



manavi

NEWSLETTER

This issue focuses on topics of
sexuality, sexual health,
sexual violence.

VOLUME XV, ISSUE 1

SPRING 2004

CONTENTS

Sexuality - What is the Big Deal?

By Surabhi Kukke - 1

An Inspiring Journey

By Alka Kamath - 3

The Secret Everybody Knows

By Lakshmi Rajagopal - 5

Sexual Assault within Marriage

By Divya Ullal - 7

Open Letter to the Women of Gujarat - 9

Film Review:

A Woman's Worth: Purity, Marriage, and Motherhood in *Pinjar*

By Shanti Wesley - 12

Book Review:

Unspoken Norms: A Review of Monica Ali's *Brick Lane*

By Palav Babaria - 14

AAROHAN 2003 - 16

Manavi Updates:

Ashiana - 17

Advocacy - 17

Fundraising - 18

Legal - 19

Sexual Assault - 19

Outreach - 19

Donor List - 23



SEXUALITY – WHAT IS THE BIG DEAL?

By Surabhi Kukke

Both culturally and individually, sexuality is a very powerful aspect of the human experience. When we say 'sexuality' here, we are not only referring to the act of genital sex, but also the cultural, social and political norms surrounding who is an appropriate object for sexual desire. For example, the fact that marriage is the only socially legitimate space for sex in many of our communities is an issue related to sexuality. This is an especially challenging norm, since human sexuality and sexual expression is actually much broader than the institution of marriage allows. 'Sexuality' also encompasses the ways that we express sexual desire, including who we choose to be with, what gives us pleasure and how. The power of sexuality lies, not surprisingly, in the silences that surround it. Sexuality is everywhere, a part of every person's life, as common as the use of any of the five senses, and yet, the silences prevail. The taboos on discussing sexuality are in some ways the products of two opposing forces: pleasure and vulnerability. Together, these forces create a distinct silence and social fear of sexuality itself.

Pleasure, while clearly a positive aspect of sexuality, is a source of fear mainly because it has not been thoroughly understood. No one knows exactly why some things are pleasurable for one person and not another, nor is there any way to completely control pleasure and desire such that everyone in a given society adheres to prevailing sexual norms. In fact, there are so many different ways that healthy sexuality may be expressed, that variability is the actual norm. This is based on historical readings of human sexual expression, which shows that a broad range of sexual expression has always existed. The inability to control pleasure, combined with the pressure to conform to one kind of sexual expression, combined with the fact that we are living in a time which seeks to make uniform sexual norms for everyone, are some of the reasons for the silences. Attempts to control our sexuality range from compulsory marriage to hate crimes against gays and lesbians to social taboos against divorce to the subtlest stigma and discrimination. These and a host of other con-

(Continued on page 2)

** The views expressed in this publication are solely of the authors and do not indicate the views or endorsement of Manavi, Inc.*



(Continued from page 1)

trol mechanisms affect all people, but particularly women and people who do not conform to the sexual norm of a married, monogamous existence.

Taboos against speaking about or acknowledging sexuality also arise from the vulnerabilities that are seen to go hand in hand with any expression of sexuality, especially for women. According to the norms of patriarchy and male dominance, men are expected to have excessive sexuality which must be controlled, while women are seen as passive objects of sex. If anything, women are seen as being vulnerable to rape, unplanned pregnancies, STIs, and sexual abuse. While these are potentially real concerns for all women, it is untrue that women cannot learn to protect themselves and keep themselves safe while finding healthy ways to enjoy and express their own sexuality.

What is Patriarchy and how does it affect my health and safety?

Patriarchy is the social system that privileges men over women. Although male dominance has varied historically and culturally, we can see the system of patriarchy operating in our economic, political and cultural lives. It is based on binary definitions of gender. This means that males and females are understood as natural opposites with strict gender roles. While it may be true that there are actual differences between males and females, the issue is that there are values ascribed to these differences. Defining maleness and femaleness as totally different, and assigning such contrasting characteristics to males and females, are necessary steps in creating gender hierarchy. This hierarchy then provides the structure on which power is distributed in favour of men.

Patriarchy also defines 'woman' as a being who is available for male use, and desire itself residing in men where women are receivers of this desire. Male sexuality is understood as dominant or pleasurable

while women's sexuality is purely procreative thus rigidly enforcing the heterosexual superiority of men. This system is kept in place by institutional and ideological sexism.

One of the ways that patriarchy has a direct impact on the health and safety of women, in particular, is through the use of violence. Violence is one of the key ways that patriarchy and sexist oppression are maintained. A system that validates the superiority of men over women (and masculinity over femininity) also supports the use of violence by men to maintain control over women and to ensure strict

adherence to unequal gender roles. This means that institutions which support patriarchy, such as the legal system and law enforcement allow the perpetration of violence against women by either turning a blind eye to it or justifying it when it occurs. Some common justifications for men's use of violence against women are 1) she was challenging male authority, 2) she was dressed provocatively or she was asking for it, or 3) she wasn't behaving like a 'real

Patriarchy is the social system that privileges men over women. Although male dominance has varied historically and culturally, we can see the system of patriarchy operating in our economic, political and cultural lives.

woman'.

The health impacts of violence are well known and have been studied extensively. Intimate partner violence, in particular, has been associated with both short- and long-term problems, including physical injury and illness, psychological symptoms, economic costs, and death. The National Research Council in the U.S. has found that as a consequence of severe intimate partner violence, female victims are more likely than male victims to need medical attention and take time off from work; they also spend more days in bed and suffer more from stress and depression.

Along with the physical and mental health issues that violence raises in women's lives, there are significant sexual health issues as well. These are the

(Continued on page 4)



AN INSPIRING JOURNEY

By Alka Kamath

It has been a little over 3 years that I have been involved with women's issues and gender based oppression work here at Manavi. Most of my work in India has been with non-profit organizations in the areas of Education, Psychology, and Human Development. Those experiences and images of India remain close to my heart and strangely enough, they continue to influence my perceptions about social changes back home. I often felt entitled to think of India as less progressive when I compared the work that we do here especially so in relation to gender issues and sexuality.

During my recent trip to India, I was surprised to discover "consciousness-raising" media events happening in big and in small ways. From time to time, discussions were being centered around female sexuality and violence on the television talk shows. These programs were being hosted by prominent personalities aiming to provide a forum for common people to voice thoughts, share information, exchange ideas, promote awareness on gender equality and justice within the media and society. Even the newspaper articles attempted to spark off proactive conversations on domestic violence, sexual assault, gender issues, etc. For example, a small town local newspaper in Southern India dedicated its Sunday magazine to the *Hijra** community theme.

Although queer-identified individuals are still subjects of public ridicule in India, some attention has been attracted by the fact that the legal system does not recognize the *Hijra* human rights. For example, it is reported that *Hijra* might not be eligible to basic rights such as passports, ration cards and voting. An incident of lesbian rape might be forgotten or despised as it does not figure as human suffering. This illustrates how the silent legal system further traumatizes individuals who do not fit within the parameters of heterosexuality. People are beginning to understand how the norms of the traditional

society police our concept of sexuality and citizenship. There are media efforts being made to share diverse views and experiences and to bring an awareness of the existing pressures on women and men that operate in patriarchal systems. Ongoing efforts are being made to develop a clearer understanding of sexual/gender oppression so that heterosexual and patriarchal institutions can be strategically dismantled.

Individuals and communities are gradually asserting their right to their sexual orientation and their rightful place within contemporary Indian society through media events. For example, a collective of sexual minorities in Bangalore organized an inspiring rally for demanding their human rights on International Human Rights Day in December 2002. Several groups and collectives are supporting human and social rights of people of different sexuality in various metropolitan cities of India. Some political leaders are recognizing that if a world with basic human rights has to be promoted, then the idea of queer rights as human rights has to be taken on board and, that citizenship cannot be an exclusive privilege of heterosexual Indians.

It is obvious that such work can be very complicated, challenging and cannot be successfully under-

Although queer-identified individuals are still subjects of public ridicule in India, some attention has been attracted by the fact that the legal system does not recognize the *Hijra* human rights.

taken without the support of other networks with similar objectives. Hence organizations working on gender based concerns within India could join hands with other marginalized groups and become agents of change. Perhaps

sexual minorities could work together with sex workers, rural groups, religious/ethnic minorities to fight against oppression based on gender/sexuality, etc. Other powerful tools of media could be ex-

(Continued on page 4)



(Continued from page 2)

impacts of violence that are sometimes harder to talk about. But it is essential to recognise and address the impact of violence on our sexual lives because sexual health is critical to our overall health and well-being. One of the direct impacts of violence on sexual health is the risk of contracting sexually transmitted infections (STIs) including HIV. In a situation of non-consensual sex, the victim rarely has the opportunity to demand the use of a condom for protection. Added to this are stereotypes and false notions that if a woman demands condom use, it either implies promiscuity or that she does not trust her partner. Such pressures can limit her willingness and/or ability to enforce condom use to protect herself from HIV/STIs.

Sexual coercion invariably also affects sexual pleasure for women. Although there is much less research on the ways that violence affects women's sexuality, there is some evidence that shows that survivors of rape and sexual assault often experience sexual problems such as fear of sex, problems with arousal, and difficulties in giving and receiving sexual pleasure. It is critical not to diminish the importance of sexual pleasure to our health. Many of us are taught that sex is meant only for having children and not for pleasure. However, sexual pleasure is a natural and important aspect of life that we should allow ourselves to embrace and enjoy either alone or with sexual partners.

Changing Perspectives on Sexuality – What Does It Mean?

Many people believe that we live in a time in which attitudes and norms related to sexuality are changing very fast. In the United States, we often look toward concepts of the “sexual revolution” as moments when perspectives on sexuality have changed dramatically. In fact, just as individual sexuality is dynamic and often changeable, social attitudes toward sexuality have also been changing all over the world in many different ways. In some instances, there is a fear that changing norms related to sexuality will cause very dramatic shifts in society.

The changes that have actually been observed are gradual, and the full implications of these will take a long time to assess. What is for certain is that

expanding our perspectives on sexuality, to include sexual pleasure in a healthy way, for example, can only help to address such issues as violence, vulnerability, and inequality.

Surabhi Kukke was a consultant with Manavi, working on a brochure on sexuality, sexual health and HIV/AIDS within a framework of sexual rights.



(Continued from page 3)

explored to take gender-based issues and anti-oppression work to mainstream society. Prominent media personalities like Arundati Nag (Actress & Theatre person) have openly expressed willingness to stage plays highlighting the problems of the *Hijra* community in India.

As pointed out by social writers, this process of mass mobilization of sexual minorities to express their concerns will transform them from being ‘deviants’ and ‘victims’ to becoming catalysts for social change. As they face challenges and move forward, they will always make a positive impact on the communities!

‘Hijra’ communities generally include transgender individuals, male to female transsexuals, and trans-vestites.

References:

Manohar, E [A Long Journey](#) , Sunday Vijay Times, 14 Sept 2003
Narain, A [Hijra Rights are Human Rights](#), Sunday Vijay Times, 14 Sept, 2003

Alka Kamath has a Masters degree in Human Development from Mumbai, India and is working at Manavi in the capacity of Counseling/Advocacy Coordinator.





THE SECRET EVERYBODY KNOWS

By Lakshmi Rajagopal

My need to explore the subject of childhood sexual abuse was always well disguised as academic. From the juncture at which my silence suddenly spilled to enraged speech, I spoke of it in third person, I ranted, I wrote, I filmed.

During my undergraduate studies in journalism in a women's college in Bangalore, India, I wished to write an article in our college magazine. As my class tried to help me pick a subject, I made a spontaneous suggestion, which was actually the result of much agonizing. It was the first time I professed my interest in the subject. Childhood sexual abuse (CSA), I said. Some eyes sparked, some evaded, some were polite, but the vote was unanimous – do it, they said, but it will be difficult.

I proceeded to identify and speak to NGOs that had done, or were doing work on the subject – and came up with Samvada, Bangalore, India, which had done a recent and rare study of CSA in high school students. 47 per cent of the girls had been abused, I reported. Abusers are very often persons known to the child, including family members, a person the child trusts, making the abuse that much more traumatic, I said. I spoke to psychologists and professors, and exhorted parents to speak to their children about a good touch, and a bad touch. I implored them to believe their children, for children rarely lie about these things. It was a good article, for what it was worth. And I kept myself safely out of it.

The next time I had the opportunity to take up the issue seriously was during my graduate studies in Hyderabad, India. I decided to do a documentary on the subject. This time I decided to do my own research, and since I lived in the ladies' hostel, it was not difficult. Living away from home, and with a bunch of wonderful, adventurous girls had also

helped me shed some inhibitions. Let's talk about it for real, I thought, and proceeded to bring together groups of girls from my hostel, or class, or their friends, and began discussing the subject, for the first time, in first person.

As I entered the waters, as I found the words to open the subject, I found that though thoroughly silenced on the surface, I rarely found a woman, a friend, and a contemporary who did not have her story to tell me. Tears, anger, shame gushed out, speaking about events that had probably transpired a decade ago. But memories of childhood are always fresh, and these memories never lose their odor.

We each spoke, of uncles who groped us in the dark, of servant boys who made us do things to them, of tuition masters whose deeds filled us with dread at the sound of the piano till today. Of drunk bothers-in-law, and how can we possibly ever tell our sisters about them, and a childhood best friend's father who sent his daughter away to the shop and violated us when we were ten.

Girls remembered smells, looks, words. They said they would never ever forget. Almost none of them had told their parents about it. We shook with anger at the hypocrisy of the family and community which

held these people in high respect, at the audacity of these relatives who pretended today as though nothing had happened. And we felt guilty as well, the guilt of having been silent, of not doing anything about it, and of continuing the silence.

As I entered the waters, as I found the words to open the subject, I found that though thoroughly silenced on the surface, I rarely found a woman, a friend, and a contemporary who did not have her story to tell me.

(Continued on page 6)



(Continued from page 5)

It seems to me that even challenging an eve teaser as a college going girl took a courage that brought high praise and admiration for those who did, from those who couldn't. Most of us simply pretended it wasn't happening. As a child, it seemed impossible. As it did once, when I was traveling along with my parents on a night bus through Kerala, India. The man on the seat behind me reached repeatedly between the window and my seat back, to touch me. I blocked his reaching hand with my elbow, but again and again that insidious hand snaked back, surreptitious, and brazen. I never saw his face, but I will never forget the disembodied hand as it sought to touch me. I could not breathe, or move, for fear that he would know I knew what he was doing. It is difficult to explain now, why, in my child's mind, I should have been so afraid of him. But I sat the entire night, frozen in fear, afraid to wake my sleeping mother on the next seat, in case he heard me. And he was only a stranger.

At this point, after all these years, we felt the need to protect those whom we loved from knowing what had happened to us. Some girls felt sullied, some said they had distrusted men for a long time after. We had simply determined to put it behind us, even if the memory could never be erased. We had spent a lifetime locked in a dark place with a memory shared only by our perpetrators.

Some girls had made their peace, had discussed it with their mothers, or boyfriends, and were no longer afraid to speak of it in any forum. For me, it was also a matter of shock at the appalling proportions of the problem. Almost every second girl I spoke to had some sort of tale to tell. I felt we were all living in a madhouse.

What was it that made these abusers so brazen? How did they have the courage to risk their standing

in society, their relationships, their respectability, when they indulged in these acts. How come they were so confident of getting away with it? And how come they almost always did get away with it? Had they no fear of retribution at all? I came away with these and a dozen more questions.

And how could it be possible that our older generation was simply unaware? And at what cost were we maintaining such a tight silence? And then an even more unnerving thought occurred to me – did people know, and keep silent simply *expecting* that the children will grow up and get over it? Were they so afraid to confront a brother, a husband, a colleague that they sacrificed their children to status quo? Was it possible?

I read some more. Grace Poore taught me that abusers had different profiles, such as pedophiles, or people who snatched opportunities to satisfy themselves with children due to other problems such as lack of confidence with female contemporaries. I learnt, however, that they were not mad, and that they make a choice to do what they do.

I saw that children feel guilty, and dirty, and often keep quiet because of the messages that they receive from around them, from their families. The complete avoidance of the subject of sex in many families makes the barrier that much more difficult to surmount. I understood the wretched, ugly difficulties of confronting such problems – after all, I had succumbed to them myself. I had taught myself to put it behind me as quietly as possible. After all, what was the point of bringing it up, after so long?

And then, last month, my best friend gave birth to a baby girl. The wheel had turned full circle. I had visions of my own baby girl. I would know, wouldn't I, who to keep her away from? But how far am I now willing to keep my peace?

(Continued on page 8)



SEXUAL ASSAULT WITHIN MARRIAGE

By Divya Ullal

All married couples argue every now and then. In healthy relationships, civil arguments alleviate tension, increase understanding, and bring couples closer together. However, when the individual rights of either partner in a marriage are disregarded in an effort by one partner to assert control over the other, the marriage is no longer a healthy relationship. Physical force is often used by one spouse, typically the husband, in an effort to maintain complete dominance over his wife. Contrary to popular belief, sexual assault is a common tactic used by men within the realm of marriage to affirm their power over their wives.

By its very nature, sexual assault uses sex as a weapon, but the physical act of sex is not the underlying goal of the assailant. Sexually assaulting one's wife is an act that centers upon the husband's ego and his desire to secure power within the marriage. Instead of viewing marriage as an equal partnership, a sexually abusive husband deems his own feelings and desires to be more important than those of his wife. The husband believes that it is his right as the man to get exactly what he wants, precisely when he wants it, irrespective of his wife's personal wishes. By violently asserting his dominance over his wife, the assailant essentially strips her of her personal sense of control. Such a feeling of incapacitation is a common link between all victims of sexual assault.

Any form of sexual violence, by a husband or by a stranger, involving the actual act of sex or not, is terrorizing to the victim of the abuse. When speaking of sexual assault, rape is most often the first example that comes to mind. Although rape is typically believed to occur between strangers, a significant proportion of incidences occur in which a husband rapes his wife. The actual number of occurrences of marital rape is undoubtedly much higher than believed, as a result of women's personal and

societal barriers to reporting incidences.

Marital rape is just one example of sexual assault within marriage. Wives also face a significant amount of sexual violence outside of the definition of rape, including exhibitionism, voyeurism, fondling, and sexual harassment.

Sexual assault within marriage is just as serious as that outside of matrimony, if not more so. Marriage is not a license for husbands to expect sexual interaction as desired, regardless of their wives' personal wishes. Every individual, male or female, has the intrinsic right to say "no" to any attempt at undesirable sexual contact, and it is the role of all members of society to respect each other's wishes. Society must realize that marital status does not in any way alter a woman's innate right to make decisions regarding her own body. Marital sexual assault exemplifies expression of the extreme belief in male dominance over women. Abusive husbands have learned over time that using sex as a weapon enables them to maintain power and control within their marriage. Added to the fact that sexual assault is almost always absorbed quietly into the walls of a household without any castigation whatsoever for the abusive husband, society additionally perpetuates the abuse by maintaining silence and essentially legitimizing the behavior. It is necessary for men to realize that sexual violence against their wives will not be tolerated by society, and that perpetrators will face severe consequences for their abusive behavior.

Popular belief claims that spousal sexual assault is not as traumatic as sexual assault by a stranger. Sadder than the fact that such a belief is actually popular in society is the fact that sexually assaulted wives are just as traumatized as any other sexually assaulted women, if not more so. The physical, mental, and emotional consequences of sexual assault by one's spouse are both severe and long-lasting. Some psychological effects include anxiety, depression, fear, post-traumatic stress, and suicide contemplation, among many others. Many victims of marital sexual

(Continued on page 8)



(Continued from page 7)

abuse also report experiencing flashbacks, hyper vigilance, sleep disorders, sexual dysfunction, guilt, self-blame, and loss of control, trust, self-esteem, and positive body image...and the list goes on.

So, what is being done to stop marital sexual assault? It seems as though society refuses to acknowledge the fact that sexual assault can and does occur within the context of marriage. In an effort to maintain the ideological, sacrosanct view of marriage, social practices and legal codes essentially enforce the surrender of women's sexual agency and personal integrity, thereby infringing upon women's fundamental human rights. Instead of encouraging victims of spousal sexual assault to come forward, report the incidences, and seek much-needed support, society deems the exposure of private matters from behind the iron curtain of marriage as taboo.

However, society must realize that once an individual's basic human rights of dignity, personal security, and equality are violated, the abusive incidences are no longer private matters, but matters that require legal involvement. At present, the legal systems in much of South Asia do not treat sexual assault within a marriage with the necessary gravity. In fact, several countries do not criminalize sexual violence in cases where the accused is in a marital relationship with the assailant, thereby alluding to the erroneous view that marital status alters one's basic rights over his/her body.

The legal systems must be convinced to accept marital rape as the crime that it is. Social systems must also be modified to eliminate the taboo associated with women who seek freedom from sexually abusive marriages. South Asian men also have the equally important responsibility of confronting other males about their privilege within society and interacting amicably with women in order to revamp the current gender role expectations and power-sharing within society in general, as well as specifically within marriages.

In order to halt the scourge of sexual assault

within marriage, society must act to replace the negative stigma from the wives who report the incidences of violence to the husbands who perpetrate the violence.

Divya Ullal is a Manavi volunteer and part of the Outreach Collective.



(Continued from page 6)

I called my friend. We must talk to her, we decided. We must educate ourselves on the best ways to do it, because if there was one thing that was non-negotiable, it was this baby girl. I will kill for her, my friend said, and I believe her. But perhaps that will not be necessary, perhaps we can give her the right messages, and enable her to protect herself. Perhaps we can ensure that she will never be a victim by ensuring that she will know not to be afraid by herself. Perhaps we can convince her that we care for her enough not to turn a blind eye if someone hurts her.

Lakshmi Rajagopal has worked for several years with non-profits in India. She currently volunteers for Manavi.





About the Open Letter to the Women of Gujarat:

The idea for the Open Letter, and the initial draft, emerged at “Aarohan 2003,” a conference for South Asian women’s organizations, which Manavi hosted in August 2003. Participants who were interested in formulating the letter formed a subgroup, and continued to work on the letter after the conference. The letter was released in March 2004 on the second anniversary of the violence.

The Open Letter is available as an online petition at: <http://www.thePetitionSite.com/takeaction/541267538>. We encourage you to sign your name to the petition, anonymously or otherwise, and forward the petition to your friends, families, colleagues, and other community members to show solidarity with the women who suffered during the violence and to help raise awareness about the intersection of communal violence and violence against women.


Open Letter to the Women of Gujarat

We, the undersigned organizations and individuals working to end violence against women in the United States, write to express our deep sympathy and support for the women of Gujarat who suffered and continue to suffer due to the state-sponsored communal genocide that took place in February and March of 2002.

We write to convey our heartfelt grief for the scores of women and girls who were murdered and brutally raped, and the thousands of women who were widowed, orphaned or lost other loved ones as a result of the violence. We recognize that the minority Muslim community was the main target of this genocide and that the violence was pre-meditated and perpetrated by mobs of men including members of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP), Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), and the Bajrang Dal. We are outraged at the horrific sexual violence and humiliation women and girls of all ages were subjected to during the attacks. We strongly condemn Gujarat's Chief Minister Narendra Modi and the government of Gujarat for justifying the violence and the Sangh Parivar for its role in the pre-meditated attacks against the minority Muslim community.

The widespread sexual subjugation of Muslim women and girls in Gujarat is a testament to the fact that women's bodies were the battleground on which state-

(Continued on page 10)



(Continued from page 9)

sponsored violence was perpetrated. Women bore the brunt of the violence in Gujarat just as women bear the brunt of violence every day in their own homes at the hands of family members and loved ones. We also recognize that what happened in Gujarat is not an isolated event and that other communities in different parts of India have suffered as a result of the hateful actions of a few to communalize Indian society.

We recognize that no one is safe in the culture of violence unleashed by the militant Hinduism of the Sangh Parivar, and wish to express our sympathy to the Hindu women who also suffered during the mob attacks. We also want to recognize our solidarity with the so-called lower caste women of all religious backgrounds whose victimization is often silenced. We recognize that violence against women knows no boundaries and takes many forms. Hence, we denounce violence against women everywhere in all its forms including female infanticide including abortion, forced marriage, marital violence, financial and reproductive control, physical and sexual abuse, and murder.

We wish to convey to the women of Gujarat that we have not forgotten them. After the horrific events occurred in 2002, some of us spoke out against the atrocities and community-building movements did occur. However, with this letter, we wish to speak out against the atrocities with one voice. We refuse to be silent any longer and make the following demands of the Indian judicial system:

1. We hold the government of Gujarat accountable for the crimes committed and denounce it for its inaction to end the violence.
2. We demand that those who perpetrated the heinous crimes in Gujarat and those responsible for organizing the genocide be brought to justice.
3. We demand an immediate halt to the revictimization and continued harassment of Muslim women by the Gujarat police and members of the Sangh Parivar.
4. We demand adequate relief and rehabilitation for the more than 100,000 Muslims who were displaced by the violence.

We are aware that many of the groups responsible for orchestrating and perpetrating the violence in Gujarat received and continue to receive funding from the Indian community in the United States. We are concerned that the overseas Indian

(Continued on page 11)



(Continued from page 10)

community donates to these charities believing that the funds will be used for development and humanitarian purposes when in fact they are routinely diverted to finance communal politics. Hence, we strongly urge the NRI community and individuals to ensure their contributions go to worthy charities and not to organizations such as the VHP and RSS, groups which promote an ideology of hate and violent acts against minorities.

We call upon the international community to help us break the silence and join us in solidarity with the women of Gujarat and those around the world working to end communal violence and violence against women. As organizations and individuals working to end violence against women, we pledge to continue to speak out against the atrocities and to make communal harmony an integral part of our work.

Signed,

Organizations:

AASRA (Boston, MA)

Chaya (Seattle, WA)

Daya (Houston, TX)

Manavi (New Brunswick, NJ)

Narika (Berkeley, CA)

Saheli for Asian Families (Austin, TX)

Sakhi for South Asian Women (NYC, NY)

* This list reflects organizations that signed the letter as of March 2004

Individuals:

* Over 500 individuals have signed this letter as of June 2004





A WOMAN'S WORTH: PURITY, MARRIAGE, AND MOTHERHOOD IN *PINJAR*

by Shanti Wesley

"Tu janam mein hi mar gayee hoti" (if only you had died at birth). In the film *Pinjar*, the heroine Puro's mother greets her with these harsh words when Puro escapes from her kidnapper and returns home. Instead of rejoicing in Puro's return or comforting her after her ordeal, her parents suggest that her life is simply not worth living anymore and actually kick her out of the house. While we may find this bewildering, it is sadly not surprising given the prevailing notions about a woman's sexual purity and purpose in life.

Pinjar is set in pre-partition India in 1946. It opens with scenes of happy domesticity, as Puro's family prepares for her marriage to Ramchand. It is immediately clear that marriage is the only possible course for the heroine's life, and Puro does not seem to expect anything more. We soon get the sense, however, that all will not go well with Puro: her fiancé Ramchand, referring to her as his Janaki (another name for Sita), jokingly says that there will be exile in her life, just as there is for Ram and his wife Sita in the epic *Ramayana*. We even get a hint of Puro's abduction and the resulting doubts about her sexual purity when Ramchand sings a song about the "agnipariksha" (trial by fire) that proves Sita's chastity after her abduction by Ravan. Sure enough, Puro is kidnapped and held captive by a man named Rashid. Her family will not accept her back after she escapes from Rashid because they assume that she has been sexually violated, and so Puro is forced to live with Rashid "in exile" from her family and her country in what eventually becomes Pakistan.

It is useful for us to examine Sita and her agnipariksha in a little more detail as they shed some light on Puro's experiences. As noted earlier, Sita is kidnapped by Ravan, who holds her captive until Ram defeats Ravan in battle and rescues her. Ram then asks her to undergo an "agnipariksha" to prove

that she has not had sex with Ravan and that she is still sexually pure. If she emerges unscathed, it proves that she has been faithful to Ram. What is implicit here is that Sita's word to Ram is not enough; there needs to be very public proof of her purity. Also, we can assume that the fire will not make a distinction between consensual intercourse and rape; Sita will be held equally culpable in either case and would deserve to die. I am not saying that Sita does deserve to die if she had consensual sex with Ravan; I'm pointing out that the agnipariksha ignores the concept of consent by not making the distinction between rape and consensual sex.

So the message of the agnipariksha is that if Sita had sex with another man, if she is no longer sexually pure, she deserves to die. This is hardly an unfamiliar concept; sexual purity has long defined a woman's worth. I believe that one of the reasons for this link is a patriarchal society's understanding of a woman's purpose: to produce sons and heirs for her husband. In a patrilineal society, property and inheritance get passed down through males, from father to son. The wife plays the integral role of producing the son, specifically the "right" son, i.e. her husband's son. This role is put at risk if a woman has sex with someone other than her husband: the fear is that she could have another man's baby and try to pass it off as her husband's. The fear stems

from the reality that, in fact, only the woman knows whose baby she is carrying, and it is this fear that translates into intense control of a woman's sexuality. If a woman's sexual purity is in doubt, she cannot guarantee legitimate heirs, thus negating the

Pinjar is set in pre-partition India in 1946. It opens with scenes of happy domesticity, as Puro's family prepares for her marriage to Ramchand. It is immediately clear that marriage is the only possible course for the heroine's life, and Puro does not seem to expect anything more.

(Continued on page 13)



(Continued from page 12)

whole purpose of her existence. The logic of the agnipariksha is that if Sita is longer not sexually pure and cannot guarantee Ram legitimate heirs, she may as well die.

So what does all this mean for Puro? When Puro begs her kidnapper Rashid to let her go back to her family, Rashid points out, “tum mere saath mere ghar mein pandra din rahi ho (you have been in my house with me for fifteen days). When Puro protests that nothing has happened between them, Rashid counters, “kaun maanega?” (Who will believe it?) As with Sita’s situation, Puro’s word will not suffice to prove her innocence. People will simply assume that she has had sexual relations with Rashid. Whether it was consensual or rape, Puro will be considered equally disgraced and worthless. There is no agnipariksha to prove Puro’s virtue; she will have to live with the consequences of her family’s and society’s assumptions.

The consequences mean being exiled from her family and from her home. Immediately after Puro’s kidnapping, it is clear that her parents have essentially written her off. Certainly they grieve for her, but they deliberately take no action to find her. We can trace their inaction to their understanding of a woman’s purpose and destiny: they assume that Puro has been sexually violated; in that case, no one will marry her because she’s been polluted and will not be able to guarantee legitimate heirs. So if she cannot marry and produce sons for her husband, she has no reason to live. She has lost her purpose in life and her worth as a woman. Puro no longer has any value as a woman and a human being; she may as well not exist. This is the reason for her parents’ inaction, for their immediate sense of defeat: Puro’s father says to her mother on the very night that Puro is kidnapped, “teri beti mar gayee” (your daughter is dead).

Puro would, in fact, be a liability to her family if she returned home as a non-virgin single woman. In

a sense, it’s actually easier on her family if she dies, rather come back dishonored and devalued in their eyes. This is made obvious when Puro actually does return home after escaping from Rashid. As I noted earlier, there is no joy for Puro’s return, no comfort for, or even acknowledgment of, her trauma. We see instead her parents’ impulse to silence and erase Puro. Her father’s first reaction is to tell her to keep her crying down for fear that “log ikatthe ho jayenge” (people will gather around). They don’t ask her a single question about what she’s gone through; their assumptions are enough for them.

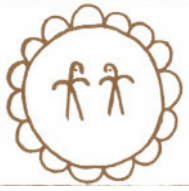
When Puro actually begs her parents to take her in, her father Mohanlal responds, “kahan rakhenge?

Kaun shaadi karega?” (Where will we keep you, who will marry you?) Mohanlal’s words capture Puro’s predicament in this patriarchal society: no one will marry her, so she has no other possible course or destiny in life; as an unmarried, non-virgin (so they assume) woman, she simply has no place in their home and in society. Because a woman’s worth, her value as a human being is totally defined by her sexual purity, a sexually violated woman like Puro

is basically nothing – she may as well not exist. As Puro’s father says, “tera dharm gaya, janm gaya” (you’ve lost your status, your whole identity). We see then that Puro’s mother’s painful remark that Puro should have just died at birth is the logical outcome of patriarchal beliefs about a woman’s sexual purity and her purpose and worth as a human being.

While Puro’s parents’ reaction to her is disappointing, the film does offer a courageous and empowering model for action: Puro’s own efforts to save Lajo, her sister-in-law. Lajo is abducted amidst communal violence during Partition. Even though Puro knows that Lajo has most likely been raped, this does not stop Puro from finding Lajo and bringing her home. In contrast to her own parents, Puro

(Continued on page 15)



UNSPOKEN NORMS: A REVIEW OF MONICA ALI'S *BRICK LANE* By Palav Babaria

Monica Ali's *Brick Lane*, shortlisted for Booker Prize follows the life of Nazneen, a twenty-year old "unspoilt girl from the village", who is married off to a 40-year old Chanu "who had a face like a frog." An immensely multilayered novel, *Brick Lane* expands far beyond the walls of Nazneen's small flat in Brick Lane, the Bangladeshi enclave in London.

Ali has been hailed by critics for her fine descriptive skills, adept ability to combine humor and pathos, and her creation of a truly global novel. Though set in today's multicultural London, fraught with race riots, post 9/11 hate crimes, drugs, gangs, and Islamic fundamentalism, *Brick Lane* also paints portraits of Nazneen's rural upbringing in Bangladesh as well as the globalized Bangladesh of today, as catalogued by Nazneen's sister Hasina's letters discussing "Brittany Spears". Although this praise is well-deserved, Zadie Smith's *White Teeth* has already awoken the world to London's multicultural populations and Salman Rushdie's *Satanic Verses* catalogued imaginary "Brickhall's" racial riots years ago.

However, what is truly remarkable about Ali's novel (and least remarked upon by critics) is that it is fiercely feminist, not in the two-dimensional oppressed-South Asian-woman and abusive-patriarchal-male manner that many South Asian authors have adopted but in a truly subtle, insightful, complex way that moves beyond surface conclusions and is more applicable to the reality of women's experiences.

Nazneen is surrounded by other Bangladeshi

wives in Tower Hamlet Estates, who gather regularly to gossip and discuss stories of the woman who jumped off a building ("You have to bear in mind she had no children. This is after twelve years of marriage...It is worst thing, for any woman"). Or the neighbor's sixteen year old daughter who was shipped off to Bangladesh to be married ("She begged them to let her stay and take her exams...Anyway, the brother has gone bad, and they wanted to save the daughter. So there it is. Now she can't run off for a love marriage.") Or of their friend Amina, who asked for a divorce ("I saw her with a split lip. And one time she had her arm in a sling. He must have gone too far this time...Not only that, he

has another wife that he forgot to mention for the past eleven years!"). It is through these interspersed stories that we realize how complicated these forms of suffering really are. The divorces, beatings and affairs become scandalous gossip for the women of Tower Hamlets, who become the judge and jury for their fellow women, serving the "silent treatment" for those who transgress the boundaries of social norms. Ali's novel features no simple characters, but intricate paradoxes. How can

women find their voices and independence while their very natures are defined by patriarchal system in which they have been raised and become accustomed to? How do women simultaneously suffer within as well as uphold these oppressive structures?

Nazneen lives by the mantra, "What could not be changed must be borne. And since nothing could be changed, everything must be borne." Her entire existence in London becomes a series of counteracting forces- what she wills to do, and that which she must silently suffer. Her rage at her ugly husband, her monotonous housework, her separation from her sister Hasina, and her isolated life in England, where she is not allowed to go out ("Personally, I

(Continued on page 15)



(Continued from page 14)

don't mind if you go out but these people are so ignorant. What can you do?" says her husband) slowly simmer and emerge. Nazneen cannot choose between the love she comes to feel for her husband, whom she deems as a kind man because "he had not beaten her yet" and the desire to "to get up from the table and walk out of the door and never see him again." She is torn between accepting her fate, as she has been taught from birth, and the passionate self-agency she is slowly discovering in her daily life.

It is this agency that leads Nazneen into an affair with young, handsome Karim. Rather than becoming a tale of condemning passion, Ali explores Nazneen's emerging independence and sexuality with all of the appropriate emotions: pleasure, shame, guilt, happiness. What is so convincing about Nazneen's actions, and in fact the novel as a whole, is the intricacy of these emotions. Ali neither condones nor condemns any of her characters' actions,

Ali's novel is one of silence, both the silencing of women as well as the silence of the community. Nazneen never directly asks a question, or states her desires, and as a result, Chanu's "no's" are to questions barely asked and never heard, resulting in a perpetual maintenance of the status quo.

merely providing a platform for them to take place. This in and of itself becomes political and feminist, as most of the issues that Ali chooses to explore: sexuality,

adultery, sexual assault, drugs, and exploitation are not only avoided, but *actively* silenced within the South Asian diasporic community.

Ali's novel is one of silence, both the silencing
(continued from page 15)

of women as well as the silence of the community. Nazneen never directly asks a question, or

(Continued on page 21)

(Continued from page 13)

does not believe that Lajo is devalued or worthless simply because she may have been sexually violated. Puro's parents take no action at all to help Puro for fear of the "dishonor" that will come to them if her kidnapping is made public; Puro, on the other hand, centralizes Lajo, over socially constructed notions of honor and purity, and takes radical action to save Lajo. Puro is also the only person in the film who makes the distinction between consensual intercourse and rape, pointing out that no one can blame Lajo since she was abducted and raped. Puro's rescue of Lajo suggests that Puro understands Lajo's worth as a woman as more than just her sexual chastity.

While Lajo's rescue by Puro is an empowering model of women's action and resistance, I still feel that it was not radical enough. The film did not allow her to challenge the larger patriarchal structure that creates oppression and violence against women. As I was watching Pinjar, I kept asking myself if the film really challenges the beliefs about a woman being defined by her sexual "purity," about her only destiny being heterosexual marriage, her only purpose, motherhood. Does the very fact that the film highlights these attitudes so dramatically constitute a challenge to the status quo? Or does Pinjar just present prevailing notions about womanhood without critique, thereby reinforcing the status quo? I feel that the film, for the most part, does not challenge patriarchal beliefs strongly enough. While it may invite some of us to begin a conversation about how unfair and unjust Puro's situation is, I don't think it actually encourages us to dismantle or even to question the structures and ideology that create gender-based oppression.

Shanti is currently Technical Assistance Coordinator at Manavi.





AAROHAN 2003: SOUTH ASIAN WOMEN RISE UP AGAINST VIOLENCE



In August 2003, South Asian women's advocates and anti-violence activists came together to strengthen existing alliances and to forge new relationships at AAROHAN

2003: South Asian Women RISE UP Against Violence. Manavi in association with the Department of Justice Office on Violence against Women hosted The National Conference for South Asian community-based organizations and advocates working to end violence against women. Manavi was proud to welcome approximately 130 participants for the 2 ½ day conference at the Sheraton Edison on August 22-24, 2003.

AAROHAN 2003 was a follow-up to the groundbreaking AAROHAN conference hosted by Manavi in 2002. As the title suggests (*aarohan* is the Hindi word for "ascent" or "rising up"); the goal of both conferences was to facilitate South Asian women's rising up to resist the violence and oppression that we experience in our lives and in our communities. The participants, who included advocates and staff at South Asian women's organizations, academics and students, and research and policy experts, aimed to build their capacities to address gender-based oppression through dialogue, networking, and creative strategizing.

The conference opened on Friday, August 22 with a panel entitled "Beyond Borders: A Global Perspective on Violence Against South Asian Women." The panel set the stage for the rest of the conference by inviting participants to look beyond domestic violence at the other forms of oppression that impact women, based on ethnicity, gender, religion, race, and na-

tionality. Purvi Shah of Sakhi moderated the panel, and the panelists, Margaret Abraham, Huma Dar, and Svati Shah spoke about the intersectionality of communal violence, racism, and domestic violence. Participants had the opportunity to examine some of these topics more closely in the afternoon workshops, which included sessions on communal violence in South Asia and its consequences on the immigrant community in the U.S.; incestuous sexual abuse; and women's reproductive health in the context of socio-cultural and gender-based violence.

The first day of the conference ended with a celebration of women's creativity, sexuality, and resistance as Mango Tribe and South Asian Sisters took the stage to entertain and inspire the participants. Mango Tribe is an ensemble of 20 Asian/Pacific Islander American women from Chicago, New York City, L.A, and Minneapolis. South Asian Sisters is a collective of women from San Francisco, L.A and Colorado. The artists from both groups used spoken word, song, movement, and poetry to create powerful and empowering performances.

The second day of the conference opened with a panel, "Dismantling Patriarchy: Domestic Violence at the Intersection of Multiple Oppression." Like the opening panel on Friday, this panel, moderated by Priti Darooka of the Ford Foundation, examined domestic violence in the context of systemic oppressions that affect women. Panel members Trishala Deb and Surabhi Kukke addressed heterosexism and classism specifically, and elaborated on the links between patriarchy, oppression, and violence against

(Continued on page 17)

South Asian women. The Saturday afternoon ses-



Fishbowl discussion; from the left: Grace Poore, Priti Darooka, Soniya Munshi, Shamita Das Dasgupta



(Continued from page 16)

sions focused on training and technical assistance, with sessions on enhancing advocacy skills; organizational development, including volunteer retention and fundraising; and strategies for community organizing and education. These workshops provided the chance for advocates and staff of South Asian women's organization to share their skills and expertise with other advocates and activists in the movement.

The final day of the conference opened with reports back from discussion groups that had been meeting periodically throughout the conference. Participants had joined one of four discussion groups based on their experience and interest: advocacy, community building, organizational development, and research/documentation. On Sunday, small group participants shared their responses to the topics that had been raised in plenaries and workshops throughout the conference; discussed how the strategies presented at the conference may be incorporated into their community-based work; and finally, presented their visions for the future of the anti-violence movement. The conference ended with a fishbowl discussion that continued visioning the movement of South Asian women working to end violence against women.

We're happy to say that the dialogue and partnerships did not end when the conference ended. To facilitate ongoing communication and collaboration among advocates, activists, and experts, Manavi, in cooperation with the Asian & Pacific Islander Institute on Domestic Violence, launched a listserve in February 2004. The listserve, called South Asians Rise Up (SARU), offers AAROHAN participants a space to share strategies and resources and to receive ongoing technical assistance. Manavi is delighted that the AAROHAN conferences provided the foundation for partnerships and alliances that will continue to strengthen South Asian women's anti-violence movements in the years ahead.



MANAVI UPDATES

ASHIANA UPDATE

Ashiana successfully moved to a new location in June 2003. We would like to thank our devoted volunteers for all the assistance with the move!

Manavi staff and a team of dedicated volunteers have supported Ashiana residents' journey towards independent living. Volunteers have assisted residents in various ways, providing them with groceries, interpretation, transportation, workshops, job counseling and housing assistance.

Ashiana Collective has been very active in looking into resources for Ashiana residents (e.g. public library, day care centres). Thank you, Anjali, Malati, Nihar, Madhavi, Shubra, Lata, Pooja, Sonali, Sonu, Anita, Hima, Lakshmi, Avanti, Kalpna, Raviya, Ruchika, Uma, and Radha for all the work you have done for Ashiana.

Please don't forget that together with programs like Ashiana we can assist South Asian women in their path to empowerment.

ADVOCACY UPDATE



The monthly collective meetings continue to encourage discussions on advocacy related concerns within the group. There has always been a focus on the group learning experience through sharing of problem areas and insights. The staff and volunteers have been engaging in brainstorming and strategizing on pertinent issues that come up for advocates in direct service work. There is room to share one's own feelings/ needs about the work we do. Specialized workshops have been conducted for the Collective by the New Jersey Coalition Against Sexual Assault, Division

(Continued on page 18)



(Continued from page 17)

of Youth and Family Services, Victims of Crime and Compensation Board, Anti-trafficking Initiative of the International Institute of New Jersey.

In July 2003 and May 2004, we organized 3-day training programs for volunteers who had expressed an interest in working closely with survivors of violence. Several volunteers attended these training sessions during which they were introduced to critical issues in intimate partner violence and sexual assault. We shared resources and policy issues with the group.

Manavi's support groups aim to break the isolation that many women experience when they go through intimate partner and other forms of violence. The group meets every second and fourth Saturdays of the month and has an average attendance of 4 women. The women have had discussions on various topics ranging from financial planning, single parenting to self esteem. A potluck party highlighted the 2003 year-end where participants reflected on the past year over mouth-watering South Asian snacks.

As Manavi moves ahead with culture focused work, we are continuing to document the complexities of gender violence in South Asian communities, and compiling resources. We are hoping to disseminate this information amongst many more communities and mainstream organizations through our capacity building training sessions.

From July 1, 2003 to December 2003, Manavi has worked with a total of 166 women who approached Manavi for assistance. 129 women called Manavi for assistance with regards to domestic violence issues while 25 called for assistance with immigration issues. 14 women needed assistance with sexual assault issues.

Following is the break-up of hours for some of the services that Manavi provided to women:

Services provided	Hours spent
Individual counseling	282
Advocacy	115
Legal Clinic/Referrals	75
Accompaniment	64
Transitional Home	82
Interpretation/Translation	7
Support Group	71

FUNDRAISING/GRANTWRITING COLLECTIVE UPDATE



We are pleased to announce that the fundraising/grantwriting collective has continued to grow, and we warmly welcome new members to our group. As always, our collective has focused on raising funds for Manavi through a variety of strategies.

We hope you can help Manavi reach its fundraising goals. Below are some ways you can help support our efforts:

Make a tax-deductible donation to Manavi. All donations directly benefit our programs.

Inquire about employer match programs at your workplace. Many employers will match all, or some, of your donation to Manavi.

Donate to Manavi through United Way. Our reference number is **009648**.

Encourage your community members to support Manavi through individual donations, and to explore the employer match option as well.

Many employers have foundations that support community-based organizations such as Manavi, or have foundations that support organizations in which their employees volunteer. **Inquire about these foundations and pass the information on to the Fundraising/Grantwriting collective** (contact Shanti/Maneesha).

The fundraising/grantwriting collective is in the

(Continued on page 19)



(Continued from page 18)

process of planning Manavi's Annual Dinner, to be held in **October 2004**. As we are still early in the process, details of the event are in formation. We are actively recruiting volunteers to join the Annual Dinner Planning Committee- if you are interested in assisting with this event, please contact Shanti/ Maneesha.



LEGAL COLLECTIVE UPDATE

Manavi's free Legal Clinics, held twice each month, are an invaluable resource to the women who access our services. From August 2003 - December 2003, more than 60 women received free consults with Family and Immigration attorneys. The Clinics would not be possible without our team of dedicated volunteer attorneys and Legal Collective volunteers. We thank you for your time and commitment.

Starting this Summer 2004, we are happy to launch a formal Legal Internship at Manavi, which will run throughout the year. If you, or someone you know, is interested in applying for the Fall 2004 Legal Internship, please contact Anuradha Gurnani, Legal Coordinator, at the office.



SEXUAL ASSAULT INITIATIVE COLLECTIVE

The Sexual Assault Initiative Collective was formed at Manavi to increase dialogue around issues of sexual assault both in Manavi spaces as well as the broader South Asian community. This Collective has enabled production of a sexual assault brochure in the recent past and we are actively trying to distribute it wherever we do outreach.

Since July 2003, the Sexual Assault Initiative Collective has been engaged in creation of a bro-

chure which will address issues of sexuality, sexual health, HIV/AIDS in the broad framework of sexual rights. Two consultants have been working with Manavi to make this brochure a reality. Some input for this brochure came from focus groups that were conducted at Manavi meetings and support group. Apart from the brochure, a referral guide is also being produced.

Manavi has been partnering with New Jersey Coalition Against Sexual Assault (NJCASA) to continue its work around sexual assault. In the last quarter of 2003, NJCASA formed a **Women of Color Caucus (WOCC)**, its mission being to recruit and encourage women of color to become an integral part of the sexual assault movement as well as to promote education, heighten awareness and break the barriers which may prevent women of color from accessing rape care services. Manavi has joined the NJCASA WOCC and we are hopeful that we will be able to further the goals of the Caucus and reach out to South Asian women as well.



OUTREACH COLLECTIVE UPDATE:

The Outreach Collective has been making a lot of efforts to increase Manavi's visibility in the South Asian community. We have also continued to provide training to mainstream service providers on issues of violence against women in the South Asian context.

Below are some of our outreach highlights from August 2003 – December 2003:

We spoke at an event organized by Middlesex County Prosecutor's Office; trained domestic violence advocates at Somerset County Resource Center for Women & Their Families; made a presentation at Passaic County Islamic Center in Paterson;

(Continued on page 21)



**ASHIANA, MANAVI & DOMESTIC VIOLENCE:
SECURITY, HELP & FEAR**

Letter from Ashiana (Transitional Home) ex-resident

Being a resident of Ashiana for a long time, I have now become self confident and now my thinking for my new life is positive.

Ashiana gives me a sense of security and new dimension in my life. I am living in an atmosphere where everybody is from different cultures, places, customs and religions. After coming here I had my status problem too with other problems like having no family for support etc. The first few months I had lot of problems. I felt I was just born and nobody was there to hug me and care for me. Then I met the staff at Manavi. Everybody was so encouraging and dedicated and took me in their hands like a baby. I would particularly mention that the staff at Manavi, the Ashiana Coordinator, counselors and advocates - everyone guided me so well that it seemed like my life entered into a HIGHWAY where I can drive and survive on my own.

I also realized that there is not only me who is in such an awkward situation because according to our culture everybody blames women and there is no respect for a woman like me. But now after living in Ashiana, it is not only my family which is respecting me but they have also realized that I have really worked hard and am working in a right direction to survive by myself and I am not bringing shame to anyone.

Thank You Ashiana and Manavi for helping me so much.



(Continued from page 19)

spoke at the Silent Witness Diversity Panel at Rutgers University and tabled there as well; conducted training for Domestic Violence Response Team in Middlesex County; attended a meeting with the Governor of New Jersey; delivered a talk at the National Coalition for the Homeless' Bringing America Home Conference. Furthermore, we spoke at the NJ Women & AIDS Network Conference; tabled at the At&T Silver Jubilee Anniversary Gala; tabled at the Bengali Students Association 'Tiger Fest'; organized a film screening and discussion at Rutgers University; and trained the Crisis Response Team in Cherry Hill, New Jersey.

The Outreach Collective has been quite involved in production of this newsletter. Thank you Lakshmi for all the assistance with formatting! Thank you Vinita and Rama for transcribing and editing!

Two volunteer orientations were organized by the Outreach Collective between September and December 2003. Through these orientations Manavi welcomed many enthusiastic volunteers. Currently we are also undertaking production of a Manavi video that will highlight issues of patriarchy, culture, sexism, oppression, and violence against South Asian women.



states her desires, and as a result, Chanu's "no's" are to questions barely asked and never heard, resulting in a perpetual maintenance of the status quo. What becomes unavoidably apparent in Brick Lane is the gaping black hole of a gap between the number of words women dare to utter out loud (especially to their husbands) and those that are forever locked up in their own minds.

This silence is most pervasive surrounding Hasina's letters from Bangladesh. Having eloped at the age of sixteen, Hasina is soon forced to flee from her abusive husband, and over the course of the novel, is raped by her landlord, exploited by her factory co-workers, and forced into prostitution. None of this is given a tangible name. Hasina's letters beg her sister not to be angry, claiming that everything must have been her own fault. Her suffering is hidden behind code words and the subtle naming-but-not-naming of rape and prostitution. When telling her husband of Hasina's prob-

lems, Nazneen too is unable to name the injustices. "When she spoke of rape she named it in the village way, Hasina was robbed of her nakhphool...and the selling of her body she did not name, saying only my sister had to stay alive."

Even though her characters may uphold social norms, and follow the patterns of silence and shame surrounding rape and sexual desire, Ali's novel certainly does not. Through the complementary stories of Nazneen and Hasina, Ali refuses to sidestep the suffering of women. In fact, it is precisely Ali's subversive approach—using the internalized language of patriarchy that many women are fluent in—that makes *Brick Lane* such a stunning novel, and one sure to challenge the stereotype of the submissive South Asian wife.

Brick Lane, by Monica Ali, Scribner, 2003.

Palav was Outreach Coordinator at Manavi during Summer of 2003





We would like to thank all Manavi volunteers and interns who contribute their valuable time and energy towards ending violence against women.

			
<u>MANAVI STAFF MEMBERS:</u>		<u>MANAVI BOARD MEMBERS:</u>	
VARTIKA MATHUR		SUREKHA VAIDYA	
SONIYA MUNSHI		SUJATA WARRIER	
SOMA DIXIT		SHEFALI MEHTA	
SHANTI WESLEY		SHANKAR KRISHNAN	
SASI VISHNUBHOTLA		MANEESHA KELKAR	
RAZIA MEER		MADHAVI PRAKASH	
PALAV BABARIA		HIMA MUKHIJA	
MANEESHA KELKAR		DIPTY JAIN	
ANURADHA GURNANI		ARATI CHAUDHURY	
ALKA KAMATH			
<i>*THIS LIST REFLECTS PERIOD AUGUST 2003 – PRESENT. SOME PEOPLE ON THIS LIST ARE NO LONGER MANAVI STAFF MEMBERS.</i>		<i>*THIS LIST REFLECTS PERIOD AUGUST 2003 – PRESENT. SOME PEOPLE ON THIS LIST ARE NO LONGER MANAVI BOARD MEMBERS.</i>	



DONOR LIST FOR MANAVI

Manavi wishes to recognize those of you who have made donations to our organization. This list reflects period August 2003-December 2003. If you find mistakes or omissions in this list, please accept our apologies and notify us.

Ajai K. Goyal, M.D.P.C.
Anika Rahman & Ron Creamer
Anita Bhatia
Anita Chandwaney-Khemani
Anu Kothar
Archana N. Mankad
AT&T
AT&T Foundation
Avanthi A. Rao
Bharti Bajaj
Bizath Taqui
Brenda D. Rogers
Charan D. Garg & Uma Garg
Cyrus D. Mehta
Dana G. or Barbara Tickner
Dana L. Dwirantwi
Danette White
Dow Jones & Co., Inc
H. Indira Pal
IBM
Indira Wesley
Ingrid E. Spears
Irvind Khurana
Jacqueline Edwards
Jinder Khurana
Jonathan A. Capp
JP Morgan Chase Companies
Justine W. McGovern
K S Murthy
Kaizar H. Colombowala
Kasturi Dasgupta
Kathleen S Berger
Kenya M Fain
Kiran R. Desai
Kunal Patel
Lakshmi Challa
Lata Phadke

Lisa E. Crudup
Mahesh R. Patel
Malan B. Gandhi
Mantiff Management, Inc
Manu Pal
Maxine K. Weisgrau
McGraw-Hill Companies
Merck Employee Giving Campaign
Molly Varghese
Mona Manzar
Om P. Srivastava
Padma Chandwaney
Prasuna R. Nukalapati
Professional Accountant Associates
Rajal Mahesh Patel
Rama S. Sodum
Raquel Inniss
Rumana Bandoowala
Rutgers(UGWSA)
Samina Sabuhi
Saroja Ilangovan
Seema M. Patel
Shamita Das Dasgupta
Shefali Mehta
Shirley Kowdley
Shobhana & Shubhash Chander
Shobhana A. Desai
Shri G. Bal
Smee Chatterji
Steven F. McCardell
Sumitra & Shashi Shah
Surinder S. Bajwa
Susan D. Susman
Sushama P Jaisingh
Tara Jethwani
The Gale Group, Inc
Timothy Novak
Trinity Presbyterian Church
Triveni Gurikar
United Way
Vinita Jain
Vinita Jethwani
Vrunda Patel
Zarina M. Hock



An organization for South Asian Women

P.O. Box 3103
New Brunswick, NJ 08903-3103
Ph: 732-435-1414
Fax: 732-435-1411
www.manavi.org
manavi@att.net

**YES! I WANT TO SUPPORT MANAVI'S EFFORTS TO
KEEP ALL OF OUR COMMUNITY MEMBERS SAFE!**

I will make a tax-exempt donation to Manavi in the amount
of:

_____ \$35 _____ \$50 _____ \$75 _____ \$100
_____ \$200 _____ Other

Please make checks payable to Manavi, Inc.
and mail to:

Manavi
P.O. Box 3103
New Brunswick, NJ 08903-3103

