

Women Abuse: Sad State of Affairs in the Sikh Community in Canada.

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SUMMARY

The article deals with the dimensions of women abuse. The extent of abuse through research studies is also highlighted. The authors deal with these issues through their work. This article is the culmination of ten years of professional work within the Sikh community on the issues of violence. The article highlights not only the challenges but also suggests a community development approach to address this issue.

Key words: women abuse, community development, types of abuse, Sikh community, help seeking behaviours

INTRODUCTION

The Sikh community is celebrating its centenary in Canada. It's been one hundred years of the Sikh community's arrival in Canada¹. The community can boast of its successes in the business sector², political arena³ and to a greater extent in the field of religion⁴. But along with successes also came challenges. The research⁵ indicates that the Sikh community is experiencing the following challenges:

- excessive alcohol⁶ use by males and the problems associated with its use e.g., marital problems, drinking and driving offenses, work related problems.
- heart disease⁷ is more prevalent within the South Asian community in Canada.
- neuro-tube defect babies - more disabled babies⁸ born to Sikh women than any other ethnic women.

¹ Buchignani, N. et al, The Continuous Journey: A Social History of South Asians in Canada, McClelland and Stewart Ltd., 1985.

² See any South Asian Business directories for the listing of Sikh Businesses

³ Elected South Asian Politicians: Gurbax Malhi, Herb Dhaliwal, Moe Sahota, Mr. Oberoi, Mr. Dosanjh.

⁴ Bali J., Bal M., Sikhs in Ontario, Ontario Council of Sikhs, 1993.

⁵ Mutta, Baldev., Sikh Community and Gaps in the Greater Toronto Area: A Needs Assessment Study, July 1992, Ontario Council of Sikhs.

⁶ Weber T., Birring P., Mutta B, Final Report, Punjabi Community Health Project, Region of Peel - Health, 1994.

⁷ South Asian Community Council, Heart and Stroke Foundation of Ontario

⁸ Kaur, Amandeep, Enhancing the Access to Prenatal Classes in Peel Region by Expectant Punjabi Mothers. A Needs Assessment Study, October 1996, The Region of Peel - Health.

- myriad of youth problems - culture conflict, the struggle to preserve the culture including language and religion, substance use, problems related to the education system, and the development of youth gangs.
- violence against women - the most silent kept secret within the Sikh community.

It is the last problem that this article is attempting to discuss. Is there violence against women? If yes, where is the Sikh community at in terms of the understanding of this issue. If no, where does the denial come from and why?

It is the authors intention to demonstrate beyond any shadow of doubt that violence against women exists in the Sikh community and is a very serious threat to the very fabric of our community. Without its recognition and understanding the complexity of this issue, the Sikh community will be unable to find solutions to it.

DIMENSIONS OF ABUSE

Women abuse within the Sikh community is a very big topic. It covers individual acts of violence by husbands against their wives⁹, to the society perpetuating violence against women in general. In addition, in the extended family context, violence against women is also perpetuated by the in-laws¹⁰. The societal violence against women exists in the form of aborting female fetuses¹¹, dowry deaths, and forced marriages. Many of the Sikh women have eating disorders¹² - anorexia nervosa and bulimia.

In this article we are concentrating on violence against women by their husbands/partners. Some issues on patriarchy are also discussed. In addition, the article covers those issues which Sikh women need to take into account when finding solutions to the complex issue of women abuse.

TYPES OF ABUSE

There are eight types¹³ of abuses that occur to women within the Sikh community. They are as follows:

1. Physical abuse

May include pushing, shoving, slapping, punching, kicking, breaking bones, abandoning one's partner in an unsafe place, throwing things, use of weapons such as guns, knives, or axes. May result in the ultimate act of violence - murder.

2. Emotional/psychological/verbal abuse

⁹ One in four women is an abused women in Canada, The Violence Against Women Survey, November 18, 1993, Statistics Canada.

¹⁰ Mother and father in-law, brother and sister in-law and other in-law relatives.

¹¹ Dr. Stevens has a abortion clinic in Buffalo, United States, which is primarily accessed by the Sikh women.

¹² Harjeet Badwall's speech at Desh Pardes conference, 1997

¹³ These eight types of abuses are used by the authors in their work with male batterers. This list originated from "Lanark County Interval House" and is attached as an appendix to this article.

Controlling through threats and fear. May involve put-downs, constant criticism, threats to hurt or kill children, jealousy, denying the wife the opportunity to keep friends, social contacts, outside interests, controlling wife's conversations, making wife account for every minute, every action. Threats accompanied by at least one incident of physical abuse, thus a demonstrated ability to carry out threats. Psychological abuse is used to wear the victim down by making her constantly fear for her safety. Its insidious nature debilitates her capacity to think clearly and to act in her own interest. Tends to increase during reproduction, pregnancy and childbirth.

3. Environmental abuse

In this type of abuse the woman is made to feel afraid in her home or environment. The abuser may attempt to intimidate her by punching walls, throwing objects or damaging items that are important to her: it is usually only the woman's possessions that are broken. Usually, the environmental abuse happens in home or vehicle.

4. Social abuse

Women are usually isolated from their immediate and extended family members, relatives and friends. The main purpose is to control her movements through isolation so that neither can she have a social life of her own nor with her immediate family. Another dimension of social abuse is the involvement of children and using children against mother during separation and divorce.

5. Financial abuse

May include allowing wife no money of her own or no opportunity to improve her earning capacity, forcing wife to hand over every penny, whether or not she works/earns money, forcing wife to account for every cent. She is allowed no bank account, no credit card and no access card for the account. She certainly is not allowed to have an account in her own name. Every effort is made by the husband to keep the wife in the dark about the financial circumstances of the family.

6. Sexual abuse

May include forced sexual activities, as well as excessive jealousy and sexual accusations, demanding that wife wear more/less provocative clothing, insisting that wife act out pornographic fantasies, and bringing prostitutes and having sex with them in front of the wife.

7. Religious/spiritual abuse

May include denying praying, or refusing to let her attend prayers at the Gurdwaras. Forcing her to convert to other denominations or religion.

8. Ritual abuse

The abuser usually seeks to intimidate her through black magic (ਜਾਦੂ-ਟੂਣੇ-ਤਵੀਤ-ਧਾਗੇ ਕਰਵਾਉਣੇ). It also involves suggesting or promoting suicides.

MAGNITUDE OF THE PROBLEM

There is a dearth of scientific research studies undertaken within the Sikh community in Canada to determine the extent of violence against women. The authors have been able to review the following research studies and have drawn some general conclusions determining the extent of violence against women within the Sikh-Punjabi community and the South Asian community in general.

1. A study conducted in 1989 in British Columbia concluded that wife abuse, child abuse and family breakup resulted as a result of excessive drinking within the South Asian community.
2. A two year research study conducted by the Addiction Research Foundation and Peel Health concluded that family disruption, wife abuse and child abuse are significant problems that result from excessive drinking.
3. The authors own research within the Sikh community highlighted that wife abuse was a problem identified by 75% of the participants.
4. A document produced by the Social Planning Council of Peel in 1992 highlighted that the problem of wife assault was a significant problem amongst Indian women.
5. A report on "Abused South Asian Women in Scarborough" highlighted the severity of abuse faced by 100 South Asian women in the City of Scarborough.

The authors also discussed with the counsellors at Rexdale Women's Centre, India Rainbow Community Services of Peel, Malton Neighbourhood Services, Catholic Family Services of Peel-Dufferin, Catholic Cross Cultural Services and Family Services of Peel to explore the extent and prevalence of violence. The counsellors felt that:

- the extent of abuse is so much that only serious issues come to their attention;
- it is their view that one in every four women is an abused women within the Sikh community (the same as in the mainstream community);
- the severity and the intensity of the abuse is greater in the Sikh community;
- a woman only leaves her husband at the last resort and is willing to go back at the first available opportunity;
- that professional intervention is sought as the last resort;
- the counselling issues are really not understood by the clients.

The personal experience of the authors assisting women in abusive situations collaborate these assertions.

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN A WOMEN DECIDES TO FIGHT BACK AGAINST VIOLENCE

What happens when a women seeks help?

When a Sikh women needs help, usually the first line of approach is her immediate family and in the absence of her immediate family she approaches her distant relatives or friends. What happens is that a series of discussions are undertaken so that "the girl is sent back to her home as quickly as possible". The underlying assumption is that

("ਕੁੜੀਆਂ ਆਪਣੇ ਵਿਆਹੇ ਘਰ ਹੀ ਚੰਗੀਆਂ ਲਗਦੀਆਂ ਹਨ") married girls are better off within their married homes. If this is the underlying assumption then no solution is sought to the abuse. The so called mediators never try to even find out the key problem areas. Their sole purpose is to "patch things up as quickly as possible". This leads to a serious disregard for the safety of the women. In most of the cases, these mediators never show up again to find out how the couple is doing.

In mediation, the "boys side" want to make sure that their views are absolutely taken into account. They know, they are bargaining from a point of strength. In the Punjabi culture (ਕੁੜੀ ਵਾਲੇ ਹਮੇਸ਼ਾ ਨੀਵੇਂ ਹੁੰਦੇ ਹਨ) the girl's side has to bow to the boy's side. So, the discussion takes place something like this: She does not listen to us, obeys us, respects us and has no skills in cooking, taking care of children etc. etc. But, despite this we have accepted her as our daughter. But she doesn't behave like one. What are we to do? The mediators rather than looking at the abuse of the husband start concentrating on proving "guidance" to the women. The "advice" given is to love and respect the in-laws. But, in the process every body has forgotten the abuse. Nobody wants to confront the husband or the in-laws regarding the abuse. No body asks "why the hell are you abusing her". The women in question, realizes that her husband and the in-laws have actually succeeding in portraying her as the bad and evil person and her husband as the caring individual. She further gets demoralized and loses all faith in any form of intervention. It is no wonder that those women have no faith, interest, and enthusiasm left to find remedy to their situation.

What happens when a women leaves her husband?

When a women leaves her husband, the following sequence of events may take place:

1. The husband is in jubilant stage. He threatens her that "don't you ever come back".
2. This wears out in few days. He approaches friends and relatives to mediate on his own terms. He may succeed or he may not at this time.
3. If he doesn't succeed, religious leaders, politicians, community leaders are approached to mediate. Enormous pressure is applied to the girl's side to settle. If this fails, the next stage occurs.
4. The husband starts to literally beg for forgiveness. He may request her not to testify in court and may agree to almost any conditions.
5. The women may decide to go back at any of these stages. If she decides to go back, she faces the reality that the husband's behaviour has not changed because no intervention has occurred. A realization by the husband that "I was wrong does not necessarily lead to behaviour change". Therefore, the abuse continues.

6. If counselling is sought by both parties, chances are that they maybe able to find solutions to those problems that are the source of conflict.

Should the women decide not to return to her husband all hell breaks loose. The religious leaders, in-laws, her own parents (in some cases), relatives, friends, self-styled community leaders, and in some cases other women all get on a band wagon to denounce the just and militant stand taken by these women.

These reactionary elements of the Sikh community usually create a defense in the garb of protecting the "sanctity of the family" or "preservation of religion and culture". While it is not the scope of this paper to talk in detail about the complexity surrounding both of these issues, but it is worth commenting briefly on these issues. One, there is considerable research data available which highlights the fact that witnessing abuse by children results in severe emotional trauma which further perpetuates the generational cycle of violence. It is much better to separate and distance oneself from abuse than preserve the sanctity of an abusive family. Two, the Sikh religion advocates the equality of sexes. No where is it written in the religious scriptures that women can be abused and have to put up with abuse. The authors would also like to stress that every culture evolves over time. The values, norms, rituals, and traditions change over time. It is time that Punjabi culture rescinds traditions that are backward and reactionary. Only those values, norms, rituals, and traditions need to be preserved that recognize the contributions, struggles and sacrifices of Sikh women. No Sikh woman has to live in an abusive situation. Preservation of Sikh religion and culture demands women have the right to leave abusive situations and start a new life with their children.

The Sikh community's role is pathetic in creating a space for abused single mothers with children. They are not recognized, valued or acknowledged. Infact, other women join in the degradation of these abused single women. The women that we have talked to have often remarked that in the Gurdwaras and in the social gatherings remarks are often made that (ਉਸ ਔਰਤ ਨੇ ਆਪਣਾ ਪਤੀ ਛੱਡਿਆ ਹੋਇਆ ਹੈ) that is the women that has left her husband.

The current state of Sikh community is such that an abused single mother with children is made more isolated by not inviting her to:

- social gatherings;
- parties;
- picnics, and other events.

The remarks made by both men and women are very cruel and hurtful towards abused single women. For men, she becomes an easy prey or as one women remarked that "men think she is now available because their isn't a man to protect her honour". For women, she is looked upon as a person who will "seduce" their husbands. Many abused women have often told us that "many women think that if their family establishes friendly relations then their husbands will be ostracized by the community".

WHAT HAS BEEN THE ROLE OF MEN WHO ARE GOING THROUGH SEPARATION AND DIVORCE

Usually men who abuse women are very confrontational to finding any amicable solutions to the complex problems generated by separation and divorce. The general trend that has emerged can be categorized as follows:

1. The men are unable to recognize that the marriage is finished,
2. And only through professional intervention can they solve whatever is left of their life.
3. The anger is channeled "to get even" with their wives. They will do anything to get even with her. Even children are not spared.
4. One way to get even with their wife is to try to hide their income so that they may not have to pay child and spousal support.
5. They may want the access of the children at a time which may cause a great deal of hardship not only for the mother but also for the children.
6. Some fathers fight to the bitter end for custody of the children. They will do anything to discredit the mother (creating for evidence in court regarding her character) so that the courts grant them the custody of the children.

The most horrendous case of wife abuse within our community was that of a irate husband shooting the wife and her family in British Columbia¹⁴ in 1996. The irony of this was that even within the Gurdwaras, social gatherings, picnics, the men could be heard discussing that "she drove him to commit this act". What is the attitude of the men within the Sikh community towards abuse? We think the general attitude is that ("ਜਬੋ ਦੋ ਭਾਂਡੇ ਹੋਣ ਉਹ ਜ਼ਰੂਰ ਟਹਿਕਦੇ ਹਨ") two utensils will make noise, or (ਤਾੜੀ ਦੋ ਹੱਥਾਂ ਨਾਲ ਵਜਦੀ ਹੈ) it takes two hands to clap.

We think these myths not only diminish but also cloud the understanding of violence against women. Our professional experience has been that perpetrators of violence need not have excuses. *They abuse for the sake of keeping and maintaining control and power over their wives. The sole purpose of abuse is to terrorize women into submission. The purpose of abuse is to apply POWER to CONTROL the women in all the spheres of life. So the purpose of abuse is to use power and control to oppress women. This is the central theme in understanding violence against women.*

THE ROLE OF RELIGIOUS INSTITUTIONS:

The role of religious institutions has been pathetic in providing guidance to the couple. The experience has shown that the leaders of these institutions are more interested to "put" the couple back together rather than addressing the problem of abuse. The reasons may be as follows:

1. They (leaders) lack the knowledge of understanding of abuse. They cannot understand that men abuse to maintain control through the use of power;

¹⁴ See Punj Pani newspaper, April 1996 issue.

2. Their sole motive is to "patch" things up. Let's unite the couple is the slogan they function under;
3. They rely more on the culture than on religion to settle differences. Their rationale is to advise the girl that:
 - a) there is no life without a husband,
 - b) it will be very difficult to raise children without a father (read without a man),
 - c) don't listen to "western culture and its professionals",
 - d) in our culture women don't divorce, and
 - e) social service agencies are "western" in nature and will ultimately breakup your marriage.
4. All the pressure is exerted on the wife rather than the husband. It is believed that the responsibility to keep the marriage together belongs solely to the wife. The justification by the religious leaders are as follows "If only she had a bit of patience -- if only she would not fight back-- if only she would not nag him -- if only she would give him a second chance -- if only she would see that the husband is not her enemy -- if only she would see that he is repentant -- if only she would believe in religion and so on.

WHAT IS THE ROLE OF THE COMMUNITY.

It is our belief that the Sikh community is at a stand still. The problem is that individual issues are not made community issues. The women abuse has not become a community issue. The women abuse cases are dealt by the individual and their respective family members. Therefore, the community is not able to acknowledge that this is such a serious issue.

The problem for abused women becomes compounded when the community refuses to "accept" separated and divorced women. In our discussions with abused women, the following issues have emerged which need to be highlighted:

1. The community, business and political leaders all play a negative role when it comes to the issue of women abuse. The authors have not come across a single leader within the Sikh community who has the understanding of the complex issue of women abuse.
2. The pressure is exerted on the women to compromise with the abusive man.
3. Within the Sikh community the social environment is still male dominated. The abusive man can still hold the status, work, attend religious functions, go to parties, not pay child and spousal support and still be held in high esteem. On the other hand, the women is ostracized and shunned by the Sikh community when participating in the same socio-community activities.
4. There is virtually no pressure on the man to behave decently towards women and his behaviour is tolerated by other men. Many times it is the man who has business dealings with other men. And, the abusive men have "Jackal and Hide" personality. They are very good, we mean, very good towards other individuals, but very, we mean very abusive towards their wives. The community has a great difficulty differentiating between the personality of these abusers.

HOW CAN PROBLEMS BE RESOLVED?

We think, the Sikh community needs to understand that women abuse is a complex issue. Men who abuse women have "acquired negative behaviour" which is bad. These men actually believe that they have the right to control their women and their wives must behave in the way that they deem appropriate. These men need professional help. The abusive behaviour cannot be "controlled and changed" through elders or by the community, religious and political leaders.

We have attempted to highlight how these complex issues may be dealt with.

A. Help Seeking behaviour

The professionals working in the area of women abuse have indicated that their help is sought only at the last resort. Sometimes the victim approaches them after police involvement. The general pattern that has emerged with the Sikh community can be summarized as follows:

- The help from professionals is sought as a last resort.
- The expectations are that the professional will solve their problem quickly.
- The other expectations are that the professionals will be available for 24 hour call basis and that through their intervention life will return to normal within a very short time.
- The limitations of the professionals are not understood.

The authors are of the opinion that unless the community achieves a psychological readiness to seek help, it will always react to seeking help as a last resort. The community must understand that men who abuse need professional help to change their behaviour. Behaviours cannot be changed easily. It takes systematic approach to undo what has been learnt as a child. In addition, these men may themselves be abused as children or may have witnessed their fathers abuse their mothers. This "learned behaviour" can only be undone through individual and group counselling.

B. What is counselling?

This is the most problematic area for the Sikh community. Is it advice giving or is it working with the clients to make them understand the nature of the problems and together with the therapist find solution to address them. Within the Sikh community, the general perception is that "counselling" means advice giving. It is very difficult to convince Sikh clients that the role of the counsellor is to develop awareness about the issue that generates tension and is the cause of the "problem". The choice to determine what solution be applied to that problem solely rests with the client. It is here that we as professionals run into difficulty. The Sikh clients believe that "you know best" and please "tell" me what to do and genuinely believe that the mechanism to address the problems rests with the counsellor and not with themselves. When the counsellor points out to them that the understanding of the problem and the solution must come from you, the client rather than accepting is begins to "shop around" for other professionals. These

same clients tend to go from professional to professional in the hope that some one will “tell” them what to do.

It takes "much time" to understand the process to help - to healing. Clients who come to an understanding of professional intervention, very often realize the need to take responsibility to find solutions to "their" problems. They realize that the therapist's role is to assist in the identification of the problem. The solutions and its consequences are discussed and the clients are "empowered" to implement the solution that one is comfortable with.

C. Shelters

In Canada, women's shelters have been created to "house" them (women) in safe places when they are abused by their husbands/partners. During the research of this article, the authors have discussed at length with both the victims and the professionals regarding the perception of women's shelters, its use and the difficulties Sikh women encounter during their stay. The following points emerged, which the readers may find useful:

1. Try not to go to the shelter at the first instance of abuse unless your or your child(ren)'s life is in danger.
2. Try to communicate with your husband.
3. Try to work out the problem with the help of those family, relatives and friends that are supportive to you.
4. Try not to hide or minimize the problem (go with your “gut” instincts). Keep a record of abusive instances and examples, which can be shared with the husband when discussing solutions.
5. If family circle cannot address the problems, it is suggested to seek professional help to “save” yourself and your children.
6. Try to put pressure on the husband to seek counselling through parents, (ਵਿਚੋਲਾ) middleman, friends, religious and community leaders.
7. Try to explain your husband the consequences of his behaviour (if possible).
8. Remember, the responsibility for family breakdown always will rest on the abuser (husband) and not the victim (wife).

It is important to understand that going to the shelter is the very first step towards a long road to recovery from the abusive situation. Before going to the shelter the following issues need to be taken into consideration:

1. Before going to the shelter, it is important to gather your and your children's legal documents, bank deposit books, OHIP cards, and passports. If time permits you may also take clothes and some money with you. But, if gathering these may endanger your life, please disregard collecting these items.
2. You may call any social service agency for assistance, who will arrange for you and your children to stay at the shelter.
3. The environment of the shelter is different than at home. One needs to be very well mentally prepared to deal with this atmosphere. Because of the new

surroundings, one feels like giving up every moment. But if you persist to overcome the initial difficulties, life will become better.

4. The client needs to let the staff know if interpreter is required. Don't be shy. The staff will make every arrangement to accommodate your special requests.
5. It is very important to listen to the "suggestions" given by the staff. They have experience handling difficult cases.
6. It is important to attend the skills enhancing workshops organized by the shelter staff.
7. Financial , clothing, laundry, day care, medical, legal assistance is arranged by the shelter.
8. Children do not miss school. The shelter staff makes arrangements to have the children enrolled into a nearby school.

The clients that we interviewed for this paper were of the opinion that the visit to the shelter should be taken into consideration after exhausting all other avenues for reconciliation. It should, however, be taken into consideration that if one's or her children's life is in danger there should be no hesitation to go to a shelter.

D. Community based agencies

In the Greater Toronto Area, there are many community based agencies that have experienced women abuse counsellors. These counsellors are trained to handle abuse cases. The abused women can get in touch with these counsellors and discuss their personal issues to find solutions to the problems. The names and the phone number of these agencies¹⁵ are listed below.

E. How does the legal system work in Canada?

The role of the police is to uphold the law. The police officers are mandated to lay charges if they believe that an offense has been committed. Once the charges are laid, the due process of the law takes over. The Judge will ultimately decide what is the appropriate outcome of the charge. It could be dismissal or it could result in a sentence. Once the charges are laid the police officer cannot withdraw them. The Crown may decide not to pursue it in the court but it is rarely done.

F. The role of lawyers

The role of lawyers is critical in the outcome of the case in an event the dispute goes to the trial. The shelters have a list of lawyers that are sensitive to the needs of women and understand women abuse. It is important to listen to the advice of lawyers. Therefore, it is important to document everything that had happened during the duration of the marriage.

¹⁵ India Rainbow Community Services of Peel (905-275-8570), Malton Neighbourhood Services (905-671-6271), Rexdale Women's Centre (416-745-0062), South Asian Family Support Services (416-

G. Legal Aid

The shelter staff assists the client to make arrangements with legal aid. The shelter will also assist with housing, financial assistance, day care, court worker and counsellor and provide moral and emotional support.

ISSUES FOR COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

What is Community Development?

The process of organizing and/or supporting community groups in identifying their health issues and planning and acting upon their strategies for action/social change; and gaining increased self-reliance and decision making power as result of their activities¹⁶.

How can abuse be addressed within the Sikh community?

We think that the Sikh community has to come to grips with the following issues:

- In Canada, women are empowered to seize the destiny in their own hands;
- The structure of family has changed within the Sikh community. The extended family runs into stiff opposition from the individual strivings of the family members. The children demand individual space and freedom and so do the parents. The older generation may not understand the concept of individuality and may try to "force" the family to live in extended family circumstances. This may result in "stressful" situations for the family.
- The majority of Sikh women are gainfully employed. But, they also end up doing most of the work at home. The child-rearing, laundry, dish washing, cooking, grocery shopping are all tasks which fall in the domain of women. It becomes cumbersome for women to be responsible day after day to work both outside and inside the home, while the husband just works outside the home. Majority of men do not help their wives in the house hold work.
- The authors firmly believe that in the Sikh community women are thought of as "the personal property" of the husband. It is no wonder that many women are **forced** into situations where they have to agree to arrange a marriage for their sisters to the husbands family. There have been cases where the wife had to agree to bring husband's relatives to Canada illegally (divorcing the husband and agreeing to marry the relative to come to Canada). The young girls are also **forced** into arranged marriages.

These and other issues have to be dealt with by the community. Usually the religious leaders argue that our religion and culture is in danger. Let's all work hard to preserve our

¹⁶ Ronald Labonte, Community Development and Partnerships, Canadian Journal of Public Health, July-August 1993.

culture and religion. It is no wonder that Punjabi language and religious classes are held at almost all the Gurdwaras. But, time after time Sikh intellectuals have pointed out that Sikh youth have no place to socialize. The youth do not come and join the Gurdwara congregation. There is no women in the leadership position of the Sikh religious institutions. There is no women leader to run the socio-cultural affairs of the community.

It is no wonder that women are relegated as second class citizens within our community. Although, the Sikh Gurus have placed women equal to men the current Sikh religious leadership is determined to keep them in their place (barefoot, pregnant and in the kitchen).

In order for the Sikh community to develop a framework for action, it is important to recognize that those men who are sensitive to this issue stand up and speak against those who abuse women. If men start to discuss these issues openly and create spaces for those women who are separated and divorced then a consciousness can emerge which will create conditions for the women abuse to stop. The following framework for intervention is suggested:

1. develop awareness within the Sikh community about the magnitude and extent of abuse
2. know the helping mechanisms
3. know your rights
4. know your responsibilities
5. have respect for the Canadian law
6. women's rights are human rights
7. women's rights are guaranteed by the Sikh religion

CONCLUSION

The extent of women abuse within the Sikh community is a serious problem that needs to be understood in the framework of the Canadian socio-political environment. The solutions to this complex problems need to be developed and implemented by all segments of the Sikh community in partnership with other stake holders.

Just like any other community in Canada, the Sikh community is also beset with serious women abuse problems. As a community, we can no longer be in a denial state. There is a problem of women abuse within the Sikh community and we need to acknowledge it and can no longer bury our head in the sand.

It has been demonstrated that women take the brunt of the abuse and both women and children suffer. The general consensus within the Canadian professional circles is that women's financial income drops as a result of separation and divorce. The women are ostracized, blamed for their misfortune and the environment within the Sikh community is often hostile to them after separation or divorce.

Men often do not pay child or spousal support (the law is changing now). Men also under report their income, especially those who are self employed. Men have to recognize that they may be divorcing their spouses but they are not divorcing their children. Morally, religiously, and spiritually, it is still the father's responsibility to

support his children. But, in many cases the Sikh men (fathers) are shirking their responsibility.

The Sikh community is still in the denial about women abuse. It is a fact that Sikh women are physically, emotionally, psychologically, economically, spiritually and sexually abused by Sikh men. The community must create conditions for this to stop. How many more mothers and daughters need to die before the Sikh community would wake up.

Finally, we must recognize that **Women's Rights Are Human Rights.**

APPENDIX

The eight types of abuse

This list is based on one made by men who were describing how they controlled or harmed their wives or girlfriends. It has been expanded by the Lanark County, Ontario, Coalition Against Family Violence, on the basis of input from women in abusive relationships. A bullet (.) indicates actions that are clearly criminal acts, or may be criminal acts depending upon the circumstances.

The authors have found that these forms of abuse also hold true for South Asian men.

1. Emotional/psychological/verbal abuse.

- making her do illegal things
- false accusations
- name calling, finding fault
- verbal threats
- yelling
- intimidation
- making her think she's crazy or stupid
- overpowering her emotions
- disbelieving her
- bringing up old issues
- inappropriate expression of jealousy
- degrading her
- turning a situation against her
- brainwashing her
- laughing in her face
- silence
- refusing to do things with or for her
- insisting on always getting his own way
- pressuring her
- neglecting her
- expecting her to conform to a role
- real or suggested involvement with other women
- making her feel guilty
- certain mannerisms, such as snapping fingers at her
- threatening to get drunk or stoned unless....
- manipulating her
- starting arguments
- withholding affection
- punishing her by not sharing in household chores
- never really forgiving, holding grudges
- lying
- treating her as a child
- having a double standard for her
- saying one thing, meaning another

- denying or taking away her responsibilities
- failing to keep commitments
- threatening her with the loss of immigration status
- deliberately creating a mess for her to clean up
- threatening to report her to the authorities
- making her drop charges
- telling jokes that belittle or indicate hatred towards women
- refusing to deal with issues
- minimizing her work or contribution
- pressuring her to stay while drugs or alcohol are being abused
- not coming home
- coming home drunk or stoned
- having picture that indicate hate or violence against women
- egging her on, challenging her to engage in physical violence
- friendship or support of men who are abusive
- demanding an accounting of her time and routine
- taking advantage of her fear of something
- putting her on a pedestal
- ridiculing her food preferences
- threatening suicide unless....

Emotional abuse surrounding reproduction, Pregnancy and childbirth

- refusing to allow or forcing her to use contraception
- forcing her to have an abortion
- refusing sex on the grounds that her pregnant body is ugly
- denial that the child is his
- refusing to support her during the pregnancy
- refusing to support her during the birth
- denying her access to her newborn child
- not supporting her or helping out after she come home with the baby
- demanding sex soon after childbirth
- blaming her because the infant is the “wrong” sex
- refusing to allow her to breast-feed
- sulking or making her feel bad for time spent with the baby

2. Environmental abuse in home or vehicle

Abuse in the home

- harming pets
- ripping clothing
- locking her in or out
- throwing or destroying her possessions
- slamming doors
- throwing objects or food
- denying her use of the phone
- punching walls

- mowing over her garden

Abuse in the vehicle

- driving too fast
- driving recklessly, pounding the steering wheel
- driving while intoxicated
- forcing her into a vehicle
- pushing her out of a vehicle when it's in motion
- threatening to kill her by driving into an oncoming car, etc.
- chasing or hitting her with a vehicle
- killing or injuring her in a deliberate accident
- hitting her while she's driving
- prohibiting her from using a vehicle by tampering with the engine, taking the keys, etc.
- putting his foot over hers on the gas pedal
- grabbing the steering while she's driving

3. Social abuse

- controlling what she does, whom she sees and talks to, what she reads and where she goes
- failing to pass on messages
- putting down or ignoring her in public
- not allowing her access to family or friends
- interfering with her family or friends
- change or personality with others
- being rude to her friends or relatives
- dictating her mode or dress
- dictating her behaviour
- habitually choosing friends, activities or work rather than being with her
- making a "scence" in public
- making her account for herself
- censoring her mail
- treating her like a servant
- not giving her space or privacy
- insisting on accompanying her into the doctor's office

Social abuse involving children

- assaulting her in front of the children
- initiating false child-abuse charges against her
- making her stay at home with the children
- teaching children to abuse their mother through name calling, hitting, etc.
- embarrassing her in front of the children
- not sharing responsibility for the children

- threatening to abduct the children or telling her she'll never get custody
- putting down her parenting ability

Social abuse during separation or divorce

- buying the children's affection with expensive gifts
- not showing up on time to pick up children or not having them back on time
- pumping children for information about their mother's boyfriend, etc.
- telling children their mother is responsible for breaking up the family
- using children to transport messages
- denying her access to the children
- failing to supply a valid phone number

4. Financial abuse

- taking her money
- forging her name
- giving her false receipts
- cancelling her insurance
- sabotaging her effort to attain economic freedom
- withholding money
- spending money foolishly or beyond means
- pressuring her to take full responsibility for finances
- not paying fair share of bills
- not spending money on special occasions
- spending on addictions, gambling, sexual services
- pressuring or controlling her working conditions
- keeping family finances a secret
- preventing her from taking a job

5. Ritual abuse

- mutilation
- animal mutilation
- force cannibalism
- human sacrifices
- suggesting or promoting suicide
- forcing her to participate in rituals
- forcing her to witness rituals
- using black magic (going to astrologers and Pundits etc.)

6. Physical abuse

- any unwanted physical contact
- kicking, punching or pinching her
- pulling or pushing her
- lapping, hitting or shaking her
- cutting or burning her
- pulling her hair

- head butting
- squeezing her hand or twisting her arm
- choking or smothering her
- force-feeding her
- spitting on her
- throwing her or throwing things at her
- hitting her with objects or whipping her
- restraining her in any way
- urinating on her
- breaking her bones
- knifing or shooting her
- threatening to kill or injure her
- ignoring her illness or injury
- denying or restricting her food or drink
- pressuring or tricking her into alcohol or drug use
- standing too close/intimidating her
- hiding or withholding necessary medication

7. Sexual abuse

- any unwanted sexual contact
- forcing her to have sex; hounding her to have sex
- forcing her to have sex with others
- forcing her to have sex with animals
- uttering threats to obtain sex
- pinching, slapping, grabbing or poking her breast or genitals
- forcing sex when she's sick or after childbirth or surgery
- sleeping around
- knowingly transmitting sexual diseases
- treating her as a sex object
- bringing prostitutes or other women home to have sex with them
- being rough
- pressuring her to pose for pornographic photos
- displaying pornography that makes her feel uncomfortable
- using sex as the basis or solution for an argument
- criticizing her sexual ability
- unwanted fondling in public
- purposely not washing and expecting sex
- name calling (whore, slut, frigid, bitch)
- accusations of affairs
- degrading her body parts
- telling sexual jokes or making sexual comments in public
- demanding sex for drugs or alcohol
- demanding sex as payment or trade
- administering drugs or alcohol for sexual advantage
- insisting on checking her body for sexual contact

8. Religious abuse

- using religion to justify abuse or dominance
- using church position to pressure for sex or favours
- using her, then demanding forgiveness
- excessive spending for religion
- interpreting religion your way
- preventing her from attending church
- requiring sex acts or drug use as religious acts
- mocking her beliefs

c: my documents \ articles \ Baldev \ womenabuse2003