

**Changing forms of violence: Struggles in non-marital intimate relationships:
A study of the experiences of intervention at the Special Cells in Mumbai**

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Changing forms of violence: Struggles in non-marital intimate relationships - A study of the experiences of intervention at the Special Cells in Mumbai

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Intimate partner relationships which are self-arranged, non-marital and non-cohabiting have rarely been a part of the violence against women (VAW) discourse. Such violence comes into the limelight especially when the aggression, takes an extremely grievous physical form, such as acid attacks. This paper attempts to understand the gamut of violence within non-marital and non-domestic intimate partner relationships which have been registered at the Special Cells for Women and Children, Mumbai and aims to map out strategies for working with survivors of intimate partner violence for VAW interventionists.

Key phrase defined

Love relationships: In India, most literature, data or text available on intimate partner relationships are synonymous to marital and/or live-in relationships. Hence, for this specific paper, the term 'love relationship' is being used which is clearly and unambiguously defined and distinguished as those intimate relationships which are self arranged, non-cohabiting and non-marital in nature.

'Cause love makes the world go round!'

Love has to be the most vital ingredient to any relationship and the earliest experience of love starts with the family. Since childhood, it is deeply ingrained in us to love our family - our mother, father, sibling/s, grandparent/s, aunts and uncles- equally. There is no question of loving any of these people more or less. You mix respect, care (especially if you are a girl child) and the right amount and the right kind of love for any healthy relationship.

What no one really talks about while growing up is the 'other' kind of love- the kind of love that blossoms outside the family and has intimate forms of romantic attachments and overtones. All

¹ This study has been a collective process and we would like to acknowledge all their contributions. First and foremost the women who accessed the services of the Special Cell; the past and current social workers of the Special Cell for their nuanced understanding on the issue of violence against women; and Manisha Kande for the precise data collection and first level analysis.

you might hear or read about is the knight in shining armour who will come, 'snatch' away the 'damsel in distress', house her in a magnificent castle laden with all riches, which presumably (for some reason) will be enough to keep her 'happy ever after'.

So, where do we really get exposed to this covert, buttoned-up love outside the family? Even though it is present all around us, and aspired for by most people, especially adolescents, no one is willing to talk about it. Books and novels on fairy tales, teen love and college romance are available and read widely and could possibly be the first point of exposure to love relationships outside of family. The overpowering influence of movies and television, especially in a country like India, also have a huge impact on notions and ideas of heterosexual love and romance.

'Love me for a reason, let the reason be love'

The romance genre of books and movies, where love plays a pivotal role, is immensely popular. They portray love in different shades and nuances: you have the childhood or 'puppy' love, love beyond borders- class, caste and religion- the unrequited love, love as a catalyst which changes you (of course, for the 'better'), love which rebels against or is in with the will of your parents. The degrees of love and situations are endless.

What is also depicted most of the times is the violence and unequal relations within romantic relationships and because of its constant representation is so understated that it goes largely unnoticed – both in reel as well as real life. Popular cinema and mainstream media have often been indicted with portraying and perpetuating in cinema and media on unequal gender relations and violent heterosexual alliances in our society. According to J. Wood (2001), "as the media and other cultural institutions reproduce the gender and romance narratives, women and men learn the roles culture prescribes, or allows, for them". Thus, men and women equally get socialized into believing that romantic relationships should be unequal and violence to some degree is accepted.

'Mere khwabon mein jo aaye... Aake mujhe 'chhed' jaaye'

The idea of romance and love which most young people fantasize about largely entails some extent of violence. Acts of harassing women just because you claim to 'love' her or tricking her into falling in love with you, though violent in nature, are how people fantasize about love. In most of the movies (if not all) the man has the upper hand. He is the one who is in control of the relationship while the woman only follows him and adheres to what he says. The lack of strong

female characters in romantic relationships also influences the young to emulate certain 'desirable' characters displayed on the big screen.

Fairy tales also are no different when it comes to portrayal of romance and love. According to Jones (1994), the link between popular representations of love and romance and acceptance of violence in intimate relationships in fairy tales is very strong. The character of Prince Charming is not very different from the Prince of Darkness as they both pose the same characteristics of strength, power, assertiveness, command and even violence (J. Wood, 2001). The colliding characteristics of two personalities- which should be poles apart- make it difficult to recognise the violence that is being perpetuated. The depiction of women as accommodating individuals, who are supposed to seek and please men and of men as dominating who regard women as inferior seeps into the cultural acceptability of violence in narratives around us, which only further oppresses women.

What love stories approach the Special Cell

Similar to the portrayal in cinema of intimate relationships outside of marriage and family, the Special Cell for Women and Children (hereafter Special Cell) also receives cases of violence in various kinds of relationships. There are married women, unmarried women, women facing violence from parents, siblings, neighbours, employers, intimate partners, husbands, in-laws - the profile of women approaching the Cell is myriad, as are the relationships in which they face violence. The Special Cell is a psycho-socio-legal service made available at police stations for survivors of all kinds of violence- faced in private and public- to report, register and take help of trained social workers who facilitate a process towards a violence free life.

Over a period of time, the social workers have observed an increasing number of survivors who are in self-arranged, non-cohabiting and non-marital intimate relationships approaching them. Discussion of this trend took place in one of the monthly meetings of the Mumbai Cell workers in which emerging trends in violence against women and learnings while intervening in cases are shared by all the Cell workers. In their experience, clients had stated that after a long period of intimacy and, in many cases, after promise of marriage, the male partner had refused to get married to them. Several Cell workers also discussed that the survivors were articulating their experience of violence within the legal framework of 'rape' as, according to them, they had

engaged in sexual intercourse with the promise of marriage and their trust was breached when the man refused to get married to them.

During discussions of such cases with Cell workers, a notable obstacle faced was naming these relationships. All the Cell workers were clear that the relationship was self-arranged, non-cohabiting, non-marital and intimate in nature. In the West, this type of relationship is termed as a 'dating' relationship. But, unlike the West, in a country like India, dating is culturally not exclusive to the idea of marriage, and hence 'dating' did not seem to be the most culturally and contextually appropriate. Another term considered was 'intimate relationships', which is usually used in the context of both marital and non-marital relationships, but that too did not encompass all the elements of the relationship. Eventually, a term emerged from the lengthy deliberations held at the meeting itself. It was noticed that Cell workers throughout their discussions were constantly referring to the 'love' that existed between the client and the respondent and as this emotion of love was so central to the relationship, it was thought that the best way to describe these relationships would be to call them 'love relationships' for the purpose of this study. It is not to say that live-in relationships and marital relationships (arranged and self-arranged) are devoid of love, but in 'love relationships', the emotion of love remains central to the relationship. The exploration and analysis of 'love relationship' with Cell workers led to thinking that aspirations of women residing in urban cities, such as Mumbai, help in the forging of such 'love' relationships.

An insight into the narratives of violence in 'love relationships' is drawn up from the applications and register entries of survivors of violence in 'love relationships' who have registered their case at the Special Cells located in V.T., Dadar, Kandivali and C. B. D. Belapur. Cases from the years 2001 and 2002 and between 2009 and 2012 from Special Cells located at the V.T., Dadar, Kandivali, were selected, relevant cases and between 2009 and 2012 from CBD Belapur and cases from 2011 and 2012 Kurla and Vikhroli were selected for the purpose of this study². The process of collecting data from the Cells was an intense process as reading through the vast number of applications revealed the complex nature of relationships. There were cases which fit exactly into the category of 'love relationships' as defined above and there were cases of intimate relationships which were not self-arranged or were of friendships which turned

2 The selection of the years from which data is going to be collected, depends on when the Special Cell has started functioning.

violent or of violence within co-workers. Because of the complexity of the relationships and the violence within that, it was decided to categorise the relationships into two sections- the core data comprises of those cases which have been termed as 'love relationships' and the peripheral data which are of violent relationships other than familial relationships. A total of 58 cases were identified which constitute as the core data for this study and 18 cases form the peripheral data.

Structured interviews of Cell workers, who have intervened in 4 or more than 4 cases of love relationships and have handled such cases in the years 2011 and 2012, were conducted to understand the strategies that they have used to negotiate a violence free life for the woman.

While this paper is focused on 'love' relationships, it is also important to bare in mind that it is only when the woman faces violence in such a relationship, she accesses the services of the Special Cell. This research does not focus on the experiences of those women and men who are in violence free love relationships.

'But that's not violence...'³: As mentioned above, violence under the garb of 'love', in mainstream movies and media, is to some extent permitted and accepted. For example, a popular Hindi movie song of 2014 shows an actor wooing the leading female actor by singing "*Khali pili rokne ka nahi, tera picha karoon toh tokne ka nahi*" ("Don't stop me for no reason, if I follow you don't ask me not to"). The inherent nature of violence, by stalking a woman just because he claims to be her *saccha aashiq* (true lover), is probably something which goes unnoticed and gets imbibed in the notion of true love. Many popular movies of the 90s depict how the lead male and female actors were enemies in the first half of the movie and, by the second half, their hatred for each other turns into friendship which eventually blossoms into love. The portrayal of a relationship which starts off on a violent note may eventually turn into an ideal love story also makes people believe that a certain amount of violence is acceptable for a 'successful' love relationship. This invisibilization, and hence the denial of sexual harassment and violence which has an impact on one's mental well being, makes one believe that there is no violence if it's not physical violence.

According to Cell workers, although, all the survivors of intimate partner violence have come with a complaint of 'harassment', and 'trouble', they are usually not fully aware of the extent of

3 While narrating the experiences of survivors, one Special Cell worker mentioned that most of the survivors say that their experiences in their 'love' relationships are not of violence.

violence that has been inflicted upon them. Interviews with the Cell workers indicate that one of the first steps carried out during intervention is to help the survivor identify the violence that she has been subjected to and to pinpoint its extent. The nature of violence in 'love' relationship differs from the violence in marital relationship, as women in 'love' relationship have experienced sexual and financial violence more than physical violence. 98.3% survivors of violence in 'love' relationship have reported instances of mental violence. Since violence is popularly believed to take physical form, many survivors of 'love' violence do not even recognize or acknowledge their relationship as violent.

The non-recognition of violence as a violation of their rights may also be due to the fact that the relationship is self chosen; it is not a relationship which someone else has arranged or forced upon them. Perhaps this is the same reason why when a new client who has self-arranged her marriage, while narrating her history of marital violence, will make it a point to include that her marriage was self-arranged. Thus, the assumption that when one settles for a self-arranged marriage or relationship, then the relationship will be non-violent because the partner is self-chosen gets challenged.

Women in self-arranged relationships feel emotionally more dependent as the choice of being with one's partner is not anyone else's but theirs, especially in cases where the relationship has been forged without the approval or consent of parents or society. Thus, there are more shared experiences between the partners in contrast to a relationship which is arranged through parents. This could probably justify the fact that the survivors of who have reported violence within arranged intimate relationships and experienced violence during courtship did not come to the Cell for reconciliation, but for break-up and severance of all ties with their ex- fiancé. While on the other hand, women who have self-arranged the relationship have tried their level best to continue because they have gone against society and also they fear that their 'honour' would be at stake if the relationship does not culminate in marriage.

Even after facing violence in a relationship which is not bound legally, most of the survivors want to get married to the perpetrator. This data is very telling of the fact that marriage remains central to any 'love' relationship. In spite of facing violence, according to the Special Cell data, 20.7% of the registered survivors of love relationships, at the time of registration, have said that their expectation from the Special Cell is to facilitate an intervention which would lead to the

marriage of the survivor and the perpetrator. K. Rosen and S. Stith (1993) had a similar experience through their interviews with survivors of violent dating relationships as they found out that most of the survivors "... did not seek counseling to leave partners but to make their relationships better...".

'Marriage-like relationship': While articulating and asserting their rights and talking about their experiences of violence, women survivors of violence in love relationships have used sexual relations to explain and/or legitimize the existence of the said relationship. *Lagnasarkha naat* (relationship like marriage) was a common term used in several of the women's narratives. In our society, sex is legitimized only within the framework of marriage and it is constructed within very patriarchal and hence oppressive, structures. The fact that consent for it within marriage is not thought of is probably the reason behind underreporting of sexual violence in marriage⁴.

But, the picture changes when one indulges in sexual activity without marriage. Reaffirming the experiences and the analysis of the Cell workers, in 75% of the cases of violence in "love" relationships, women have complained of sexual violence at the time of registration of their case. To talk about sexual violence might be more acceptable within the context of refusal to marriage, as sex outside the framework of marriage is not accepted and hence, the violence then becomes all the more intense and the complaint becomes more severe. Probably, it is this unacceptability that makes it easier for the survivor to talk about such violence in the language of rights and violence.

A patriarchal and heteronormative society makes women believe that sex is that boundary in a woman's life, which if crossed, makes the relationship a more committed, long term one. Thus, by stating that a relationship is like marriage - most of the time, means that the couple has been engaged in sexual activity within the socially-sanctioned institution of 'marriage'. Sex thus becomes an integral part of one's love relationship and as there is no possibility of intimacy outside the realm of marriage, that relationship becomes akin to a marital one. Also, in cases

4 As per a study conducted in 2001 by the Special Cell, only .3% clients of the Special Cell have reported sexual violence. Location of violence in 85.8% cases in the same study is within marriage and in 74.1% cases the complaint is made against the husband.

where the survivor wants to get married to the perpetrator, stating that there has been sexual proximity between the two also means that theirs was a committed, serious relationship and that this wish of the survivor is therefore a 'legitimate' one which she is justified in pursuing by asking for institutional support.

While sex in 'love' relationships is identified by survivors as violence, it is important to note, that it is not because it is not consensual- which is the case in incidents of sexual assault- but it is because it is the refusal of marriage which frames the relation as violence in retrospect. Thus, for the survivors, the consent to sexual intercourse is only valid until and unless the promise to marriage is fulfilled.

While sex and intimacy are the reasons for equating a love relationship with marriage, there is absolutely no notion of the man being the financial provider in love relationships. The experience of the Special Cell indicates that even in marital relationships, men do not necessarily go by the socially ascribed role of being a provider, a breadwinner, but in cases of 'love' relationships especially this role is totally absent, leading to the woman supporting her intimate partner financially as well.

In marital relationships, financial violence stems from demand for dowry, not giving enough money to cover the household or medical expenses or taking away the woman's *streedhan*. As love relationships do not fit under the institution of marriage and as there is no shared household, the method of abusing the woman financially changes. Also, in love relationships, there is blurring of responsibilities. As husband and wife you have a socially ascribed set of responsibilities. But in cases of love relationships because there are no norms, no rules, the roles are also not defined. Thus, unlike marital relationships the man does not necessarily take the responsibility of the financial expenditures and as there is no shared household, there are no material goods bought together by the couple and because of the 'marriage like' relationship finances are exchanged (mostly from woman to man).

Data shows that 51.6% of the women who are in intimate partner are financially abused. As most of the women are financially independent, it is easier for the man to ask for money and easier for the woman to give it. According to a Cell worker, women who are economically independent - are employed in a regular remunerative formal job - are 'duped' (*fasavle*) because of their financial stability by the perpetrator to amass his own wealth, said one Cell worker in her

interview. The Special Cell data of 10 years shows that 38% of the married women who register their complaint have said that they face financial violence from their husband (RCI-VAW, 2015). Thus, women who are married to their perpetrator do not complain about facing financial violence as much as women who are not married to their perpetrator. This may also be due to the fact that because there is no legally or socially acceptable shared belongings, women in 'love' relationships are more aware of the times in which they have 'lent' the man money. Also the nature of financial violence is different in both the relationships. In marital relationships, financial violence may include, not giving maintenance, not giving money or enough money for household expenses, taking control of financial instruments, taking away woman's right to financial entitlement; whereas in 'love' relationships, the nature of financial violence is different as it largely includes the perpetrator taking money to build his own property. For example, in one of the cases the perpetrator took money from the client to buy a house and registered the house in his name. In two other cases, the client gave the respondent money for their wedding- which never took place. The above mentioned forms of violence also show that the situations in which money was given by the survivor, are not under coercion and in fact is given towards building of a better future for the couple.

Exchange of sex and finances are permissible only within the institution of marriage. Thus, when indulging in these exchanges outside of marriage and in self-arranged, love relationships the shame attached to it may also compel the woman in legitimizing her experiences within the institution of marriage- which is far more acceptable and socially sanctioned.

'Saare niyam tod do, niyam pe chalan chod do': There is no doubt that intimate, self-arranged, non-marital, non-cohabiting relationships are unconventional. Women are definitely pushing societal norms and boundaries by forging such relationships. This nudging, pushing and crossing of the '*laxman rekha*' makes one susceptible to violence from the rest of the society as well and causes a lot of emotional violence.

The emotional violence in a 'love' relationship is different from the emotional violence in a marriage as in a 'love' relationship the violated woman does not only face violence from the partner, but also faces violence from the larger society for consensually entering into a relationship which is unconventional. According to a Cell worker, the violated woman, through various attempts tries to keep the relationship intact as she is aware of the shaming that she will

have to face if the relationship does not get 'validated' with marriage. She gets more and more emotionally involved in the relationship, agrees to sexual relations with her partner, provides financial support to him - all in the hope that he would marry her in the future.

There is lack of family and legal support for the violated woman that leads to further alienation and emotional abuse. The difference between violence in 'love' relationships and marital relationships is that in a 'love' relationship the woman, more often than not, finds herself alone, isolated and nowhere to go. In such cases, blaming the victim is more common as the woman herself has decided to enter into a relationship which is breaking patriarchal boundaries and is not considered 'legitimate' and the violence within it will not even be recognized. Women are usually blamed for entering into a relationship which has not culminated into marriage, and the focus rarely shifts from blaming the violated woman for being in a consensual intimate relationship to the violence that she is facing within it.

The shame and stigma attached to the relationship becomes greater than the violence. One of the social workers has mentioned that, violence in domestic relationships "is not perceived as shame whereas in these cases they have the added burden of shame which makes them more vulnerable." This adds to the pain and stress as one of the attempts made by the woman to step outside of societal boundaries has failed as the relationship is not and will not be recognised by society.

Supporting factors: Many of the clients, according to the Cell workers, do not get the much required support from their natal family. The woman nor the man in the relationship do not necessarily consider caste, class, religion as factors which influence their decision regarding the relationship. The fact that the man and the woman have met outside their physical communities, also means that most of these relationships might be developing clandestinely. Keeping the relationship secretive further alienates the woman if and when she faces violence as then there is lack of family support.

There was a contradictory narrative of natal family support. Data collected from the case registers suggested that there was natal family support, while Cell workers mentioned that the survivor hardly had any support. While re-examining the data, it was realised that the natal family supports the woman at particular junctures of the relationship. It does not support the woman when she is in the relationship (in cases where the relationship is inter- caste or inter-

religion and hence, status quo is not being maintained), but helps when her rights are being violated and when she has decided to take steps against him - to either get married to him or not, probably because then her 'honour' is at stake. After reading applications and interviewing the Cell workers it was clear that the natal family does not support the woman when she is in the relationship, due to the social unacceptability of such a relationship. But, when it comes to breaking off the relationship or punishing the man or convincing the man to marry the woman, the natal family champions her cause.

“When women transgress or exercise agency, it is often her 'own' family that punishes her, sometimes in the name of family honour...” (M. Gupte, 2012). Policing women's sexuality is seen with regards to marital violence as well; when the woman is facing harassment, the woman is encouraged by her natal family to stay in the marriage, but when she is murdered by them, the natal family blames the marital family and makes use of the law to get justice. While data shows that the family of the woman who is in a 'love' relationship, does support her, it is also important to keep in mind that this support is given to her only after her rights have been violated and her and the family's 'honour' is at stake (in cases where the man has refused to get married to the woman).

Strategies and skills

Cell workers were asked to identify particular strategies that they employ while working with survivors of violence in 'love' relationships. While the skills used in such cases and other cases which get registered at the Special Cell were not drastically different, there were nuances in the strategies and skills used.

Writing as a cathartic process: Each and every survivor who comes to the Special Cell to register her case is asked to give in writing an application in which she writes the history of violence and her expectation from the Special Cell. The process of writing gives the survivor that time to think about all that she has experienced and helps her to articulate the violation of her rights as well as her quest for justice better.

As discussed above, survivors of violence in love relationships do not necessarily recognize their experiences as violence. Writing of the application in cases of such violence then becomes all the more important as it not only “makes her reflect on her feelings, but also aids in her linking those

feelings to violence. Women need to understand how and when the violence started⁵” and while writing she realizes the nature and duration of violence in the relationship.

As mentioned before, many survivors experience financial violence in their love relationship. One Cell worker uses writing as a method for the survivor to understand the extent of financial violence she has faced. She asks the survivor to calculate all the money she has given or spent on her partner.

Building self-determination: To provide emotional support and to facilitate the woman’s process of self-determination is the first thing that the Special Cell worker does whenever a survivor of violence walks in⁶. The process at the Special Cells is also aimed at empowerment of the survivor and hence, self determination becomes an important aspect while working with survivors of violence.

According to Cell workers, while working with survivors of violence in love relationships, it is more important to facilitate the woman’s process of self-determination in cases of intimate partner violence due the nature of such relationships. As these relationships are self-arranged, it is very difficult for the woman to accept that her experiences are in fact a violation of her rights. It becomes a question of reconciling the figure of the person in whom emotional and autonomy-related aspirations have been rested as a choice of intimate partner beyond what society accepts and allows, with the figure of the perpetrator of violence whom she must now name and 'accuse' as so. Also, because these relationships are self-arranged, the woman may lose faith in the choices which she has made and hence Cell workers have said that it is all the more important to build her shattered confidence by giving her positive reinforcement and by focusing on her qualities and capacities.

There are two main aspects of work during initial interactions with a survivor of violence in love relationships. First, to help the survivor understand that her choosing her partner and being in the relationship in itself is not wrong and that no one has the right to violate her and second, to help the survivor understand that she is not the only one who has faced violence in non-marital

5 Excerpt from Cell worker's interview.

6  Mission Statement and the monitoring indicators for Special cell for Women and Children- Within the Maharashtra State Police System, 2004

intimate relationship. In a self arranged relationship, it is very easy for the survivor to blame herself for the violence. “I chose him. I went against my parents and this is what I deserve”. Such thoughts will only further victimize the survivor.

Building support system: While some natal family members are (and may have become in due course of time) supportive of the woman by the time she reaches a service such as the Special Cell, not all families may be supportive if the woman decides not to marry him or not to break off the relationship as the question of honour becomes central to their decisions to either support the survivor or not. It is thus, according to Cell workers, very important to keep in mind to build a strong support system by getting in touch with her natal family and/or friends.

A Cell worker was of the opinion that convincing the survivor’s parents and families to support the survivor poses as one of the challenges while intervening in such cases. Many times, if there has been any sexual relationship between the client and the respondent, the parents tell the Cell worker to file a rape complaint while the survivor always does not want to file a complaint. To then focus on what the woman wants and convincing the parents that what the survivor wants will be done, becomes a challenge.

Strategic engagement of Police & other state services: It has been the experience of the Special Cell, that cases in which the violence does not get recognized under any law, are more often than not, referred to the Special Cell by Police and other services of the Police. Especially for a service such as the Special Cell which is located within the Police Station premise, it is important to strategically engage help of the Police in cases of intimate partner violence, being very well aware of the patriarchal set up of the institution. One Cell worker was of the opinion that the Police rarely concur with the woman’s feeling of being cheated in her intimate relationship. Their response, generally to cases of intimate partner violence, is that it is not cheating if the woman is an adult and 'can think for herself' – which reflects how the Police are also part of the larger social-legal spectrum that deems non-marital non-cohabiting relationships as 'consensual' and hence deems rape charges filed by women survivors from such relationships as 'false'. Such situations are when the Cell worker can support the woman by first preparing the survivor before going to the Police to file a complaint and secondly by focusing the discussion with the Police on the violence rather than the nature of relationship.

Discussion

It is only in the recent past that women have started to speak of violence within intimate relationships in the public domain. For instance, recent news on a Bollywood singer's arrest due to allegations of sexual assault by his girlfriend brought to the forefront the issue of forced sexual relations with the promise of marriage. The singer was arrested on the charges of rape, cohabitation caused by a man deceitfully inducing a belief of lawful marriage and criminal intimidation⁷. Reporting of such cases in the media and recounting experiences of violence within love relationships amongst friends, led to the understanding that women are forging relationships outside the realm of marriage and looking at continuing intimate relationships not necessarily within marriage. Through this study, this understanding has changed. Women actually do not really want to move away from the institution of marriage, but hope that the love relationship does culminate into marriage and come to access services such as the Special Cell for this purpose.

It is also important to bear in mind that 44.8% of the women who registered such cases at the Special Cell belonged to the middle class. Thus, while the middle class is transforming at a fast pace and is keeping up with the impact of liberalization-privatization-globalization, which impacts the aspirations of young women, it is also the class which is holding on to traditions. In S. Dickey's (2012) study on the middle class in urban South India, she argues that "... class positions must be accepted by others, and onlookers (both intimate and anonymous) must be persuaded of them on a continuing basis. Much of this reproduction requires the performance of proper class behaviours such as language, consumption, ritual practices..." The struggle to keep up with modernization while being subject to scrutiny and judgment on the basis of the choices that they make, is where women in 'love' relationships seem to be caught in.

There is no doubt that self-arranged marriages exist and if they do, then non-cohabiting and non-marital love relationships also exist (as part of the courtship period); and violence in any relationship - marital or natal - exists, which makes it difficult to negate violence in non-cohabiting and non-marital intimate relationships. Thus, there is no denying the existence of violence in intimate relationships. Unfortunately, because of the perception of self-arranged relationships in our country, most of the times, non-marital and non-cohabiting intimate

7 ⁴<http://www.firstpost.com/bollywood/aashiqui-2-singer-ankit-tiwari-arrested-on-for-raping-girlfriend-1514871.html>, seen on: 9th September 2014, seen at: 10:28 AM

relationships are clandestine. The secretive nature of these relationships and the circumstances under which such relationships are forged makes it all the more difficult for women who have experienced violence in their intimate, non-marital and non-cohabiting relationships to come out and talk about the relationship itself, let alone talking about the violence.

While the concept of 'double burden', especially in the Indian context, "...refers to women's housework and work in the market" (M. Khullar, 2005) and is usually used in the context of marital relationships, one can also say that women in 'love' relationships also face the double burden. The double burden in such relationships is of having to face the consequences of a 'marriage like' relationship while keeping it secretive. Romance, intimacy and love are all part of our daily lives through mainstream media and are also part of our socialization. But, because all these feelings and emotions are also spoken about in the context of marriage, more often than not, experiences of intimacy and love are put within the framework of marriage. In Kalpagam's ethnographic study on marriage norms, choice and aspirations of rural women, she states that women in rural India "...perceive modernity in terms of freedom of choice in their private life" (2008) and this choice is exercised over private aspects such as freedom to take up jobs, mobility and freedom to marry by choice. But, the image of the modern, urban, educated Indian woman, conflicts with the idea of love and romance. While struggling to move away from tradition, by exercising her 'agency', she is attempting to move away from the norm, but she finds solace in another norm i.e. marriage. This conflicting paradigm of relationships causes the double burden. When women are attempting to put both these aspects of their personal lives together, they become more vulnerable, in a unique way, than ever before. The way women's sexuality is constructed, makes pushing and crossing of boundaries of sexuality all the more difficult for them.

While most of the women who have faced violence in 'love' relationships have written about falling in love (*pyaar karne lage, dosti pyaar mein badal gayi*), the word marriage does not stray too far away in the application they submit at the Special Cell. Marriage also legitimizes the relationship and, hence, breach of promise of marriage is the only way a woman can legitimize the relationship and the exchange of sex and finances which have taken place during the relationship. Very few applications only spoke of friendship and the violence that the woman faced in that relationship.

Another aspect that comes about starkly in the data presented is the way survivors have attempted to move out of the traditional roles of a woman. For example, the survivor interviewed for this study was the first girl in her house who had decided to get a job. While her elder sister had decided to finish her basic education and help her mother at home, the survivor decided to work outside of home as she wanted to see the world. Thus, women are constantly shifting - sometimes leaping, sometimes taking small steps - to make that change within themselves.

Nuances in perpetuation of violence, especially in the changing times, has been very well documented in the recent years. For instance, though women are encouraged to access education and get formally employed the responsibility of the household still remains with women. Thus, the conflict between the tradition and the modern only burdens the woman and her 'personhood' further. According to Kalpagam (2008), "...modernity... reconstructs "personhood" and we witness the emergence of "individuals" exercising free will and reason". Kalpagam states that in the process of reconstructing her personhood, the woman seeks to overcome the binds of traditions and customs and that they "... perceive modernity in terms of freedom of choice in their private life".

The changes in the urban socio-economic-political landscape which impacts women's personal lives and perpetuates newer forms of violence together with discussions with the Cell workers led to the realisation of two main issues. One, that it is important to understand better how the violence faced by survivors of 'love' relationships is different and, second, what kind of support is available to survivors of love relationships. Addressing these issues would inform the strategies used at the Special Cell as well as suitably equip other feminist violence against women interventionists.

In that journey to change, women have increasingly started to take upon traditional roles of the opposite sex. While men are seen to be 'breadwinners' according to society, women are supposed to be self-sacrificing, giving individuals. But when women start becoming 'bread winners', there does not seem to be a role reversal. While women become financially independent, men are not taking on the role of care givers.

So how does a feminist interventionist intervene in such cases? The biggest learning from this study is to understand that even though the relationship may not be a marital one, the emotional, physical and financial investment in the relationship is similar, if not the same, as in a marital

relationship. It is because of the secrecy surrounding the relationship, that it affects the survivor differently. With little or no family support, and being in a non-normative, socially not approved relationship, the survivor only feels more alienated. Hence, while the nature of violence may be similar in marital and 'love' relationship, the unacceptability of the relationship makes it more violent, not only by the perpetrator, but also from community. Hence, interventionist should refrain from thinking of an intimate, self arranged, non-marital and non-cohabiting relationship similar to a marital relationship and should in no way demean the relationship. Interventionists, especially in their language (verbal and body), should not give the survivor the impression that her relationship or the violence she has experienced in it is not justified because it is not a marital relationship.

In the experience of K. Rosen and S. Stith (1993), "... women in dating relationships are likely... to want the therapist to help them maintain their abusive relationships, therapists are faced with the dilemma of respecting their clients' choices without colluding with the violence..." While survivors of marital violence might also come to a service, seeking to maintain the relationship and the interventionist takes a strong position against violence and takes a non-judgmental position with regards to the survivor's decision, the same should be followed even in cases of "love" relationship violence. As feminist social work practitioners, one should not to be judgmental; especially with regards to the relationship of the survivor to the perpetrator of violence. The relationship of "love" should be treated as respectfully and as seriously as that of a marital relationship and the space of the interventionist should be one where the woman is not judged on the basis of forging intimate relationships outside of marriage, as she herself considers her relationship as *lagnasarkaha* (like marriage). As feminist interventionists facilitating the ace for the woman's process of self determination is absolutely essential. These principles should be kept in mind even more in cases of intimate partner violence.

There is no doubt that intimate relationships outside of the context of marriage are not talked about much in our society. Even in schools, the way 'sex education' is spoken about (if at all) is by keeping marriage central to the discussion. Talking about healthy intimate relationships, even outside of marriage, is yet to happen and there is an increasing need to do so at the earliest.

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