



# Between Friends

The Maitri Quarterly

## Editorial

By Mukta Sharangpani (General Secretary, Maitri)

Violence is everywhere. On TV, in the songs we hear, in the sports we play, on the road, in the classroom, on the fashion ramp, in the centre aisles of toy stores, in the video games our children are glued to for hours on end. We are surrounded by it, we are immersed in it. Immigration policy, capitalist culture, nationalistic sentiments are all infused with violent undertones and overtures. How then can we make sense of violence when it happens to us within the four walls of our home? What do violent encounters with the outside world have in common with violent occurrences within the home, between husbands and wives, between parents and children? How can we condemn domestic abuse when we condone, say, corporeal punishment? Why is it that so many of us who believe that there is no excuse for domestic violence, still believe that a once-in-a-while spanking helps keep kids disciplined, well behaved? Why, in such cases do we believe that physical action gets results that verbal effort doesn't? Does the answer to such beliefs lie in questions of ownership, of possession? Understanding these connections is crucial to our work. Without recognizing our client's past relationship with violence, we cannot anticipate or truly understand her response to her present circumstances. Because of the nature of our work, and the urgency of crisis intervention, we rarely have energy and bandwidth to concentrate on preventive efforts. Our commitment this year is to pay special attention to our preventive programs such as the teen violence prevention project, the career building and resume writing classes and the big brother- big sister mentor program for the children in our transitional home. It is our hope that such efforts will foster a sense of worth and self esteem in teenagers and at risk children, develop in them a keen sense of what is life led with dignity, and provide women the ability to integrate into mainstream and reduce their chances of isolation so that the prospect of being on their own and becoming primary providers for their one- parent-family does not remain such a frightening one.

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#### Local Resources:

- AACI: 408-975-2730
- Community Solutions: 408-842-7138
- Next Door to Domestic Violence : 408-279-2962
- Support Network for Battered Women : 1-800-572-2782
- SAVE : 510-794-6055

Check out the book "*Beyond the Call of Voice*" by Asita Prabhushankar at [www.anekabooks.com](http://www.anekabooks.com)

Please sign up for the *Maitri Tennis Tree* <https://secure.ga3.org/01/tennistree>

#### Upcoming Event

Maitri is co-presenting the film "No more tears, sister: An anatomy of hope and betrayal" at the Third San Francisco International South Asian Film Festival. Please checkout the link <http://www.thirdi.org/festival/film/tears.htm> OR visit Maitri's website [www.maitri.org](http://www.maitri.org) for more details on this upcoming event.

### Maitri Website Information

Our website--[www.maitri.org](http://www.maitri.org)--provides information on Maitri, our services, available volunteer opportunities, and educational knowledge about domestic violence, cultural conflicts, and crises facing South Asian women, men, and teens. It also offers a comprehensive resource of different non-profit organizations in and outside of the USA. The website also lists Maitri's current fundraising events and outreach programs. Headlines from around the world about conflicts faced by women today are posted every week under the newsletter section. The website is a very useful and important resource for our clients and we are in a process of improving our search on different browsers and we need your help. First, please visit the website and provide constructive feedback. Second, do endorse [www.maitri.org](http://www.maitri.org) on as many websites as possible. Outreach is key and this will help us raise our search engine ranking and provide useful access to clients who may not be aware of our services.

*Donations can also be made online. Contributions to Maitri are fully tax deductible and are exempt from state and federal taxes. Please visit [https://secure.ga3.org/01/maitri\\_donations\\_onetime](https://secure.ga3.org/01/maitri_donations_onetime) and find out more about how you can make donations online.*

#### Teenage Dating Violence

- ✚ One in three teens will be in an abusive relationship.
- ✚ Boys who grow up in a violent home have a 60% chance of becoming an abuser.
- ✚ Twenty six percent of pregnant teens are reported to be physically abused each year.
- ✚ Women ages 16 to 24 experience the highest rate of intimate partner violence.

To our Reader, we want our newsletter to...

- Provide information on Maitri's activities
- Increase awareness on domestic violence issues
- Be a resource for those seeking accurate information



[www.maitri.org](http://www.maitri.org)



## *Does Abuse Cross All Boundaries*

**By Asita Prabhushankar**

I left India immediately after my graduation for higher studies. Within a few months a classmate of mine wrote me a letter that she was marrying an Indian born, U.S. raised groom and coming to the States. I was thrilled to hear that, as I didn't have any friends in the U.S. at the time. I lived in the Silicon Valley in California; she was coming to the East Coast, nevertheless it was nice to have someone from back home coming to the States. Months passed before I received a letter from her again. She said she would prefer to write than call me. She had noted her number in the letter and I called her and was rather surprised that she was in a joint family and didn't have much privacy to talk.

Over the years she and I developed a strange friendship. Back home we were classmates but our friendship was limited to exchanging class notes and home works. She would call me sporadically and tell me "I will come to California, help me find a job." Slowly but surely I gathered something was not quite right, but could not put my finger on it. She never discussed her husband or his extended live-in family. I didn't ask either. Over the four years she learnt to trust me enough to buy a one-way ticket from coast-to-coast and fly out penniless. She had worked for three years but had given away everything to her husband and his family. She didn't know how to drive. She was full of self-pity and cried most of the time.

I have a rather unique style of dealing with issues. Blunt and harsh with my words but the other person who has figured me out and survived as a friend knows me well enough to know I am caring and mean well. Although at that time she wanted compassion, she got enough of that from the other people she called. My time with her after I returned from work was never about what he did or what led to her leaving him, I don't recall ever wanting to hear her stories. It was about how we move forward from here. I taught her driving, helped her buy a used car, helped her put together a resume and showed her how to contact recruiters. She landed a job fairly quickly. We looked for an Indian roommate, as she was not ready yet to be in the main stream. Slowly but surely she was on her feet. We figured out a divorce lawyer and applied for a divorce. He had told her he was forced into this marriage and his heart was not with her on the very first day of her arrival in the U.S.

A year later I was at an Indian get together where a girl approached me and said she was involved with an organization called Maitri for two years and she was moving to Texas and she wanted to introduce me to the organization. My life changed that evening when I sat in the meeting where twenty or so Indian women discussed case after case they were handling. I was in disbelief for the rest of evening. I did not know there was so much physical and mental abuse in the so-called affluent Indian community. These women were doing what I had done with my friend at a much larger scale and in a more organized way. They were pooling their resources and unconditionally helping other women in need. I went home and my roommate had invited some guys over for dinner. Over the course of time they had become my friends too. When I told them what I had heard about women brought here through arranged marriages who were being beaten, isolated and at times thrown out on the streets penniless in a strange country, one of the guys said, "Why can't you let them sort out their issues? You feminists have an organization to break marriages even in this country?" I did not argue but smiled. I knew I was taking up a cause that would be much criticized by many. "We are educated. We don't beat our wives, it is auto rickshaw drivers and porters who beat their wives" is what I heard more often than not for the first few years.

Yet relentlessly, every opportunity I got I brought up the cause of Maitri and the need for many such organizations in the U.S. Slowly but surely we have created significant awareness in the past 14 years and Maitri receives well over 2000 calls a year in Silicon Valley alone from women in need. People often ask me "how do you work with these women? It is emotionally draining to hear their stories." My response, "I don't hear their entire story. I get the picture and say, 'O.K. what can I do for you? Do you want a place to stay? Money to eat? Driving lesson? Attorney? School fees? What is it that we, from Maitri can do to help you begin a new life?'" My friend who came to stay with me, almost a decade later appreciates me telling her, "Stop crying, quit feeling sorry for yourself and move on. You deserve better than him anyways." She is happily married now with a child. Life goes on, but the first step to leave an emotionally or physically abusive relationship is the hardest. Especially for Indian women as we have many more cultural barriers to cross and also being in another country with no family support makes it twice as hard.

When I first joined Maitri I was asked to attend a 40 hours mainstream training. I learnt a lot about legal issues, law enforcement procedures etc and also watched a videotape for an hour. The video is fresh in my memory. It was a documentary as told by four women of different color in prison. One Black lady, a Mexican, a White and an Asian. One woman had 165 stitches on her. Her husband had tried to cut her into pieces with a kitchen knife. She shot him. Another woman ran out of her house in the dark while her husband tried to beat her to death. Helpless she tried to run towards her parents' house, a couple of miles away. Her husband drove around in the car looking for her and rammed her against a fence. She had several broken bones and ribs. She lit fire on his bed when he was asleep. Likewise, the other two also killed their abusive husbands. Each judgment was, "The victim was defenseless when the crime was committed", the victim being the abusive husband and the women are in prison for life.

We can argue that the women are victims and the crime was committed against them. Yet in the eyes of the law they are the perpetrators of the crime. These are women off different ethnic backgrounds. If, in America, a free society where dating and love marriages are the norm has issues of violence, why do highly educated Indians in arranged marriages believe this does not happen in our community? We only hear what we choose to hear. I often told my stories to an Indian male colleague. One day he said, "Don't tell me these horror stories from Maitri, I am happily married." I believe all the men who beat their wives would say the same thing and add, "She makes me angry enough to hit her otherwise I would never raise my hand." Ladies, there is no excuse for violence and being hit once is once too many and the "Sorry, I will never do it again" is too little said too late. They never stop: the beatings and the sorry'.

## *Indian Cabinet Approves Domestic Violence Bill, 2004*

[www.maitri.org](http://www.maitri.org)

### *The Bill will make women safe at home*

June 23, 2005 was a significant day in the history of the Indian women's movement! The Indian Cabinet approved the introduction of the Protection from Domestic Violence Bill, 2004 in the Parliament following 10 years of persistent efforts. It was the persistence of women activists and a lawyers' collective which revived and modified the Bill in December 2004. The new Bill is a considerable improvement from the earlier one. The deficiencies in the earlier draft have been removed and new empowering clauses inserted. The proposed Bill will provide effective protection and remedy to women against domestic violence of any kind and will thus fill a void in the existing legal framework. In the comprehensive bill the definition of domestic violence has been extended to include all kinds of abuse and also its threat — physical, sexual, verbal, emotional and economic. Harassment by way of unlawful dowry demands to the woman or her relatives would also be covered under this definition of the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Bill, 2005.

What is more, it covers single women in a live-in relationship and women living in joint families—sisters, mothers, widows—often at the receiving end of physical and emotional abuse. The most empowering clause, however, relates to women's right to residence in shared households. The Bill seeks to protect the rights of women to secure a house or live in her matrimonial home or shared accommodation, whether or not she holds any title or rights. This right will be secured by an order passed by a magistrate. It also provides for appointment of protection officers and registration of NGOs as service providers for legal and medical assistance to the abused.

In a society where women's rights are often denied and where the dominant structures of family are still patriarchal, the Bill is a progressive piece of legislation, capable of providing much relief to victims of domestic violence. The extent of domestic violence prevalent in our society is far greater than we would like to admit. Statistics reveal that 45 percent of Indian women are slapped, kicked or beaten by their husbands and 75 percent of battered women contemplate suicide. The right of residence will make it a lot easier for such women to walk out of an abusive relationship without the fear of being on the road. The protection officers drawn from NGOs will hopefully be more responsive and sensitive to their needs than the police are in most such cases. Some may argue that the empowering clauses are likely to be misused by avaricious elements, but that is true of all laws. Of course, laws alone cannot change society, but legal protection can give women confidence to fight the injustice they have been quietly putting up with all this for a long time.

### ***Whale Rider* ----- A Movie Review by Niveditha Madgula**

Cast: Keisha Castle-Hughes, Rawiri Paratene, Vicky Haughton, Cliff Curtis  
Director: Niki Caro , Screenplay: Niki Caro, based on the novel by Witi Ihimaera,  
Cinematography: Leon Narbey , Music: Lisa Gerrard

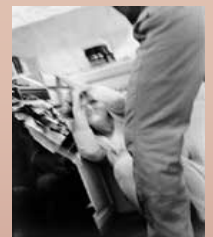
The theme of *Whale Rider*—female empowerment— is not unique, but is presented in a unique context. Like many societies, the Maoris are patriarchal, and the concept of a female ruler, if not unthinkable, goes against tradition. *Whale Rider*, based on the novel by Maori author Witi Ihimaera, postulates what might happen if, in seeming contravention of religious custom, a girl appears to have been endowed with the mystical abilities of chieftain. The Whangara people live in a village on the eastern coast of New Zealand, a place they have inhabited for more than a millennium. Legend says that their demi-god ancestor, Paikea, arrived in New Zealand on the back of a whale. Since then, the first-born son has always been the Whangara chieftain until now. Pai, a young girl, is the lone survivor of a difficult birth that claims the lives of her mother and her twin brother. Her grief-stricken father, Porourangi (Cliff Curtis), flees the island for Europe, leaving his little daughter in the care of his father and mother, Koro (Rawiri Paratene) and Nanny Flowers (Vicky Haughton) respectively. Koro is bitterly disappointed since it appears that the bloodline of centuries has ended with his immediate family. He cannot bring himself to consider that Pai, the firstborn in Paikea's bloodline, might be the rightful chieftain because she is not a male.

The majority of the story takes place when Pai (Keisha Castle-Hughes) is about 11 years old. She spends most of the film trying to prove herself to her grandfather, who stubbornly refuses to consider her as anything more than a disappointment. He begins to teach all the first-born males in the village in the "old ways," hoping that one of them will show the courage, strength, and fortitude to take over the Whangara's leadership. Ultimately, however, it is the whales, the very same animals that bore Paikea to New Zealand, who indirectly reveal the truth.

The story itself is richly rewarding and uplifting: the coming-of-age tale of a girl who must defy the odds to achieve her goals. Keisha Castle-Hughes is wonderful as Pai, showing the character's unflagging spirit and boundless determination. The movie is a must see. I liked it a lot because I could relate to Pai's character, and I think to an extent every woman and girl who has grown up in a traditional society would too. On a lighter note: the movie is worth watching just for the beautiful scenery of New Zealand, cinematography in the movie is just excellent.

#### Some Statistics

- 🚩 Family violence victims comprise of 73% females. <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/pub/pdf/fvs.pdf>
- 🚩 Females make up 58% of family murder victims. <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/pub/pdf/fvs.pdf>
- 🚩 Eight three percent of spouse murderers are male. <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/pub/pdf/fvs.pdf>
- 🚩 Pregnant women are more at risk for battery than non-pregnant women.  
[www.Americanpregnancy.org/main/statistics.html](http://www.Americanpregnancy.org/main/statistics.html)



Following statistics are extracted from <http://endabuse.org/resources/facts/>:

- 🚩 Three million women estimated to be physically abused by their husband or boyfriend per year.
- 🚩 Around the world, at least one in every three women has been beaten, coerced into sex or otherwise abused during her lifetime.
- 🚩 Women of all races are equally vulnerable to violence by an intimate.
- 🚩 The health-related costs of rape, physical assault, stalking, and homicide by intimate partners exceed \$5.8 billion each year.
- 🚩 On average, more than three women are murdered by their husbands or boyfriends in this country every day.

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TO



**Maitri Hotline: 1-888-8-MAITRI / 1-888-862-4874**

## How to Support Us

There are many ways you can support Maitri's initiatives.

- Grocery cards to local Safeways or Albertsons.
- Domestic and international phone cards.
- Shopping cards to Wal-Mart, Kmart, Target, and Office Depot.
- Gas cards for at least one month's car fueling expenses.
- Pro bono legal assistance.
- Pro bono counseling services, worker or a psychologist
- If you own a second home in the Bay Area and are currently renting it out, you donate 12-24 month rent-free space for the Maitri Transitional Home.
- Assistance with job referrals.
- Donate a car.
- Donate extra storage space for 12-24 months.

Contact us:  
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**Please make donations online**

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