Engaging Men to End Domestic Violence in South Asian Communities in the United States
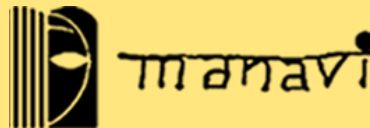
Ramesh Awasthi

With Contributions from
Shamita Das Dasgupta

manavi

working to end violence against South Asian women
New Jersey, USA
2015

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Foreword

As Manavi continues on its commitment to end violence against South Asian women in our communities, we are constantly challenged to understand complicated issues that victimize women. While these are not new issues, it is important to understand them at a deeper level. With the support of the Office on Violence Against Women (OVW), we are adding three new documents to the pool of Manavi's Occasional Paper series that was initiated in 2007. In the current series, complex issues of 'honor' and its intersections with domestic violence in South Asian Communities, and reproductive violence are explored in great detail along with engaging men in domestic violence work.

All the authors in this series of Occasional Papers have seriously challenged readers to think critically about relevant issues crucial in advocacy for South Asian battered women. These position papers are an important source of analyses and knowledge. More importantly, like the previous papers in this series, these are tools of intervention for advocates. We hope that the issues discussed in the current series will be useful to advocates, community activists, and service providers in understanding South Asian women who are impacted by violence in the family.

I cannot stress enough how significant it is to grasp these issues and their impact on South Asians in the United States. I believe the detailed analyses will help us understand the complex realities of South Asian women's lives and persist in our struggles to end violence against women.

Shefali Mehta
President, Board of Directors

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Executive Summary

Engaging South Asian men in the movement to end violence against women is fraught with difficulties as various factors such as immigration, colonization, patriarchy, and masculinity are likely to intersect to complicate the task. To persuade boys and men to engage and act to end violence against women, advocates need to develop arguments that are effective. Manavi recognizes that a one-size-fits-all plan to engage men in anti-violence against women work cannot be successful in the South Asian community, a community that is highly diverse in religion, language, nationality of origin, class, caste, sexualities, education, age, immigration history, etc. From this standpoint, it would be appropriate to provide all South Asian Women's Organizations with a template to create their own custom-made programs.

When addressing the issues of violence against women, anti-domestic violence organizations characterize men as bystanders at best and batterers or potential perpetrators at worst. The fact that men can be women's partners in stopping, and ultimately ending violence is a recent realization. The contemporary rise in studies of masculinities as an area of extensive research has opened up a wide range of discourse on addressing hegemonic and violent masculinities. The fact that all men are not violent and all masculinities are not hegemonic and aggressive has given the hope to engage with men and masculinities to redefine societal and family relationships based on gender equality.

The conception of masculinity means that rather than a single masculinity, different masculinities exist and have existed in diverse cultures, geographical locations, and in different times. Divergent masculinities may exist simultaneously in different communities in the same geographical location. Societies and cultures are not monolithic and never static over time; hence masculinities too keep changing, evolving, and adjusting to changed situations and challenges of modern thoughts and ideologies. In India, men had purposefully gone about restructuring masculinity in response to the colonizers' derogation of Hindu Indians. They redefined their masculinity in varied mixes of strong, self confident, silent, virile, ethical, patriotic, nationalistic etc., in an effort to salvage the national masculinity. In the framework of social and cultural hierarchy in the U.S., Asian American masculinities are subordinated, as are all other forms of masculinity, such as those of men of color, gay, transgender, and bisexual men. Furthermore, on the backdrop of colonial history of feminization of native men, South Asian men in the U.S. are stereotyped as nerdy, weak, tech-coolies, unassertive, sneaky, sexist, and short. In contrast to the White or even Black American masculinity based on characteristics of independence, individuality, strength, aggression, and go-getter spirit, South Asian men seem weak and feminine. They are further marginalized and emasculated by the myth of their status of 'model minority.'

Gender relations with hegemonic masculinity and subordinated femininity are fundamentally about relations of power. However, several power structures operate simultaneously in the society beside patriarchy. The intensity and toxicity of these power structures may vary from region to region and in different times of history. A man's power, due to his multiple social identities, then, depends on where he stands on the social power grid in terms of intersectionality of the above factors and in relation to women or other men. A man may experience multiple power differentials and feel all powerful vis-à-vis his wife but in his social interaction and work relations, he is always navigating between the experiences of power and powerlessness while interacting with men and women situated on different intersections of the power grid. These experiences also affect his

power relation with his wife in the same way a woman's relationship with her children and other women in the family gets affected by her relationship with her intimate partner.

In addition to the caste, class, and gender superiority, the professionally and financially successful South Asian men in the U.S. internalize the 'cream complex' that arises from their self-assessment and is reinforced by their families. It is the feeling that 'I made it to the U.S. because I am superior to other men in my country who could not come.' This self assessment inflates men's egos and peaks their feelings of entitlement that their wives should be eternally obliged to them and therefore subservient, because they have brought them to the U.S. to enjoy a better life.

While men's violence against women may be a learned behavior it is certainly not a 'simple' behavioral problem. Gender violence is a manifestation of unequal gender relations and hegemonic masculinity produced by patriarchy interacting with other structures of power. It is propagated as well as protected by male domination in all social, economic, political, and religious institutions. Unequal power relations between men and women, fortified by male control over all institutions in society, strengthen men's dominance over women. Men use violence to assert the power of their masculinity and to ensure their control over resources and decision making. Power is known to be addictive and many enjoy it when they perpetrate violence with impunity to assert, exhibit, and consolidate their power. When violence yields results in terms of submission and compliance by the victim, it ends up satisfying the perpetrator, thus reinforcing and helping violence recur. Hegemonic masculinity has been confronted by powerful voices of strong women throughout history. Masculinity has shifted and changed in face of this challenge; that is, it has not been static in history. Men cannot reject the latter standards of gender equality summarily, as they often look to women for approval of their masculinity. With the continual challenge from women's movements, the hierarchal masculinity, under threat of losing its power and meaning, may ultimately be obliterated in a gender equal world. In the mean time, how do we convince men or inspire them to join the efforts for ending violence against women and work for gender equality?

Role models play significant roles in the molding of boys into masculine men and girls into feminine women. The primary role model for a boy is likely to be his father or another significant man whose behavior he observes, analyzes, and struggles to internalize. The images and observations formulate his aspirations and influence how he performs his masculinity. Gender training programs for teachers, even at the early childhood education level, of sports coaches, etc., are now being addressed by various agencies so that these individuals become role models of positive and gender fair masculinities and influence socialization of children in non-hegemonic masculinity. To establish gender equality, South Asians have to develop their own role models and come to terms with and reject a dualistic image of masculinity, which they have internalized over the years. They must develop their own confident and independent self image in all its positive and negative realities to move toward egalitarian gender relations.

There are many structures other than patriarchy operating in society that determine power relations. The dynamics of hierarchal relations laid down by these structures also affect masculinities and femininities and their mutual interactions. Hegemony of some masculinities as well as subjugation and subordination of other masculinities and of women and LGBTQ communities will have to be opposed by a counter-hegemonic approach. In order to discover their autonomous self-image, the second and third generations of South Asian American men will have to rise above their racially subordinate status in American society and oppose hegemony and discrimination based on race. If they cannot do that convincingly, if they decry racism and adhere

to beliefs and practices of subjugation and discrimination based on gender, caste, religion, sexuality etc., there is little hope that they will create a more gender-just society.

There are multiple institutional structures and value systems that support hierarchy, hegemonic power relations, discrimination, and oppression in society, patriarchy being one of them. These institutions and social values contribute to the construction of hegemonic and violent masculinity and the ensuing violence against women. A broader appeal to fight against all forms of discriminations based on gender, race, caste, class, sexuality, etc., would inspire men and women alike to come together and work out new images of masculinities and femininities based on gender equality or 'gender democracy.' Along with the comprehensive approach to redefine masculinity of South Asian American men, the pressing task for South Asian Women's Organizations is to make violent masculinity socially unacceptable and thus create intolerance toward violence against women.

In South Asian communities across the U.S., faith has acted as a focal point of organizing and providing identity, cultural continuity, and comfort to community members. A few religious organizations are slowly recognizing the importance of their roles in keeping women and children safe and maintaining peaceful families in the community. The SAWOs must take on the responsibility of educating and training the faith based leaders so that the assistance they offer to women is effective. Furthermore, by working not in opposition to but in partnership with anti-domestic violence agencies, faith leaders can generate an environment in faith based organizaions that would encourage women to disclose their experiences of abuse and seek help. Religious centers may offer their premises as community centers for initiating dialogues with the community.

The second and third generations of South Asian Americans, who have weaker bonds with their larger family networks in their countries of origin, might be more likely to accept gender equality. Over-night camps for boys and girls involving participatory training with lots of fun-filled activities have the potential of becoming very popular with the youth. Such programs could train a cadre of young men in gender equity, who could then become peer communicators, role models, and powerful voices in redefining and reshaping masculinities that counter violence against women. SAWOs, then, have the objectives of supporting women against male violence and working with men to restructure democratic masculinity.

1

Introduction

The beginning of the South Asian anti-violence against women movement can be traced back to 1985, the year Manavi was established in New Jersey. Although a number of organizations had appeared by then in the South Asian community, most concentrated on reaffirming cultural, linguistic, and religious identities of community members. A few other organizations that did not fit this category were involved in enhancing community members' financial ambitions by providing support for their professional skills. In the nascent immigrant community that was busy putting down roots in the U.S., no organization had chosen to focus on women's well being in the family. Manavi was the first organization in the U.S. to highlight South Asian women's plight in the home. Manavi's inspiration came from victimized South Asian women who were seeking help in their crises from a culturally and linguistically specific women's organization. In the next decade, several South Asian women's organizations (SAWOs) were created around the country with similar intentions of providing support and assistance to women who were experiencing intimate partner violence.[1]

In those early days, the SAWOs worked without a safety net. On the one hand, they faced tremendous opposition from their own communities for airing dirty laundry in public and on the other, they were ignored by mainstream domestic violence agencies that did not quite grasp the need for culture specific services. The majority of SAWOs had no role model, except each other to emulate. Furthermore, the SAWOs were put in tremendously difficult positions by the hostility and skepticism of the community that believed that they were facilitating alien (read: Western) impositions on its ancient traditions and mores. SAWO advocates were viewed as traitors to the culture who were challenging the South Asian family and jeopardizing the continuation of its way of life. While women may not have openly endorsed SAWOs, the most virulent criticisms were led by male community leaders. To protect themselves from such antagonism, the founders of the SAWOs often made the space female only. Furthermore, many believed that they needed time to sharpen their organizational skills in privacy, without men's judgmental eyes on them. It was only after a few years of existence that most SAWOs opened up their membership to men. Nonetheless, the leadership in the SAWOs remained with women.

> **The majority of SAWOs had no role model, except each other to emulate**

With SAWOs finding footings in the local communities and gaining recognition for their persistence, the community outlook seemed to be gradually shifting. In nearly three decades, the community has moved from outright hostility toward SAWOs to grudging tolerance, to ambivalent condemnation of violence against women. This subtle alteration of collective attitudes has encouraged SAWOs to think that it is time to engage men and boys in the struggle to end violence against women and girls. While the efforts at the front end might be substantial to accomplish this, the benefits are expected to be significant. However, engaging South Asian men in the movement to end violence against women might be fraught with difficulties as various factors such as immigration, colonization, patriarchy, and masculinity are likely to intersect to complicate the task.

How Could this Occasional Paper Help Advocacy?

The main objective of this Occasional Paper is to help SAWO advocates tailor-make programs to engage South Asian men and boys in anti-violence against women work in their local communities. Keeping in mind that SAWOs might still be dealing with vestiges of hostility from the community and derision about 'women's issues,' a systematic and well thought out plan for the specific purpose needs to be created and implemented. Such a strategic plan can only be developed by understanding the nuances of existing South Asian masculinities including factors that have influenced male violence in cross-gender relationships. The first step in this process is to convince South Asian men and boys that this involvement is worth their attention and efforts.

To persuade boys and men to engage and act to end violence against women, advocates need to develop arguments that are effective. The research findings on persuasive communication might be useful here. The following are some suggestions culled from literature on mass communication, propaganda, and persuasion that might help SAWO advocates.[2]

- Appeal to the emotions and provide specific and feasible instructions for action.

- Offer two-sided presentations; that is, provide both pro and con arguments. This is particularly effective when the audience is leaning in the opposite direction, as is generally true for the South Asian community's position regarding violence against women.

- Offer the most important information early and the next most important ones at the end. An audience tends to forget the middle part of a presentation.

- If the audience strongly disagrees with the point of view being presented, it is best to minimize the discrepancy. Arguments that are highly divergent from an audience's beliefs are likely to be dismissed, derogated, and ignored. However, this relationship does not hold true if the presenter is considered highly reputed and credible; that is, a recognized subject matter expert.

- Direct challenges to strongly held attitudes are less likely to persuade an audience. Small inducements to shifting beliefs tend to be more effective. Such alterations might take more time, but the change is more enduring.

This information on effective communication along with the background information on cultural nuances on masculinity has been utilized in developing the recommendations presented at the end of this paper.

What Will this Occasional Paper Achieve?

In the past few years, as Manavi conducted a comprehensive needs assessment[3] of SAWOs and organized several teleconferences on emerging issues in violence against South Asian women, the question that surfaced repeatedly is how to meaningfully engage boys and men in the movement to end domestic and sexual violence. While the SAWOs recognized that such efforts are already going on in mainstream communities, they were reluctant to replicate these models in South Asian contexts. Instead, SAWOs sought distinct culturally relevant programs for their work. The subject matter of this paper was selected in response to SAWOs' requests of assistance to develop plans for engaging boys and men in their work.

Manavi recognizes that a one-size-fits-all plan cannot be successful in the South Asian community, a community that is highly diverse in religion, language, nationality of origin, class, caste, sexualities, education, age, immigration history, etc. From this standpoint, it would be appropriate to provide SAWOs with a template to create their own custom-made programs. Furthermore, the template must be fleshed out by an understanding of the significant factors in this process. The most critical

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factor here would be to grasp the dynamics of South Asian masculinities which have historically been shaped by colonial powers, religion, son preference, class, and caste distinctions, among others. It is, therefore, imperative that we become aware of these forces that have shaped the dynamics of South Asian masculinities before we attempt to devise a plan to integrate men and boys in what is commonly believed as 'women's issues.'

This occasional paper does exactly that. It begins by providing a background of the current topic, traces the dynamics of masculinities, unpacks the nuances of working with violent men, and elaborates the incentives to inspire South Asian men to engage meaningfully in the movement to end violence against women. Finally, it lists a set of recommendations that might be effective in developing individual programs to encourage men's commitment to anti-violence against women work.

2

Powers and Practices of Masculinities

Men's Engagement in Anti-violence against Women Work

When addressing the issues of violence against women, anti-domestic violence organizations characterize men as bystanders at best and batterers or potential perpetrators at worst. The fact that men can be women's partners in stopping and ultimately ending violence is a recent realization. The contemporary rise in studies of masculinities as an area of extensive research has opened up a wide range of discourse on addressing hegemonic and violent masculinities. The fact that all men are not violent and all masculinities are not hegemonic and aggressive has given the hope to engage with men and masculinities to redefine societal and family relationships based on gender equality.

Gertrude Mongella, Secretary General of the Fourth World Conference on Women at Beijing, gave a call to men: "It is now the turn of men to join women in their struggle for equality" (p. 190).[4] The Platform for Action adopted at the Beijing conference called for partnership between women and men in the struggle for equality and emphasized that men's groups mobilizing against gender violence were necessary allies for change.[5] The importance of the approach of bringing in men as allies in stopping

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gender based violence was further stressed by the UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon by way of setting up a Network of Men Leaders in 2009 as part of the growing efforts to include men to prevent and end violence against women. While launching the Network under Campaign UNiTE to End Violence against Women, the Secretary General called upon men and boys everywhere to join, break the silence, and not to sit back when witnessing violence against women and girls, but act, advocate, and unite to change the practices and attitudes that incite, perpetrate, and condone this violence.[6]

But why should men change, and how can we inspire men to give up their power, privileges, entitlements, as well as prejudices, and discriminatory practices (e.g., against women, LGBTQ community, inter-racial/inter-caste marriage, etc.) under the patriarchal structure? Is it possible to convince men and boys that they too are victims of patriarchy, suffering oppression, and carrying so much social burden on their shoulders that their involvement in the struggles for gender equality would result in working for their own liberation? Would the offer of a reformed image of masculinity and better ways of being a 'real' man motivate men to become partners with women to stop violence against women and work toward dismantling patriarchy? Can the fire be kindled in men to fight against all forms of oppression and discrimination, which will transform them and make them better human beings as well as better men in terms of gender relations?

A word of caution must be inserted here. Working with men should in no case be taken as a substitute of or an alternative to working with women. In no way should it dilute the efforts of 'empowering women' to lead the movement to end violence against women. It is well recognized that women too are deeply socialized by patriarchal institutions (e.g., religion) into accepting male superiority, tolerating men's violence, and supporting gendered division of roles. A recent multi-country study conducted by the United Nations in Asia and the Pacific reports that women also endorse the dominant social norms that legitimize gender inequality and the use of violence against women.[7] Our strategy for ending violence against women, therefore, should focus on equalizing power between men and women, and include addressing both hegemonic and violent masculinities as well as submissive and subservient femininity by working with men but without compromising even slightly on empowerment of women.

This Occasional Paper presents some of the questions and issues discussed above on the backdrop of the different approaches utilized by various groups working with men and boys. By understanding the extant practices and modifying them, we can create unique models that are sensitive to the cultural needs of South Asian American communities.

What is this Business Called Masculinity?

Masculinity can be broadly defined as a set of socially determined practices, attributes, roles, privileges, and power considered appropriate for men. Additionally, these determine their relations with women and with other men in society. Thus, masculinity is not equivalent to being a male in the biological sense, but is socially and culturally determined norms of how a man is expected to be and act. The conceptualization of 'normal' masculinity puts pressures on men to perform certain social, psychological, emotional, cultural, physical, and sexual roles, and to conform to the expected community standards of being a 'real' man. These norms may differ in different cultures, different societies, different locations, and at different times in history.

This conception of masculinity means that rather than a single masculinity, different masculinities exist and have existed in diverse cultures, geographical locations, and in different times. Furthermore, divergent masculinities may exist simultaneously in different communities in the same geographical location. Societies and cultures are not monolithic and never static over time; hence masculinities too keep changing, evolving, and adjusting to changed situations and challenges of modern thoughts and ideologies. This history of change offers a lot of hope that domination, violence, control, and power associated with normative form of masculinity can be modified and non-violent gender-equal norms instituted in its place.

> **Working with men should in no case be taken as a substitute of or an alternative to working with women. In no way should it dilute the efforts of 'empowering women' to lead the movement to end violence against women**

Hegemonic masculinity is understood as hierarchal pattern of gender related practices that establishes men's power and control over women and other masculinities.

> …[O]nly a minority of men might enact it. But it was certainly normative. It embodied the currently most honored way of being a man, it required all other men to position themselves in relation to it, and it ideologically legitimized the global subordination of women to men (p. 832).[8]

However, all men do not need to enact domination; nonetheless, they enjoy the benefits of hegemony over women without implementing it with or without violence. Furthermore, all men who enact hegemony may not use violence, as they may use culture, religion, or institutional authority to do so.

South Asian Masculinities in the United States

In order to understand and address violent masculinities of South Asian communities in the United States, we need to be aware of the interplay of historical and cultural influences on the South Asian American communities. All those who trace their ancestry to Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, the Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka are identified collectively as the South Asians. The community also includes members of the Diaspora, whose past generations originally settled in other parts of the world, including Africa, Canada, the Caribbean, Europe, the Middle East, and other parts of Asia and the Pacific Islands. According to the United States Census 2010, there are over 3.4 million South Asians living in the United States with Indians comprising the largest segment of the community, constituting over 80 percent of the total population, followed by Pakistanis, Bangladeshis, Nepali, Sri Lankans, Bhutani, and Maldivians.[8] It is estimated that at least 66,000 Indo-Caribbean people also live in the United States.

The South Asian Americans, who came to the U.S. post-1965 when immigration policies were liberalized, were mostly educated elites such as engineers, scientists, and student researchers who later opted to stay on. This population had come to their dream-land with personal missions of succeeding in their careers. The Asian American masculinity was subsequently socially constructed around the concept of 'model minority' maleness (e.g., sincere, gentle, nonviolent, submissive, effeminate, etc.) and not in terms of the dominant construction of aggressive macho 'American' masculinity.[9] The next two decades of migration of South Asians to the U.S. had, to a large extent, been the siblings and family members sponsored by those already settled in the country. These immigrants were not as highly qualified in terms of education and had to struggle to settle down. On the whole, Asian Americans were considered to be too busy in pursuit of academic and financial successes and consequently not interested in pursuing social and sexual pleasures. This construction of the myth of 'model minority'[10] presented South Asians as effeminate and as a result, the South Asian men were emasculated.[11]

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In the framework of social and cultural hierarchy in the U.S., Asian American masculinities are subordinated, as are all other forms of masculinity, such as those of men of color, gay, transgender, and bisexual men. Some of the existing literature on Asian American masculinities, focused on White perspectives, reaffirms the image of Asian Americans as effeminate and asexual while simultaneously patriarchal and domineering with their female counterparts.[12] These

conflicting and competing images of Asian American men, financially successful but effeminate, upheld the cultural and institutional racism in society and confused the development of Asian American men to the point where their self-images could not be internally defined.[13] Asian men concurrently felt positive for their successes and negative due to their social marginalization and emasculation. This condition has a parallel in history.

During the colonial period, the British colonizers deliberately and systematically emasculated South Asian men to consolidate their cultural domination over local communities and underscore the claim that native men were not masculine enough to be able to govern the country; thus, justifying the colonial rule.[14] The response to this colonial emasculation in India has been manifested in various forms at both the community and national levels. One form of resistance by upper caste Hindus to this imposition of colonial cultural superiority was to reinforce caste superiority by treating British officers as bosses, yet not eating food touched by them. Furthermore, they purified the floor of the schools or other places visited by a British by sprinkling *Gangajal* (water from the sacred river Ganges). So, British people may have exerted superiority in every day work life but were considered inferior by caste considerations.

In addition, Indian men had purposefully gone about restructuring masculinity in response to the colonizers' derogation of Hindu Indians. They redefined their masculinity in varied mixes of strong, self confident, silent, virile, ethical, patriotic, nationalistic, etc., in an effort to salvage the national masculinity. Thus, parallel to the secular and democratic freedom movement led by Mahatma Gandhi and Jawahar Lal Nehru, there grew a strong nationalist Hindu Rashtra (nation) movement based on Hindu superiority and Hindu purity. The movement was led by Savarkar and fundamentalist Hindu organizations like Hindu Mahasabha and Rashtriya Swayam Sevak Sangha

> **The Asian American masculinity was subsequently socially constructed around the concept of 'model minority' maleness and not in terms of the dominant construction of aggressive macho 'American' masculinity**

(RSS). After independence from colonial rule, the emergence of the Hindutva movement has further consolidated this image of Hindu masculinity and even added belligerence to its contours by focusing its aggression on religious minorities, specifically Muslims and Christians. The promotion of this aggressive Hinduism recreated Hindu gods in a new image. For instance, Rama found a new avatar as a warrior on the pictures promoted by RSS and Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP), the global organization of Hindus promoted by RSS. The women's wing of RSS is named 'Durga Vahini' (the Durga brigade) after goddess Durga, who carries weapons, protects her devotees, and represents strength, power, and aggression, all traditionally 'manly' qualities. The women of the Durga Vahini have been known to encourage and applaud the men who raped and slaughtered Muslim women in the 2002 Gujarat riots,[15] thus reinforcing the powers of aggressive Hindu masculinity in extreme and violent ways.

On this backdrop of colonial history of feminization of native men, South Asian men in the U.S. are stereotyped as nerdy, weak, tech-coolies, unassertive, sneaky, sexist, and short. In contrast to the White or even Black American masculinity based on characteristics of independence, individuality, strength, aggression, and go-getter spirit, South Asian men seem weak and feminine.

They are further marginalized and emasculated by the myth of their status of 'model minority.'[16] It is, therefore, plausible that South Asian immigrant men tend to rediscover and assert their masculinity in their families in all its aggressive and dominant forms, which, in turn, is reinforced by the caste superiority and class power they bring with them from the home countries.

Perhaps to cope with this day to day marginalization, South Asian Americans propagate a contrasting worldview in their own community gatherings where their own cultures, values, and histories are idealized and White/Eurocentric perspectives and lifestyles are devalued.[17] Community centers, temples, churches, and mosques are the places where the community leaders and clerics authenticate the messages of superior cultural values by packaging them in religious garb and emphasizing their religious preeminence.

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The South Asian men in America are both a privileged group by gender and a subordinated group by race. They live a bi-polar masculinity since racism thwarts their efforts of fully emulating White American macho-masculinity outside home, while at home they revert to hegemonic masculinity imposing gender norms in the name of traditional values and culture. "External racist emasculation and internal 'raja'[18] syndrome leaves one area where the Indian American male can assert his masculinity: his relationship with community women (p. 393)."[19]

In her exploration of masculine culture in South Asian youngsters, Sunaina Maira found that exclusively *desi*[20] parties in New York had the reputation of being the scene of regular outbursts of violence among party-goers, both men and women.[21] Some youngsters attributed it to an aggressive sensitivity to perceived "disrespect," or hyper-masculine defensive responses to slights against girlfriends, and women's fury over supposed aspersions cast against their characters. Contrastingly, in a regular non-ethnic party where South Asians, Whites, and Blacks gathered, the *desis* generally did not create trouble or get involved in fights. An exclusively South Asian social space provided not only the opportunity of feeling powerful but also was an outlet for expressing machismo and regional jingoism.

3

Masculinities and Violence against Women

Masculinity and Gender Dominance

Raewyn Connell, who has written extensively on masculinities, explains about hegemonic masculinities and shows a silver lining of possibilities of it being challenged and changed. According to Raewyn Connell and her colleague,

> *Hegemonic masculinity [is] understood as the pattern of practice (i.e., things done, not just a set of role expectations or an identity) that allow[ed] men's dominance over women to continue (p. 832).*[22]

> *Men who received the benefits of patriarchy without enacting a strong version of masculine dominance could be regarded as showing a complicit masculinity. It was in relation to this group, and to compliance among heterosexual women, that the concept of hegemony was most powerful. Hegemony did not mean violence, although it could be supported by force; it meant ascendancy achieved through culture, institutions, and persuasion.*

Furthermore, hegemonic masculinity is not practiced by everyone, nor is it monolithic. These concepts were abstract rather than descriptive, defined in terms of the logic of a patriarchal gender system. They assumed that gender relations were historical, so gender hierarchies were subject to change. Hegemonic masculinities therefore came into existence in specific circumstances and were open to historical change. More precisely, there could be a struggle for hegemony, and older forms of masculinity might be displaced by new ones. This was the element of optimism in an otherwise rather bleak theory. It was perhaps possible that a more humane, less oppressive, means of being a man might become hegemonic, as part of a process leading toward an abolition of gender hierarchies (pp. 832-833).[23]

Gender relations with hegemonic masculinity and subordinated femininity are fundamentally about relations of power. However, several power structures operate simultaneously in the society beside patriarchy. The intensity and toxicity of these power structures may vary from region to region and in different times of history. For example, caste and religion in India; caste and ethnicity in Nepal; ethnicity in Pakistan; ethnicity and religion in Myanmar and Sri Lanka are important players in the power grid. The masculine power manifests differently in the power grid variously

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intertwined with hierarchies of race, class, caste, nationality, place of origin, language, religion, education, physical/mental abilities, appearance including color, gender, immigration status, sexual orientation, etc. A man's power, due to his multiple social identities, then, depends on where he stands on the social power grid in terms of intersectionality of the above factors and in relation to

women or other men. A man may experience multiple power differentials and feel all powerful vis-à-vis his wife but in his social interaction and work relations, he is always navigating between the experiences of power and powerlessness while interacting with men and women situated on different intersections of the power grid. These experiences also affect his power relation with his wife in the same way a woman's relationship with her children and other women in the family gets affected by her relationship with her intimate partner. A socially submissive and polite masculinity exhibited by a socially marginalized man may turn into aggressive, hegemonic, and violent masculinity in relation to his wife and children at home or for that matter, toward another man situated at a lower rung of power hierarchy.

South Asian Masculinity in Migration

The majority of South Asian men who migrated into the U.S. in the 1970s and 1980s were highly educated, upper caste and class, as well as from the upper stratum of the societies back in their countries of origin. In South Asian countries, the upper castes, particularly Brahmins, enjoyed and nearly monopolized the privileges of education for several centuries. Women and people lowest in the caste hierarchy were forbidden to receive education for hundreds of years. In free India, despite criminalizing the practice of untouchability and government's affirmative action agenda, as well as other efforts to universalize access to education, the upper castes continue to dominate the field of higher education, though middle level caste holders and others are gradually catching up. Therefore, when U.S. immigration policies loosened up in 1965 and made it possible for the technically and English educated to migrate, the first to arrive were mostly the men from the rich upper castes.[24]

Caste and patriarchy cannot be separated in the contexts of most South Asian countries. These two structures are inseparably intertwined and have thrived on control over women and their sexualities. Caste system is strongly vested in patriarchy. Purity of castes can be ensured only if women are not allowed to have sexual relations with or marry men outside their castes. Hence stronger patriarchal control over women's sexualities, their mobility, and choice of partner are essential to maintain the caste status quo. Even in the U.S., far away from the countries of origin, South Asian communities continue to maintain for females stereotypical traditions of no intermingling with men of different castes/communities; no keeping away from home for long hours or overnight; and arranging marriages (sometimes forced) with partners chosen by parents. In the U.S. culture, the South Asian community struggles under the added fear of the second generation losing their caste identities and thereby snapping the bond with their communities of origin. Transgressions from these norms become an issue of honor, not just for the family but for the entire caste based community. It is a part of the construct of South Asian masculinity to watch over and guard the conduct of women of one's family so that they do not cross the boundaries of family honor.

South Asian Patriarchy and Women's Oppression

Centuries of patriarchy have firmly established the concept of male superiority in relation to women and normalized masculinity to the extent that both men and women feel this is the natural order in life.[25] Similarly, the existence of centuries of caste hierarchy in South Asia has led to the belief in people of the upper castes that besides being superior in intellect, culture, and ethical behavior, they are genetically superior to people of other castes.[26] Under the rigid caste system, the upper castes were entitled to certain privileges and free services from the *Dalits*.[27] The highest

castes also decided the code of conduct and behavioral norms for all others, as well as the jurisprudence to punish transgressors. In a way, the highest castes played masculine roles while *Dalits* enacted the feminine roles. Due to this similarity in roles, under Hindu patriarchy, women have been regarded equivalent to '*shudras*'[28] or *Dalits* in the caste system (p. 14).[29] The role of *Shudras* in the caste system, to serve all higher castes, has been defined in Rg Veda in a hymn called *Purushasuktam*.[30] Thus, the upper caste Hindu men are socialized in and internalize a very strict version of masculinity, a sense of superiority, and a conviction of entitlements.

In addition to the caste, class, and gender superiority, the professionally and financially successful South Asian men in the U.S. internalize the 'cream complex'[31] that arises from their self-assessment and is reinforced by their families. It is the feeling that 'I made it to the U.S. because I am superior to other men in my country, who could not come.' This self assessment inflates men's egos and peaks their feelings of entitlement that their wives should be eternally obliged to them and therefore subservient, because they have brought them to the U.S. to enjoy a better life.[32] A 40-year-old woman in Seattle, Washington, who came to U.S. with her husband when she was 23, expressed succinctly: "I have been listening to this rhetoric from him for seventeen long years of marriage; now that my children are grown up, I can't, and why should I put up with this persistent humiliation anymore? I am putting up my divorce papers."[33]

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While men's violence against women may be a learned behavior, it is certainly not a 'simple' behavioral problem. Gender violence is a manifestation of unequal gender relations and hegemonic masculinity produced by patriarchy interacting with other structures of power. It is propagated as well as protected by male domination in all social, economic, political, and religious institutions. Unequal power relations between men and women fortified by male control over all institutions in society strengthen men's dominance over women. Men use violence to assert the power of their masculinity and to ensure their control over resources and decision making. Power is known to be addictive and many enjoy it when they perpetrate violence with impunity to assert, exhibit, and consolidate their power. When violence yields results in terms of submission and compliance by the victim, it ends up satisfying the perpetrator, thus reinforcing and helping violence recur. If the victim resists violence and refuses to comply, male responses may vary. Some men may ratchet up the violence to extract desired results and take the resistance as a challenge to their masculinity, while others may stop utilizing violence altogether.

Gaining power and control[34] may be the most overriding motive of male violence against women, but these alone do not fully explain all violence perpetrated by men against women. The discourse remains incomplete without attending to the notion of entitlements bestowed on men by patriarchal structures. Men use violence to ensure that they continue to enjoy the set of privileges that patriarchy allows them.[35] These privileges include sexual entitlement – a belief that men (particularly husbands) have the right to women's (especially wives') bodies; that is, to have sex with a woman regardless of her consent. Rapes within marriage, date rapes, as well as mass rapes of

women in war or conflict zones are all manifestations of men proclaiming their victory and power over victims and exercising their entitlements.

Under patriarchy, men are firmly convinced that just being a male makes them worthy of certain privileges and services, and women are mandated to furnish these unquestioningly, first as mothers and sisters while growing up and after marriage, as wives. In South Asia, filial duties often take precedence over conjugal ones and a man believes that not only he but his parents and siblings are also entitled to be served by his wife. Men expect that women should implicitly understand and anticipate when and what is needed by men and they should fulfill these needs without having to ask for it. A wife is considered to be failing in her duties if men in the family need to ask for certain services which she is expected to provide routinely. Further, men ought to get their needs met on demand, or rather command, by women.

Connell observes that patriarchal constructs of femininity amounts to cultural and physical disempowerment of women resulting in violence against them as means of maintaining dominance and power and for asserting masculinity.[36] The violent involvement of husbands' mothers and sisters in enforcing the patriarchal norms of femininity on the wives/daughters-in-law is further instrumental in upholding the privileges men enjoy in society.[37]

Gendered Division of Public and Private Spaces

The gendered division of spaces in South Asian cultures with public spaces for men and private spaces for women has consequences that go far beyond the lower representation of women as lawmakers, public servants, and workers. It has created gendered division of work and wide disparity in income as well as ownership of property, business, and wealth. Gender-just laws and policies incorporating affirmative action are proving inadequate in correcting the situation in a short time and in achieving substantive equality. An important implication of this gendered division of spaces is that women can leave the private space (home) to enter the public space only for specific purposes and for specific times with permission of a patriarch of the family such as father, brother, male partner, or one acting on his behalf. For any contravention or transgression beyond a reasonable limit, women are held answerable and may invite punitive actions in terms of further restrictions of such permissions or even violence, physical or in other forms.

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These gender norms were practiced much more strictly in South Asian countries in the 1960s and 1970s when most South Asians migrated from India to the U.S. The South Asian Diaspora's mindset frozen in the times they migrated has commonly been cited as an explanation for men's and women's restrictive attitudes about women's mobility. Despite women doing 'double shift work,' many South Asian men feel strongly intolerant of independent and autonomous women and view it as a sign of Westernization. As more women are seen on the streets, work places, as well as in politics, there is also backlash in South Asian countries from threatened patriarchal masculinity.

The Crisis of Heterosexual Hegemonic Masculinity

There never was a period when masculinity was not in crisis. It is in a perpetual state of crisis because it valorizes itself at the cost of the feminine, it is obsessed with the idea of controlling female sexuality, it takes for granted that being male guarantees you with a set of powers. It gathers a range of privileges and then neatly divides them among men on the basis of class, caste, sexual disposition, etc. Men fight with each other over the share of these privileges but also unite when it comes to the question of women.[37]

The feminist movement and the LGBTQ rights movement have given rise to new challenges to the heterosexual image of all powerful masculinity and normative gender relations. Hegemonic masculinity has been confronted by powerful voices of strong women throughout history. Masculinity has shifted and changed in face of this challenge; that is, it has not been static in history. However, under the concerted attacks of diverse feminist movements in

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the last thirty years, men are probably more confused today than any time before in determining whether to be a traditional 'real man' or a 'good man' (read: gentle, soft, caring man, who knows how to cook, wash, clean, etc.). Men cannot reject the latter standards of gender equality summarily, as they often look to women for approval of their masculinity. Thus, the hierarchal masculinity is under threat of losing its power and meaning and may ultimately be obliterated in a gender equal world.[38] This recent crisis has given rise to a dualism or hypocrisy in many men such that they would subscribe publicly to politically correct liberal views on gender equality and equal rights for the LGBTQ community, but in private would assert aggressive masculinity, gender domination, and homophobia.

It is difficult to postulate at this point whether hegemonic masculinity would disintegrate under strong push for gender equality and be replaced by democratic relations and gender equity. Nevertheless, this confusion about the meaning and implications of masculinity offers an unprecedented opportunity to redefine and reconstruct masculinity and demolish its violent characteristics.

4

Changing Men

Approaches to Working with Violent Men

The deployment of hegemonic masculinities has happened historically and most frequently in violence against women. In nearly every society male violence against women was a reality that, if not unequivocally approved, was at least bitterly tolerated. It is only recently that this status quo has been soundly challenged and efforts have been made to re-educate abusers. In the U.S., the attempt to stop men's violence against women by resocializing them in gender equality and accepting responsibility for their own actions resulted in the proliferation of Batterer Intervention Programs across the country.

Batterer Intervention Programs

Batterer intervention programs (BIPs) were first introduced as a way of holding men accountable in lieu of incarcerating them for their crimes of violence against women. Initiated in the 1970s, BIPs became a part of criminal justice system's response to domestic violence in many states. Most states have adopted BIPs with some difference but the programs are run mainly by non-profit organizations. Generally, the battering men are mandated by the Court to go through a certain number of day-long counseling-cum-education sessions with a designated local BIP. The number of sessions that a perpetrator is required to attend differs from state to state according to the law of that state and the BIP requirements. The attendee is required to pay a fee to the sponsoring organization for each session he attends. The favored configuration of facilitators for the group sessions is one man along with one woman. If a man does not complete the required number of sessions or misbehaves, his parole is terminated and he is sent back to jail.

Most BIPs are based on behavioral change approach as well as holding the perpetrator responsible and accountable for his crime. Furthermore, the program is accountable to victims and victim advocates. The approach comprises confronting the perpetrator's denial of violent behavior to enforce accountability. This acceptance of guilt is then followed by educating the perpetrator to understand power and control, and offering therapeutic alternatives to anger management and behavioral change. The approach is based on the belief that internalization of education or therapy cannot begin unless and until the batterer admits his culpability for the crime/s he has committed.

> **Most BIPs are based on behavioral change approach as well as holding the perpetrator responsible and accountable for his crime**

Does such confrontational approach to holding men accountable make them defensive, amenable to learn, or just strengthen their resolve to adhere to their own beliefs while forced to submit superficially? In 1997-'98, I had the opportunity to be present in fifteen sessions of a batterer intervention program in Baltimore, Maryland. I observed the group's interactions in the presence of the facilitators and when they had left the room and the men were on their own.

Hence I was privy to the informal conversations/outbursts of the group members. In the presence of the BIP facilitators, the men would make comments such as, "I'm working on my attitude," "I'm learning to control my anger," "I like being here," etc. Left on their own, the men expressed themselves in the foulest of languages: "It's a s--- place." "Who likes being in this f---ing place." "I don't trust that b---- no more." "I'm p---ed off with her; she called 911," etc. The men could not express their anger in the presence of the facilitators in fear they would be handed over to the police officers waiting outside the room and be incarcerated. They parroted politically correct phrases to avoid arguments with the facilitators and bided time for the mandated period to pass.

This experience in the BIP made me question whether the batterers attending the program truly learned to mend their behaviors. More likely, the lessons that they learned from each other in their informal conversations were, how to minimize liability if one decides not to go back to his intimate partner; when to opt for a DNA test to determine liability for the baby if she was pregnant; what to do to avoid the clutches of law, etc.

The effectiveness of BIPs modeled around 'accountability, re-education, anger management, and behavioral change therapy' has been questioned and its limitations exposed in a report published in 2007 by The National Institute of Justice, New York.[39] The report analyzed approximately thirty five studies of BIPs completed since the 1980s. It also took into account four interesting studies that employed experimental techniques such as assigning offenders randomly to a BIP or a control group in an effort to provide definitive findings on recidivism rate. The results

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suggested that there was no effect of BIP on relapse of battering behavior. A literature review by Feder and Wilson also found that BIPs overall do not reduce reoffending, especially when measured by victim report, or show only marginal effects at best.[40] Two evaluations of programs in Broward County, Florida, and Brooklyn, New York, based on pretty rigorous experimental designs also claim that BIPs have little or no effect on batterers' behaviors.[41]

Contrastingly, in their report, Chic Dabby and Grace Poore have discussed two BIPS with a difference.[42] Both programs are focused on Asian men and address processes that endorse gendered harm. The Cultural Context Model (CCM)[43] created by The Institute of Family Services in Somerset, New Jersey, provides individual and group therapy to batterers court ordered to attend intervention programs.[44] The CCM employs culture circles for batterers and separate culture circles for abused partners, where, the batterers write accountability letters addressing every violation on the Power and Control wheel,[45] and the abused women write empowerment letters. Through culture specific interventions, the program tries to create critical consciousness in batterers about gender roles in societal contexts (e.g., gender interacting with class, race, immigration status, and sexual orientation).

The second model of BIP that Dabby and Poore mention is an intervention program for court mandated South Asian batterers implemented by Bata/Starr Counseling Associates in San Jose, California. It addresses inequality in relationships and family and attempts to help men

reframe their masculinity as well as reshape intimacy with their partners. The program takes into account the aggressive role often played by in-laws in South Asian families and coaches men to disrupt family power structures to strengthen conjugal relationships. These two programs have incorporated innovative methods of incorporating cultural contexts to transform gender roles and gender relations. In addition, Institute of Family Services' model, CCM, also draws in the battered partners and the relevant community through culture circles. Unfortunately, success of the programs has not yet been demonstrated by systematic studies.

While there should be no easing off offenders from holding them accountable for their crimes of violence against women, we need to look beyond court mandated programs to end intimate violence against women and adopt a holistic model. We need to build strategies to foster partnerships with men in the community to reshape power relations and redefine masculinities in order to end gendered violence.

5

Creating Partnership to End Violence against Women

Building Partnership with Men

When we place hegemonic masculinity and violence in the larger context of power, privileges, entitlements, and oppression, we cannot but address violence against women as a problem of complex power relations in all its intersectionality with caste, class, race, and various other power structures operating in society. We, therefore, need to work out strategies to engage with men and women in our communities to reshape masculinities in order to build gender equal and non-violent relationships. Needless to say that while we work with men, the safety of women and children in their communities should not be compromised in any way and interventions for women's empowerment should not suffer at any cost.

But how do we engage with men and why would men change? How do we convince them or inspire them to join the efforts for ending violence against women and work for gender equality? In order to develop a plan to engage men, we need to consider the following issues that men themselves have expressed:

a) Not all men are powerful. Many men are victims of structural violence (e.g., poverty, racism, heterosexual patriarchy, etc.) and are living with tremendous stress in their lives. Patriarchal responsibilities and the stress of being the head of as well as the provider in the family make life difficult for men. There are so many not-for-profit organizations and advocates for women to help them speak out and provide assistance in distress. Men have nowhere to go, no place to cry. If there were counseling centers to help men, it would check men's alcoholism as well as domestic violence, and it may help men to off-load the burden of normative masculinity;

b) Men are never taught to make breakfast, cook a meal, and take care of young children. How can we expect them to suddenly start sharing household chores with the wife and take responsibility of young children? We should establish training centers in child-care and housekeeping exclusively for men. That will bring about change in gender roles. Cooking in the kitchen and looking after children is really enjoyable and men would love it once they start doing it; and

c) The construction of masculinity under patriarchy is unjust to men also. While growing up and throughout lifespan, a man lives under the burden of standing up to be a *real* man. Men do not realize that in the march to achieve the grade of *man*, they lose touch with many human emotions and create for themselves a web of trauma and pain from which there is often no exit.[46] Gender equality would ease a lot of burden from the shoulders of men. Dismantling patriarchal masculinity is therefore liberating for men too. If we could make them realize this truth, they will join the struggle.

The above arguments seem reasonably valid until we consider them in the context of our original objective of engaging men in anti-violence work and going beyond patriarchal masculinity to bring about gender equality. The following are counter points of the arguments listed above:

A. It is true that all men are not powerful in all situations and subordinate as well as marginalized masculinities do exist. Most men learn to play dominant and aggressive (read: masculine) as well as obedient and submissive (read: feminine) roles to navigate different situations and negotiate different masculinities. But even the most subservient men at work become powerful at home as patriarchal masculinity plays out. It is true that men have stresses especially the immigrants and the poor, and they may not be able to access the services of psychologists and trained counselors because in the private sector, these are totally inadequate and prohibitively expensive. Poverty is structural violence perpetrated by exploitative and unequal economic and political systems. If the organizations that work with the objective of ending violence against women start running these services for men, much needed though they might be, it would amount to diverting time of gender sensitive and motivated men as well as taking resources away from the work of ending violence against women. Alcoholism and stress might trigger or aggravate a man's violence against his wife or children, but the fundamental reason is unequal power relations and the gendered construction of masculine and feminine behavioral norms;

B. It is a perfectly valid suggestion that cooking classes and parenting lessons for men might be necessary since they do not acquire these skills while growing up and may feel disinclined to learn these from their partners. However, there are no biological impediments to men learning these skills. After all, most professional cooks are men and in most kitchens in hotels and restaurants the chefs are men. There is no doubt that in order to end gender division of roles, men should start working in the kitchen at home and take care of children. These household chores can be enjoyable at times and terribly unpleasant, irritating, and tiring at other times. These can become joyless chores when they are routine and without escape. Taking care of a child can wreak havoc on one's nerves. Similarly, working in the kitchen and being short of time can create high stress. Thus, attempting to sell household responsibilities to men as 'enjoyable' loses validity, especially when confronting men's push back (e.g., "If these chores are enjoyable and women have been enjoying them for so long, let them continue. We are okay without this enjoyment").

This is not to argue against men accepting responsibilities of raising children, working in the kitchen, cooking meals, washing dishes, and doing other household chores. The point is to inspire more and more men to accept these as part of their normal household responsibilities arising out of the understanding that gender division of roles is unjust to women. For example, childcare would certainly strengthen men's emotional bonds with their children and this process could become the entry point for increasing emotional sensitivity of men; and

C. Those who are in positions of authority, whether in society or in politics, carry the burden of and the stress associated with maintaining, consolidating, and living up to that power. The same is true for men in hegemonic patriarchy. As the chief bread winner, household head, and protector of the family, men have to fulfill and live up to the image of *real man*. Additionally, the extra responsibilities of guarding women's sexualities, which is viewed in relationship to men's, families', and clans' honor, and exercising authority to meet the expectations of being a *real man*, can be highly stressful for men. In their efforts to live up to the standards of a *real man*, men often miss being really good human beings.[47]

However, the power and privileges of being a man in the family and in all spheres of life (e.g., economic, social, political, cultural, religious, etc.) far outweigh the disadvantages or drawbacks of being a man. Historically, women have shared the so-called *manly* burden whenever men have fallen short or run away from shouldering full responsibilities of the family. With increasing educational and employment opportunities, women are sharing ever more. The attraction of being free of *manly* burdens is unlikely to motivate men to join the gender liberation struggles since there is pride associated with carrying the *manly* burden. With gender equality, men would have to forgo their power, privileges, and entitlements.

Creating Male Role Models in the Community

Boys learn 'proper' masculine behavior as they grow up in their social contexts. Various factors including peer influences, media projections, and parental sanctions for behaviors as well as from family members and neighbors shape their socialization. Boys look up to their fathers, teachers, older boys in school, neighborhood men, film stars, sportsmen, or war heroes as role model/s to emulate. Role models play significant roles in the molding of boys into masculine men and girls into feminine women. The primary role model for a boy is likely to be his father or another significant man whose behavior he observes, analyzes, and struggles to internalize. The images and observations formulate his aspirations and influence how he performs his masculinity. Gender training programs for teachers, even at the early childhood education (ECE) level, of sports coaches, etc., are now being addressed by various agencies so that these individuals become role models of positive and gender fair masculinities and influence socialization of children in non-hegemonic masculinity.

It must be underscored here that there are not enough role models of gender-equal men among teachers, sports coaches, and in communities. Most sports coaches tend to push their team players to be aggressive and forceful, to dominate over rival teams. The male school teacher is expected to be firm with students and be able to maintain discipline in the classroom. In order to establish alternative masculinity as the norm, it will have to be included in the selection criteria of teachers and sports coaches.

These role models of alternative masculinity would require social support to affirm and establish the new value systems of gender equality. Our strategy of working with men should therefore encompass creating role models and dialogue in the community and media to generate wide support for a new set of norms for acceptable male behavior based on gender equality. MASVAW (Men's Action for Stopping Violence Against Women)[48] and MAVA (Men Against Violence & Abuse)[49] in India and many men's organizations all over the world have been made great strides in training young men into role models and challenging traditional images of masculinity.

The dismantling of the normative and popular patriarchal, hegemonic image of masculinity and replacing it with the humane image of a gentle, gender equal man is not going to be an easy task among South Asian Americans. In comparison to culturally and numerically powerful aggressive White American masculinity and the cool African American one, the physically smaller South Asian men are already perceived as effeminate. To establish gender equality, South Asians have to come to terms with and reject this comparative and dualistic image of masculinity, which they have internalized over the years. They must develop their own confident and independent self image in all its positive and negative realities.

Both the model minority image as well as the perception of emasculated and marginalized masculinity have been damaging to South Asian boys and men. The model minority syndrome exerts undue pressures on South Asian boys and young men to perform well in school, especially in mathematics, computers, and science to succeed in their career choices as doctors or engineers. Young South Asian men feel rejected if they see a *desi* girl dating a White man. Married men who feel subdued or face racist comments in the public arena express their aggression at home to rediscover and reassert their masculinity. The issue of softening and humanizing masculinity and surrendering the powers, privileges, and entitlements that go with it by the South Asian American men is going to be tricky.

It has taken several decades of hard work by South Asian feminists in the U.S. for the 'model minority' South Asian community to admit the prevalence of domestic violence. It would be another challenging task to make the alternative image and meaning of gender-equal masculinity socially acceptable. However, it is doubtful that just offering a different image of a real man or a reformed picture of masculinity would inspire South Asian men to move toward egalitarian relationships.

Motivations for Men to Engage in Change for Gender Equality

The two key factors elaborated below might determine an appropriate strategy to engage South Asian American men and address masculinity.

    i.   Gender based violence is an issue of power relations. However, there are many structures other than patriarchy operating in society that determine power relations. The dynamics of hierarchal relations laid down by these structures also affect masculinities and femininities and their mutual interactions. Hegemony of some masculinities as well as subjugation and subordination of other masculinities and of women and LGBTQ communities will have to be opposed by a counter-hegemonic approach. Hegemonies of all kinds, be it gender, caste, race, color, religion, language,

physical ability, or sexuality, should be repudiated as part of a comprehensive counter hegemonic solution to this complex problem.

ii. South Asian men in the U.S., like all men of color, face racism and xenophobia and their identities and self images are distorted by the prevalent racist perception about South Asians. In their turn, South Asians Americans are colorists[50] and practice discrimination on the basis of color, appearance, caste and religion.[51] Also, regionalism comes to the fore when South Asians congregate in pockets or neighborhoods.

As discussed earlier, South Asian Americans need to define their identity independent of how they are perceived by others. In order to discover their autonomous self-image, the second and third generations of South Asian American men will have to rise above their racially subordinate status in American society and oppose hegemony and discrimination based on race. They cannot do that convincingly, if they decry racism and adhere to beliefs and practices of subjugation and discrimination based on gender, caste, religion, sexuality etc., against those lower to them in social hierarchy.

Reconstruction of self image would also restructure masculinity based on democratic and egalitarian gender relations. In this restructuring process, men would need affirmation and validation of alternative masculinities by women in the community. Therefore, advocacy at the community level is an important component in this counter-hegemonic approach.

Alan Greig and his colleagues also promote a comprehensive approach to gender based violence:

It may be useful to look not merely at the violence of men but at the violence that lies at the heart of masculinity's hierarchizing of difference and the misogyny, homophobia and racism that are embedded in discourses of masculinity. In this sense, a development response to the connections between men, masculinity and violence should not only consider working with men but also, for example, addressing issues of human rights and discrimination (p. 13).[52]

We have seen in recent history that the ideologies of equality and the spirit of 'human rights for all' combined with the zeal for nationalism inspired generations in many former colonies including South Asia to fight for freedom. The struggle for freedom ended colonial rule in large parts of the world and ushered in a new world of over 200 free nation states. Perhaps the same doctrine of equality and the dream of 'human rights for all' would kindle the fire among South Asian American young men to resist all forms of oppression and discrimination.

> **In recent history that the ideologies of equality and the spirit of 'human rights for all' combined with the zeal for nationalism inspired generations in many former colonies including South Asia to fight for freedom**

There are multiple institutional structures and value systems that support hierarchy, hegemonic power relations, discrimination, and oppression in society, patriarchy being one of them. These institutions and social values contribute to the construction of hegemonic and violent masculinity and the ensuing violence against women. A broader appeal to fight against all forms of discriminations based on gender, race, caste, class, etc., would inspire men and women alike to come together and work out new images of masculinities and femininities based on gender equality or 'gender democracy.'[53]

Along with the comprehensive approach to redefine masculinity of South Asian American men, the pressing task for South Asian Women's Organizations (SAWOs)[54] is to make violent masculinity socially unacceptable and thus create intolerance toward violence against women. Although there are concentrations of South Asian populations in many cities, it is difficult to meet South Asians as a community in the U.S. There are hardly any community centers other than places of worship. The communities are divided on the basis of religion and even the religious centers are separate for different nationalities or sub-nationalities. Afghans would meet in Afghani mosques which are different from Pakistani or Indian mosques. Similarly Tamil Hindus and Gujarati Hindus tend to meet in different temples. Even the student unions in universities are divided on the grounds of religion and nationality; e.g., there may be Hindu Students Union, Indian Students Union, Muslim Students Union, and South Asian Students Union, all in the same university campus. Thus, the simplest way for SAWOs to reach out to South Asian populations might be to approach communities through faith leaders and faith based organizations (FBOs) and create support for women and social intolerance against violence. But this pathway of working with FBOs is not without some inherent risks.

6

Engaging Communities

Working with Faith Leaders and Faith Based Organizations

There are strong and relevant reasons to mobilize faith based organizations (FBOs) and faith leaders to oppose violence against women. But engaging with faith based leaders and organizations might be a double edged sword. According to UNFPA guidelines,[55] working with faith-based organizations, as one community among many critical agents of change, is no longer a matter of discussion, but rather, one of considered, systematic, and deliberate engagement with like-minded partners. In South Asian communities across the U.S., faith has acted as a focal point of organizing and providing identity, cultural continuity, and comfort to community members.

One of the first things South Asian immigrants did in the U.S. was to build temples, mosques, and Gurudwaras wherever they congregated in substantial numbers and became economically stable. Even now, these places of worship managed by FBOs act as community centers where people gather, interact with each other, and celebrate festivals and religious/cultural functions. Disconnected from the kinship in their countries of origin, immigrants in the U.S. ameliorated their insecurities by connecting to each other and creating a familiar environment by establishing these places of worship. In many cases, these organizations also provided various services (e.g., de-addiction groups, career guidance, search for rental houses, children's religious education, etc.) to community members. The services were and still are funded by donations and offerings by the devotees and visitors to the community centers. Nonetheless, most FBOs have overabundance of funds.

> **Although the South Asian community may have come out of its initial denial of the existence of domestic violence, it is still reluctant to offer much support to services for survivors of violence**

On the other hand, non-profits working with survivors of violence and women in crisis run on shoestring budgets. The agencies tend not have strong outreach and influence in the community at large. Although the South Asian community may have come out of its initial denial of the existence of domestic violence, it is still reluctant to offer much support to services for survivors of violence. The skepticism and antagonism regarding violence against women that surround FBOs are palpable enough to discourage women who are experiencing violence to approach faith leaders for help or to hold perpetrators accountable.

A few religious organizations are slowly recognizing the importance of their roles in keeping women and children safe and maintaining peaceful families in the community. At this point, the SAWOs must take on the responsibility of educating and training the leaders of FBOs so that the assistance they offer to women is effective. Furthermore, by working not in opposition to but in partnership with anti-domestic violence agencies, faith leaders can generate an environment in FBOs that would encourage women to disclose their experiences of abuse and seek help.[56]

However, the endeavor is not without dilemma for SAWOs. While the advantages of working with FBOs are there, the risks involved in associating with religious leaders are also serious. Feminists have claimed that religion is a patriarchal institution that has historically institutionalized and perpetuated male domination, gender inequality, and subjugation of women. Shamita Das Dasgupta, anti-violence against women activist in the U.S. and academician on gender issues, re-studied Hinduism and Islam to develop insight into what various religions say about women and suffering and found that in almost all religions, there are parts that empower women and others that disenfranchise them. Unfortunately, the disempowering parts are popularized as culture and given authenticity while the empowering parts are forgotten or minimized.[57] Fortunately, the status quo is being challenged from within. At a world gathering of Global Interfaith Network for Population and Development organized by the UNFPA in Istanbul in October 2008, the representatives of UNFPA and FBOs restated the principle that all faiths share the same aim to safeguard the dignity and human rights of all people, women and men, young and old. Thus, they must work together to advance human well-being and help realize the rights of all individuals with special attention paid to women and young people.

> **Forgiveness can be a critical value in normal life; but where violence against women is concerned, can the issue of 'accountability,' earnestly sought by SAWOs, and 'forgiveness,' preached by faith leaders, coexist without conflict?**

While the intentions are certainly worthy, the crux of the problem remains unaddressed. The sacred books and faith leaders may not lend blatant support to violence against women, but no religion supports equal roles and equal rights for the two genders. On the contrary, the codes of conduct laid down for women unequivocally prescribe obedience and subordination. Most advocates are well aware of religious institutions' denial of reproductive health rights to women in many European and South American countries. Such anti-human rights stance of religious institutions and faith leaders has cost them following among younger generations. Consequently, many FBOs are loosening their stringency and taking cautious steps toward liberal stands on contemporary issues related to women's and child rights, same sex relations, etc.

Nevertheless, anti-violence advocates who are working in South Asian communities cannot ignore the role religion plays in victims' lives. In various articles, Dasgupta has related her experiences of intervening with battered South Asian women. At first, many of the women she has worked with resisted intervention stating that according to their religions, they were supposed to tolerate and suffer at the hands of their husbands and other family members. Although most of them felt they were helplessly trapped and wanted the abuse to end, they resisted leaving the relationships saying that such a change would destroy a core value in their lives. It becomes obvious that howsoever the activists may try to alter minds by expostulating on different values of religion and providing alternate interpretation of scriptures, believers accept authenticity of scriptures only from the mouths of faith leaders and preachers.

All religions place inordinate emphasis on the sanctity of marriage and family as the most sacred institution in society and forgiveness as its cornerstone, particularly as it relates to husbands' transgressions. Undoubtedly, forgiveness can be a critical value in normal life; but where violence

against women is concerned, can the issue of 'accountability,' earnestly sought by SAWOs, and 'forgiveness,' preached by faith leaders, coexist without conflict?

The history of Europe and recent inter-religious strives in numerous countries in different parts of the world reiterate for us the havoc faith institutions and faith leaders can play when they bring in religion into social and political spheres and take control of personal lives of individuals. The incidents of child sexual abuse and abuse of women in faith based institutions in the U.S., European countries, as well as India are well documented and faith leaders in many countries are now being tried in courts of law for crimes against women and children. The potential for such criminal acts are always present in situations where a select group holds social and emotional power over others. This realization should make SAWOs stop and ponder whether it is wise to lend credibility to faith institutions and bring them to play a role in the community on social issues.

Initiating Dialogue with the Community

An alternative course to directly engaging FBOs is to consider religious centers as community centers for initiating dialogues with the community. Many religious centers have large halls where soirees, birthdays, and youth activities take place, and some even have tennis and badminton courts to attract young generations. Such spaces could be utilized for multiple activities which are essential to attract more people, especially the youth. Advocates from SAWOs could approach the prominent elders managing these centers to get access and begin small activities like distributing pamphlets, putting up information booths, or organizing debate competitions, discussions, or various youth activities to initiate dialogues with the community of men. Furthermore, SAWOs need to increase their visibility and acceptability in the community by writing articles for ethnic bulletins and magazines such as India Post, India Currents, and Sada-e-Pakistan which enjoy large circulation in South Asian communities in the U.S.

Working with Adolescents

The second and third generations of South Asian Americans, who have weaker bonds with their larger family networks in their countries of origin, might be more likely to accept gender equality. However the question remains, where do we engage with them collectively – in schools, colleges, work places, community centers, or places of worship? Various students associations in colleges and universities could be the forum for dialogue on non-patriarchal, non-hegemonic masculinities and new independent identities of young South Asian Americans. At the same time, places of worship like temples, Gurudwaras, churches, and mosques could provide spaces for interacting with young people while bypassing the more orthodox faith leaders. Overnight camps for boys and girls involving participatory training with lots of fun-filled activities have the potential of becoming very popular with the youth. Such programs could train a cadre of young men in gender equity, who could then become peer communicators, role models, and powerful voices in redefining and reshaping masculinities that counter violence against women.

7

Summary of Discussion

- There is growing realization in the advocacy community that in order to end violence against women, men must be included as partners in the struggle that has thus far been waged chiefly by women's organizations.

- Patriarchal construction of masculinity is based on gender hierarchy as well as unequal power relations between dominant and marginalized men that are based on differential privileges and entitlements bestowed upon them. Such power and privileges have given rise to hegemonic and often violent masculinities that ultimately result in subordination and subjugation of women in society.

- There is no monolithic masculinity; masculinities change with time, cultures, geographies, situations, and also with factors such as caste and class. It is important to recognize that all masculinities are neither violent nor hegemonic. Since masculinities as social characteristics are learned, they can be addressed, redefined, modified, reconstructed, and reshaped to be non-violent, non-hegemonic, and democratic. Men must be actively engaged in this venture to resocialize other men.

- South Asian masculinities have been severely affected at individual as well as at national levels by the region's history of colonization. The colonizers utilized a deliberate process of emasculation of native men to establish complete cultural domination. During the region's struggle to gain independence and after achieving independence, various efforts were launched to reconstruct and rejuvenate South Asian masculinities including aggressive masculinities based on religion. An analogy of this dynamic can be found in the immigrant South Asian community in the U.S.
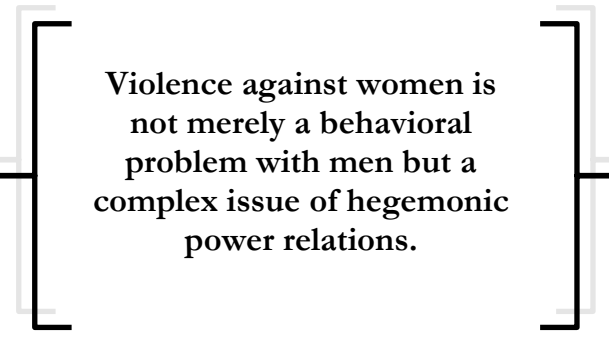
- Violence against women is not merely a behavioral problem with men but a complex issue of hegemonic power relations. Besides gender, there are many other social determinants such as race, class, caste, religion, language, immigration status, sexuality, and (dis)ability that influence the dynamics of power structures or power relations operating in society. The solution, therefore, lies in counter-hegemonic approaches to address the problem.

- Although Batterer Intervention Programs have been able to hold men accountable for their crimes of violence against women, the evaluation studies have indicated mixed results at best. For example, BIP attendance seems to have little impact on recidivism of

violent behavior or on incidence of violence against women.

> ♦ Masculinities of South Asian men in the U.S. have been subordinated by twin effects of the 'model minority' syndrome and the effeminate image of Asian men in the West. Such derogation of South Asian masculinities is drastically contrary to South Asian men's status in their homes, communities, and cultures as privileged princes and kings, resulting in boys' and men's internalization of the *raja* complex. This contrast of subordinate masculinity outside the home and dominant masculinity inside must be grasped to be able to address male aggression and violence against women in South Asian communities.

In order to redefine their masculinities, South Asian men need to build and live their own identities instead of internalizing and reacting to the racist perceptions of the dominant culture. To undertake this process of redefinition, they will have to contest racism outside and look inward to deal with hegemonic power relations and discriminatory practices based on gender, caste, religion, language, sexuality, etc., amid the community. A democratic masculinity can be shaped only by accepting the principles of equality and human rights for all without any exception.

♦ SAWOs have double objectives of supporting women against male violence and working with men to restructure democratic masculinity. For both, they need to initiate dialogues with the community, especially with men.

♦ While working with faith leaders and FBOs to harness the influence they have in the community is attractive and may be a 'no better alternative' option, the approach has its built-in risks. For instance, SAWOs partnering with FBOs might lend the latter credibility and invite them to interfere in social issues that are beyond the scope of their expertise. Further, FBOs tend to model the same hierarchal and patriarchal dynamics that are reflected in unequal gender relations.

Violence against women is not merely a behavioral problem with men but a complex issue of hegemonic power relations.

♦ Religious centers in the U.S. also act as community centers and provide various non-religious services to the community. Thus, the religious centers could provide space and facilitate interactions with the community including opportunities to connect with the youth.

♦ SAWOs must increase their visibility in the community through ethnic media. Media could also be used to initiate community dialogues on issues related to masculinity and violence against women.

♦ Engaging with younger generations that are brought up in the U.S. could probably yield better and faster results as they are probably more amenable to accepting new challenges. Partnering

with young men might be helpful in promoting ideas about democratic masculinity and egalitarian gender relations in South Asian communities.

An Engagement Program for Men and Boys

It is important to recognize that there cannot be an effective universal program to engage men and boys in anti-violence against women work. While a program can be founded on the above analysis and discussion, it must be tailored to fit the community where it will be implemented. As participants are recruited, the intensity of their involvement can be determined by their time constraints. However, minimally involved individuals have a tendency to drop their commitments to the organization and the work. Therefore, it is important to keep men engaged at least to a medium level. It is important to realize that not every man in the community will be fully engaged with the work. Nonetheless, it is important that all men and boys are reached to induce individual change and learn strategies for intervention if confronted by situations of violence against women.

The following is a basic framework of an engagement program for men that might be modified by each SAWO to fit the community of its operations.

- Identify a few men who are allies. The first step in facilitating the involvement of a large group of men in anti-violence against women work is to recruit a handful of men who could be socialized into feminist philosophies and anti-violence advocacy. It is best to select men who have a strong sense justice and empathy for human suffering. This small group of men would act as partners of SAWO advocates and mentors of boys and men to provide education and outreach in the community.

- The program for education for the small group of allies has to be carefully crafted according to the groups' age, education level, socioeconomic status, and geographical location.[58] The curriculum employed must not only raise awareness about gendered violence but also engage them in activism. While the beginning of this educational program might focus on understanding the disastrous impact of intimate violence on girls and women, it must then move toward the privilege men gain from such violence[59] and individual and group strategies to end violence against women.

- The ally group must be involved in the development of the engagement program to be deployed in the community. The program must address male privilege; power; inter-relationship of men, women, and families; the benefit of peaceful communities; and the concept of universal justice among other cultural issues.

- An important part of this curriculum must be strategies to replace hegemonic masculinity by 'honorable' masculinity. Honorable masculinity can be described as empathic, supportive, just, and engaged in the service of liberating the oppressed. 'Honorable' men take responsibility for the well being of women, children, and the community in the curriculum.

- As the ally group becomes knowledgeable in the cultural nuances of domestic and sexual violence, it should be treated as experts and can then provide peer to peer education to other men in the community.

- The strategies created to engage men in the community must meet them where they are at; that is, to develop a specific and individualized agenda of change. The educational agenda must recognize the attitude and knowledge of community men regarding violence against women and provide information that is vastly discrepant. A medium degree of difference between the information presented and the beliefs of the audience seems to bring the most attitudinal change.[60] A series of trainings over time could fully shift the community's attitude toward violence against women and girls.

- Men in the community must be exposed to survivors' stories to feel empathy and validate women's realities. Often a personal point of connection to issues of violence can bring the point home, as does making manifest the harm done to one's close relatives by violence.[61]

- Along with information to raise awareness, the allies can offer to men and boys specific and feasible actions to engage in anti-violence work. A few examples of actions are: speaking in high schools and colleges to involve students in violence prevention; raising funds for the SAWO operations; cooking dinner for the residents of SAWO shelter on auspicious days; and providing free medical services to victims.

- The allies can act as role models to men and youth in the community. For this function, it is important to recruit men who are acknowledged leaders or are reputed for their special skills such as musicians, artists, writers, athletes, and scientists. These men can deliver the message of prevention with credibility. Men can also demonstrate nonviolent behavior, conflict resolution, and equitable gender relations to young boys and teenagers. They can offer boys and teens alternates to sexist conduct and showcase an alternate masculinity that is based on skills and equality and not on aggression and domination.[62]

- In engaging men, using strength-based strategies might be more effective than negative approaches. Men may be swayed by statements that recognize their commitment to doing the right thing and their interests in building a healthy community. The message must go out that although men are the main perpetrators of violence against women, they can be a vital part of the solutions. Berating men to give up their privileges and entitlements and engage in egalitarian conduct is not necessarily effectual and might actually rebound.

- It is important to create opportunities for men's group education by using films and follow up discussions; cartoon series in gender equity; brainstorming sessions; and service opportunities.[63] Many South Asian men, particularly those associated with FBOs, are committed to providing services to the community. SAWOs can ensure opportunities for services that benefit women and children.

- Involving men in anti-violence against women campaigns such as the 16 days of activism against gender violence, clothesline project, walk a mile in her shoes, and white ribbon campaign might also give them an opportunity to experience firsthand the work of SAWOs. It is important to transform these campaigns into culturally appropriate ones to fit South Asian contexts.

- Involving men in education programs offered to the law enforcement, judiciary, teachers, faith community, and the health professionals would enhance their commitment and also increase the credibility of the trainings.

- Most men in South Asian communities in the U.S. have strong leadership, research, and administrative experiences. Involving men in policy making work of SAWOs would be a great way to increase their engagement in anti-violence work.

- Teaching men and boys tactics of bystander intervention and committing them to intervene in situations of violence against women provides them with responsibility and an action plan.[64]

- Most men tend to feel discomfort in challenging gender inequity because they feel they will be ridiculed and shunned by other men. Research indicates that men are more willing to intervene in situations of violence against women if they feel other men are going to act also.[65] Thus, marketing social norms of intervention such as speaking out, protecting women and children, and honorable masculinity could lead to a sustainable shift in community attitude and a realistic chance at ending violence against women.[66]

Concluding Remarks

SAWOs are at a critical juncture when the opportunity to engage men in struggles for gender justice has presented itself. SAWO advocates must seize the moment. Men's engagement in anti-violence work and gender justice is complex, because even when individual men recognize their own privilege and work to equalize it, they are still privileged by structural inequalities. The few good men engaged in anti-violence against women work must struggle to convince their brothers to dismantle those privileges. Because to end violence against women, men do have to end their own privileges, hold themselves accountable, change gender norms and values, and move to uphold women's right to be liberated. It is also men's role to model alternative masculinities for young boys and teens so that they may grow up to develop a world without violence against women.

Undoubtedly, the role of men is crucial. As activists and advocates for women, we need to help men develop honorable masculinity that does not view men's and women's roles as oppositional and create safe spaces where men can talk about being men. In the South Asian community, organizations like Manavi have an unprecedented opportunity to engage and involve men in anti-violence against women work and establish gender justice.
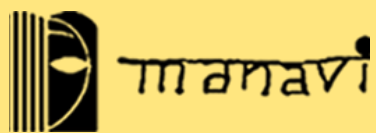
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