As a result, his neighbours always maintained a distance from him. She has totally broken down after hearing about Sarjit's mental disorders. At present, on advice of one of her friends, she approached a counselling centre for help and she is trying hard to persuade Sarjith for getting treated in a psychiatric clinic.

It was seen that in the cases of wives with paranoid husbands, physical violence equally accompanies mental torture. It was also noticed that the husbands accused them of being "unfaithful". Several common threads run through all the cases examined. All of them recount a litany of woes of continued abuse, verbal abuse, beatings, harassment, threat, and forced sex. Most of the victims experienced mental exhaustion. Overall, the women respondents reported loss of enthusiasm and energy to carry out their responsibilities. They often unleash their temper on their kids for which they later feel guilty and repentant. Such incidents leave indelible scars on their psyche.

## **Appendix-2**

### **List of agencies and presons consulted**

#### **A. Police stations**

- (i) Kalamassery Police Station
- (ii) *Vanitha* Police Station, Kochi
- (iii) Kothamangalam Police Station

#### **B. NGOs**

- (i) *Mukthisadan*, De-Addiction Centre, Kochi
- (ii) *Sakhi*, Women Rehabilitation Centre, Kochi
- (iii) *Udayabhavan*, Social Work Institute, Gandhinagar
- (iv) *Suvartha* convent, Kissan colony
- (v) *Snehalayam*, Counselling and De-Addiction Centre

#### **C. Family Counselling Centres**

- (i) *Santhwana* Counselling Centre, Kacheripady
- (ii) St. Jude Family Counselling Centre, Angamaly
- (iii) *Ashwas* Family Counselling Centre, Kacheripady
- (iv) St. Theresa Family Counselling Centre, Kothamangalam
- (v) Rajagiri Family Counselling Centre, Kalamassery

#### **D. Darshan. Gender line, Kochi**

#### **E. People's Council for Social Justices, Ernakulam.**

#### **F. Women's cell, Kochi**

#### **G. Family Court, Kochi**

#### **H. Social Workers**

#### **I. Social Activities**

#### **J. Public**

- (i) Causal Labourers
- (ii) Government employees and Women members of local bodies
- (iii) Journalists
- (iv) Professionals and Teachers

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