

# Vio-Map: Documenting and Mapping Violence and Rights Violation Taking Place in Lives of Sexually Marginalized Women to Chart Out Effective Advocacy Strategies



*Sappho for Equality*

# Vio-Map: Documenting and Mapping Violence and Rights Violation Taking Place in Lives of Sexually Marginalized Women to Chart Out Effective Advocacy Strategies

A Feminist Qualitative Research Report

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this research work is dedicated to women  
who had to erase themselves by committing suicide  
or been murdered for loving their own kind

## FOREWORD

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Sappho for Equality as an organization believes in developing feminist qualitative research based intervention program to do away with the stigma (social, moral and legal) associated with the LBT (Lesbian, Bisexual women and female to male Transperson) issues. Sappho for Equality understood through twelve years of journey that though rights violation and violence of every kind are the commonest experiences of almost all women with non-normative sexual orientation in our society, it is not yet properly documented. Hence one part of this research documented those narratives of violence, both physical as well as psychological and violation of human rights, mainly violation of right to choice, family, property, work, education, self determination and dignity. Even right to life is denied to these women in many cases as they are forced to commit suicide not being able to cope up with societal non-acceptance and cruelty. Advocacy, on the other part, has emerged as one of the main thrust areas for Sappho for Equality's work since inception. Being engaged in serious advocacy work for so long, the relation between research and advocacy is now crystal clear in our understanding. Through this project we got a good scope of intertwining advocacy with ground level qualitative research. The rationale behind this project has emerged very spontaneously to us. We need effective advocacy strategies to combat homophobia within the society, ensure rights of LBT persons and include non-normative sexualities in the mainstream women's movement as an important issue pertaining to women's rights. This research indicates and documents the gaps in existing systems, acts as pointers towards non-existing ones and analyse strategies. So, for both documentation and analytical exposition, this study has been able to generate a series of effective advocacy strategies, the exact tool to reach our immediate objective towards a discrimination-free better tomorrow.

This first ever national level research endeavor focused entirely on violence and rights violation in LBT lives, is one of the eleven research proposals chosen from all over Asia and Africa. The fund for this project came from the Riek Stienstra Fund (jointly managed by Hivos and MamaCash) and the Kartini Asia Network, the sexuality theme of which was funded by the Ford Foundation and Hivos. The research was academically coordinated by Saskia Wieringa, who holds the chair of Gender and Women's Same-Sex Relations Cross-culturally at the University of Amsterdam and managed by Nursyahbani Katjasungkana, the coordinator of Kartini Asia Network. As a part of this project we had been able to interact with researchers and activists from other parts of the globe working on allied issues which has enhanced our understanding and empowered us more towards achieving our goal of a world free from sexual orientation based discriminations.

Sappho for Equality has always believed in inclusion and has given stress upon the path of exchange, dialogue, intermixing and communication between the normative and non-normative

parts of the society. At the same time, emotional support and bonding within the LBT community persons and providing a safe space for them have been the parallel way towards the same destination. This research endeavor has thus reflected these two distinct yet closely related purposes. We are inbound, documenting experiences of LBT lives, matching it up with narratives from the normative counterpart of the society and outbound with accounts of activists who have successfully or unsuccessfully tried to intertwine women's rights movement and LBT rights movement. We believe that our mission of ensuring equal rights of sexually marginalized women has to develop through a combined effort of other marginalized and progressive rights movements. So from knowing and addressing the personal to the understanding and strategizing the political, this project helped us proceed further.

This research project was started in the month of August 2009 and was completed in the month of November 2010. We hope our 15 months long earnest toilsome effort, tremendous emotional involvement, commitment towards our activism and conviction in rights based feminist approaches will influence and impact sensitive people from all walks of life to think twice before being brash and hurtful to LBT persons and will in turn unite with us to protect LBT rights. The documented views of normative population about people with non-normative sexual orientation will create a bridge between the so called margin and mainstream. With inputs from our national level women's rights and LBT rights activists our organization will etch out more effective strategies of collaboration, inclusion and bonding against hetero-patriarchy, the common enemy.

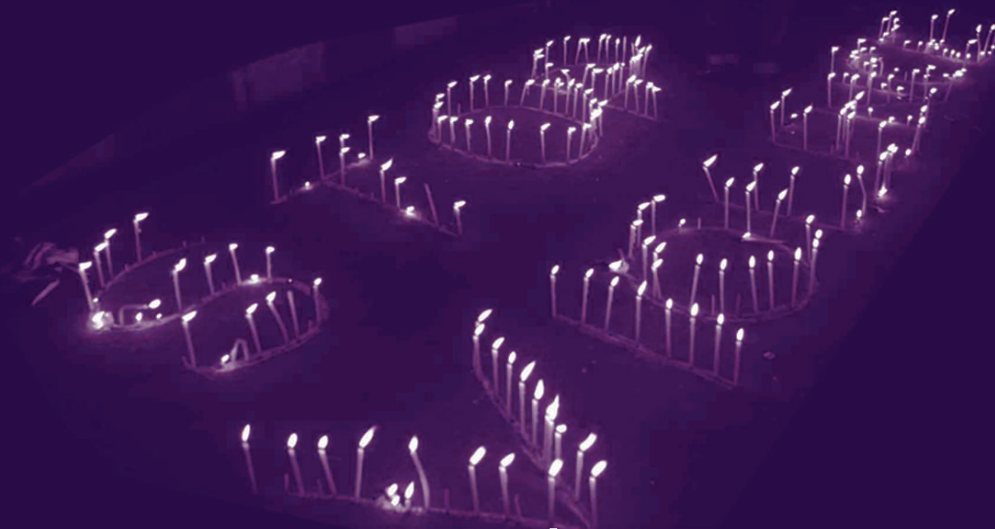
So here, we present, our honorable reader, this book for you, to read, think and act.

Subhagata Ghosh  
On behalf of the research team, Sappho for Equality  
Kolkata  
INDIA  
March 8, 2011

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Agnes Joseph

Kolkata  
INDIA



# ORGANIZATIONAL PROFILE

## 1.1 Sappho for Equality

Sappho for Equality is a forum – the first of its kind in eastern India – that has emerged as a consequence of a unique effort to bridge the ever-widening gulf between the queer and non-queer community in India. Taking wing in October 2003, Sappho for Equality (a registered trust/NGO) aspires to become the collective voice of all cross-sections of society who feel the imperative to challenge the hegemonic hetero-normative order that rules our present.

Sappho for Equality is also the name of a journey that reflects a shift from identity-based politics to issue-based activism. The motivating force behind this journey has been the need to build a coalition with the non-queer society through their direct involvement in a movement that seeks to question the assumptions of ‘mainstream’ sexual practices and norms. Sappho for Equality provides a platform to anyone and everyone, irrespective of gender and sexual orientation, who seek to question the organized workings of homophobia, heterosexism and hetero-normativity. A focus on the terms of exclusion through a politics of standpoint can contribute to a radical rethinking of the hegemonic social and engender a re-signification of the categories through which the world is made visible to us.



## Vision

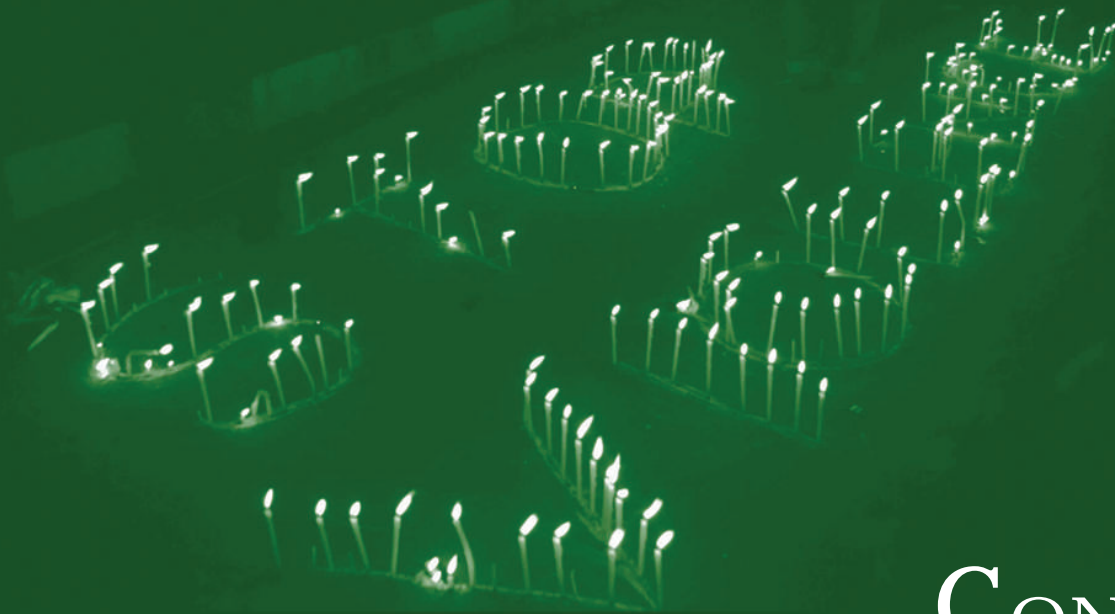
A society free of sexuality-based discriminations, where rights of the sexual minorities will be ensured.

## Mission

To address the issues of sexually marginalized women in the society and to broaden the struggle for their social equality and rights within the nation-state and beyond.

## 1.2 Sappho

Deriving its name from the legendary ancient Greek poet, Sappho is a support group for lesbian, bisexual and F to M transpersons. With its base in Kolkata, West Bengal, it is the only group of its kind in the whole of eastern India, founded on 20th June 1999. The primary goal of the organization was to provide safe space for women with same sex preference but gradually it moved into a rights oriented path to fight discrimination and hatred against marginalized women with same sex preference. However, in due course of this journey, the core members of Sappho have taken the lead to form Sappho for Equality indicating the mission to work on a broader framework of human rights. But Sappho still exists as the informal support group of lesbians, bisexual women and F to M transpersons.



## CONTEXT

Across the world violence against women is recognized as a symptom of power hierarchies that feed different social structures such as the family, community and the state. Patriarchy operates in a multi-layered fashion. Working through a three-pronged method the ensuring of hierarchy proceeds in the following way: first, by laying claim on woman's body and her self through acts of coercion, second, by making her conform to socially ordained norms and behavioral stereotypes by employing the threat of violence, and third, by making her seek protection from the same agents of patriarchy that exploit her in the first place.

In India particularly, violence takes many serious forms like female foeticide, battering, rape, stripping and parading in public, trafficking, 'honor killing' and more recently, acid splashing. Women experience physical and/or mental abuse throughout their life cycle – in infancy, childhood, adolescence, during adulthood as well as in old age. Most of the instances of violence against women also take place in the everyday, and in very specific mundane forms. Such acts of violence, not being easily recognized or speedily countered, have lasting implications for women. This everyday violence against women is largely located in the very intimate realm of the family, often within relations of love and kinship. Women's deep emotional investment in kinship networks, and near-total dependence for survival on familial and community resources, makes it more difficult for them to

acknowledge or articulate the painful moments of violation. We also realize that violence need not always take the overt form of physical force or assault. It can well be perpetrated in the form of subtle psychological and emotional intimidation. Rigidly defined and deployed gender and sexual norms create an environment of discrimination and deprivation leading to widespread violence. In the Indian context the situation is further exacerbated by the fact that besides strict gender and sexual norms, economic vulnerability renders women more susceptible to control and violence.

Sexuality in our country has always been given a rather skewed approach. While a veritable silence around sexuality has dogged the political and academic circles, the space of the legal, demographic and medical disciplines has more than kept the issue of sexuality perpetually in the limelight. India being a secular country we have people here practicing Islam, Christianity, Hinduism as well as Buddhism, Jainism etc. In most religions homosexuality is not condoned. But when it comes to lesbianism it does not even find mention in religious texts thereby signifying the fact that the imagination of sexuality does not include sex between two women, let alone judge it. Some sculptures on Hindu temples and cave carvings/paintings however do bear explicit evidence of the knowledge and practice of lesbian love even in the olden times. Faced with the charge from right wing circles and the state that homosexuality is a western import and antithetical to 'our' culture and to a certain extent to oppose social and political activists who refused to acknowledge the existence of problems related to sexual choice there have been efforts by gay-lesbian activists to recover narratives from India's written and oral traditions. These collections seek to establish the fact that homoeroticism has been an integral part of our tradition and people indulging in same-sex love 'were honored and successful members of society who contributed in major ways to thought, literature, and the general good'. There have also been collections of autobiographical accounts, poetry, fiction and gay journals that have sought to place the issue of non-heterosexual love decisively in the public arena.

In India a defining paradigm for understanding homosexuality is Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code (IPC). Introduced in 1869 by the British it persists as a draconian law that has more extra-legal use than legal. Section 377 of the IPC is another category of sexual offences which has occupied much public attention in recent times. The crux of the debate about the utility of this section rests on the fact that it promises to address a wide range of sexual violations on the one hand, while delimiting (for all, including heterosexuals) the scope of sexual pleasure within the narrow contours of peno-vaginal intercourse. Put another way, the section promises to deal with sexual transgression precisely by spelling out a constricted definition of what is natural, normal and legal.

Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code states that:

Whosoever voluntarily has carnal intercourse against the order of nature with any man, woman, or animal, shall be punished with imprisonment for life or with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to ten years, and shall also be liable to fine.

Explanation – penetration is sufficient to constitute the carnal offence described in this section.

While the latter of the section holds unnatural and against the order of nature all activity that entails penetration outside the peno-vaginal route, in the practice of law only men having sex with men come under its purview as it is interpreted to criminalize anal sex between men. In 2001 Naz Foundation, an NGO working with MSM (men who have sex with men) filed a writ petition to the Delhi High Court noting that Section 377 of the IPC infringed on homosexuals' rights to equality, privacy, dignity and health. In its reply the Union Government of India responded by drawing upon familiar notions of 'Indian morality' and 'public sentiment'. The State decreed that Section 377 could not be repealed as 'Indian society by and large disapproves of homosexuality'. Justifying its stand, the State opined that the purpose of section 377 of the IPC was to provide a 'healthy environment' in the society by criminalizing 'unnatural' sexual activities and yielding to such changes in law could instead open the flood gates of 'delinquent behavior'. Petitions like these, the affidavit responded, could jeopardize the delivery of justice in incidents of child sexual abuse and rape – crimes that are supposedly covered under this law. This argument of course overlooks the fact that the petition appealed for decriminalization of consensual, private, adult sexual behavior and did not prevent its use in child sexual abuse or to fill the lacunae in rape cases as claimed by the state. It would be relevant to mention here that on 2 July 2009, a Delhi High Court ruling declared that Section 377 violates Article 14, 15 and 21 of the Indian Constitution in so much as it criminalizes consensual sexual acts of adults in private. This ruling is being seen as a landmark in the LGBT movement and will hopefully help in curbing the unprovoked arrests, harassment and prosecution of homosexuals.

The legal situation regarding homosexuality is further complicated by the lack of sensitivity and awareness on the part of the medical-scientific fraternity. **Though homosexuality has been erased from the official list of disorders, psychiatrists in India have been rather tardy in following this de-pathologization in their clinical practice. Till date there are mental health professionals who use counseling and drugs to treat homosexuals. There has been a dearth of debates, discussions, sensitization and awareness campaigns among the mental health professionals and no active role taken up by**



the psychiatric community to dispel fears and misconceptions in the larger society. Either professionals have demonstrated ignorance about the removal of the clinical category of homosexuality from the list of disorders or have perpetuated social stigmatization by continuing to practice aversion therapy, behavior-cognitive therapy and other normalizing procedures in a bid to bring 'sexual deviants' back to the mainstream. While the lesbian, gay and transgender movements have relied heavily on scientific tenets to formulate their activism (both in drawing its support as well as in dismissing its homophobic claims) they have mostly failed to involve the scientific community in supporting their efforts to repeal discriminatory laws and change public opinion in their favor. There have been some instances of sensitive clinicians who have contributed to the effort of changing perceptions and societal attitudes but the general scientific community has been largely indifferent.

Contemporary psychiatry though presenting a more accommodative stance nevertheless retains its normativizing function – a function that relates to the way the broader social functions. Echoing scientific caution, Psychiatrists are quick to point out to their 'patients' and their guardians that homosexuality is indeed a non-pathological condition and a 'common phenomenon seen among many adolescents.' Holding on to the rhetoric of non-pathology, they counsel parents not to treat their wards harshly or irresponsibly, assuring them about the transitoriness of the phenomenon. This belief in homosexuality being a temporary phase capable of being transformed finds reflection in many suggestions on record: visit the disco more often, read more pornographic literature and practice skipping everyday!

The central thrust of contemporary 'treatment' modalities is to orient the concerned individuals about the social non-acceptance and (therefore) non-viability of such alternative sexual lifestyles. In other words, psychiatrists and other mental health professionals remain completely noncommittal about their professional role in changing societal attitudes towards what is to be considered pathological illness in the realm of sexual behavior. What emerges, then, through an examination of such clinical discourses, is the continued psychiatrization of homosexuality and transgender people and psychiatry's overwhelming propensity to govern human behavior into categories of what will or will not count as socially viable, a marking off in advance.

In the last three decades, the women's movement in India has contributed to a growing public awareness of violence against women. Besides seeking legal reform, women's groups in India have taken up other forms of protest like awareness raising, street meetings and campaigning through the media. The 1990s saw a new phase of activism in the form of lobbying and advocacy with a view to mainstreaming women's issues. This was a move away



from the more confrontationist measures of the 1970s and 1980s in the form of legal campaigns and protest marches. The law has been looked upon as the major agent for women's empowerment. However, unlike other situations the Indian law does not provide any protection to the LBT woman since it does not recognize her as a bona fide citizen.

The women's movement in trying to make sense of problems like rape, trafficking, honor killing have arrived at the insight that sexuality is an important issue that can no longer be ignored in any discussion on gender justice. However, in spite of these re-articulations within the domain of the political, issues pertaining to non-normative sexuality remains restricted to the very specific work field of only those groups committed to the cause by virtue of embodying the cause. This continues while sexuality – considered by some women activists as a peripheral issue, secondary to problems of education, livelihood and violence – becomes the route/root for denying some women their right to education, livelihood and a primary reason for perpetrating violence, be it through forced marriage or rape, murder or desertion, ostracization or pathologization.

Barring some, most sections of the feminist movement are of the opinion that sexuality is primarily a gay-lesbian problem, failing to acknowledge the hegemonic operations of heterosexuality that bestow on them the privilege of occupying the 'majority' position and banish such issues to the 'minority sexuality rights' forum. The women's movement in India with its largely left leanings find the issue of sexuality causing confusion and distraction about more pertinent problems such as illiteracy, poverty alleviation, domestic violence, women's empowerment and so forth. Such is the disdain for issues regarding non-normative sexuality that lesbians were not permitted to carry their group banners in March 8th rallies in Delhi some years ago – a decision that went on to further prevent lesbians from participating at all in the rally even if they are not raising the issue of lesbian rights. Seeking to mark a clear disjunction between 'women's interests' and interests pertaining to sexual rights and preferences it was clarified that such issues could receive support from the women's movement as issues coming under the broad category of civil liberties and democratic rights but not as constituting 'common women's life-worlds'. Even where the women's movement has been more accommodative of lesbian concerns it has done so more from a feeling of concerned sisterhood rather than from any inclination to seriously engage with the issue of (hetero)sexuality.

Today however the situation does not remain so bleak. There has been a definite shift in the understanding of the interface of feminism and lesbianism and more importantly between women's rights group and sexuality rights groups. Sexuality

rights is acknowledged as an important constituent of women's rights and the mainstream women's movement is much more engaging of sexuality rights issues than they were before with many heterosexual women activists taking up these issues for campaigning. There is a sincere effort from both sides on how to foster a dialogue on issues of gender and sexuality that have to be thought in unison and integration in any agenda of feminist politics. In recent times the mainstream women's movement and the lesbian, bisexual and transgender women's organizations have come together (along with child rights groups) on multiple occasions to debate and dialogue on the new Sexual Assault Bill that talks of changing the definition of rape to sexual assault to denote sexual violence other than peno-vaginal penetration, and changing the notion of 'victim' to include sexual assault perpetrated on persons other than women, i.e., trans persons and hizras. This collaborative and cohesive working together signals the new camaraderie that is emerging among the women's groups and the LBT groups despite the ideological differences that have separated them so far.

Though a large body of work has been done on violence against women in India, violence against lesbian, bisexual and F to M transpersons women has remained a blind spot of these endeavors. There have not been adequate research or advocacy materials to address this lacuna. Most of the instances of violence against LBT women being either invisibilized or normativized have remained outside public discourse. In an effort to challenge the overwhelming homophobic attitude in the society and generating a more liberal and understanding acceptance of non-heterosexual moes of life the alternative sexuality groups have carried on a sustained campaign. They have demanded legislative changes that recognize their sexuality as non-criminal and ensure them the right to participate fully in the societal process without fearing discrimination on account of their sexual practice. Actively organizing mass awareness programs, college sensitizing interactions, public debates etc, activist groups are questioning social moes and gender stereotypes that stifle individual expression of desire.

We at Sappho for Equality felt that to build a fruitful and effective advocacy system we need a strong and extensive database. So, apart from the documentation carried out at our organizational level we needed to take up research work that would generate qualitative data that can be then used to design advocacy and campaign material. Sappho for Equality also felt that the research work had to be taken up from a different and critical angle. So, instead of merely focusing on narratives of LBT women (we do consider these narratives essential and critical, however we felt other constituencies also needed to be brought into the analysis) we have sought to document the narratives of other persons who constitute the world of these women, as 'intimate enemies', as critics of change and as critical agents of

change. Hence this project seeks to map the ideas, thoughts and feelings of people who inhabit the close personal world of LBT women, the people of the world outside, i.e. the general mass as well as people who form part of the activism world. The project sees this mapping as necessary to understand the level of tolerance or intolerance, hatred, compassion or empathy that the non-queer section of the society feels for the non-normative woman. Our work as a support cum activist group also made us realize that most of the instances of violence are not direct effects of a politics of hatred but derive from internalized assumptions and norms that have remained unacknowledged and unchallenged for all these years. It is our conviction that for an effective advocacy strategy or dialogue to take off, it is necessary to recognize, document and bring to surface the 'mainstream' theories and norms that act as a major driving force behind a culture of hatred. Besides trying to understand the processes of normalization and pathologization that feed such homophobia, it is also significant to identify and nurture spaces of solidarity and support within the 'dominant' in order to actualize the process of advocacy. This project is the first step in that direction.

The project is an outcome of a long process that has clearly shown us how social and legal reform together can take us towards the much needed actualization of organizational mission of social equality and full citizen's rights.

As started earlier during our project time, on July 2, 2009, Delhi High Court issued a historical judgment decriminalizing adult consensual sex (both homo and hetero) thereby marking the beginning of a new era in the history of sexuality rights movement in India. It was a great moment that brought in greater responsibilities for us as with this verdict, the invisibility cloak surrounding non-normative sexuality got lifted to a lot extent exposing us to enjoy and endure all the violent and beautiful elements of nature. Our research on violence mapping thereby becomes all the more relevant at this moment because exposure and violence are now going hand in hand more than ever before.



# সমাজের কোপে দুই নারী

দু'জনেই প্রাপ্তবয়স্ক। অথচ তাদের একসঙ্গে থাকতে দিতে নারাজ দু'জনের পরিবা-  
এমনকী গোটা এলাকা। পাশে দাঁড়িয়েছে সমকামী অধিকার রক্ষার সংগঠন স্যাফো

# Lovers driven to death

স্বপ্নিতা" এলাকার সকলে যে হত্যাকাণ্ডই হলো তা অস্বীকার করেছিলেন দুই তরুণীরা। তাই সেদিনঘরে ২২ তারিখ দুটি না-  
দিয়ে সোজা রাজকুশলের অচ্যুতের পলিমে ঘন দু'জনে। ২৩ তারিখে  
দু'জনের বাড়ি থেকেই দু'নীরী খাঁড়ার খনন মেসোলের নিচে  
হওয়ার অভিযোগ রয়েছে। সেই অভিযোগের ভিত্তিতে  
পুলিশ তদুভীর ডায়েরি করে মেসোলের কক্ষ। অচ্যুতের বাবা দু'নীরী  
আর বিষ্ণুর কাছে সেই বছর কোনওভাবে সৌভাগ্যে তাঁরা কাগজপত্র  
না করে বাড়ি ফিরে আসেন হাতে তাঁদের জন্য কোনও বিবরণ

শক্তি না পায়। খাঁড়ার পা দেওয়ার মুহূর্ত থেকে তা  
বিষ্ণুর। তদুভীর বাবা, মা, বোনরা তাঁকে ঘিরে বেলে  
বেলাসের সেই চলবে যে আর একটি মেয়ের সঙ্গে  
সম্পর্ক রাখা অপরাধ। বিষ্ণুর পরিবার তাঁকে গার্ডারি  
সঠিকে মেসোলে। এক আত্মীয়ের বাড়িতে রাখা হলে  
কোনভাবেই তিনি তদুভীর সঙ্গে যোগাযোগ কর  
তদুভীর যে কোনও মূল্য বিষ্ণুর সঙ্গে সম্পর্ক  
একতরো। কিন্তু বাড়ি থেকে বেহায়ে না পারত

## OUR CORRESPONDENT

Janluk, Feb. 21: Two women were found dead in a field in Nandigram this morning and police stumbled on a note that said "commit suicide". The society did not accept their relationship". An empty bottle of pesticide was found beside the of Sonachura resi-Swapna Mondal, 23, ... 19.

for the past four years". "Swapna and Sucheta had been cautioned by villagers on several occasions. They had also informed the duo's parents. Sucheta's father married his daughter off a year ago," the officer said. Sucheta had been living with her husband in Golpara, 1km from her parents' home. Yesterday, Sucheta visited her parents' home with her husband Bikash. "Sucheta was supposed to accompany her husband to a village fair. But she refused to go at the last moment saying she was feeling unwell," the officer said. He said

# চার বোন ও বাবা মায়ের সংসারে জরিপ কাজ করে

# Lesbians in suicide

- Ramesh Babu Thiruvananthapuram, June 26
- NOVEMBER 13, 2003: 19-year-old Raji and her cousin Sreeja, 20, consume pesticide in Kerala's Wayanad district after their families oppose their relationship.
- January 3, 2002: Bindhu, 21 and Rajani, 22, two undergraduates in Ernakulam, jump into a granite quarry, killing themselves.
- August 25, 2001: Two tribal girls from Idukki, 15-year-old Ragini and Anju, 22, commit suicide when they can't live together.

## Living example



Sree Nandu, Sheela

Hated by all, including their parents, they thought of suicide as a way to escape. We request activists to save the society. We request the police to question the couple and condemn their actions. We request others to help them.

# Probe into teenage suicide cases

Police officers have ruled out that two were involved in lesbian relationship.

# "My family avoided me for different sexual orientation"

Kerala: Anuradha (name changed) is a lesbian and disowned by her family as her sexual orientation was different from theirs.



## PATHETIC PLIGHT

When Anuradha's parents found out that she was differently oriented, they started behaving abnormally. Anuradha's father had a business and was made to shift to another place.



Some friends and relatives of the two girls said they would receive snide comments for public display of affection.

The victims' families reportedly had a verbal feud. The girls' families were angry with each other. The girls' families were angry with each other. The girls' families were angry with each other.

# সোনাচূড়ায় দুই তরুণীর দেহ উদ্ধার

নিজস্ব সংবাদদাতা : হলদিয়া, ২১শে ফেব্রুয়ারি - সোমবার সকালে নন্দীগ্রামের সোনাচূড়ায় দুই তরুণীর মৃতদেহ উদ্ধার করলো পুলিশ। এদের নাম স্বপ্না মণ্ডল (২৩) ও সুজাতা মণ্ডল (১৯)। সুজাতা বিবাহিত ছিলেন। পুলিশ সূত্রে জানা গেছে এরা দু'জনে খুঁড়তুতো-জ্যেতুতুতো দু'বোন। সোনাচূড়ার গোলপাড়ার পূর্ব পার্শ্বের মাঠে এদিন সকালে গামছা দিয়ে দু'জনের হাত বাঁধা অবস্থায় মৃতদেহ

# একই গাছে দুই যুবতীর ঝুলন্ত দেহ

তপন বন্দ্যোপাধ্যায় • বসিরহাট

৫ মে : মজলুম ভোজের বাগানে একই গাছে জালে দুই যুবতীর দেহ ঝুলতে দেখে হিন্দু-মুসলমানের যোগেশপায়ে সাপকর চাওয়া দেখা যায়। দুই যুবতী একই গাছে আঁকড়া হলে, মা' কি এর পিছনে অন্য রহস্য আছে পুলিশ তা ঘটিয়ে দেখবে। পুলিশ তদন্ত শুরু করে ৩। পুলিশ জানিয়েছে, মৃত দুই যুবতীর নাম অনিমা মণ্ডল (১৮) ও ভাসুধরান (২০)। দু'জনের মরণো গভীর বন্ধু ছিল। দু'জনেই বাড়ি হিন্দু-মুসলমান যোগেশপায়ে বাজারের মিত্র চৌরাস্তা মিলন সড়কের কাছে। অনিমা ও ভাসু দু'জনের বাবা মজলুম ভোজের বাগানে প্রায়ই। মেয়েদের সম্পর্কে যেমন খোঁজখবর রাখেন না। অনিমা ও ভাসু দুই পরিবারেরই আর্থিক অবস্থা খারাপ। অনিমা ও ভাসু দু'জনেই দক্ষিণ ২৪ পরগনা জেলায় সোনারপুরে পরিচালিত কাজ করত। সপ্তাহ বানেক আগে দু'জনে একই সঙ্গে সোনারপুর থেকে যোগেশপায়ে বাড়ি আসে। প্রায়শ্চল দুই বন্ধু প্রায়ই এসে হেঁচকি কা। সারানিন পাড়ায় যোগেশপায়ে কাজ করত। এর ফলে বাড়ি থেকে বকাবাকি করে দু'জনে। যোগেশপায়ে বাজারে হিন্দু-মুসলমানের আসর ছিল। দু'জনে সেই আসরে গিয়ে রাত ১২টা পর্যন্ত গান গান। গানের পর দু'জনে হিন্দু-মুসলমান যোগেশপায়ে বাজারে গামছা দিয়ে জড়িয়ে। তার পর





# OBJECTIVES

## The objectives of this research are:

- i. To document experiences of violence and violation faced by women with non-normative sexual orientation, particularly the LBT persons.
- ii. To document testimonies of family members and other persons residing inside the intimate circle of the non-normative woman about their experiences vis-à-vis her sexuality.
- iii. To document narrations of normative persons from different walks of life to know their feelings, ideas, levels of acceptance/non-acceptance of non-normative sexualities, particularly the LBT persons.
- iv. To document accounts of Women's rights and LBT rights activists of bridging and/or failing to bridge the existing gap between the movements.
- v. To collate, analyze and synchronize the data thus collected and synthesize it as a manual suggesting effective advocacy strategies against violence and violation on women with non-normative sexual orientation, particularly the LBT persons.









# METHODOLOGY

Our research is completely based on the interviews collected from different cross sections of the society in order to document and map violence and rights violations happening in the lives of lesbians, bisexual women and female to male transpersons.

Using oral narratives as tool of feminist research methodology is internationally accepted. We have been using this methodology for quite a long time now; it began with collecting first person narratives of LBT persons and publishing them with a story-flavor for general reader since 2005. In course of collecting those narratives we could understand the immense potential of this process and also the cathartic element hidden in it. Therefore for mapping violence and violation, oral narratives was our first choice as basic tools.

We divided our respondents into three major categories. First was the woman with non-normative sexual orientation, the LBTs, second category was further divided into two sub-categories, LBT's intimate space and larger society and third category was women's rights and LBT rights activists.

In this research we have placed the LBTs in the centre. In their private space their experiences of violence and violations are our primary data.

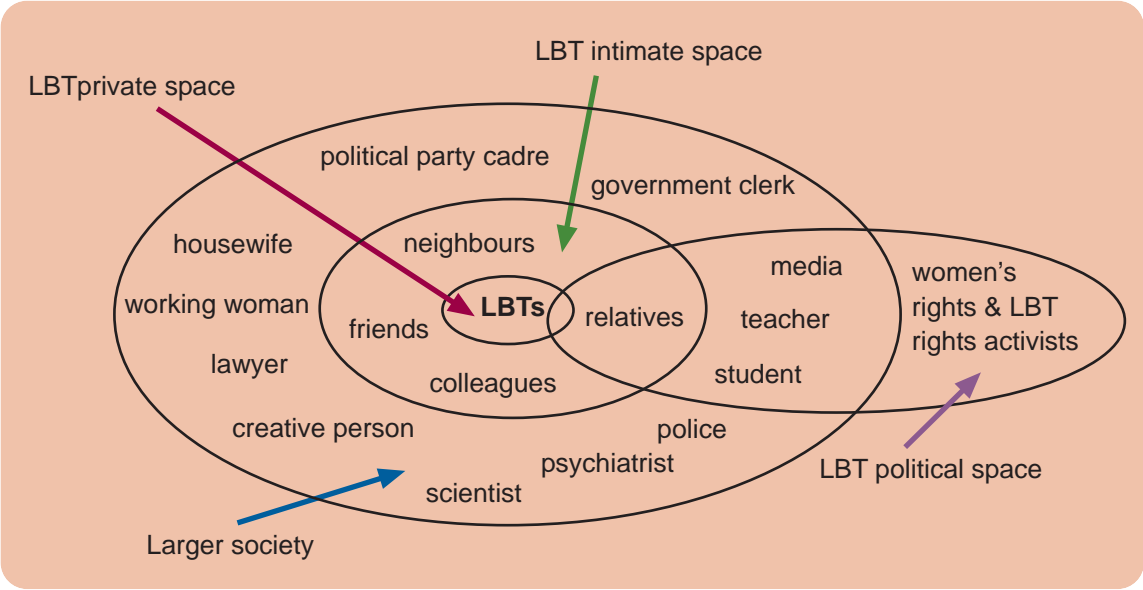
Complimentary to their experiences are those who inhabit their intimate sphere and the persons from the normative larger society outside their selves. Our next step was interaction



with the second layer, the intimate space around the LBT person shared by her immediate and extended family, friends, colleagues, neighbors. We have tried to uncover the level of tolerance or intolerance, hatred, homophobic expressions or empathy towards a LBT sister/daughter/friend/colleague/neighbor or any other relationships through these testimonies. This is the LBT persons' immediate reality.

The general non-queer society forms the outer range of the second layer where narratives of normative people from the society have been documented. If this research aims to address issues of violence and violation on LBT persons, accounts of people from the non-queer parts of the society who could give meaningful insights both positive and negative are necessary, because it is the general mass around us that creates, nurtures and implements various forms of violence and violation on LBT persons and also helps us fight back.

From the 'regular normative' we traveled towards the 'special normative' in the third category, that is people who are already into the rights movement, who already are conversant in the rights language. Here we had dialogue with women's rights and LBT rights activists who have either etched out ways of complimenting each other's movements or are engaged in doing so. As we believe that a lesbian's primary identity is that of a woman and that is why she is doubly discriminated, we only naturally wanted to document the critical yet crucial relationship between the women's rights and the LBT rights movements for the last twenty five years in India.



*Pictorial representation of classification of respondents*

The diagram here tries to explain in three layers the private space inhabited by the LBT (Category I), the intimate personal space where s/he interacts with her/his family, friends, colleagues, and neighbors (Category IIA), the larger civic society that forms the outer cover of her/his existence (Category IIB) and finally the political sphere of women's rights and LBT rights activists (Category III) that overlaps all the other segments and tries to politicize LBT rights as women's rights issue.

The data thus generated from these three levels of in-depth interviews would help us chart out effective advocacy strategies to combat overt and/or covert homophobia present in the society as well as to ensure rights for the woman with non-normative sexual orientation.

## 4.1 Process adopted for each interview in each category

1. Selection of interviewers and respondents
2. Training of interviewers
3. Obtaining consent of the respondents
4. Audio recording the interviews
5. Transcribing the interviews
6. Translating the interviews
7. Coding the interviews
8. Compilation of the coded data
9. Summarizing the interviews from the coded data
10. Collating and preparing the master summary
11. Archiving the audio cassettes, transcriptions, translations, coded data and summaries

### 4.1.1 Selection of interviewers and respondents

We had selected a team of interviewers, all members of Sappho for equality and prepared a list of respondents for this research. Three of the research team members had given interviews, two in the LBT category and one as a LBT rights activist. For the LBT category we had selected peer interviewers, for the intimate relation category senior (both in age and experience) members of the research team were chosen, professionally qualified persons from the research team were engaged for interviewing larger civil society and for the last category we had involved those research team members who are most actively participating in the rights movements.

Selection of respondents also demanded some aforethought, as to a) who would be the LBT respondents – it was done on a lesbian/bisexual/F to M transperson plus age/class/education/profession/marital status/location basis, b) which would be the subcategories of the civil society – it was done on a class/gender/education/profession/age/occupation basis and c) how far can we travel to which organizations and individuals to collect a balanced input on the interrelation of the women's rights and LBT rights movements – it was done on budget

- location relationship/individual - organizational ratio/women's rights - LBT rights percentage basis. For the intimate circle, we had accepted whoever was kind enough to help us with her/his time, who qualified for this category. This was the toughest to reach/handle group.

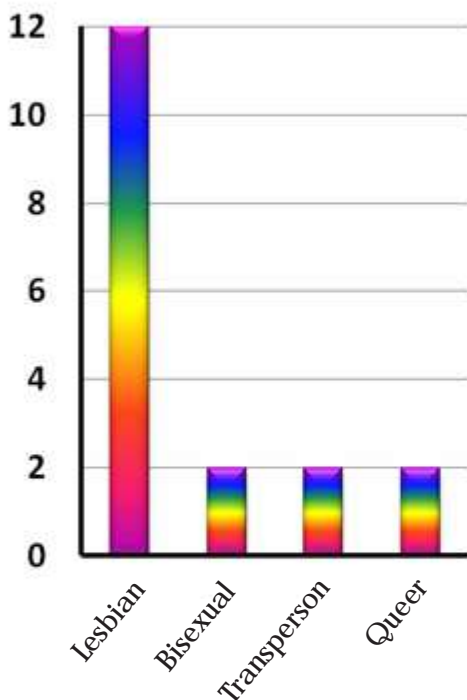
Total number of interviews - 75

| Categories                           | Sub-categories   | Number of Interviews in each sub-category | Total number of respondents in each category | Duration of each interview |                       |
|--------------------------------------|------------------|---|--|----------------------------|-----------------------|
| Category I (LBTs)                    | Individual       | 18  | 20   | 1.5 hours to 3 hours       |                       |
|                                      | Group            | 2   |  |                            |                       |
| Category IIA (LBT's Intimate circle) | Family           | 6   | 13   | 30 minutes to 1 hour       |                       |
|                                      | Friend           | 3   |  |                            |                       |
|                                      | Colleague        | 3   |  |                            |                       |
|                                      | Neighbor         | 1   |  |                            |                       |
| Category IIB (Larger society)        | Student          | 3   | 25   | 30 minutes to 1 hour       |                       |
|                                      | Teacher          | 3   |  |                            |                       |
|                                      | Housewife        | 3   |  |                            |                       |
|                                      | Government Clerk | 3   |  |                            |                       |
|                                      | Working woman    | 2   |  |                            |                       |
|                                      | Media person     | 2   |  |                            |                       |
|                                      | Creative person  | 2   |  |                            |                       |
|                                      | Psychiatrist     | 2   |  |                            |                       |
|                                      | Police           | 2   |  |                            |                       |
|                                      | Lawyer           | 1   |  |                            |                       |
|                                      | Scientist        | 1   |  |                            |                       |
| Category III (Activists)             | East zone        | Individual                                | 3  | 17                         | 45 minutes to 2 hours |
|                                      |                  | Group                                     | 1  |                            |                       |
|                                      | West zone        | Individual                                | 3  |                            |                       |
|                                      |                  | Group                                     | 2  |                            |                       |
|                                      | North zone       | Individual                                | 3  |                            |                       |
|                                      |                  | Group                                     | 2  |                            |                       |
|                                      | South zone       | Individual                                | 2  |                            |                       |
|                                      |                  | Group                                     | 1  |                            |                       |

### 4.1.1.1 Demographic Representation of Individual LBTs

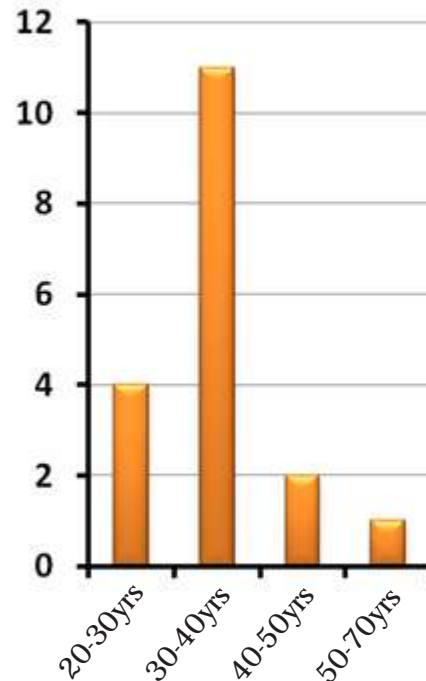
We have taken in depth interviews of 18 individuals and 2 groups who identify as lesbian, bisexual woman and F to M transperson. The two focus group discussions that are included in this section are coded as LBTG1 and LBTG2. These groups are identity based support groups, working as safe space for lesbians, bisexual women and transpersons in two different cities in eastern and southern parts of India. Both the groups though city based, cater to people from rural and suburban areas. The Kolkata based group caters to middle to lower middle class, educated persons mostly identifying as lesbians and the Bengaluru based group caters to lower to lower middle class, less educated persons mostly identifying as F to M transpersons. 17 out of the 18 individual respondents are members of the Kolkata based group including two of the research team members also participated as respondents in this category. [Please see ANNEXURE, page 65 for more details].

*Sexual orientation*



Number of respondents

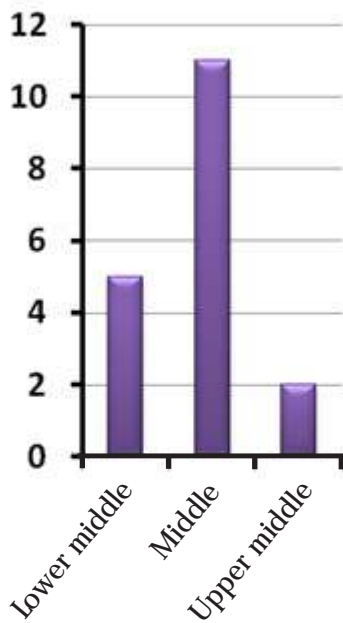
*Range of age*



Number of respondents

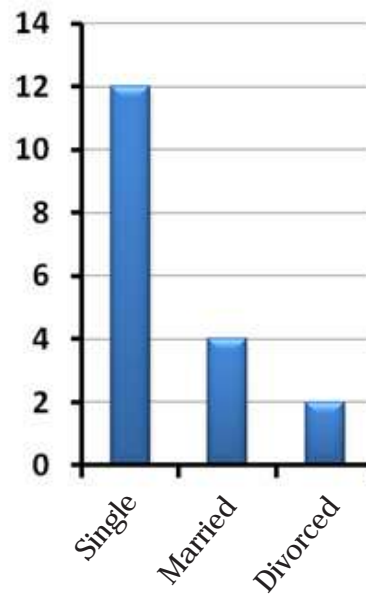
Total number of respondents 18

*Socio-economic class*



■ Number of respondents

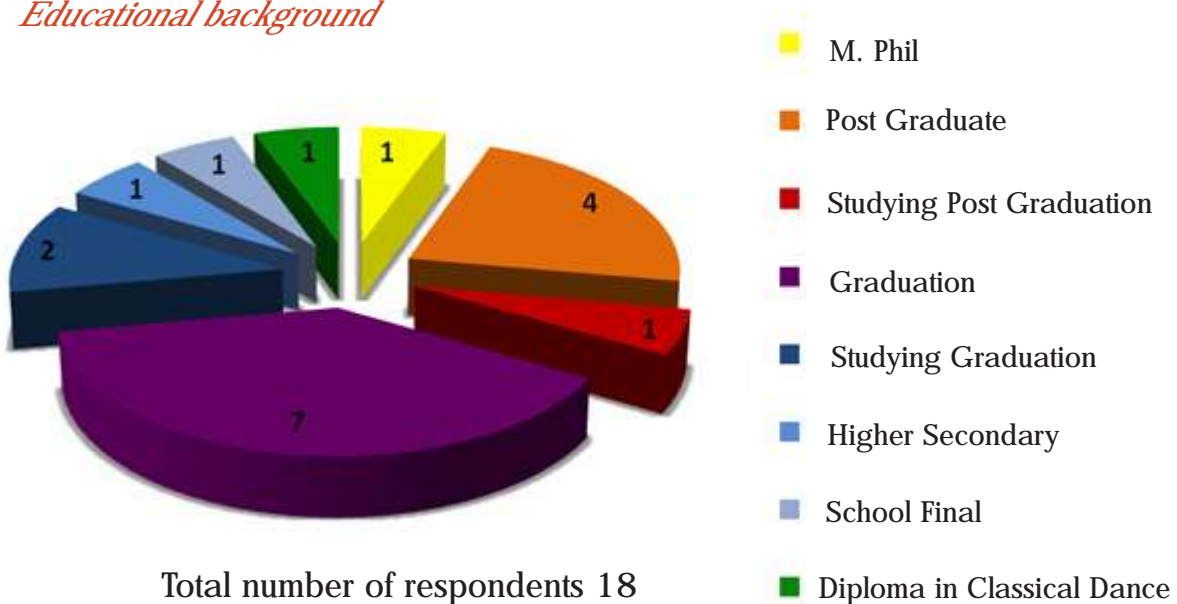
*Marital status*



■ | Number of respondents

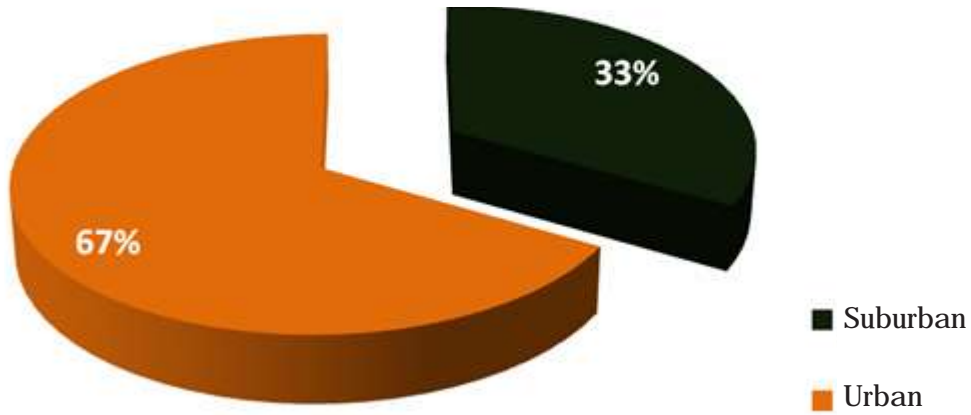
Total number of respondents 18

*Educational background*



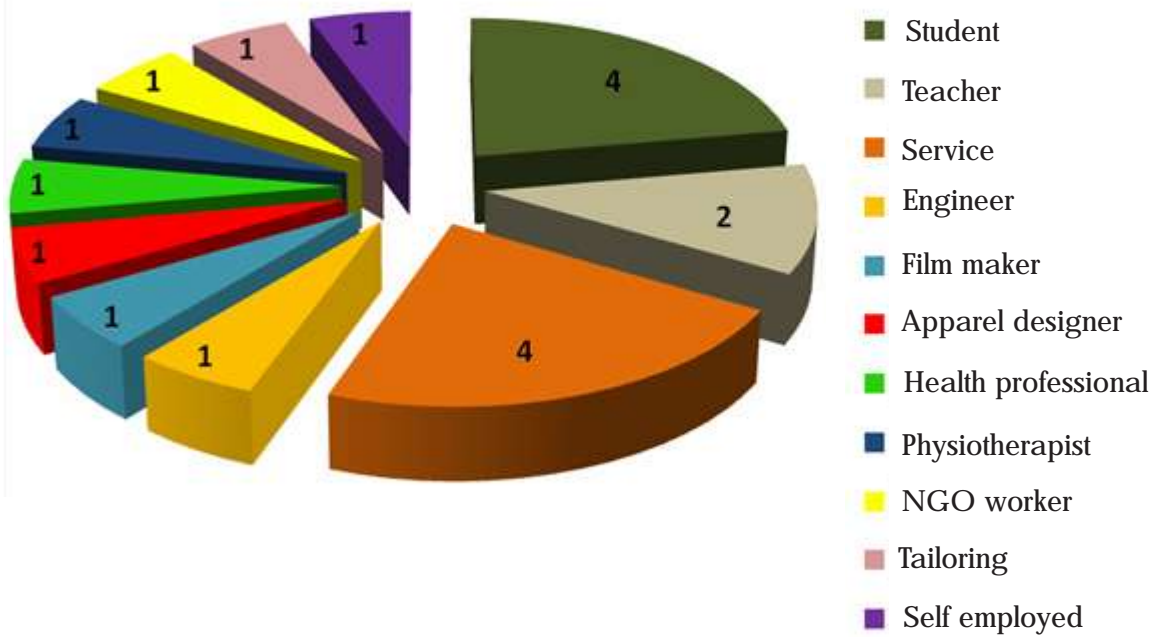
Total number of respondents 18

*Location*



Total number of respondents 18

*Occupation*

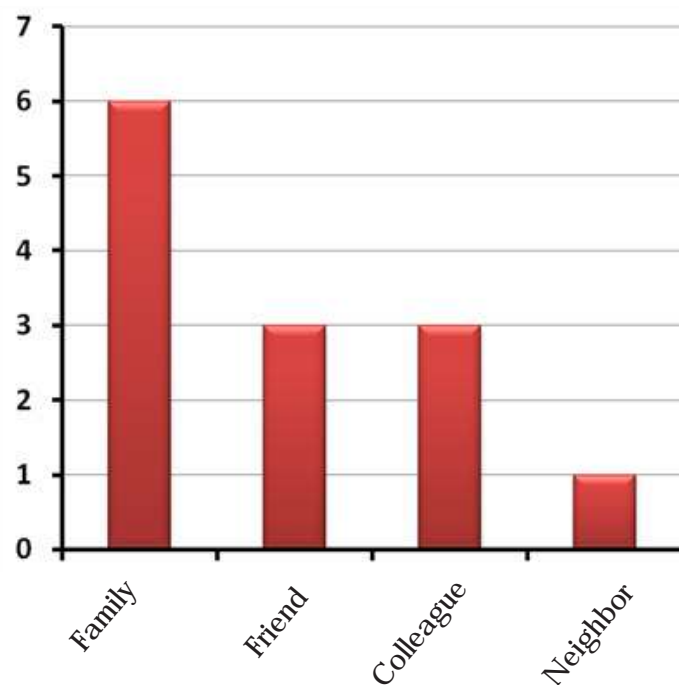


Total number of respondents 18

### 4.1.1.2 Demographic Representation of LBT's Intimate Circle

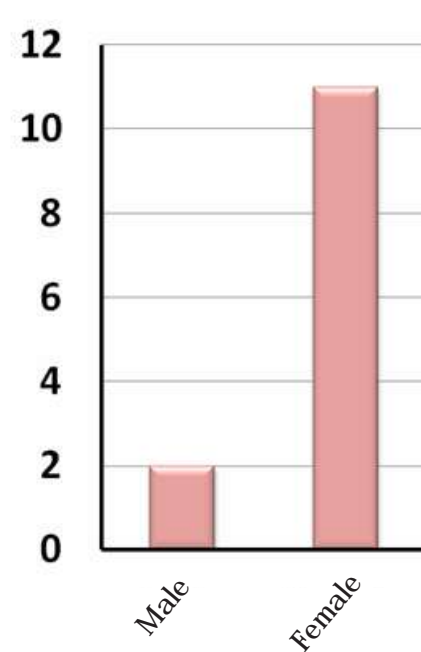
In Category II (the intimate circle) we interviewed 13 persons, two mothers, one brother, two sisters, one sister-in-law, three friends, three colleagues and one neighbor. All of our respondents in this category know about their close one's orientation and they all have voluntarily consented to talk about this issue vis-à-vis their close one. [Please see ANNEXURE, page 69 for more details].

*Intimate circle*



■ Number of respondents

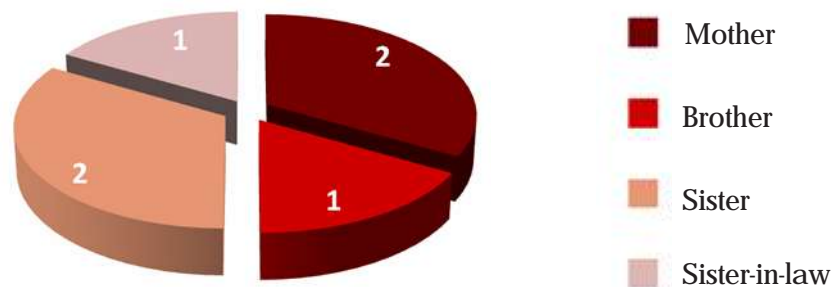
*Gender division*



■ Number of respondents

Total number of respondents 13

*Family*



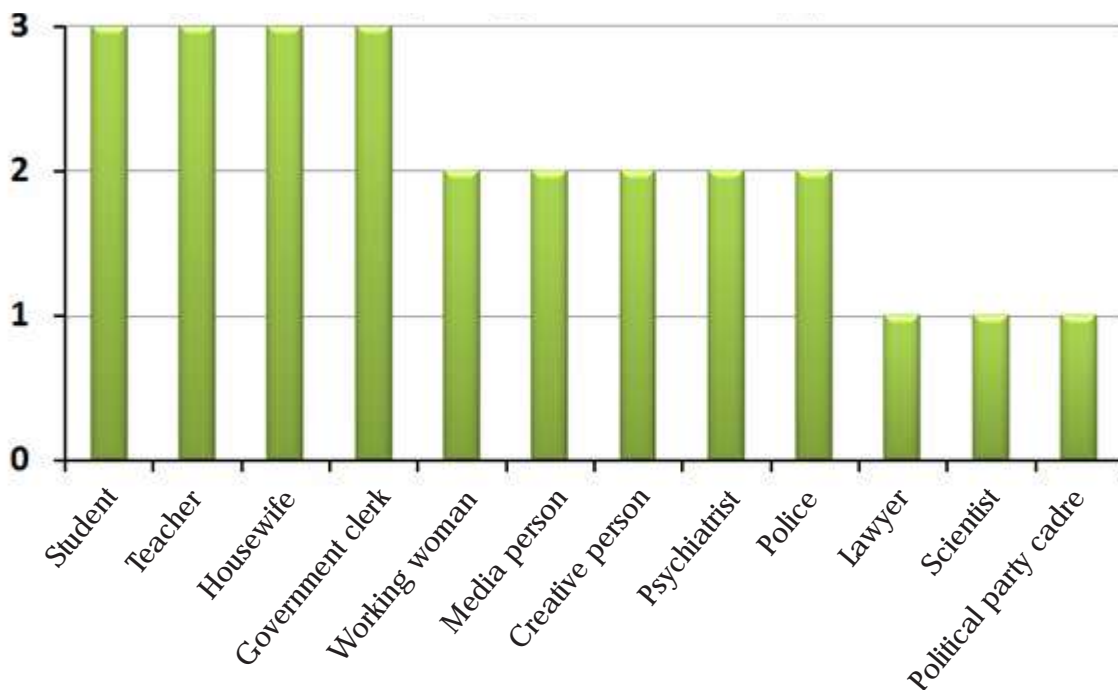
Total number of respondents 6



### 4.1.1.3 Demographic Representation of Larger Society

We have selected 25 individuals from different cross section of the society irrespective of gender, age and educational qualification. We tried to be as diverse as possible with respect to their occupations and ourselves restricted within urban and suburban locality and middle to upper middle class, with one person coming from the lower middle class, in terms of socio-economic background. [Please see ANNEXURE, page 69 for more details]

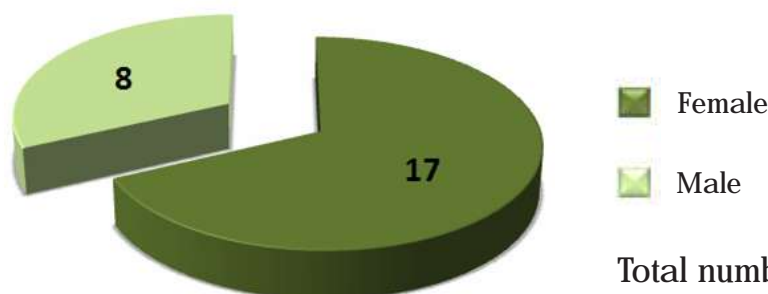
#### *Larger society*



■ Number of respondents

Total number of respondents 25

#### *Gender division*

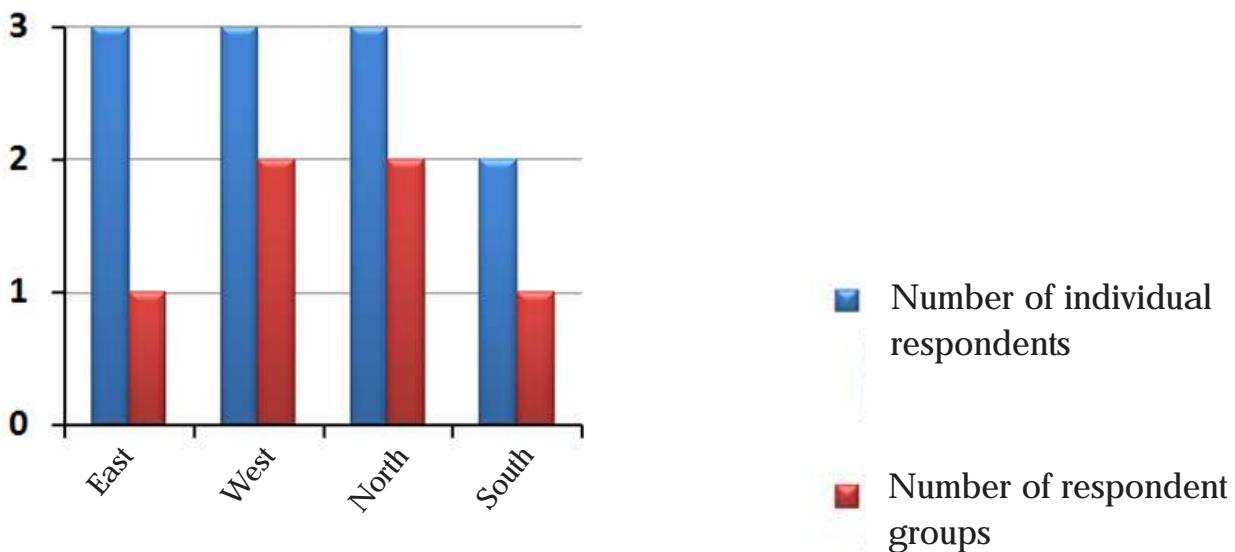


Total number of respondents 25

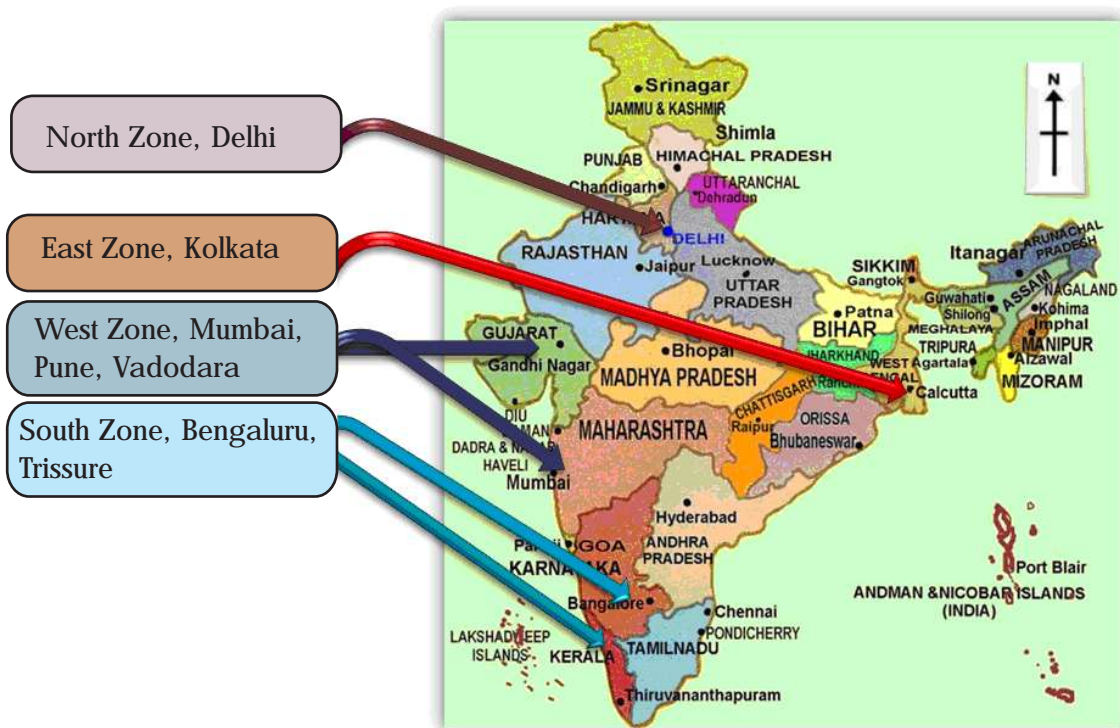
### 4.1.1.4 Demographic Representation of Activists

In this category we interviewed 11 individuals and 6 groups from eastern, western, northern and southern zones of India. [Please see ANNEXURE, page 70 for more details].

#### Activists



Total number of respondents 17



### 4.1.2 Interviewing

We took all the interviews with full informed consent of the respondents. We did not use any specific questionnaire for the interviews; instead we categorized it into themes. We selected a number of themes [Please see ANNEXURE, page 72 for more details] on which we would carry on the conversation. Selection of the themes was done in consensus of all the research team members. The themes were selected keeping in mind that we are supposed to collect feelings and experiences of violence and violations while interviewing the LBTs, opinions on rights issues and conflicts from the activists, and impressions on an extremely tabooed and touchy subject like homosexuality from the larger society (including the intimates of the LBTs). We kept the interviews free flowing so that the respondents can open up unhesitatingly. The interviewer only saw to it that the conversation fell in track with a few comments or giving clues on the themes. Each interview was given a specific code number to maintain anonymity. The language of interviews were selected according to the comfort level of the respondent, most of the interviews were done in the local language, which is Bengali, some in the national language, that is Hindi and some in English.

### 4.1.3 Transcribing

We transcribed each interview word by word and whatever we heard from the audio cassettes. As we delved into an extremely sensitive and private corner of a person's self that dealt with violence and violations we tried to transfer every emotion on paper as far as possible by documenting non-verbal anecdotes like pause, silence, sobbing, crying, hesitating, fumbling, laughing (sarcastically, loudly, angrily) so that the sensitivity and intensity of the narrative is kept intact. Transcriptions are mostly done by the interviewers themselves with a few exceptions and names and others identity points are obliterated at this level so that translators could be hired from outside without disclosing identities of the respondents.

### 4.1.4 Translating

Each interview was translated into English if it was taken in any regional language (Bengali or Hindi) and translated it into Bengali (the vernacular language) if the interview was taken in English/Hindi. Translators hired for this purpose were proficient as well as issue sensitive, though many of them were not from the LBT community/group.

### 4.1.5 Coding

We used number codes against each theme under each category and then critically went through the transcriptions and translations putting the specific number codes allotted for a particular theme beside the region in which that particular theme is expressed in the interview.

The themes and code numbers of each category are given in ANNEXURE [please see pages 72-73].

#### 4.1.6 Compiling and Summarizing

All selected regions of the whole interview under each specific code were compiled and then summarized.

#### 4.1.7 Data Collating and Preparing the Master Summary

The master summary was prepared for each category by collating all summaries under each code of every interview. This master summary is our research finding for each category.

#### 4.1.8 Archiving

Audio cassettes, transcriptions, translations, coded data and summaries are stored in a secured place.

### 4.2 Special Inclusion

We had adopted a unique methodology to include an account of a deceased LBT person given by her same sex partner. It was agreed by the research team that the partner of the deceased girl is the legitimate heir of their joint history of love, and hatred that they both faced; therefore her account of the incident was most important. This interview was taken in two parts. The principal investigator had taken the primary interview and a co-investigator later talked to the principal investigator to bring out her interpretation and feelings about the narrations of violence and violation. The team had also gone through some of the letters written by the deceased girl to her partner which have been archived as supportive document. This particular interview was important as it brought us face to face with various forms of violence at the same time. The deceased girl, who was practically an orphan, had faced worst kind of physical violence, rape by her own brother, her only close family and cousin brother, as punishment of her depravity. We can only assume the kind of psychological trauma she must have faced and fear and helplessness that actually made her loose sight and the very purpose of her existence became void. She decided to marry to get rid of this situation, instead died an unnatural death just a few months after her marriage.

We had treated this case with special interest and sensitivity. Partner of the deceased girl recounted their relationship and the incidents of rape, physical abuse and psychological threat given to her by her brothers. While narrating these incidents we also noticed the amount of emotional trauma this girl had gone through while in the relationship, her heartbreak, when her partner decided to marry a man and put an end to this relationship and the final blow being her death which this girl is not being able to cope with. So we got two violence accounts from a single narrative which facilitated even a third. The principal investigator had taken the interview of the partner of the deceased girl and she had also interacted with the deceased girl herself through tele-counseling via helpline and also had face to face interaction more than once. The account of the partner along with principal investigator's own interpretation of the deceased girl's life story opened up another chain of emotional trauma within herself, which was addressed through the cathartic process of sharing it with the co-investigator.

We had used multiple interpretation method for the same narrative and compared those to find out the subtle and nuanced information about violence and violation other than those present in gross forms. Three different accounts were prepared, one for the deceased girl, one for her partner and one for the principal investigator.

### 4.3 Ethical Fiber

As part of our research ethics, questions of confidentiality and anonymity were fully observed. The interviewers were encouraged to identify and at the same time dissociate with the respondents as far as possible. Following the feminist research process, we needed to relate and politicize our personal identification with the 'subjects', but at the same time to maintain a critical viewing angle we needed to dissociate from them and have a subjective-objective interplay. Especially with the LBT respondents, it was a subtle and complex situation as the interviewer and respondents were often close friends, associates or comrades. The training imparted to the interviewers covered these areas and the interviewers had performed their tasks well.

Since this research dealt with human beings and their emotions, we had to be very careful about our research ethics. The steps we had taken to maintain a high degree of ethical value are:

- 0 Informed consent from all the respondents and researchers
- 0 Complete anonymity right from the transcription level as all translators were not from the community

- 0 Complete confidentiality even within the team [if a researcher wanted to discuss some issues with the team, she had to use code number]
- 0 After each interview the respondent was given a choice of interviewing the interviewer to minimize power hierarchy
- 0 Each interview was sent back to the respondent after transcription, for her/his approval

## 4.4 Research Team

Principal Investigator: Dr. Subhagata Ghosh

Co-Investigators: Ms. Sumita Basu Bandyopadhyay  
Dr. Ranjita Biswas

Other Team Members: Ms. Minakshi Sanyal  
Ms. Sumita Majumder  
Ms. Sudeshna Pal  
Ms. Agnes Joseph

Report Writing Team: Dr. Subhagata Ghosh  
Ms. Sumita Basu Bandyopadhyay  
Dr. Ranjita Biswas

We had also hired a part time research assistant, transcribers (from the community), and translators.



# RESEARCH FINDINGS

Violence is an operative word for Indian women in general, though they perhaps do not recognize its existence in everyday life. They are living in the continuum of violence and violation; and by virtue of being biological women LBTs are also a part of that continuum. But LBTs are not just biological women; they are sexual women proclaiming definite sexual choice. Hence they are doubly violated, as women and as women with same sex preference. Our research project has tried to map violence and violation done to this particular category of women, by recording and documenting violence on LBT persons by family and society, intra-relational violence within the LBT community and activists' stand vis-à-vis women's rights and LBT rights movement.

To begin with we tried to cull out definitions of violence and violation from all the responses from all the categories. Almost all the respondents had segregated violence between physical and mental. Something done to cause bodily harm, to make the victim obey the perpetrator, is physical violence, which is tangible and there are some legal recourse available to deal with such violence. Mental violence is to break the victim's spirit, so that she/he has no other option but to obey the perpetrator. It is more subtle in form and more difficult to be addressed through the existing legal system of the country. Other than these two broad categorizations there are finer layers of violence and violation and the relationship between these two. As silence, or knowledge or ideology as forms of violence. As violation in itself being a form of violence, or bringing in the concept of context (time, place and individual) as part of



understanding violence and violation. In a way violence and violation is dealt here as a general overarching idea as well as a definite contextualized one. We needed both, as gender based violence is a more generalized form of violence whereas sexual orientation based violence is more contextual. About violation, one thing was interesting that most of the respondents have linked violation with rights, violation is not letting one have her/his rights, but understanding of rights per se is rather vague for almost all.

## 5.1 Category I (The LBTs)

This is the section where we are taking an account of actual violence and violation happening on LBT persons. From the findings of this category we have been able to collect documents on:

- o A varied range of understandings of violence and violations
- o Issues of violence and violation
- o Different forms of violence and violation
- o Sources of violence and violation
- o Coping techniques of the individuals

### 5.1.1 Understandings of Violence and Violations

Violence is understood by all the LBT respondents in very clear terms but violation is not so explicit. The relationship between violence and violation are unclear but that the act of violence emerges out of violation of rights is clear. Power relationships vis-à-vis violence, optionlessness as violation, self inflicted violence and violation of one's own rights has clearly come out at practical as well as conceptual levels. Internalization of violence and violation that is practiced in the society and enacting the same in intimate relationships is a consciousness that became helpful for many of our respondents. The realization that the patriarchal framework has been internalized by those who are supposed to challenge it, was a challenging moment. The chain of violence, in which violence gives birth to even more severe forms of violence, within relationships and also in the society is another concern expressed by our respondents. Similarly, 'how far is too far' is a question asked by many to understand the limits of own rights vis-à-vis family.

## 5.1.2 Issues of Violence and Violation

Issues of violence and violation experienced by respondents in this category are generally both sexual orientation based and gender based. Overt violence had been experienced by LBTs for not conforming to the gender roles. Along with that we have noted specific forms of violence happening particularly because a person is an illegal child or an only child or an orphan or a married woman with children or a nun inside a convent or having a mentally ill father and so on. It clearly indicates that violence happens to people who do not conform to norms and expectations of the society, an only child is supposed to fulfill all her parent's dreams or an illegal child is not supposed to exist.

## 5.1.3 Different Forms of Violence and Violations

We have categorized instances of violence and violations faced by our LBT respondents under different forms. The numbers within bracket is the number of varied instances of violence and violation faced by LBTs that came out from this research.

[Please see ANNEXURE, page 74 - 83 for detailed lists for each form].

- o Physical violence and violation [31]
- o Psychological violence [139]
- o Verbal abuse [37]
- o Any other form of violence and violation [20] [within educational institutions/work spaces/health care services/support groups]
- o Gender based violence and violation [29]
- o Self inflicted violence and violation [39]
- o Respondent as perpetrator [41]
- o Violence and violation within the LBT relationship [49]

### 5.1.3.1 Physical Violence and Violation

We have identified many forms of physical violence, 31 in number to be precise. This includes rape by own brother, murder/abatement to suicide by husband, forced sex by partner, consumption of contraceptive pills by force by partner, medical violence as head to foot examination including vagina by male doctor after learning about the person's sexual orientation, innumerable instances of sexual abuse by close relatives, neighbors, known persons, different forms of mob violence beginning with stone pelting to severe beating, police case, false legal case, physical captivity by family as well as by partner, physical abuse like beating, throttling, using teeth, nail,

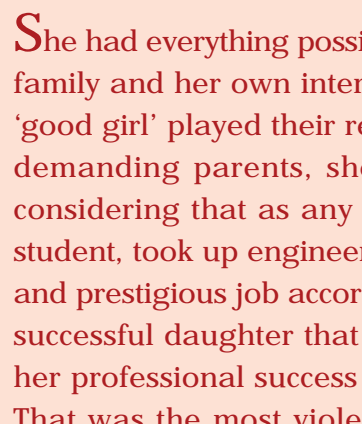
sharp objects, cigarette butts to cause physical harm by partner, and many more. It is interesting yet painful to note that most of this violence is perpetrated either by family or by the same sex partner.

A young girl, lost both her parents at 3, was living with her uncle's family along with her own elder brother. At 17 she fell in love with another girl and as expected her cousin brother and her own brother both came to know about it. How disgraceful, they thought. They decided to teach her a lesson, actually many lessons, as they both raped her repeatedly just to purify her soul and bring her back to the sacred path of heterosexuality. But the girl got their intention all wrong and plunged into severe depression; she was practically an orphan, yet to complete her studies, dependant on the uncle and her own brother, who happened to be the only family left to her. Her girlfriend was as young as she was and not particularly equipped to handle the complexities of this situation. She decided to marry, she may have thought that marrying a man would give her the stability, peace (?) and family honor. Her family was happy, her girl friend was sad. We do not know how she exactly felt as we never met her after her marriage. She died within four months of marriage, supposedly by hanging herself, a young girl of 23.

### 5.1.3.2 Psychological Violence

Psychological violence has 139 entries in our list. Frustration, anger, helplessness, humiliation, dejection, worthlessness, self doubt, phobia, anxiety, psychosomatic diseases, attempt to suicide, stress, trauma, distress, public shaming, paranoia, panic, unlovedness, claustrophobia, hatred, loss of self worth – these are the basic emotions that has appeared in different permutations and combinations throughout these interviews. The family has exerted as much emotional pressure as they could to bring the 'erring member back to sanity' and the same sex partner has on the other hand done everything under her control to keep this cow tied to her noose.

It often seemed like a jigsaw puzzle to us, every piece fitting into the other. A is getting harassed by her family, feels frustrated and angry, takes that out on B, her partner, who is also emotionally tortured by her family thinks A is her only refuge, so she never retaliates, thus designing an exact replica of hetero-patriarchal violence within a homo-relational boundary.



She had everything possible to make herself successful and happy. But society, family and her own internalization of patriarchal norms, her need to be the 'good girl' played their respective parts to perfection. An only child of highly demanding parents, she always gave in to her parents' wishes without considering that as any kind of violence on her being. She was a brilliant student, took up engineering as her profession and is doing a quite well paid and prestigious job according to her parents' demand. She is the brilliant and successful daughter that they had wished for. But neither her brilliance nor her professional success helped her when she fell in love with another girl. That was the most violent blow to her parent's reputation and they were beyond themselves in shame and anger when they discovered her secret affair. Her parents went to every possible person they knew, relatives, friends, neighbors to help them come up with ideas to combat this 'vile crime' by their own daughter. These people pressurized her, her parents emotionally threatened her, and a male friend who she had confided in, blackmailed her to marry him! She married, as she did not want to remain an outcast, her own honor as a social being was at stake with her parents' honor thrown into it for good measure. She actually believed that she is going to be happy with this 'friend' turned husband who used her vulnerability to become a messiah for her parents. And she in return to this wonderful proposal agreed to be his wife, gave her parents their much needed son-in-law, and continued to keep her same-sex partner tied down to this relationship without a future, violating her rights and getting violated at every step. Next came the question of posterity, a family demand again, and definitely a justified demand, which she could not ignore, though by then she knew that her marriage is a compromise, her parents have always used her to fulfill their own unresolved desires. An expecting yet expectationless woman, she is living within that invisible cloak of 'societal respectability', 'obedience' and 'family prestige' that is slowly strangling her towards an imperceptible death.

### 5.1.3.3 Verbal Abuse

Kinds of verbal abuse identified are in this process 37. Verbal abuse ranging from 'slut' to 'daughter-fucker', from 'non-man' to 'fuck your ass' – has no end, no rational explanation. And most of these came from closest of relatives — mothers, brothers, husbands or even same sex partners. A mother who was almost 70, when she came to know about her daughter's orientation, her first reaction was of horrified stupor. The daughter was married by then and had a 12 year old girl child and the mother not knowing how

to cope or combat lashed, at her daughter with extremely abusive words - does she [the LBT daughter] feel sexually attracted to her own 12 year old girl child?! We have another F to M transperson, who was forced into marriage with a man and had a child out of that marriage. This transperson's female partner verbally abused him/her calling ugly words meaning pseudo-man for his/her maternal inclination towards that biological child.

#### 5.1.3.4 Other Forms of Violence and Violation

Violence happens to a LBT person in almost all sectors of her life. If her identity gets exposed she can be hunted down by her class mates or school/college authorities. She can be punished by taking away her school game-team captaincy or by denying her promotion. We have come across students who discontinued education as they were not being able to cope with open hatred and slandering by fellow students and the authorities for their non-girly attire/attitude. The same happens in work places where promotion is denied, work opportunity is withdrawn and general work atmosphere gets so much vitiated that an employee has to opt for transfer or quit her job. There are instances where a LBT person was sacked after her identity got exposed under some other pretext. Violence within the health care system, particularly psychiatric violence is very much to be noted in this context. LBT persons are treated as sexual perverts not just by lay persons but by qualified psychiatrists and other medical practitioners, which gives them the license to be physically/sexually/psychologically abusive to the person. Against a dark back drop of violence and violation, a support group, may or may not be identity based, can help people to a great extent. But in few cases violence and violation had been experienced by our LBT respondents from the support groups where they took refuge.

A robust young girl realizes that she has a sexual inclination towards persons of her same sex. She knows it is wrong, her surroundings tell her so, her friends tell her so. Nowhere in the romantic movies, in popular literature, in everyday life, can she see a reflection of her desires. Surely not everyone is wrong, those everyone who say that she is wrong! It was at this juncture when she decided to go to a doctor. The doctor is the most venerable, the most knowledgeable person in her own knowledge arena. She went to check if she could be cured or if it is a disease at all, she was tired to being afraid of herself. The doctor, a general physician, must be a knowledgeable one, when he came to know about her desires, decided to look for any abnormality in the body. If mind is desiring

the abnormal can body be left behind?! He conducted a head to foot physical examination of the body that included probing inside the vagina of a confused, afraid, girl of 22, who had come to seek help from a dependable person. The body probe did not help her, but it did cure her from her internalized homophobia.

### 5.1.3.5 Gender Based Violence and Violation

A LBT person begins her life with a double discrimination – as a woman and as a same sex loving woman. Therefore gender based violence forms a very significant part of her life. We got rampant instances of sexual abuse in this category; respondents are sexually abused by close relatives, neighbors or unknown men just because they are women. Then they went through corrective rape because of their orientation as same sex loving women. Another form of gender based violence in this category is because of gender non-conformity. A woman who does not behave or dress like a woman is not accepted in the society and there are instances that such women were driven towards committing suicide.

S/he consumed enough sleeping pills to make sure that s/he won't have to wake up again to face this world! Her/his world meant the family, the neighborhood friends and the girlfriend, all of whom participated in the violence in some way or other. A F to M transperson who transgressed gender norms and threatened the neighborhood boys by 'winning' the most beautiful belle in the locality, had too much life still left to survive emotional blackmailing, public humiliation, relational trauma, mob violence and overdose of sleeping pills. S/he gave us a detailed account of how her/his widowed mother begged her to dress and act like a woman, how the neighborhood pals started perceiving him as a threat, how her/his girlfriend's family members gathered local goons to 'teach the pervert a lesson', how s/he felt lost, dejected, frustrated, purposeless and thought of suicide as the only answer to all her/his questions. It was after this incident s/he decided to join a support group in 2005 and today s/he is one of the executive committee members of her/his organization.

### 5.1.3.6 Self Inflicted Violence and Violation, Respondent as Perpetrator, Violence and Violation within the LBT Relationship

Violence within the homo-relational structure, self inflicted violence and respondent as a perpetrator, inputs under these three codes actually brings us face to face with the most difficult issue to address, the internalized notions of hetero-patriarchy. The accounts that we collected on relational violence within the LBT relationship speaks the same language of violent heterosexual relationships. The gender binaries are very spelt out in these relationships and the adopted form is patriarchal. It is often coupled with lack of actual social support that a hetero-normative structure gets, which leaves a void, accentuating violence towards soft target, the femme partner. Therefore in the process, the LBT person becomes the perpetrator. Those who are conversant in the violence language know that survivors have a tendency of becoming the perpetrator. And it is not uncommon in our case. Violence received from outside takes a complete 360 degree turn and becomes violence directed at others. We have documented instances of such violence perpetrated by LBT persons. Self inflicted violence is the most common form of violence documented through this research. In the process of trying to cope with the society LBT persons have negated their core identity and kept on living a pseudo life or a closeted life. Or to hold on to a relationship, since LBT relationships are difficult to form, they are letting themselves be violated as much as possible, which in other words mean the age old practice of holding on to a 'bad marriage'. Internalized homophobia also plays vital role in case of self inflicted violence.

When a woman, unwomanly in dress code, looks, ways, passions, knowing her sexual orientation still chooses to marry a man just to fit into the heteronormative structure of the society, she can violate her rights and inflict violence upon herself in such a way that no outsider can. She tried to cut her toes to fit in the shoes that she thought were meant for her, though she was economically independent, educated with a fairly supportive family to back her up. She married a male friend who shared her passion for outdoor adventure sports and thought she could be happy in this way. But she never enjoyed sexual intimacy with her husband, rather was in constant fear of forced anal sex. Her husband guessed about her orientation and tortured her with threats of 'anal rape' till she mustered courage to come out of the marriage. She was one of those fortunate few who could actually undo some



of the damages done to themselves, while we have also seen a great number of LBT persons suffering within their own self created torture chambers by internalizing the heteriopatriarchial societal notions unquestioningly.

#### 5.1.4 Sources of Violence and Violations

Family, both intimate and extended, stands out as the seat of severe-most violence and violation happening on LBT persons. It can begin with psychological pressure, to emotional blackmail to mental torture and can reach up to rape to 'cure' the LBT family member. Sexual abuse is abundantly thrown in for good measure here and there in between.

The girl was forced to go to a temple and recite hymns to get rid of her evil same-sex partner. After some days when her family members realized that worshipping could avail nothing, they stopped financial support for her education and sent their daughter to her maternal uncle's house, far away from the city of Kolkata where her maternal uncle attempted to rape her. She requested her father to take her back home but was refused. Probably her father thought that it was a cock and bull story made up by her to come back to her same-sex lover. After all, the person was her maternal uncle, therefore, a respectable man! She then fled from her maternal uncle's house, collecting her passage money by selling her used clothes and came back just to know that she was disowned by her family. Her address then became a women's shelter 'Home' where she fell ill severely. When she was taken to the hospital the 'Home' authority informed her parents, who refused to come to even see her. The family completely abandoned their sick child because of her sexual orientation; a lost daughter was more acceptable than a lesbian one.

Educational institutions and workplace end as a close runner up. Especially because the authority and power they have over LBT persons as students or employees. Refusing promotion, taking away captaincy, vitiating atmosphere in such a way that a student is compelled to take a TC or victimizing a worker for her orientation, refusing job, taking away job, these are all instances of institutional power at its best display. Friends, colleagues, associates are individuals are nails and screws in the hate machinery.

She was politely asked to leave the company as women employees were not feeling safe with her! When she asked for a written complaint, the boss said that would put her into more trouble and her dues won't get cleared. But how did they come to know about your sexual orientation in the first place? When we asked her, she answered with a tinge of disbelief still lingering in her voice, 'ours was a different kind of work place, very creative, very open, we used to work together, share so much of our lives with each other, ask for help, it was a positive kind of atmosphere. So I thought I too can seek help, I too can talk about my relational issues!' However much creative, positive, open and accepting her work atmosphere was, she learnt her lesson by paying a high price of losing her livelihood as well as self respect. A lesbian is a threat to the womankind, not her male/heterosexual colleagues, or family members or road romeos, or anyone for that matter whom we see everyday glaring at us as perpetrators from print, electronic and other media.

Within relationships between LBTs, a strange yet not so strange event was identified. Expressions like 'gender-typical relational expectations leading to violence' or 'inherent violence of heterotypical relationship' was repeated over and over. Mistrust, suspicion, promiscuity, disrespect – are violent words from hetero-normative world that has found their way into their couple-dom. In one hand there is lack of security in socio-legal terms and on the other hand lack of recognition. Then there is internalized homophobia, lack of proper information and in-depth knowledge about homosexuality in general and same-sex relationship between women in particular. All these factors have contributed negatively in intimate spaces. In fact for many, homosexuality used to mean only having sex with a same sex partner. Therefore many of our respondents had entered into marriage with this idea of living a married life as well as continuing with their same sex practice, exposing themselves, their partners and their husbands into more violence and violation.

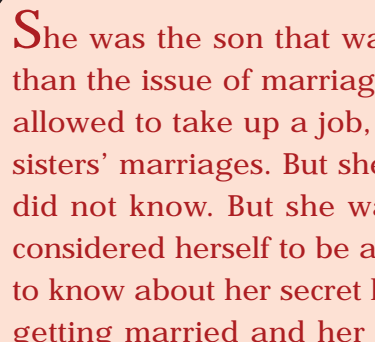
'Yes, I can give you wonderful violence stories', the young, energetic, happy face broke into excited laughter! 'I know what violence as an illegitimate child is, my father did not marry my mother and my girlfriend always used to make that an issue. She said my jali rakto [polluted blood] should be purged out when

she used to beat me severely. She used to cut my flesh with sharp objects so that I bleed profusely, once she even tore off my kurti [Indian style upper outfit] in public saying that as a lawaris [illegitimate] I do not have any honor left so I can be disrobed anywhere. And she also forced me to take contraceptive pills' . . . But why? Surely there was no question of getting pregnant, we asked. 'No, but she liked that feeling of acting like a man, as if she could get me pregnant.' The 23 year old was continuing unflinchingly with her tale, we the seasoned activists had to take a break!

As researchers we have tried to bring out a more generalized version of individual encounters with violence and violation. The instances of violence and violation that are listed reflect that generalized version where we tried to capture in an objective way, subjective cases of violence and violation happening on people. Some of the items listed are more frequent than others. We have identified one pattern of physical abuse like beating as a common occurrence, but have classified that into two parts – beating by family and beating by partner. It clearly shows violence within and outside can actually converge. Every single interview talked about variety of psychological abuse that was categorized into an exhaustive list, but a similar category was made where self inflicted violence was listed. It clearly shows again that violence within somewhere resonates with violence outside.

### 5.1.5 Coping Techniques of the Individuals

Coping techniques already explored and/or suggested to deal with violence and violation clearly shows a bipolar division. One set talks about creating a space within the society, to be self sufficient, emotionally strong, economically independent, knowledgeable, continuous dialogue with family in particular and larger society in general, joining a support group, joining the rights (women's/LBT) movement, taking help from women's organizations, creating issue awareness – these are positive approach to combat violence and violation. The other set talks about keeping a low profile, compromising as a married woman, compromising with feminine dress and/or behavioral code, living inside closet, pretending as a heterosexual and finally exercising violence against violence. As researchers we have uncovered the second group as well as the first, now as interventionists we will be building upon the first to combat the second. [Please see ANNEXURE, page 83]



She was the son that was not born to her parents in every respect other than the issue of marriage. She was brought up with good education, was allowed to take up a job, move freely, and help parents to arrange for her sisters' marriages. But she was in a secret relationship with a girl that they did not know. But she was ashamed of herself, sad for her parents, she considered herself to be a disgrace to her family. Also afraid if people came to know about her secret life, her sisters won't get married. Her sisters were getting married and her parents were asking her to get married as well, normal, simple, right wishes of parents of 'good' daughters, taking up the role of a son. She was willing to oblige her parents, left her girlfriend and went to a psychiatrist as she thought herself infected by the disease called homosexuality. The doctor was also a genuinely god fearing, honorable doctor who said it all happened because she had never tasted sex with a man and that she was assigned a 'male role' in the family. Everything will smoothen out if she marries. And she married, ready to sacrifice herself. But her husband was impotent, who used to beat her black and blue cursing her as the cause of his inability. Her in-laws branded her as the 'barren' woman, and all the while she was trying to put up with these in the name of family honor, her natal family, as well as the marital. Unfortunately for her husband and rather fortunately for her, she finally could take her own decision after getting pushed to the wall. She came out to her mother and sisters and divorced her husband on grounds of cruelty. She is today living on her own terms with her same-sex partner.

## Twist in the tale

“Positive side of violence is clear understanding of one’s own situation and the need to stand on one’s own feet”

- LBT Community Person

## 5.2 Category IIA (The Intimate Circle)

Findings of this category throw light on the reaction of the intimate space inhabited by a LBT in day to day life.

Category II A (intimate circle) constitutes the smallest section, but nonetheless, a very powerful one. Here we were dealing with people, family/friend/colleague/neighbor, who share the most intimate space with the LBT persons. The first problem faced in the very beginning was people were not willing to volunteer for interview. People, who are generally open and accepting about their LBT relatives, friendly with the research team, even they were not willing to let us document their views. Even LBT persons within the group were not keen to have us talk to their families. Friends were easy to get, but colleagues were not. In a workplace where exposure of orientation can actually cost one's job, it was really difficult to get hold of colleagues who could speak about a person, whom s/he knows to be a LBT. We were lucky to get a neighbor, who has rented out her ground floor flat to Sappho for Equality, knowing fully well what kind of organization it is.

From all our respondents in this category we tried to find out what they actually understand by violence and violation. Our findings show that sometimes the family, friends, colleagues or neighbors are not aware that they are inflicting violence upon or violating the rights of LBTs in the name of doing 'welfare' of their daughters/sisters/friends/colleagues/neighbors/or any other relationships. So understanding of violence and violation was a major issue.

But one thing became clear as soon as we began working with this group that we are interviewing only those who have accepted their close one's orientation. There is subtle adversity, a feeling of helpless frustration or irritated indifference in some cases, but there was no overt negativity. **In most of the cases it was clearly seen that people have accepted the LBT as someone close, they have accepted the person as their daughter, sister, sister-in-law, friend, colleague etc, i.e., the relationship with the LBT has become more important than her/his existence as an individual. They are coping with the situation out of love and responsibility. Acceptance/recognition of the issue as another individual's free choice remained as forbidding as possible. Family is playing the most important and interesting role here. It is the family that brings down the most hideous forms of violence on its LBT member, because it believes in purging through punishment, it is the family that accepts its LBT member because after all she is family and finally it is the family whom the LBT cannot think as a perpetrator, hence disregards all violence done to her. It is quite problematic to assess the relationship between family and LBT, there are many instances where the LBT person understands and speaks in clear terms about the violence done to her by her family, but it is nonetheless very complicated.**

Some of the LBT persons, who appeared in Category I, have their family or friends speak in this section. In certain cases we have documented contradictory versions among them.

Same incident or same situation have been described by an individual LBT and her family from two completely different and incongruous positions. In such cases we have treated these two versions as two completely different narratives, each true to its own perception.

A housewife, family of an LBT person, married at 17, mother at 18 and 21, who could not even finish high school, living as happily/unhappily married as anyone else for 22 years, after a little trepidation, somewhat bewildered at her own expression, said that she never could think about having sex with a woman, she doesn't know if that is possible at all, but she would have been happier if she could be as free and confident as her LBT sister-in-law! For her lesbianism signifies independence, autonomy, self-determination.

## Twist in the tale

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“I don't think it is a disease any more now..... apart from the sexual part, I rather like her life style.”

– LBT family member

### 5.3 Category IIB (The Larger Society)

In this category we tried to find out acceptance or non-acceptance of LBTs and LBT issues by the larger society.

The most interesting observation in Category IIB (the larger society) is emergence of the gendered face of society. We know gender is inevitable, but every time that inevitability materializes, it gets reinforced once more. From the responses of our respondents from the larger society it was very clear that there is a basic gender based distinction in understandings of violence and violation. All male respondents defined these two terms in a more general way while for most of the women respondents these are more personal in nature, more specific and more subtle. At the beginning of each interview we informed the respondents about our topic of discussion. Only one person, a woman, included lesbians as victims of violence – ‘marriage of a lesbian with a man’.

There is an overall knowledge on different sexual identities among our respondents in this section. They are aware that these people exist but not accepted by the society or the state law. Many of them know about the 2nd July 2009 Delhi High Court judgment. In most of the cases media is the source of information. Some have acquired information from their respective professional fields. It is also evident that educational background does not matter in shaping up opinions about homosexuality. We got completely opposite responses about the same point within the same sub-category.

In many cases the responses are crafted in the most politically correct way, but the moment they entered into the personal domain, the double standard became largely evident. **People are happy accepting the lesbian who stays a light year away than in India, may be somewhere in a distant city in India than in Kolkata, and even if in Kolkata then definitely not within the locality.**

We have placed two sets of enquiries to our respondents, one set is her/his response towards LBT persons and the other set is towards LBT issues. Persons and issues brought in two distinctly different, but not always opposing views. The same person would give sermons of non-violence towards homosexuals and declare that homosexuals are abnormal because some of their organs are not fully functional or a mother should be ready to look after her lesbian daughter as a mentally retarded child's mother would. It is somewhat like the Christian preaching – hate sin, not the sinner!

There was a query in this section that was meant for personalizing violence experiences and building empathy, which fell almost flat. We got very lukewarm responses to personal violence related information as perpetrator or even as receiver. Since the discussion was basically on violence against LBT persons, all presumably straight respondents could not place themselves in the same league.

Parent-child relation is something that every respondent focused upon. A child definitely needs parental care and acceptance, but it also reflects a typical hetero-normative pattern of understanding. Family is the most important site, in security or in violence, in care and nurturing or in the most hideous form of rights violation, family is the ultimate.

**We have interviewed a political cadre from the right wing opposition party, who perhaps had given the most candid responses. She generally would not take part in any mob violation against a homosexual, would rather try to convince a neighborhood lesbian girl to go back to 'normal' life, even help such persons if they come to her in any crisis, but she is convinced that it is wrong, it is abnormal. She**



won't even discuss this issue, she won't even care if it is legalized, because inside her mind she feels it is wrong, an aberration and if her own son becomes a homosexual, perhaps that would be the threat which will make her violent. She is the target of our intervention.

## Twist in the tale

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“Behavior cannot be modified genetically; it has environmental inputs, so anybody trying to talk about gay gene is trying to simplify the thing. Somebody is doing it for making waves in the news, sensationalizing researches, I don't know about gay gene and whether it really exists.”

- An Eminent Molecular Biologist

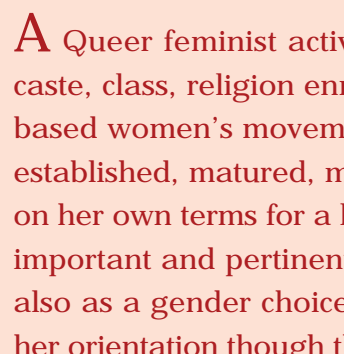
### 5.4 Category III (Womens' Rights and LBT Rights Activists)

Category III, the women's rights and LBT rights groups and individual activists have reflected upon the relationship between women's rights movements and LBT rights movements in India.

To develop an effective advocacy strategy for reducing violence on LBTs it is necessary to have the accounts of women who already are conversant in the rights language. We, therefore, as the third level data of our research, documented experiences of women's rights and LBT rights activists who have either etched out ways of complimenting each other's movements or are engaged in doing so.

According to this category, violence has three segments, overt or physical, covert or psychological and structural or standardized through socialization.

Some important and critical issues raised by the respondents in this category are directly related to violence and violation and some are obtusely. **Like the issue of exclusion as a violation, this happens because of the notion of normalcy predominant in the society. Every society has its own notion of what is normal and it is assumed that normal is natural. And going beyond that construct would bring down violence on the individual. Many of the respondents felt that LBT rights movement is crucial because one cannot hide behind an identity that is not her own. It is violence and violation of her own rights. Normalcy is not a matter of majority's decision. People are different and people have to accept that difference.**



A Queer feminist activist whose idea of feminism has gender, sexuality, caste, class, religion enmeshed into each other, has been involved in rights based women's movements for more than three decades. She is educated, established, matured, married, broken off, living with her same sex partner on her own terms for a long time, running a LBT support group, raising very important and pertinent issues around not just queer as a sexuality choice also as a gender choice, but her own family, her parents are yet to accept her orientation though they know about it. She does not have a space within the intimate family to talk about her sexual choice, her life with her partner, her personal, sexual, emotional issues. When asked whether this forced silence around her personal, sexual identity is actually a form of rights violation, she agreed.

In course of interviews some of the respondents raised the question of women as a biological category. Persons whose biological sex do not correspond with their psychological sex are branded as gender variants. They are embodiments of violence and violation and the time has come to give gender a much needed twist and to challenge the very notion of woman. And as woman is not a homogenous category, lesbian is also not a homogenous category. There's a working class lesbian, Muslim lesbian, dalit [backward class] lesbian. These differences have to be kept in mind.

Media violence is another important issue raised in this category, stories of lesbian suicides are portrayed in such a way that either people who are reading it gets appalled by the word lesbian or queer or they glamorize these deaths and encourages other couples showing the way to defy the normative society.

A very interesting input has come from one of the respondents, women's groups perceive queer people as threat because a) the notion of asexual, sacred sisterhood gets challenged, and b) notion of a fluid sexuality continuum can challenge their own sexual positioning. So people want to maintain a clear safe distance creating the boundary of 'them and us'.

It has come out clearly through these interviews that some rights are put higher up in the ladder by powerful players in the mainstream rights activism. This is a display of power against the disempowered marginalized groups. By building up a rights hierarchy or by prioritizing some rights over the other, the rights activists themselves are internalizing

the same power structure imbalance that they are supposed to fight against. Also the fact that putting some of the rights in the margin comes from lack of knowledge and macro level thinking and people are not ready to admit their lack of knowledge or larger vision. Fighting only for the rights of one's own constituency is not social transformation. It happens when one can associate with the struggles of those that are not one's own. Those can even be challenging one's own beliefs. Just because there are lesbians in a group doesn't mean that their experience is a part of the group's understanding.

About social reform vis-à-vis legal reform the legal activists have made important remarks. According to them law has very many symbolic significance in the society. How it is going to be translated or executed or changed, repealed or read down, also has important symbolic significance. Not that the society is going to change overnight according to the law, but the fight to change or bring in a change in the legislature has always been very important in this country's social change history. But to think this is the only kind of battle to be fought, or that legal ground is the only battleground, would be wrong. Even if IPC 377 is repealed, neither compulsory heterosexuality would stop nor would the gamut of violence and violation faced by the queer community disappear.

While raising the issue of queerness/homosexuality as an identity, the respondents have remarked that people have a stock response against the identity of a queer that if heterosexuality is not an identity why would queer be. The answer should simply be, because heterosexuality is so very mainstreamed, a queer person has to establish her identity with conviction and people should know whom they are dealing with. In Indian context it is even easier to think of oneself as the member of the opposite sex than to feel attracted sexually to the same sex. Homosexuality is so very unacceptable to even a homosexual person.

The first important point that needs to be documented while analyzing this category is the fact that we did not get a single entry in the section of 'indifferent' reaction within the movements [LBT Rights and Women's Rights]. There is 'positive cohabitation', 'negative reaction', even 'mixed reaction', or 'shift in understanding', but no indifference. So one thing is very clear, the women's rights movement and the LBT rights movement are at least closely related to each other.

Point number two, it is not yet decided that the onus of further consolidation should rest on whose shoulders. Both the groups think it is 'their' responsibility, which reminds us of an old saying – it could be done by anybody, but everybody thought it was somebody else's responsibility and finally nobody did it. We need to really work harder to make 'everybody' do it.

The third point is while going through the history of Autonomous Women's Movements of India by almost all the respondents, we can clearly see that the women's groups that are proactively trying to integrate sexuality issues are actually headed by queer women. They may not work singularly on LBT or even sexuality issues, but have opened up to the issues with the personal being political conviction.

Point number four, **sexuality is actually not understood or accepted by people within the women's movement even today. It is now a political question, and like other marginalized issues as disability, mental illness, caste, religion, it is given a specific position within a broader rights framework. But sexuality and gender as a pair of lenses to be used together to see the hetero-patriarchal structure of oppression, is yet to be accepted and understood.**

Point number five, some radical/forward thinking/younger groups and individuals in the women's rights and LBT rights movements have started **questioning and challenging women as a homogeneous category and accordingly homosexual women as a homogeneous category, which is positive problematization of certain given age old structure. Gender is reviewed vis-à-vis sexuality and biological woman is placed vis-à-vis self-identified woman. So today women's rights movement and the sexuality rights movement are getting entangled with each other with issues of sex, gender and self-identification in a further complex way.**

Point number six, while taking these interviews, the research team had experienced a strange incident happening recurrently. Many of our respondents in this category had asked us to shut the audio recorder down and spoke un-recordable things, and then went back to their politically correct stand after a while. It also happened that some of these transcriptions went for a content check to the respondents and came back with specific portions missing/deleted/changed. We had accepted the final versions, because after all we are trying to negotiate very turbulent water over a flimsy bamboo bridge. **One of the well known LBT rights activists, who were quite enthusiastic about participating in this process as a respondent, decided against it later and wanted to withdraw her narrative which was very important to us as it gave useful insights for understanding within the community violence.** We honored her decision and did not include her portion in this research.

Point number seven is about the personal of the political, **respondents of this category tried to intellectualize their statements as more political than personal. Violence and violation is an ideological issue that happens within a certain context and does not affect the individual activist as a person.** We had two questions in this respect, one

whether she is a survivor or perpetrator of violence. Some have commented on the overarching role of violence in a woman's life, thereby recognizing her own experience of violence and violation to some extent, but only two entries are documented as perpetrators. The personal in this case has not been politicized.

## Twist in the tale

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“As women defied patriarchy through women's rights movement, queer persons would defy hetero-normativity through queer rights movement.”

- Women's Rights Activist



## RESEARCHERS' EXPERINECES

As stated before in the Methodology section, the research team members are members of Sappho for Equality. Three of them participated as respondents in Categories I and III. This project has followed the feminist research methodology for mapping violence and violation on LBT lives and subjective identification and objective interpretation became an integral part of this research, especially because the researchers also belong to the same community that faces similar violence and violation.

For Category I (LBT persons) we had used peer interviewers to facilitate positive communication and understanding. Interviewers in this category were not only from the community they were also among the most popular, most dependable and most accepted persons within the group. They were from different age/experience category so that respondents from varied age and experiential domain could relate to them easily. These interviews were the most long drawn, most time consuming and emotionally draining for both the respondent and interviewer as they were talking, listening and discussing very painful, unsettling and haunting secrets.

Interviewers in this category often felt stories of violence and violation tugging at familiar chords within, bringing back memories of similar violence and violation. In some cases these tales illuminated certain aspects of the researchers own experiences in a never before way. Reflection of one's own life and experiences in someone else's story questioned and

challenged some decisions taken by the researchers and reinforced many others. Sometimes it became frustrating, some of the interviewers recalled, because the respondent could not see the obvious violence and violation happening, because to identify some act or feeling as violence or violation one has to understand and define violence. Subtle forms of violence, especially rights violation are often not recognized, as the issue understanding is unclear.

Working with this category had been a very challenging task for us because some of the researchers were continuously experiencing transference with the respondents. Some of the respondents and research team members who belong to the community had shown clear indication of change in their perception of violence and violation as experienced by them or as an idea.

In Category II A (intimate circle), very interesting interactions happened between interviewers and respondents. On one hand we had close family persons giving their account of their LBT family members and on the other hand the interviewer in many cases knew the interpretation given by the LBTs themselves referring to the same context. Often these were conflicting or complementary analysis of the same truth. This actually has helped the researchers develop deeper insight of the human psyche using the socio-cultural reality as a backdrop.

In some of the cases researchers have interviewed their own family, friends or colleagues. This in turn has helped the interviewers to initiate conversations on issues long suppressed. Respondents in this category knew about their LBT family members, friends, colleagues or neighbors, but knowing and foregrounding grievances, bewilderment, anxiety, fear, trauma and many other complicated mental states are totally different. The interviewers came to know about the extent of trauma their loved ones faced and the respondents also understood the intensity of pain and hurt their loved ones had gone through. Some very strange secrets were revealed in this process like the incident of child sexual abuse faced by a 75-year-old mother of a LBT by an unknown woman, which helped to bridge some of the gaping gaps of non-understanding. These were rewarding moments for both the parties and it opened new channels of communication.

Interviewers working with Category IIB (larger society) experienced varied behavioral and intellectual inputs within the same sub group. In many cases people were unwilling to sit for the interview, those who were ready took trouble as not to use particular words like 'lesbian' or 'sex'. In one particular incident, the research team was trying to get hold of a suburban college teacher who turned them down saying she is afraid to take part in such a



research as her marriage is already fixed! We don't know what she exactly meant by this statement but it can mean that her would-be-husband may decline to marry her if he comes to know of her association with us or it may even mean that she is about to get married so there is no point trying to get her involved in 'lesbian activities'.

While working with Category III (activists and organizations) researchers have gathered more analytical, eloquent and politically correct responses than other categories. But the inner feeling was of mutual mistrust and blaming. Interviewers as LBT rights activists had to dissociate themselves and not take part in the blame game.

The principal investigator has expressed a strange yet pertinent feeling while she was analyzing the feedbacks and collating them. Closeness and too much exposure to so many raw patches of violence and violations had actually acted as selfinflicted violence which had been multiplied when she was compiling and collating all data collected. She being a scientist by profession, related to her experiences at a dissection table where a living object was about to be dissected. She narrated her feelings of abhorrence at the violence she would be doing to the living being and the excitement of knowing something that would help her attain her goal, somewhat similar to her experiences of working in this project. 'Emotions of human beings, secrets that are close to their hearts, feelings of helplessness, frustration, shame, fear, impotent or potent anger, self loathing, self questioning, confusion, clarity – all were pinned down in front of me, I with the dissection knife would cut them open to probe further, this knowledge would give me power. It was not a happy feeling, I felt like violating people's lives. But again as scientific researches and experiments, this research is dedicated to serve humanity in general and the target population in particular. Those who have contributed their violence stories, their personal experiences of violation for this research had done that consciously, with a purpose. And I too, am contributing, with a purpose, to make it work for all of us'.

One of the researchers involved mainly in interviewing the LBT individuals have lots to share about her feelings and experiences. 'It was a different kind of experience. I was an ordinary student, never had any association with research as such. I had joined Sappho when I was 22, and Sappho has empowered me so much that I could become a part of this research team today. Through this research, I have learnt and understood what is violence and violation. As I started taking interviews, I realized that most of the respondents did not know what is violence or violation and obviously they are not aware about themselves as perpetrators. But now they know, at least to some extent. The respondents shared all their emotions and secrets

with me, I felt responsible to keep those secrets confidential. I also felt that I should also be able to provide them open, friendly, warm and non-threatening space. I felt I should be non-judgmental otherwise I will be inflicting violence on them. As a novice in this work, I realized that qualitative research depends also upon the interviewer's life-view, her depth of understanding of the issue and her own experience that can connect her with the respondent. I think I need to expand myself more. Learn more skills and technique and develop better understanding of the subject'.

Another researcher who was also a respondent in the LBT category while re-reading her narrative could identify some lapses; she had forgotten to include some very critical experiences of violence and violation that could have been crucial to the overall understanding. 'I was feeling uneasy about it, and was planning to call up the team to ask what should be done. But as I scrolled down the list of violence and violations, I realized that almost all my expressed or forgotten experiences of violence are already there in the list! They are there as someone else's experience, things that I had talked about or the forgotten stuff that I was fretting about, all are there, experienced by many just like me. It is a feeling I am not being able to identify, somewhere it is creating a bond with other similar violence sufferers, but it is also making my special moments banal, my violence was unique to me, now I see them almost everywhere, they are not mine alone, no more!'

One of the interviewers who had worked specifically with Category IIB, the larger society, wanted to share her experiences here in her own words. 'Apprehension as I faced ambiguities around my role as an interviewer and excitement at being associated with such a project coalesced on being asked to help with this project. The first challenge was to solicit respondents who were willing to donate an hour or two of their time. However, four gracious adults did volunteer to answer my questions. I had a stroke of luck of meeting a student when her books came crashing down, took a chance and she agreed for an interview. I was surprised at the ease with which the first interview went off. I had thought my first 'trial' would probably be punctuated with mistakes that would later be improved. I was impressed with some of the suggestions of this young student, surprised at how comfortable I was conducting the interview and a little bit amused that this girl who had so confidently and readily agreed to be interviewed almost recoiled with trepidation on being asked to furnish her email id to enable her to cross check the contents of her interview. The interview with the housewife was a little surreal; it was conducted during the middle of the night, literally, since that happened to be the most convenient time for the respondent and though I was a trifle bugged at the time, I nevertheless

obliged. Probably that was the reason why I felt to some extent I had failed to connect with the respondent and though I asked the questions and got the answers, I felt I had not done full justice to this interview. I realized that when I interviewed my friend, we were totally relaxed and to some extent, she was in control of the interview and I had lost the status of detached observer. This time, I not only became the listener, but also the student and she became the teacher. She answered each question with details that directly related to the question, and with her philosophies of life. I experienced a short inner struggle, 'should I try to stick to the questions or should I abandon the prescribed role of interviewer and become the learner of her accomplishments?' I decided to let the conversation flow freely. I was fascinated with her insight and depth of understanding. Immediately afterwards, I reflected on the pattern of the interview and finally accepted my particular style. I concluded that the strength of the interview was rooted in my ability to relax the respondent and encourage conversation and not in the specifics of the questionnaire. Unfortunately, the next interview with my partner's sister turned out to be a little traumatic, possibly due to the personal nature of it. For one I was shocked to learn some home truth on her views about our relationship and second, after I interviewed her I slipped back into the past and relived almost all the incidents that occurred vis-à-vis my relationship. While the experience was painful, in retrospect, I can say it was a catharsis. In the course of this work, I met four intriguing individuals who shared their thoughts with me. I have often wondered why these volunteers were so willing to speak. I concluded that they wanted to speak, they wanted to be heard and they wanted their experiences legitimized. The interviews fulfilled one predetermined objective, providing information for the project and two, unanticipated outcomes, honoring the volunteers by allowing them to tell their stories and honoring me by letting me listen'.

One of the research team members had to temporarily discontinue her association not only with this work but also with the organization as her orientation got exposed to her family. She wanted to share her feelings of violation, trauma and helplessness in her own words. 'The palms of my hands were stiff and cold like a corpse. My vision was blurred with tears but I was trying hard to hide it before people could see me sobbing openly on the road. I was scared, hurt and bruised deep inside. And the only probable reason behind it is this – I am queer. It was December 29th, 2009. There started a huge turmoil in my family as soon as I returned from the residential workshop, organized by Sappho for Equality, the organization with which I am associated. I am not straight; this fact was evident to my parents clearly, by the time I got back to home after the workshop. I was denied any sort of communication with my parents except some heated arguments. I was directly asked about my orientation and I was informed that to have a gay child is nothing but a sheer misfortune. I was told that my

identity would not even let my mother die peacefully. My mother kept crying, my father was numb, and I was standing in front of them unanswered, with my jaws compressed. I left my home that afternoon with some money and headed towards nowhere. I tried to contact my friends from Sappho. They were beside me all the while. But I was unsure about this research work to which I was committed at that time. I lost my composure because nobody asked me to stop when I left home that morning. At midnight my parents gave me a call and took me back home from a cyber café. But I was not allowed to sleep on the bed beside my mother after that incident. For months I used to sleep initially on the floor, then on a separate bed. I believe I am fortunate enough to have these Sappho sisters right beside me during my thick and thin. It is due to them, I was able to rehabilitate myself again and was able to continue the work after a few months' gap. There was a time when I thought I would have to choose either my work or my family, because my movements were restricted and I was emotionally devastated. But I managed somehow to get over with it and completed the work that I was assigned. I am highly privileged that I could be a part of this research work after surmounting all the hindrances. I never thought I would gain such an experience, that too during this research work. But I am thankful to God that it happened. I was more inclined towards the project, and was able to relate myself to every bit of it, thoroughly'.

This section ends with the tale of one of the co-investigators involved in this project. She is a community person but married to a man for more than 25 years. She had been coping with her life in a peculiar manner by segregating her identity in two watertight compartments of the queer activist and the happy wife. This schizophrenia was taking a toll on her mentally as well as physically and her husband was also going through bouts of intense insecurity, frustration and trauma. Through the process of this project of taking interviews, transcribing, translating, coding, analyzing all the violence stories and defining queer forms of violence and violation, this person had arrived at this realization after 12 years of emotional struggle that she cannot be both at the same time. These are not just two conflicting parts of a whole self but two different selves altogether. By living this dual existence she is violating her own rights as a queer person as well as her husband's rights to a heterosexual wife, who though knows and tries to accept her as a lesbian. That it is a form of self inflicted violence and that she is also a perpetrator against her husband became apparent to her by looking back at her life through a vio-lens developed in the course of this research. Today if she walks out of her marriage after 26 years, it would be terrible trauma for her husband, if she steps back within the folds again, she will violate herself in every possible way. She is now poised at a strange dusky dawn of her life and time only can tell us what is there in store!



## CHALLENGES FACED

Collecting oral narratives and analyzing them to create a database as well as the understanding of certain social situations and/or practices, is a tried and tested method. At the same time, this process is not without its inherent flaws and problems. It is a method that requires the researcher to depend heavily upon the respondent and her/his perception of the world around. That perception can be flawed, limited, one sided or even untrue! **We have faced acute problems while talking to both the same sex partners or with a LBT person and her family separately, because often their narration and interpretation of the same incident were different. We finally decided to treat these accounts as separate and not conflicting inputs.**

This method also has another loop-hole; data collected through this process often, therefore, depends upon the interviewer's interpretation of a given situation. Especially because of the open-ended unstructuredness of the interviews, responsibilities of the interviewers increased manifold. As a prelude, they were given a thorough training on research methodologies as well as about the rationale and outcome of the research. The interviewer-respondent relationship, especially in the LBT category, was another complicated issue, because most of the respondents shared a lot of very personal and private stories, which were to be kept under full confidentiality. **Many of the LBT respondents started looking up to the interviewers as therapists and expected positive input in their relational problems.**

Instead of July '09 our project could only begin in August '09. Sappho for Equality (probably for being a LBT rights group) was having problems with FCRA (the specific permission from India Government to receive foreign fund) clearance and subsequently not able to receive



this overseas fund. Finally in August we had to go for the alternative process of accepting fund in two individual core members' names.

The research topic being uncommon and tabooed, people from the larger society were reluctant in many cases to give interviews. In some cases they did not even turn up on the fixed day or declined our requests for interviews.

Family members who are positive towards their intimate LBT relatives agreed to give interview only and they were very few in number. So we faced a lot of problem to find out respondents in this sub-category.

Category II B (larger society) is so varied in nature that it became difficult to collate the data obtained. In fact this category itself provides the opportunity of another full-fledged research work. We could only gather 25 respondents that are in no way a proper representation of the larger society. The data gathered through these interviews are nudging us towards a deep diving into this category, which we may take up later.

In Category III (activists) the language of interview became an obstacle since in this section we had to select respondents from different parts of the country.

We worked with an inherent problem, *choice of subjects both qualitative and quantitative in the 'others' category representing the family, friends, workplace and larger society, was limited. Those who were willing to give interview were either being politically correct or actually pro-homosexuality. It was difficult to delve inside their psyche and bring out their actual unadulterated feelings.*

One of our research team members' orientation got exposed to her family during the research period and was under house-arrest for a long period of time. She had to discontinue her work with us for that period and could join back much later. Another research team member had to discontinue as her father was diagnosed with terminal illness. We could not appoint any more researchers because there was no time for orientation sessions. The working hands became insufficient since all team members are volunteers and thus could not dedicate whole time to the research.

The number of interviews (75) we committed was extremely optimistic because time was very short for working with such a large sample size.

We have suffered monetary loss due to depreciating value of Euro.



# CHARTING OUT ADVOCACY STRATEGIES

## 8.1 Gaps Identified

Through this research certain gaps are identified in the existing situation that induces and enhances violence and violation in LBT lives.

- i. Patriarchal values and norms internalized by LBT persons
- ii. Homophobia internalized by LBT persons
- iii. Hetero-phobia and refusal to interact open-heartedly with the larger society by LBT persons
- iv. Hetero-typical relational demand within LBT relationships
- v. Lack of social security and acceptance leading to frustration, anger and relational violence
- vi. Lack of knowledge on homosexuality both in the intimate circle as well as in the general society
- vii. Myths and misconceptions ruling high in mass mind about homosexuality
- viii. Sexuality without its reproductive purposes is branded immoral
- ix. Homosexuality is aberration, wrong, deviation from the normal and unnatural
- x. Homosexuality is a treatable mental disease and some psychiatrists use a bouquet of therapies and drugs to treat such people
- xi. Women's rights activists expect the LBT rights activists to take the initiative for inclusion
- xii. Sexuality is a personal affair happening in the private domain, does not fall within the purview of rights movements

- xiii. Violence is the only convergence point between the movements and celebration of sexuality is ruled out
- xiv. Organizations are unwilling to look beyond their immediate agenda
- xv. Both the movements (women's rights and LBT rights) otherize each other

## 8.2 Needs to be Addressed through Advocacy

The gaps that are identified need to be bridged. We have recognized three basic forms of gaps and interventions needed to address those gaps. First being the gap within the LBT community in understanding gender stereotypes and internalized patriarchal notions. Second area of identified gaps is that which resides inside the non-queer section of the society. It is comprised of fear, disbelief, mistrust, lack of proper knowledge, stigma, myths and misconceptions about homosexuality. Third area is the existing power hierarchy within the mainstream women's rights movement. Whether homosexuality is a fancy fringe issue of the educated urban upper-class, whether it is pertinent enough to get any space within a mainstream rights framework, whether sexuality itself is worth discussion other in the context of sexual violence, is yet not resolved.

- a. From the above list, points (i) to (v) indicate gaps that affect LBT lives from within and result in relational violence and violation mainly by giving her a faulty notion of the world around. To bridge these gaps, thorough gender understanding is needed to stop hetero-typical relational expectations. Rights awareness is also needed, which rights can be claimed from the society or the state and what are the responsibilities that would come with those rights. Homosexuality in its proper perspective is not understood by not only the non-queer world, it is not understood by those who practice it also. Homosexuality is often equated with a sexual act practiced with a certain gender identifying person. But that it is actually a notion, a perspective which definitely has erotic/emotional components but also is a way of being, is much less discussed.

To bridge gaps of understanding gender and relational violence within, the onus lies mainly on the LBT community and the LBT rights organizations and/or activists for intervention program. The nuanced face of violence, the intricate design of heteropatriarchial behavioral pattern resulting in typicalizing homo-relational spaces are difficult to address and intervene. On one hand emotional, legal, psychological support need to be given to the survivor as well as perpetrator (as she too is a victim of larger societal/familial violence in most of the cases) in such situations. On the other hand a strong and thorough feminist ideological understanding of homosexuality is to be developed within the organizations as well as with the community persons. Sexuality in general and homosexuality in particular should be

understood in their proper perspective not just as an act or even an identity but a complex ideological/emotional/erotic/relational way of being.

- b. Points (vi) to (x) show us gaps in general understanding of the non-queer world about issues of homosexuality. Dialogue and positive engagement is needed to bridge this gap. Targeted intervention campaign can be taken up to address specific groups in the society like the psychiatrists, the gynecologists, the academia (both student and teacher), the lawyer and state machinery like the police or administration (after 2 July 2009) and many more. Family awareness and intervention has to be designed separately and with greatest care as we have seen that family is the site of most horrible violence/violation and can also become the most secured haven.

Here the onus lies as much on the LBT rights organization/activists as on an aware, rights oriented, conscience-driven individual from the general civic society. Because violence begets violence, mistrust fosters further alienation, otherization is actually a two-way process and no society can benefit from keeping a certain part of its members in a ghetto. A few lines of Rabindranath Tagore still makes sense, jare tumi neeche phelo se tomare tanichhe je neeche/pashchate rekhechho jare se tomare pashchate tanichhe [roughly translates as, those you have dumped under are pulling you down/those you have left behind are pulling you back]!

- c. (xi) to (xv) are pointing out the bridges that has to be or been already halfway built between the women's rights and LBT rights movements. The main gap that exists here is about who should take the onus of bridging the gap and whose issues are more rights oriented and pertinent. The need is therefore to strike a balance somewhere, to harp on the fact that no issue or no movement can survive in void. And women's sexuality has women at the center. Not only just the women's rights movement, the LBT rights movement should network and build alliances with other rights based minority movements as well as the gay movement.



## CONCLUSION

We had begun this research with background knowledge of gender based violence that is too common in Indian context. Our findings showed us that it is further supplemented by violence that inhabits the space of non-hetero-normative people and relations. Homophobic heterosexual people against people with same-sex orientation and gender non-conformation perpetrate this violence. In recent times there has been substantial coverage in the media of certain incidents of violence (targeted at both individuals and groups) perpetrated against people of non-normative gender and sexuality and these hate crimes are demonstrative of the daily perils lived by members of any marginalized group, more so, if they embody a non- (re) productive, non-heterosexual, non-familial/non-familiar way of life. The legally ambiguous status of homosexuality precludes the possibility of any formal public means of redress. The law makes even consensual sex look like sexual crime itself, without the possibility of regarding same-sex relations normal and natural. Thus, the overt violence of certain same-sex relations defies any legal conceptions of violence, as all same-sex relations are always already 'criminalized' so to speak. LGBT abusers utilize the legal and social institutions created by homophobia and heterosexism to unleash violence against people practicing non-hetero-normative sex.

Thus the non-normative woman becomes the softest target, both for her gender and her sexuality!

Our experience as a support group and as an activist platform has much too often brought us face to face with the issue of violence that pervades the lives of women who transgress



given norms of gender and sexuality. This research has shown us that often this violence takes forms of murder, rape, battering, public violence or even forced medical treatment. But **most often violence comes in more subtle forms, as in threats, forced marriages, sacking from jobs, denial of right to basic amenities of life etc.** Visibility is an important factor that constitutes incidents of homophobic violence. The more visible you are as a non-conformist the more you are liable to attract violence. Women are forced to either live a life of invisibility or face violence on account of wanting to live life on their terms. There is an unwritten code that coerces women to conform to 'mainstream' ways of living, thinking and being, or be doomed. **A lot of women belonging to the LBT community show acts of both compliance and resistance to mainstream norms and standards. While resistance to dominant norms could attract overt violence from the side of the dominant, compliance or a quiet passing off as the 'normal heterosexual' may help in avoiding visibility and potential violence. The latter however suffers from a suppression of selfhood and violence on self.** Some of these women find it difficult to resist the pressure of family and peer to conform to the normative. Some declare an open war. In both cases the violence that follows needs to be recognized and resisted. Through this research, we clearly saw that violence and violation goes hand in hand in everyday lives of these women and young girls. Given the hardships faced by women encountering violence within heterosexual relations, the violence inflicted on women embodying same-sex desire is almost unimaginable. Added to it is the difficulty in articulating and communicating this pain to friends and family. There is also the greater possibility of having to encounter hostile agencies like the police, the law and the medical establishment in the aftermath of such violent events. **No concrete services or institutional support systems are in place because there are no clear ideas about the legality of the act itself. Discussions and sharing on such issues of violence remain largely confined to the space of personal counseling sessions and support groups.**

Among other things a woman's sexual orientation can determine her access to resources as well as her social status. Our research findings indicate that women suffer material losses, not being able to pursue education, career options and facing desertion from family members and friends. They suffer emotional and psychological trauma having to struggle against discrimination and ostracization. Women also undergo immense self-depreciation and lack of confidence due to the constant exposure **to a heterosexist worldview that leads to self-denial or self-doubt. Misrecognition and non-recognition can become a very perverse source of violence as it seeks to naturalize the power held by the dominant over non-dominant modes of life.** Families, friends and teachers refuse to recognize LBT women's need for acknowledgment as they are, as they desire to be. On the other hand, the inability to be recognized for what one is can cause depleted self-esteem and a sense of social

un-productivity. This deliberate disavowal instills in some a feeling of pathological self-identification and they end up in the psychiatrist's clinic with discomfort and confusion regarding their gender roles.

Three levels of violence are identified through this research. The first is individual where harmful acts are perpetrated against people and property and include acts like taunting, forced marriage to even murder. The second is identified as institutional where harmful acts are done by social institutions with the intent to obstruct spontaneous human potential, for example, offices denying promotion to its employee on account of sexual orientation or reproductive health programs that do not take into account lesbian sexuality. The third is structural-cultural or the ideological roots of religious and political beliefs for example, homosexuality is illegal and immoral. One could also identify domains of violence according to the areas where such violence takes place – the familial domain, the social domain and the institutional domain. Familial opposition, forced marriages have often led to suicides or home-leaving by LBT women. In the social domain neighbors, communities, office and educational institutions have harassed and discriminated against LBT persons. In the institutional domain, laws that have deemed homosexuality unnatural and therefore illegal, religious faiths that have considered it immoral, and mental health disciplines that have seen it as abnormal, at best alternative, have all participated in actively discriminating or tacitly condemning homosexuality.

Violence and violation is the central theme of this research. As explained in our proposal, we had a primary intention/goal of documenting violence and violation happening to women with non-normative sexual orientations. This was necessary because anecdotal stories of violence and violation were always floating in the air since the inception of our organization but to work with conviction for eradication of such violence it was becoming imperative to collect and document them and build a 'violence repertoire', however strange that may sound.

We all know violence and violation happens, we all have certain degree of exposure towards that mostly as receiver and sometimes as perpetrator. But through this research, that commonplace occurrence we had got so used to, opened up layers of layers of questions, comments, challenges in front of us, the research team. We need to share this with as many people as possible because it is not just about one horrible incident or a series of incidents or even a particular kind of mindset. **Violence and violation covers an area much broader than the physical or psychological harm done to one or many or similar kind of persons. It is a specific form of reading the society, the way we use 'gender reading' or 'subaltern reading' or even 'sexuality reading' to understand a text or an issue, we can use 'vio-lens' or 'violence reading' of a phenomenon, a time frame or a particular mind set prevalent in the society.**

One of our immediate goals is to present the 'violence repertoire' in the form of a publication with an analysis of 'violence reading' of non-normative sexualities movement happening in India at this point in time, beginning with the 'Fire campaign' through 'Delhi High Court Judgment on IPC377' towards a 'brighter' future. This documentation would be one of its kind, as violence mapping of LBT persons has never been done on this scale and intensity before.

Another goal that has also been explained in our original proposal is the advocacy manual. It will be designed on data collected from our core resource of LBT person's violence repertoire; will include the intimate spaces where her/his rights are most severely violated and the non acceptance, indifference and double standard practiced by larger society towards her/his issue that makes her/him more susceptible to violence and violation. These will then be analyzed through data collected from activists, both women's rights and queer rights, and thus the actual 'fill in the blank' between rights based movements will take place. The advocacy manual will carry the insight that is developed from this in-depth research.

A dissemination program for the outcomes, the violence repertoire and the advocacy manual is also planned. Both of these products have specific target audience and specific usage. The advocacy manual will be designed keeping field based organizations in front, a basic document on which they can tailor-make their own anti-violence intervention programs. The dissemination will be planned accordingly with the rights based organizations and individuals who will have a ready use of the manual.

The violence repertoire will have a slightly different clientele. We are trying to aim it for a more general category in one hand, people who are interested to know about things happening around them and take a proactive step against violence in any form and also for those who would want to know more about the root cause of violence other than obvious homophobia. On the other hand, this publication will be specially targeted at the educational and government institutions, with psychiatrists and lawyers as special categories, as a preparatory step to initiate a long term process of curriculum/policy designing.

The next logical step after this research would be to translate our leanings into actual intervention program. Through this research and the manual and repertoire we have gained invaluable knowledge about causes, forms, expressions, reasons of violence directly at three different levels, the LBT person at the eye of the storm, the intimate circle around her affecting and effecting her the most and the larger society further beyond that has direct/indirect impact on her life. We are going to plan anti-violence targeted intervention programs specially

designed to address these three areas on the basis of hard-core data collected from this research. Film, theatre, music, storytelling and other creative methodology will be used in our programs to make it as effective as possible.

We had begun this research on the premise that no movement can survive in void. The relationship, more often negative than positive, between LBT rights and women's rights movements were therefore explored thoroughly to look out for new avenues of networking and dialoguing and also to de-rust the existing channels. We had in depth interviews from individuals who double up as both queer rights and women's rights activists and all of them expressed the need to have many open channels not only between the LBT and women's rights movements but also between the LBT rights and LGBT rights movements. A queer woman is woman and queer, both, is a position we need to consolidate in our long term strategizing.

The most ambitious long-term goal for us is to initiate a dialogue with the Government. The process with the educational institutions has already begun, and we have already been able to forge a bond with some of the premier institutes that has included queer studies into their curriculum. But till date we do not have a consolidated database with which we can begin a negotiation with the government towards new policy designing. Especially, homosexuality, before the Delhi High Court Verdict on 2nd July 2009, was not an issue that could be openly raised other than in the context of HIV/AIDS. Today, we have a database and we do have a Court Verdict with which we could at least begin an ice-breaking process, using the pro-woman legal stand of the Indian Government as the facilitator of the process.

The project is an overall success for us. It is actually beginning of a process of mapping and documenting violence and violation in the first phase and bringing out an advocacy manual along with a violence repertoire in the second phase and developing intervention program, networking with educational institutions, psychiatric and legal networks and finally lobbying with government for policy development towards a discrimination free, violence free environment for LBT persons in the country.



# ANNEXURE

## Detailed description of respondents in category I (The LBTs)

| <b>C</b> ode | <b>O</b> rientation | <b>A</b> ge | <b>E</b> ducational background | <b>M</b> arital status | <b>S</b> ocio-economic class | <b>P</b> rofession | <b>L</b> ocation |
|--------------|---------------------|-------------|--------------------------------|------------------------|------------------------------|--------------------|------------------|
| LBT1         | Lesbian             | 27          | Graduate                       | Single                 | Middle                       | Student            | Suburban         |
| LBT2         | Lesbian             | 32          | Graduate                       | Single                 | Middle                       | Apparel designer   | Urban            |
| LBT3         | Transperson         | 33          | Higher Secondary               | Single                 | Lower middle                 | Tailoring          | Urban            |
| LBT4         | Lesbian             | 35          | Graduate                       | Divorced               | Middle                       | Service            | Urban            |
| LBT5         | Lesbian             | 32          | Post Graduate                  | Single                 | Middle                       | Teacher            | Suburban         |
| LBT6         | Bisexual            | 32          | Post Graduate                  | Married                | Middle                       | Engineer           | Suburban         |
| LBT7         | Lesbian             | 34          | Graduate                       | Single                 | Middle                       | Self employed      | Urban            |
| LBT8         | Lesbian             | 38          | Graduate                       | Single                 | Middle                       | Film Maker         | Urban            |

| Code  | Orientation | Age               | Educational background          | Marital status | Socio-economic class | Profession          | Location |
|-------|-------------|-------------------|---------------------------------|----------------|----------------------|---------------------|----------|
| LBT9  | Lesbian     | 38                | School Final                    | Married        | Lower middle         | Service             | Urban    |
| LBT10 | Lesbian     | 42                | Graduate                        | Divorced       | Middle               | Service             | Suburban |
| LBT11 | Bisexual    | 24                | Diploma in Classical Dance      | Single         | Middle               | Student             | Suburban |
| LBT12 | Lesbian     | 23<br>[when died] | Masters 1 <sup>st</sup> year    | Married        | Lower middle         | Student             | Suburban |
| LBT13 | Transperson | 34                | Graduate                        | Single         | Lower middle         | Physio-therapist    | Urban    |
| LBT14 | Lesbian     | 21                | Graduation 1 <sup>st</sup> year | Single         | Middle               | Student             | Urban    |
| LBT15 | Lesbian     | 30                | Graduation 2 <sup>nd</sup> year | Single         | Lower middle         | Service             | Urban    |
| LBT16 | Lesbian     | 33                | Post Graduate                   | Single         | Middle               | Teacher             | Urban    |
| LBT17 | Queer       | 63                | Post Graduate                   | Single         | Upper middle         | Health Professional | Urban    |
| LBT18 | Queer       | 48                | M. Phil                         | Married        | Upper middle         | NGO Activist        | Urban    |

Beyond the tabular format, we would like to present a brief introduction to all our respondents as full-blooded human beings.

LBT1 – Young, chubby, serious, has a husky melodious voice, sings country songs really well. She tried to enter into the electronic media after graduation and got a very raw deal as a lesbian. Tried to cope for about 3 years, then finally left and enrolled for a management course to start afresh. Sounds of her shattering dreams are still ringing through her interview.

LBT2 – She is a survivor, who survived her family’s son preference, her parent’s rebuke, ill treatment, lack of care, ultimate disowning, partner’s physical and mental abuse, close relative’s attempt to rape. She also survived a rescue home, mental distress leading to physical illness, open hatred by people around, loneliness in the city. She was determined to give herself a job, a home and stability that were refused to her. Today she is tying those flimsy knots around her life, through work, friends and a rental place that she calls home.

LBT3 – S/he never ‘wanted’ to be a man, because s/he ‘is’ a man. An apparently happy go lucky person with a ‘couldn’t care less’ attitude worn on her/his sleeves, s/he used to bike around the neighborhood with the choicest of girls, till s/he got involved into a serious affair with a married woman with children. And those children just hate her/him, the way s/he hated her/his mother and her illicit lover in her/his childhood days. To her/him, the circle is complete now!



LBT4 – She knew she is a lesbian, she knew she had to marry; she knew marriage means having peno-vaginal penetrative sex. She was ready to sacrifice herself, because she simply could not conjecture an alternative. She went to the psychiatrist for help who reaffirmed her belief that she is abnormal and everything would get normal once she marries. It did not, and she after a long period of 7 years finally accepted herself, divorced her husband and settled down with her partner.

LBT5 – She today is this integrated, confident and totally grounded person. But what a checkered life she had been living! The most inconspicuous girl, quietly obedient, from the suburb, who had gone through series of sexual abuses from male relatives that she could never talk about, because she was a good girl and bad things never happen to good girls. She in turn fell in love with her female batch mate, and broke away from her family, for the first time raising her voice, for her rights. Today she raises her voice over and over again for the rights of LBT persons.

LBT6 – She has everything that is expected from a person with the right kind of family, right kind of education, right kind of job. But ‘wrong’ kind of orientation spoiled everything. Her bisexuality had put her in severe mental distress coupled with her internalized hetero-patriarchal familial/societal values. She had married, because she wanted security and respect from society and wanted her family to be happy. But she cannot leave her same sex lover, and keeps her tied down to this relationship without a future, violating rights and getting violated at every step.

LBT7 – She was worse than the family pet dog! Her family after knowing about her orientation expressed their feelings in these simple terms. She had the most loving, compact family, which fell down to pieces as they came to know about her. To make her come back to them, to tame her, they went to her employer’s place and told them about her orientation and how she is a nuisance to the society. She lost her job, not once, but twice.

LBT8 – A filmmaker, acclaimed for her creative approach, she is accepted in her circuit, but within the intimate relationship she gives a unique twist to the tale of violence. She sees knowledge as a tool for violence, intellect as a crooked device for disempowering a person and thereby violating her right to self-determination.

LBT9 – This is one of those strange tales that leaves one wondering. She was a married woman with two children, living happily/unhappily with her husband as anyone else, busy with household chores and children and getting beaten by husband now and then, a very routine existence, so to speak, for 8 years. Then she fell in love with a neighborhood woman, and when her husband’s physical violence became unbearable, left home and eloped with her lover. She came back for her children and is continuing with both the relationships today, but her life has changed forever, for better or for worse.

LBT10 – She is a mountaineer, a dare devil adventurer, a spirited woman who internalized the societal norms and decided to marry and live happily ever after. She could not live happily or even unhappily with her mountaineer husband, continued to fall in love with women and faced lots of violence from husband in the process. Finally she divorced her husband but internalized norms are still playing strange games with her, she cannot talk about her divorce in public, she feels uncomfortable with society’s gaze at a divorcee woman.

LBT11 – A young dancer with a graceful body and a spirited mind, she is an illegal child, a stigma that she is carrying since birth. Her bisexuality adds up to that, so is her youth, spontaneity and lack of awareness. Series of sexual abuse dot her young life, from the society that is outside, family that is intimate and same sex lover

that is inside. Strangely the degree and extent of violation and violence are similar in all these areas. She today is in the process of coping up and gathering her pieces together.

LBT12 – She is already dead. Died at 23 after 4 months of married life, charges against husband are either abetment to suicide or murder. An orphan, who only had an elder brother to call her own, has grown up in a foster family of unkind relatives. Her cousin brother along with her own elder brother used to blackmail her for sexual favors as they came to know about her secret relationship with another girl. She lost all hope, and finally decided to marry, to cope with this unbearable situation. She tried to live, and died in the process.

LBT13 – S/he was abused, ridiculed, taunted by family, neighborhood and others for her/his dress code and un-feminine behavior. More than once s/he was compelled to dress like a woman, which s/he hated. Her/his immediate and extended family created immense marriage pressure and neighborhood hoodlums organized mob violence against her/him. S/he tried to commit suicide and fortunately survived and gave her/himself that strong hard look at mirror and bounced back with full faith and vigor. It is one of the positive cases in this section.

LBT14 – She is all of 21, fresh, eager, excited to explore life, who had survived aloofness from mother, lack of interest and care from father, victimization by school authority, mistrust and hatred by friends and class mates and severe physical abuse and humiliation in public by girl friend's mother. She is still fighting and will continue doing so.

LBT15 – Her family has dictated her terms of life forever in the name of love and bonding. They were not against her same sex orientation; it was only obvious that she should be a lesbian because she was brought up in such a way! Today she is questioning her upbringing as the 'man' of the house, of not giving her any option to marry and not even letting her be happy in her same sex live-in relationship.

LBT16 – Violence in her life began very early as the daughter of a mentally ill father, who later committed suicide. It continued throughout her life and she was made responsible for her father's death. Her internalized homophobia held her back for a long time to accept herself as a lesbian and her profession as a teacher in a suburban lower middle class vernacular girls' school brings her face to face with fear and insecurity by her colleagues' remarks against homosexuality.

LBT17 – The most fantastic tale of a nun turned queer! She was in the convent for 17 years and all these years in a same sex relationship inside the convent. The convent gave her chance to grow professionally and curbed her freedom personally giving no space to express any of her desires. She came out of the convent with her partner and is now living together but still cannot call herself lesbian because of negative religious connotations attached to the word.

LBT18 – Floating in the sexuality continuum, she violated her rights as well as people around her. A love marriage to 'the most wonderful husband' as a heterosexual, she went through a bisexual stint in between when she fell in love with a woman after 15 years of marriage, then a still continuing homosexual phase where she is deeply involved in another same sex relationship. She is in a continuous conflict within as well as with the outside.

## Detailed description of respondents in category IIA (The Intimate Circle of LBTs)

| Sub-category | Sl. No. | Name          | Gender | Age | Occupation                  |
|--------------|---------|---------------|--------|-----|-----------------------------|
| Family       | 1       | Mother 1      | Female | 52  | Marketing Job               |
|              | 2       | Mother 2      | Female | 75  | Housewife                   |
|              | 3       | Brother       | Male   | 44  | Service (Government Sector) |
|              | 4       | Sister 1      | Female | 21  | Student                     |
|              | 5       | Sister 2      | Female | 48  | School Teacher              |
|              | 6       | Sister-in-law | Female | 40  | Housewife                   |
| Friend       | 7       | Friend 1      | Female | 43  | Post Doctoral Researcher    |
|              | 8       | Friend 2      | Female | 42  | Consultant                  |
|              | 9       | Friend 3      | Male   | 52  | Lecturer                    |
| Colleague    | 10      | Colleague 1   | Female | 48  | Service (Government Sector) |
|              | 11      | Colleague 2   | Female | 42  | Service (Corporate Sector)  |
|              | 12      | Colleague 3   | Female | 49  | Mental Health Activist      |
| Neighbor     | 13      | Neighbor      | Female | 70  | Housewife                   |

## Detailed description of respondents in category IIB (The Larger Society)

| Sl. No. | Category  | Code no. | Gender | Age | Educational background | Socio-economic class | Location |
|---------|-----------|----------|--------|-----|------------------------|----------------------|----------|
| 1       | Student   | 1        | Female | 23  | Post Graduate          | Middle               | Suburban |
| 2       | Student   | 3        | Female | 18  | 12th Standard          | Middle               | Suburban |
| 3       | Student   | 15       | Female | 20  | Graduate               | Middle               | Urban    |
| 4       | Teacher   | 4        | Female | 35  | Post Graduate          | Middle               | Urban    |
| 5       | Teacher   | 13       | Male   | 57  | Ph.D                   | Upper-middle         | Urban    |
| 6       | Teacher   | 22       | Female | 42  | Ph.D                   | Upper-middle         | Urban    |
| 7       | Housewife | 12       | Female | 31  | 12th standard          | Middle               | Suburban |

| Sl. No. | Category                     | Code no. | Gender | Age | Educational background   | Socio-economic class | Location |
|---------|------------------------------|----------|--------|-----|--------------------------|----------------------|----------|
| 8       | Housewife                    | 2        | Female | 40  | Graduate                 | Middle               | Suburban |
| 9       | Housewife                    | 16       | Female | 32  | Graduate                 | Middle               | Urban    |
| 10      | Working Woman                | 14       | Female | 45  | Ph. D.                   | Middle               | Urban    |
| 11      | Working Woman                | 18       | Female | 45  | Graduate                 | Middle               | Urban    |
| 12      | Government Clerk             | 7        | Male   | 52  | Ph. D.                   | Middle               | Urban    |
| 13      | Government Clerk             | 9        | Female | 58  | Graduate                 | Middle               | Urban    |
| 14      | Government Clerk             | 10       | Male   | 58  | 12th Standard            | Middle               | Urban    |
| 15      | Police                       | 5        | Female | 24  | Post Graduate            | Middle               | Urban    |
| 16      | Police                       | 11       | Female | 30  | Post Graduate            | Middle               | Urban    |
| 17      | Psychiatrist                 | 19       | Male   | 52  | Professionally qualified | Upper-middle         | Urban    |
| 18      | Psychiatrist                 | 8        | Female | 32  | Professionally qualified | Upper-middle         | Urban    |
| 19      | Media (Print) personnel      | 6        | Male   | 59  | Post Graduate            | Middle               | Urban    |
| 20      | Media (Electronic) personnel | 20       | Female | 38  | Professionally qualified | Middle               | Urban    |
| 21      | Creative Person              | 21       | Female | 48  | Post Graduate            | Middle               | Urban    |
| 22      | Creative Person              | 25       | Male   | 40  | Post Graduate            | Middle               | Urban    |
| 23      | Scientist                    | 23       | Male   | 54  | Ph. D.                   | Upper-middle         | Urban    |
| 24      | Lawyer                       | 24       | Male   | 38  | Professionally qualified | Middle               | Urban    |
| 25      | Political Party Cadre        | 17       | Female | 40  | 12th Standard            | Lower-middle         | Urban    |

### Detailed description of respondents in category III ( Activists and Rights Organizations)

A1: A woman centered woman, feminist activist, a socialist feminist, very much rooted in the community that is excluded and deprived socially, politically, sexually, economically and culturally. She feels exclusion and inferiorization by exclusion faced by women is an important issue to address.

A2: Gender rights activist, working on violence against women.

A3: Queer feminist activist. Her politics is around feminism and that is very rooted within the women's movement. Her idea of feminism has an angle of gender and sexuality along with caste, class, religion etc. And she also looks at queer activism from a feminist point of view.

A4: She identifies as a queer rights activist.

A5: Working with women mainly on the issue of right to work and livelihood, which also includes identity of a women worker and the kinds of marginalization women face in work field. She recognizes sexuality as a tool of marginalization and as an identity of a woman and tries to include sexuality along with gender in the trainings organized for the rural women's groups that her organization works with .

A6: Queer feminist activist who not only relates to sexuality as sexual violence within the context of marriage as the predominant practice is with mainstream women's movement, but also how without sexuality the understanding of feminism is incomplete. And sexuality is just not about violence it is about pleasure and feminism is not just about victim-hood, it is also about subverting and challenging patriarchy.

A7: A human rights activist, with special focus on sexuality rights and further specifically on LBT rights. Basically a rights activist fighting towards a discrimination free society.

A8: A women's rights activist, working with rural women, interested in intersectionality of gender and sexuality.

A9: A sexuality rights and a women's rights activist, both because it is not an either/or situation. But she is uncomfortable with the term 'woman'.

A10: A queer feminist legal rights activist, who is not a full-fledged law professional and finding the intersectionality quite intriguing between activism, identity and professionalism.

A11: A queer feminist activist, where all the three components are integrally related, is how she identifies personally as well as professionally. Though there is no clash between them in the inner world, in the outer world there still is some dissonance with the identity of a queer.

AG1: Women's rights organization, working for women from the lower income group, mainly from Muslim community fighting against gender based oppressions and for equal opportunities.

AG2: A feminist group working for women's rights.

AG3: A feminist group, a women's rights organization, member of Voices Against 377. It has been a part of the Fire demonstration and always felt that LBT rights are a part of larger women's rights movement. Violence against LBTs is a visible reason of this organization's getting into LBT rights. If norms are to be questioned and patriarchal notions to be challenged then compulsory heterosexuality is also a norm, another patriarchal notion that should be challenged as well.

AG4: LBT rights organization and support cum crisis intervention group.

AG5: A women's rights forum formed by people from the leftist political movement who wanted to work on gender from a different context. Today they identify as social feminists, not disassociated from left political thought. They are looking at structures of society that discriminate against women holding the state accountable, looking at laws relating to women and visiblizing violence against women especially within the family.

#### CODES AND THEMES FOR CATEGORY I (THE LBTS)

1. Understanding violence and violation
2. Issues of violence and violation faced
3. Instances of physical violence and violation
4. Instances of psychological violence
5. Instances of verbal abuse
6. Any other form of violence and violation [education/work]
7. Gender based violence and violation
8. Source of violence and violation – immediate family
9. Source of violence and violation – extended family
10. Source of violence and violation – friends
11. Source of violence and violation – workplace/educational institute
12. Source of violence and violation – neighbor
13. Source of violence and violation – other
14. Source of violence and violation – support group
15. Violence and violation within the LBT Relationship
16. Respondent as perpetrator
17. Self inflicted violence and violation
18. Coping technique for self
19. Suggestions for combating violence and violation
20. Special comments/realizations

#### CODES AND THEMES FOR CATEGORY IIA (THE INTIMATE CIRCLE OF LBTS)

1. Understanding of violence and violation
2. Positive responses towards her/his LBT relative, friend, neighbor, colleague
3. Positive responses towards LBT /Homosexuality issues
4. Negative responses towards her/his LBT relative, friend, neighbor, colleague
5. Negative responses or lack of understanding on LBT or homosexuality issues
6. Mixed responses towards her/his LBT relative, friend, neighbor, colleague
7. Mixed responses towards LBT /Homosexuality issues
8. Indifferent responses towards her/his LBT relative, friend, neighbor, colleague
9. Indifferent responses towards LBT issues/Homosexuality
10. Fearing social ostracization
11. Practicing double standard in dealing with LBT issues
12. Respondent as a victim of violence /violation
13. Respondent as perpetrator of violence /violation
14. Coping techniques
15. Suggestions from the respondents

#### CODES AND THEMES FOR CATEGORY IIB (THE LARGER SOCIETY)

1. Understanding of violence and violation
2. Knowledge about LBT/Homosexuality related issues
3. Whether came across any LBT
4. Awareness around violence and violation on LBTS
5. Positive responses towards LBT persons
6. Positive responses towards LBT issues



7. Negative responses towards LBT persons
8. Negative responses towards LBT issues
9. Mixed responses towards LBT persons/issues
10. Indifferent responses towards LBT persons
11. Indifferent responses towards LBT issues
12. Respondent as victims of violence and violation
13. Respondent as perpetrator of violence and violation
14. Suggestions from the respondent
15. Special comments from the respondent

#### CODES AND THEMES FOR CATEGORY III (THE ACTIVISTS)

1. Understanding violence and violation
2. Respondent as a victim of violence and violation
3. Respondent as a perpetrator of violence and violation
4. Understanding violence and violation on LBT persons
5. Organizational stand vis-à-vis LBT issues
6. Positive cohabitation with main stream women's movements
7. Negative reactions within the movements
8. Mixed reaction within the movements
9. Shift in understanding
10. Strategies/suggestions by the respondent
11. Special comments/points not covered above

#### LIST OF UNDERSTANDINGS OF VIOLENCE AND VIOLATIONS FROM ALL CATEGORIES

1. Violence is intentional acute physical and/or mental torture, otherization, rejection, emotional or social aggression on individuals or groups.
2. Violence is reducing a human being as a sexual object, considering her sexual orientation as the only identity.
3. Silence can be a form of violence
4. Knowledge can be used as a tool for violence and violation
5. Violence can be ideological
6. Violation of an issue is trivialization, reducing its importance
7. Violation means violation of rights as human beings, particularly as woman
8. Violation can be unaware but violence is purposeful
9. Violation is also violence, when a person's existence is threatened by violence then that is also violation of rights
10. Violence is violation of rights which stems from gross ignorance
11. Power hierarchy is violence through which the society is controlled
12. Construction of normalcy by selective removal of homosexuality is violence
13. Lack of time and interest to know about other can lead to violation
14. Media violence by portraying homosexuals as criminals or perverts and/or sensationalizing the issue
15. Violence carries different meanings in different contexts and constituencies
16. Violence is related to masculinity
17. Psychological violence is actually extrapolation of physical violence
18. Violation is a legal term and violence is a social term
19. Violence is coercion and denial
20. Violence begets violence
21. Violence is non-recognition of violence as violence

22. Violence has three categories, overt or physical, covert or psychological and structural or standardized through socialization
23. Invisibilizing the person is violence
24. Violation is concept; violence is act, violence is obvious, violation is subtle
25. Violation can continue over a period of time in a continuum while violence is usually one act or repeated acts at a time
26. Concept of violation is embedded in the psyche

#### INSTANCES OF PHYSICAL VIOLENCE AND VIOLATION FACED BY LBTS

1. Beating by immediate family
2. Beating by partner
3. Beating by partner's family
4. Mob violence
5. Sexual harassment using her un-feminine attitude as guard
6. Stone pelting
7. Sexual abuse by maternal uncle
8. Child sexual abuse by cousin
9. No meal as punishment by mother
10. FIR against her with charges of abduction by partner's husband
11. Jumped from a 3 storey building to teach mother a lesson
12. Severe beating by husband
13. Throttling by husband/partner
14. Sexual abuse
15. Attempt to marital rape
16. Marital rape
17. Series of child sexual abuse
18. Attempt to murder by husband
19. Taking part into heterosexual act of sex with continuous uneasiness
20. Police case lodged by husband
21. Using teeth, nail, sharp objects, cigarette burn to cause physical harm by partner
22. Tearing down one's clothes in public by partner
23. Compelled to have unwilling sex by partner
24. Compelled to have contraceptive pills by partner
25. Physical captivity by partner
26. Rape by cousin
27. Rape by own brother
28. Murder by husband
29. Physical abuse in public
30. Head to foot examination, including vagina by male doctor after learning about her orientation
31. Male suitors of partner used to throw human excreta in her hostel room every other day

#### INSTANCES OF PSYCHOLOGICAL VIOLENCE FACED BY LBTS

1. Psychological abuse resulting in loneliness, frustration
2. Emotional pressure, torture, stress and blackmail by family
3. Open hatred resulting in fear, anxiety

4. Negative campaign resulting in helpless anger and frustration, humiliation
5. Verbal abuse resulting in humiliation
6. Public shaming
7. Otherization and rejection by society at large
8. Fear and anxiety around professional non-acceptance as an un-feminine woman
9. Discrimination based on gender non-conformation in workplace resulting in inferiority complex
10. Discrimination at workplace due to her orientation as a lesbian resulting in frustration and mistrust
11. Discrimination in school as a lesbian and facing the ire of entire school resulting in depression, sadness, hopelessness, nervous breakdown
12. Non-acceptance by her extended family for her un-feminine attitude resulted in hatred and rejection
13. Fear, anger, helplessness, frustration for being seen as an object of ridicule for her non-feminine attire and attitude by society at large
14. Mental torture
15. Emotional blackmail
16. Psychological pressure resulting in trauma, self doubt, dejection
17. Disowning by the family when she was young and without any financial support
18. Cruelty by family
19. Silence in the family
20. Indifference by family
21. Family had refused to take care of her educational/financial needs when young
22. Marriage pressure by family
23. Psychological trauma resulting in physical illness – asthma, panic attack, suicide attempt
24. Was perceived as a sexually pervert, mentally ill person by school/college friends, thus unaccepted by friends
25. Open hatred by family
26. Pressurizing for ideological compromise by partner
27. Psychological pressure by school authority by disallowing promotion
28. Anger and discomfort rising from harassment, taunt, indecent behavior of neighborhood people
29. Wrong medical information about same sex behavior created discomfort, stress, and fear
30. Mental torture by appointing tantric [parareligious priest who practice black magic] by family
31. Psychological turmoil and stress created because of non acceptance of her partner by her family
32. Humiliation by partner's daughter
33. Violent threatening by partner's husband
34. Childhood trauma from mother's illicit relationship with a man
35. Psychological break down erupting in the form of extreme anger and hatred against mother for her illicit relationship
36. Marriage pressure – self inflicted
37. Confusion and self doubt created by wrong information given by psychiatrist
38. Threat of curbing financial independence, mobility, education
39. Threat of suicide by mother
40. Threat of vilifying her same sex partner at her [partner's] home
41. Threat of taking away her [partner's] job
42. Mental pressure resulting in self doubt
43. Lack of exposure about homosexuality leading to lack of confidence, leading to helplessness/hopelessness
44. Frustration, anger rising from words and expressions used by close relatives about same sex relationships
45. Inability to confide about history of child sexual abuse to anyone resulting in deep distress, trauma, pain
46. Silence about her same sex relational problems with anyone led to claustrophobia and pain

47. Public shaming in hostel
48. Not letting her develop independent thought process by parents
49. Teaching her to live for others according to norms by parents
50. Not allowing her options
51. Blackmailing into marriage by boyfriend
52. Guilt feeling for not being able to fulfill her parents' expectations
53. Loss of self worth
54. Lack of initiative or interest about herself even medically
55. Moral outcast by larger family
56. Violence in the name of love, care and protection
57. Ugly offensive language
58. Extreme form of otherization
59. Indecent enquiry about personal sexual life
60. Psychological trauma by degradation as pervert, abnormal, dirty, immoral
61. Intrusion into her private space by breaking down boundaries of decency generally practiced in a middle class household
62. Stress and helpless anger due to victimization faced in the support group
63. Hurt and emotional distress due to misunderstanding in the support group
64. Emotional violence in same sex relationships
65. Insecurity and fear as mental pressure due to same sex partner's bisexuality
66. Humiliation through sex talk involving lesbians in general
67. Deep emotional violence by partner leading to trauma
68. Claustrophobia from space encroachment by partner
69. Lack of physical proximity gave rise to insecurity
70. Helplessness before knowledge as a tool of violence
71. Indecent inquisitiveness in public about her sexual orientation
72. Receiving meaningfully negative statement in workplace about lesbians in general
73. Sense of loss and humiliation by making a public display of a private relationship
74. Sense of loss and humiliation because of being used as a tool for immigration to a first world country
75. Helplessness for getting into a heterosexual marriage because of family pressure and financial problems
76. Inability to come out of marriage because of family pressure and financial problems
77. Optionlessness
78. Lack of support from natal family
79. Lack of love in marital relationship
80. Indifference and aloofness from husband
81. Husband has vitiated her children against her
82. Indifference of her natal family towards her physical and mental abuse by husband
83. Trauma because of husband's threat of 'anal rape'
84. Distress by her husband's sneaking into her private life
85. Lack of security at home
86. Confusion and hurt by rejection as a woman and acceptance as an asexual person by society at large
87. Discrimination and marginalization because of her status as an illegal child
88. Falsity within the same sex relationship
89. Extreme kind of psychological violence by her same sex partner, demand of heterotypical relationship, no recognition of her needs, likes or dislikes

90. Extreme kind of psychological violence by her same sex partner's family by calling her an illegal child in public
91. Desertion by her father leading to feeling of extreme rejection and hatred
92. Feeling of humiliation and frustration because of repeated sexual abuses
93. Humiliation and pain due to usage of phrases like 'work as a whore' by mother in public
94. Helplessness for getting blackmailed into sexual act by cousin and own brother using IPC 377
95. Lack of willingness to reach out for support
96. Panic and paranoia
97. Distress arising from inability of getting socio-legal benefits in her live-in same sex relationship [joint property, naming each other as insurance or savings nominee]
98. Distress arising from inability to accept her own female body and specific functions like menstruation
99. Feeling of discomfort, humiliation, helpless anger by being compelled to wear feminine clothes
100. Feeling of rejection, lack of care and love by father resulting in anger and disrespect
101. Public humiliation by school authority by taking away her class captaincy and not letting her take part in school sports
102. Emotional stress and negative feelings as girl friend supported her parents in police case where she was falsely accused by girl friend's parents
103. Insecurity within same sex relationship as a transperson
104. Helplessness and hurt for parents' disinterest in her wellbeing
105. Fear of being labeled as deviant
106. Living a closeted life
107. Discomfort with own woman's body and physiological occurrences like menstruation
108. Threats of separating 'special friendship' practicing friends by convent authorities
109. Stifling convent life
110. Lack of option as a daughter [marriage or convent]
111. Guilt feelings for being in a forbidden lesbian relationship inside convent
112. For 12 years had been in a relationship without getting sexually intimate because of moral and emotional pressure
113. Media sensationalized her story and exposed her as 'nuns as lesbians' even after vouching for confidentiality
114. Brain washed to think that convent life is a noble vocation, sacrificing the pleasures of life for others
115. All bodily pleasure was denied inside the convent, even tasty food
116. Curbing every expressed desire [she wanted to learn medicine but she was sent to learn nursing, to make her humble]
117. Brain washed into not questioning and obeying superiors
118. Convent life gives one security by taking away autonomy
119. Stigmatization
120. Considered untouchable
121. Mobility restraint
122. Psychological pressure to live a dual existence
123. Psychological pressure to hold back all spontaneous expressions
124. Internalized hetero-patriarchy
125. Psychiatric violence leading to suicide attempt
126. Conflicting emotions leading to stress and trauma by obeying the family on one hand and living for herself on the other
127. Internalization of family as the supreme ruler
128. Infantilization within the same sex relationship

129. Family values as understood by her has created a structure inside her psyche which is controlling all her adult intimate relationships outside the family
130. Lack of confidence resulting from conflicts between intimate relationships [mother and same sex partner]
131. Discrimination and marginalization since her father was mentally ill
132. Feeling of suffocation since she has been compelled to opt for pretending as a heterosexual in order to survive within the system at her workplace
133. Constant pressure from colleagues to fit her in the heteronormative paradigm through marriage
134. Humiliation by the superintendent of the hostel
135. Humiliation by the university teachers
136. Open hatred and resentment by classmates, teachers and hostel authority
137. Robbing someone off her name at her in-laws place after marriage
138. Insult by husband because of orientation
139. Claustrophobia inside a feminist structure created by partner

#### INSTANCES OF VERBAL ABUSE FACED BY LBTS

1. Using slang words denoting sexual act in a most dirty way
2. Using hateful words meaning sexually pervert, sick
3. Humiliating statement about her parents by partner
4. Derogatory words and expressions regarding her sexual orientation by family, husband, larger family
5. Abusive words and gestures
6. Indecent proposals
7. Indecent comments and gestures with sexual undertones
8. Wrong medical information about same sex behavior
9. Intelligible words and indecent gesture by partner's husband
10. Objectionable abusive words against her partner by her mother
11. Abusive words denoting childless woman
12. Humiliating and degrading words
13. Lurid comments by young neighborhood boys
14. Abusive words denoting immoral behavior
15. Abusive words expressing hatred and negative feelings about lesbians
16. Ugly and offensive language used to humiliate
17. Indecent enquiry about personal sexual life
18. Ugly words meaning pervert, abnormal, dirty, immoral
19. Negative campaign about lesbians in general
20. Abusive words used against same sex practice
21. Negative campaign on the basis of sexual orientation
22. Sex talk involving lesbians in general
23. Indecent inquisitiveness with derogatory words
24. Usage of meaningfully negative statement about lesbians in general
25. Abusive words generally denoting sexual act
26. Sexual demand using slang
27. Abusive words denoting her sexual relationship in front of children
28. Whore [khanki pana (acting like a slut)]
29. Usage of very dirty term for anal sex [pnod mere debo (fuck your ass)] as punishment for alleged same sex behavior
30. Usage of derogatory terms meaning illegal child [jali rakta (polluted blood)]



31. Usage of phrases like 'taste of real sex with a man to cure' to justify rape
32. Slang denoting mixed gender identity [hijra, chhakka (transvestite), two-in-one]
33. Abusive words denoting illicit birth
34. Abusive words denoting sexual orientation
35. 'You are just like your father' is a form of verbal abuse for a person having huge issues about her father
36. Phrases that hold her responsible for her father's suicide [father was mentally ill] by close relatives
37. Mother using filthy language indicating sexual relationship with LBT's own daughter

#### **ANY OTHER FORMS OF VIOLENCE AND VIOLATION [EDUCATION/WORK/SUPPORT GROUP] FACED BY LBTS**

1. Family had refused to pay for her education
2. Economic insecurity created by family
3. Was refused a job as she declined to wear feminine dress
4. Threat of not letting one continue with her job
5. Threat of not letting one continue with her education
6. Threat of rustivating from the hostel [education/shelter]
7. Family disclosed her sexual orientation at the workplace and thereby she lost her job - twice
8. Threat to rusticate partner from college
9. Husband tried to create problem at her workplace
10. Education got disturbed because of father's violence and her abusive same sex affair
11. Could not attend college regularly as a result could not pass because of negative campaign by partner's mother
12. Had to change school for not being able to deal with adverse atmosphere
13. Was an outcast within the support group because of relational dynamics
14. Intrusion inside personal domain by support group
15. No space was provided to share her heterosexual encounter and subsequent guilt, trauma, discomfort around that by support group
16. Misunderstanding around relationships created by support group
17. Victimization by individuals of support group
18. Otherization within the support group by creating a divide between seniors and juniors
19. Mutual lack of patience in the support group
20. Inability to connect to the safe space within the support group

#### **GENDER BASED VIOLENCE AND VIOLATION FACED BY LBTS**

1. Sexual harassment using her un-feminine attitude as reason
2. Pronounced son preference – gender factor complicates the sexuality factor
3. Sexual abuse by close relatives
4. Child sexual abuse by relatives
5. Sexual abuse by neighbors
6. Rape
7. Marital rape
8. Neighborhood guys create problems as they are jealous about her being a woman yet competing with them
9. Was refused a job as she declined to wear feminine dress
10. Had to marry because of family pressure as a woman
11. Had to leave her job after marriage
12. Taunted by in-laws for not bearing a child

13. Had to face abusive words as a barren woman though her husband was impotent
14. Had to wait till all her sisters got married before leaving her husband
15. Not allowed to think and had to obey others
16. Had to follow the gender norms
17. Gender driven expectations and non-fulfillment of those leading to deep psychological trauma
18. Violence as a married woman by her husband even before her same sex involvement began
19. Local police station did not pay importance to the everyday physical violence she was facing from her husband
20. Indifference of her natal family towards her physical and mental abuse by husband
21. Cannot talk about her divorce as divorcee women are highly stigmatized in the society
22. Was deterred from taking part in active mountaineering for being a woman
23. Own understanding of gender norms violated herself in many cases
24. Non-typical looks and behavior often allow people to see one as an asexual person thereby violating her right to be a woman
25. Deserted by father as an illegal girl child
26. Lack of option as a daughter [marriage or convent]
27. Double discrimination [as woman and as same sex loving woman]
28. Family never wanted her to get married as she is playing the role of a son
29. Robbing someone off her name at her in-laws place after marriage

#### SELF INFLICTED VIOLENCE AND VIOLATION BY LBTS

1. Tried to enter into a heterosexual relationship to cope with societal pressure thereby violating her own rights
2. Jumped from a 3 storey building to teach mother a lesson
3. She is unable to understand the impact of violence and violation happening upon her, thereby inflicting violence upon herself
4. Marrying a man after knowing her orientation for internalized patriarchal notions
5. Internalized homophobia
6. Psychological violence on self by engaging sexually with a male just to check out own orientation
7. Mental torture on self by forming heterosexual relationships and rejecting them
8. Though economically independent and educated yet never mustered courage to speak her mind
9. Allowed husband to blackmail her into marriage by letting her parents know about her secret same sex relationship
10. Allowed her parents to blackmail her into marriage by suicide and other emotional threats
11. Never question the hetero-patriarchal structure of the society and its inherent violations
12. Accepted and internalized all the gender typical norms thereby violating her own rights
13. Still wants to give in to parents' wishes of child bearing though she herself does not wish a child by her husband
14. Though in a medical crisis, does not want to do anything about it as she feels she is not worth it
15. Continuing for a long time in an abusive relationship
16. Suffering from self hatred for allowing herself to be a victim of relational violence
17. Self degradation for the grievous lie used by her
18. Guilt and self degradation for coming between a couple and violating that space
19. Marrying a man after being aware of her same sex orientation thereby bringing down a whole lot of violence on herself
20. Living within the married relationship without ever enjoying the sexual part
21. Living within the married relationship that is sexually, physically and mentally abusive
22. Wounding herself with sharp object when angry with same sex partner
23. Carrying on with a same sex relationship that is physically and mentally abusive

24. Violating own gender rights by internalizing the gender-typical structure of the society and putting oneself in that box
25. Being in love she had neglected education
26. Suicide
27. Attempt to suicide
28. Trauma created by inability to accept her own female body
29. Self harming because of incontrollable anger
30. Got involved in street brawls many times when teased by people for non conformity and same sex orientation
31. Internalized fear resulted in living a closeted life
32. Feels uncomfortable calling herself lesbian after 30 years of being in a lesbian relationship as the word is loaded with negativity in Christian religious context, prefers 'queer identity' as a gender
33. Still burdened with guilt feelings for being in a forbidden lesbian relationship
34. Still feels her decision to join convent at 17 was voluntary thereby the violence was self inflicted, rather than making her father the perpetrator
35. Names all the violence and violation as 'injustice'
36. Living openly outside closet brings down whole lot of familial and societal violence on the person
37. Fear of losing intimate persons gives rise to violence on self
38. Self negation
39. Conflict between the politically correct self and emotionally raw self causing violence

#### LBTS AS PERPETRATORS

1. Tried to enter into a heterosexual relationship to cope with societal pressure thereby violating her boy friend's rights
2. Physical abuse in the heterosexual relationship
3. Disclosing one's secrets in the support group
4. Entering into simultaneous relationships
5. She had left her partner for another woman then came back when the other woman left her making her partner's life miserably sad and insecure
6. She had formed relationship with a married woman with two children thereby violating the heteronormative family space
7. She had used slang abusive language towards her partner's husband
8. Expectation of heterotypical relationship and internalized patriarchal notions results in conflict and violence
9. Marrying a man after knowing her orientation thereby violation husband's rights
10. Left her same sex lover because of internalized homophobia
11. Came between two persons in an intimate relationship, thereby causing break up
12. In the attempt to temporarily put an end to her relationship, had violated partner's rights.
13. Entered into a relationship with a male cousin to get even with someone else in the family
14. Used male cousin's sexual interest to check own orientation
15. Attitude towards men in general is abusive in nature, had allured men and when they became deeply involved, had left them
16. Married and also has kept the same sex partner attached without any proper future plan thereby violating partner's rights
17. In the process of appeasing parents and the society at large, had violated partner and husband's rights
18. Practicing double standard by continuing with a secured, respectable, married status and having a lover at the same time
19. Has violated family's rights because they had to face many problems for her orientation in the society

20. Had misused support group's faith and dependence upon her
21. Had lied to many people who are close to her and who had placed their faith upon her
22. Had been unfaithful and disrespectful to her relationship
23. Violence setting off a chain of violence in intimate relationships including license of promiscuity
24. Told a grievous lie to a very close person to save her own skin
25. Came between a lesbian couple and thereby violated one of the partners
26. Eloped with same sex partner leaving her two young children
27. Violation of husband's rights for getting into extra marital same sex relationship
28. Marriage and subsequent divorce even after knowing one's orientation
29. Walking out of a same sex relationship without giving much explanation to the partner
30. By trying to pay colleagues back in the same coin for their gender insensitivity by doing things their way thereby sometimes unwillingly perpetrating some of those violence
31. Violation of the safe space provided by the support group
32. Had been deceptive in relationship
33. Had been in relationship with two persons [male and female] at the same time without being transparent to any of them
34. Got involved in street brawls many times when teased by people for non conformity and same sex orientation
35. Violence upon her sister by trying to rule her sister's life according to her own understanding of right and wrong
36. Violence due to internalization of patriarchal values like possessing a person
37. Internalized aggression expressed by physical violence towards father
38. Lack of ability to adjust
39. Lack of tolerance
40. Very strict narrow ideas about right and wrong and lack of flexibility
41. Perpetrating violence on partner by creating pressure for leaving her natal family and slapping her in public

#### **VIOLENCE AND VIOLATION WITHIN LBT RELATIONSHIPS**

1. Partner wanted to see her as a man and disregarded her gender fluidity, in sexual and social activities
2. Lack of social recognition and legal bonding resulting in insecurity
3. Psychological incompatibility
4. Misunderstanding
5. Domination
6. Miscommunication or lack of communication
7. Lack of faith and trust
8. Suspicion, disrespect
9. Financial factors like taking each other financially for granted or plundering one's hard earned money
10. Emotional blackmail
11. Psychological torture
12. Humiliation and harassment
13. Physical abuse
14. Sexual abuse
15. Over possessiveness
16. Lack of space
17. Over dependency

18. Her first girl friend from school did not take a stand for her when she was given transfer certificate from the school
19. Had left her partner for another woman then came back when the other woman left her making her partner's life miserably sad and insecure
20. Physical abuse, psychological pressure, jealousy, misunderstanding, attempt to suicide, self inflicting pain
21. Expectation of heterotypical relationship and internalized patriarchal notions results in conflict and violence
22. Mental abuse, trauma resulting from desertion, rejection
23. Lack of exposure about homosexuality leading to lack of confidence, leading to helplessness/hopelessness
24. Incompatibility of experiences and expectations leading to misunderstanding
25. Psychological violence on partner by her sexual engagement with a male just to check out her orientation
26. Violence bringing in violence creating a chain of violence
27. Inherent violence of heterotypical relational expectations
28. Insecurity and fear as mental pressure due to partner's bisexuality
29. Lack of trust and information about bisexual women
30. Lack of mutual trust and respect
31. Encroachment upon each other's space to negotiate the physical distance between the partners
32. Emotional violence in the name of spirituality, greater philosophy, larger world view and belittling the other person in the process
33. Using knowledge as a tool of violence
34. Public display of a private relationship by the partner
35. Being used as a tool for immigration to a first world country by the partner
36. Self wounding
37. Promiscuity
38. Desertion and jealousy
39. Physical abuse like using teeth, nail, sharp objects, cigarette burn to cause physical harm
40. Tearing down one's clothes in public
41. Compelled to have unwilling sex
42. Compelled to have contraceptive pills
43. Physical captivity
44. Hypocrisy
45. Psychological incompatibility
46. Incompatibility in lifestyle
47. Economic incompatibility
48. Girl friend ditched her to marry a man
49. Partner does not give recognition to the relationship to her [partner's] family

### COPING TECHNIQUE FOR SELF BY LBTS

#### POSITIVE:

1. Giving herself some more time to reach a position of authority so that she can fight back more constructively
2. Economic independence
3. Attaining financial stability
4. Joining a support group
5. Taking help of women's organization working on violence against women issues to combat police procedure against her on the basis of her partner's husband's charges
6. Involving women's rights organization positioning her as a domestic violence victim
7. Joining the women's movement helped her to accept herself as a woman
8. Gathering knowledge and information

9. Being vocal about gender based rights violation and demanding those rights
10. Continuing dialogue with family
11. Gradually starting dialogue on the issue of lesbianism with her mother
12. Getting into a job ensuring some amount of economic independence and mobility
13. Trainings addressing violence
14. Trainings on psychological skills building
15. Keeping safe distance between her profession and her personal sexual orientation [a ladies tailor by profession, she runs a tailoring business]
16. Lodging an FIR at the local police station before leaving husband's home
17. Vouched to discontinue her same sex relationship to appease her immediate family to be able to continue with her studies and job but kept contact behind their back
18. Living a life outside closet openly with conviction
19. Using social work as a worthy cause, culturally accepted in her religious community for leaving convent and staying with her partner
20. Secretly throwing away medicines and taabeej (sacred metallic armlet believed to be of supernatural power) which had been given to 'cure' her
21. Co-adopting a child [legally by the partner as a single parent]
22. Has decided to carry feminine dresses with her in office so that in extreme necessity she can use those
23. Changing work sector and trying to begin from the beginning
24. Completing higher studies through convent
25. Getting job placement through convent
26. Entering convent was an acceptable alternative to marriage
27. Building a safe space for her and her partner

#### NEGATIVE:

28. Tried to enter into a heterosexual relationship
29. Marriage and preparing herself for peno-vaginal sex
30. Used silence as a coping technique
31. Apparent patch up with husband but continuing with her same sex relationship
32. Marrying a man with shared passion
33. Trying to pay colleagues back in the same coin by doing things there way, showing the crudeness and ugliness of such acts to deal with their gender insensitivity
34. Getting into another relationship which is seemingly safer
35. Introducing partner as sister to pacify neighbors
36. Living inside closet



