

Domestic Violence, Marriage and Immigration

**If you are immigrating into the UK to
marry, what you might need to know**

September 2006

Sponsored by the British Academy, UK

**College of Social Work, Nirmala Niketan,
University of Mumbai, India**

**The Violence Against Women Research Group,
University of Bristol, UK**

Domestic Violence, Marriage and Immigration

If you are immigrating into the UK to marry, what you might need to know

Gill Hague, Geetanjali Gangoli, Helen Joseph and Mary Alphonse

This project, conducted in 2006 and funded by the British Academy, UK, was a partnership project between the College of Social Work, Nirmala Niketan, University of Mumbai, India and the Violence Against Women Research Group, University of Bristol, UK.

Introduction

Many women in India, Pakistan and Bangladesh marry a man from the UK and emigrate under UK Immigration Rules to settle and raise a family. This arrangement can work out very well for all concerned, and does so in the majority of cases.

However, what happens to women in this situation if they encounter problems in their marriages? This project looked at the experiences of women who entered the UK to marry and then suffered domestic violence or other marriage difficulties. The study came about when the partners from Nirmala Niketan visited the UK and met with some women living in a specialist refuge (shelter home) for women of South Asian descent escaping violence in the home. These women had much good advice to pass back to those in India intending to marry a UK citizen or a man resident in Britain (in either an arranged or a love marriage). On the initiative of the Nirmala Niketan partners, it was therefore decided to build on previous joint work with the Violence Against Women Research Group to seek funding to conduct together an expanded partnership study of the issue. We are most grateful for the sponsorship of the British Academy.

The project was carried out in two stages. In the first stage, a range of women of South Asian descent in the UK, who had experienced marriage difficulties, were consulted to ascertain what they wished they had known before moving there, in the light of their subsequent experiences. The second stage of the project consisted of feeding this information back to organisations and women's groups in India. This is a small-scale pilot project, conducted with a view to later extending the study to areas of high immigration in the countries of the Indian sub-continent.

What we did in the project

The Indian and UK partners in the project conducted nine focus groups with women who had experienced domestic abuse, or who knew of others who had had such experiences. Members of the team also conducted meetings with a variety of workers in the UK who work with South Asian women experiencing domestic abuse and marriage problems, building on previous meetings. Overall, fifty two women were included in these focus groups and interviews. The women described their experiences in the UK and gave their considered advice, based on these experiences, to be fed back to groups and individuals in India.

One particularly large group was held at Brent Asian Women's Resource Centre in South West London which for 22 years has supported South Asian women who are facing difficulties. Further organisations included NextLink in Bristol and BAWSO in Cardiff. Most of the other organisations involved did not wish to be publicly identified. Women who participated gave informed consent, and emotional support was offered and provided if required. The groups were conducted in a range of Indian languages, in particular, Urdu, Punjabi and Hindi, and in some cases in English. The themes emerging were identified and analysed to draw out the major issues concerned.

Review of Previous Literature

Much research on violence against women in the UK has remained relatively silent about the specific forms of violence experienced by women from black and minority communities settled there— referred to, in the UK term currently preferred, as BME communities (c.f. Gangoli et al. 2005; Batsleer et. al. 2002). This is largely because gender-based violence has been seen as the dominant source of violence, and the ways that different types of violence based on gender, race and class intersect and impact on each other have often been ignored (Amos and Parmar, 1984; Anthias, 2002). While there is no evidence to suggest that BME women in the UK experience more domestic violence than white 'majority' women, recent research has looked at the specific experiences of 'minoritised' women (to use another current term) that may impact on their access to services and to justice with regard to domestic violence (Bhopal, 1997; Ahmed et. al. 2004; Gangoli et. al. 2005; Gangoli et. al. 2006). This includes research on experiences of dowry-based violence in the UK (Bhopal 1997; Barot, 1998) and domestic violence perpetrated by wider family members including parents-in- law.

Cultural concepts such as '*sharam*' (shame) and '*izzat*' (honour) play an important role in forcing young people into marriage, and keeping women and men in unhappy marriages (Shaheen et. al. 2000). It has been argued that migration increases women's vulnerability to domestic violence, because immigrants encounter barriers (linguistic, cultural, economic and systemic) to accessing support and services. In addition, where immigrant families share different cultural values in relation to gender roles, the resultant stress can increase control over spouses, and conflict between

spouses (Ahmed et. al. 2004). Research has also indicated that structural racism and language issues can prevent women from accessing services (Gangoli et. al. 2005).

The existing literature indicates the problems in conducting research on domestic violence among 'minoritised' women and, therefore, the need to engage in research practices that are sensitive and take into account immigrant women's marginalized status in the UK which may prevent them speaking out (Burman and Chantler 2004; 2005; Wigglesworth et. al. 2003). Our research is one response to this need. It attempts to raise the voices of women marginalised in the UK and to disseminate the results within an Indian context.

Our findings

The following is a selection of quotes from women interviewed during the study:

Be mentally prepared to face a difficult life in this country. You might face discrimination and prejudice and your marriage might not work out, as well.

Prepare yourself for the poor weather.

Try to learn some English.

You may have to take low-paid jobs if you work here.

There are welfare services and social security here and you might be able to get housing and other help from the Council.

Memorise your passport number and details. You need to keep your immigration papers or take a copy if you cannot get the documents yourself.

Make a thorough investigation about the man one is planning to marry and his family before deciding on the alliance. Never agree to marry quickly.

Advice from women interviewed

What emerged from the discussions was a rich medley of information, experiences and advice for other women. These issues could be grouped broadly speaking into the following categories:

1. Experiences of domestic abuse and cultural, religious and family issues
2. Immigration issues
3. Issues in trying to get help from agencies and organisations in the UK.

Each of these is addressed in turn in this report. The report ends with selected recommendations. Five case narratives of women's experiences are included as an Appendix with the permission of the women concerned. (Note: all names have been changed)

Experiences of domestic abuse and cultural, religious and family issues

The majority, but not all, of the women in the study had experienced domestic abuse or other marriage problems. In addition, the team informally interviewed twelve representatives from seven agencies working with BME women who communicated the experiences of the women using their services. Direct experiences of domestic violence included physical, emotional, verbal and sexual violence by husbands and in some cases by the extended family. Most of the immigrant women interviewed felt an increased sense of fear and vulnerability due to lack of information about their rights, and difficulties in speaking the language.

While the women overall had usually been optimistic about their marriages on arrival and some had settled into happy lives in the UK (or were workers in women's organisations and the social care sector), most of our informants had felt extremely isolated and frightened when things began to go wrong in their marriages. Some had known no-one in the UK outside their husband's family and were in a highly vulnerable position, especially if they did not speak any English or understand how UK society worked. This meant that they did not know their rights or how to get help. For example, we were told of one woman who had experienced abuse and had lived almost 15 years in the UK without having any idea that she could obtain British nationality.

A problem for many of the women interviewees was that their own families were far away in India or Pakistan so they could rarely get any help from them. Women spoke of how much they missed their families and needed their support. If they did have some of their own family in the UK, these family members were often helpful (especially sisters and brothers) but in some cases they were rejected by their natal families due to the stigma of having a failed marriage or of having attempted to separate.

Immigrant women with educational qualifications and skills reported that they had had problems getting jobs in the UK, due to institutional racism and lack of recognition of non-British qualifications. This increased their dependence on their husbands, and made it difficult for them to leave the marital home. In several cases, women who had emigrated to the UK after marriage were not aware of some vital facts about their husbands: for example, in one case the husband had previously been married to a white woman who had been killed by her mother-in-law; in another case, the husband was a serious drug user; in a third, the woman only found out when she arrived that the husband had previously been married on two occasions. While the

system of arranged marriages normally includes parents ‘checking’ such details about potential spouses (Barot 1998), in the case of marriages arranged overseas, it becomes easy for spouses to conceal information and details about themselves (Ahluwalia and Gupta 1997).

In several cases, the women suffered acute physical and mental abuse from their husbands, and there was tacit or active support for this from their extended families. As one survivor of domestic violence put it:

You may be treated like a second-class citizen here – both by the family and by the society. You would need to prepare yourself to deal with this.

South Asian survivor of domestic violence

Representatives from a BME cultural organisation felt that many women were controlled by their in-laws, and that *‘the in-laws were often the out-laws’*. Several immigrant women marginalised the violence meted out to them, often due to a sense of shame (*sharam*) and cultural ideals of the ‘ideal woman’ who preserves the family honour (*izzat*). Most of the women interviewed who had experienced domestic violence, and whose marriages had broken down as a consequence, were reluctant to go back to their country of origin, possibly due to a sense of stigma attached to divorce and, in some cases, to lack of support from, or fear of rejection by, their natal families. Almost all the women preferred to stay, sometimes because they felt that they and their children had a better future in the UK with regard to education, health, social security etc. as compared to the opportunities they might get in their own original homes.

In addition to domestic violence experienced by immigrant women, respondents also spoke of inter-generational conflicts – often between parents originating from a South Asian country and their children born in the UK. This can lead to increased surveillance of young women, and in some cases, forced marriage, which has been conceptualised as a form of domestic violence (APCO et. al. 2000). The following extract from an interview with an agency reveals some of these trends:

The parents want their children to do well in their studies and their jobs, they want them to subscribe to Asian values and culture... which becomes very difficult for the teenagers. Sometimes girls born and brought up in Britain are married off to boys from (name of country). This leads to a number of problems as the expectations of the man and woman are very different.

Agency representative

In addition, husbands often use women’s immigration status as a way to control them, by holding the passports of their wives, thus making them vulnerable and incapable of accessing public resources (as further discussed below).

Some of the women interviewed had experienced depression and mental health problems as a result of the violence and, in a few cases, their children had been turned against them by their husband. Some had lost their children to their husband’s family and could not get them back due to not understanding the system or the law in the UK

or who to turn to get help. It is important to note, however, that there was no evidence that women of South Asian descent experienced any more violence than other women in the multi-cultural UK community including white British women, as noted in the literature review.

One woman pointed out that there should be more protection for women who immigrate to the UK as *'no-one offers much support and it can be very isolating and frightening if you have problems'*. Isolation and lack of support were recurring issues even though many South Asian communities in the UK are supportive and close-knit. This did not always apply where domestic violence had occurred.

The women also talked about the double standards of the men in the Asian community in the UK, who want to socialize like white men may do and:

have fun, party, dance with other women, but when it comes to their own homes, they want to follow a different yardstick. They want conservative wives, women who will be subservient to them and will listen.

Agency worker

Thus, the interviews indicated the increased vulnerability that immigrant women experience in cases of domestic violence that impact on their ability to assert themselves.

Immigration Issues

Existing UK immigration laws allow women and men on spouse or fiancé visas to enter the country, but they have no 'access to public funds' until they obtain permanent 'right to remain', which they can apply for only after 2 years of first entering the country. Respondents believed that immigration laws and policies were often racially motivated, which supports the claims of some existing research on the subject (Phillips and Dustin 2004). Some interviewees felt that the immigration authorities dealt with and settled cases of white people faster than those of South Asian women, and they often felt disadvantaged due to problems with language:

If dealing with the Home Office, get some support, don't go alone; get someone to be your advocate especially if you don't understand English well
 South Asian survivor of domestic violence who was a British citizen
 and supported other women experiencing abuse

In general, the advice was that interviews with, or letter exchanges with, the Home Office (the UK government department which oversees immigration) are of enormous importance. The assistance of an advocate, a knowledgeable friend or a support worker was imperative according to our respondents. *'Especially if the woman does not speak good English, it can be essential to take a helper with you.'*

As we have seen, some men use women's insecure immigration status as a way to control them by keeping their passports from them, and in some cases not informing women of important correspondence from immigration authorities. One survivor of domestic violence had this piece of advice for women entering the UK on a spouse visa:

Try to be aware of what your immigration status is – don't rely on your husband to deal with it. If anything goes wrong, you will be in a weak position if you don't know your situation and don't have the documents

Woman originally from India, now settled in UK

In addition, women were often unaware of what the immigration rules are, and therefore experienced additional problems in cases of domestic violence. Very often the passports/visas of the women were deliberately not regularized, and the husbands refused to work on the immigration papers as they wanted to have full control over their wives. The women who do not have a permanent resident status or citizenship may then be sent back home. Sometimes in such cases, they are tragically separated from their children born in the UK, who may then be allowed to stay in Britain and either be taken into care or allowed to stay with their husbands' families.

Another woman interviewed advised immigrant women to:

Watch out as there may be letters from the Home Office and your husband may be keeping them from you and not telling you about them. Then the Home Office will think you are not responding to their letters and treat you hostilely. In one case, the husband both kept the letters without telling the wife and replied to them inadequately. Another husband deliberately replied in a way that indicated she should not stay (almost conspiring with the Home Office to 'get rid of her').

While immigration laws allow for what is called the 'domestic violence exemption', i.e. allowing women with insecure immigration status residence rights if they can prove that they have experienced domestic violence, none of the women we interviewed had been able to use this policy. This is perhaps because proving domestic violence can be very difficult for immigrant women, due to lack of information, lack of services, fear of the consequences or isolation. This is borne out in other existing research (Phillips and Dustin 2004).

Women of South Asian origin with British passports were also aware of the ways that immigrant men may use their immigration status as a way to gain entry in the UK. Some women had married in good faith and then been left, once their husbands' status in the UK was secure. However, while such women had often been pressurised into marriages with men from their country of origin, due to their status as UK citizens, they were often able to cope with, and assert themselves if they experienced domestic violence better than first generation immigrant women.

There is, as noted, much evidence of the racism implicit in UK Immigration Rules and in the legislation. Therefore, in sum, a woman's immigration status can be an important means of control over her, which is perpetrated both by the UK State and by spouses, specially in cases of domestic violence.

We finish this section with this quote from a woman with experience of abuse, emphasising the all-important point that migrant women need to maintain access to their legal documents. We heard of very many cases where either husbands or in-laws insisted on removing them from the custody of the new wife and did not allow her to have them.

Try to keep your documents, it's not good to leave without them. Husband may insist on keeping them or hiding them from you. However, they are your documents and in the UK, you will need them. Try to get them. Some projects will keep them for you outside the home in case you have to leave.

Issues in trying to get help from agencies and organisations in the UK

The UK attempts to be a multi cultural, pluralistic society. It does provide a welfare state, usually free at the point of delivery, although this has been substantially reduced and cut in recent years. Women experiencing domestic violence are able to access resources through this route (for example free health care, possible access to public sector housing if they have left home due to violence, social security benefits and free education).

Some women respondents were pleased with the welfare facilities available, with the sympathetic treatment they had received from the police, and with the access to housing and assistance that they could benefit from in the UK, compared with India / Pakistan.

T could not believe that she could get money from income support and housing benefit and that she could get re-housed by the Council because of the violence in a three bed-roomed house for herself and her three children.

South Asian domestic violence worker

These measures are a clear benefit to citizens and to those settled in the UK, although new immigrants are unlikely to have 'recourse to public funds' in this way as discussed earlier.

However, all is not as optimistic as it sounds. There are long delays for some types of assistance, particularly housing, for all applicants and accompanying cutbacks and poor provision. There have also been various research studies (e.g. Gangoli et al. 2005) which have shown covert or overt racism in the provision of services, although some agencies have tried to improve their practice in recent years in this regard using

interpreters, for instance, and attempting with varying degrees of success to operate anti-racist policies in their service delivery. It remains the case, nonetheless, that immigrant women might meet a discriminatory or prejudiced response. While the women in the study often stated that '*we all need to respect different cultures*' and this is indeed the official position, many had also felt that they themselves had few rights and faced hostility and difficulty both from the society in general and from some organisations in particular.

Some women had experienced discrimination, silencing and 'stone walls' from the agencies they had approached. As for the immigration services, there was a general feeling that white people were often dealt with faster by the helping and welfare agencies than they were. This, our interviewees felt, was probably because of the racial prejudices of the authorities (although it would often be difficult to make this claim with certainty). They also felt that immigrant South Asian women very often did not have a support system of friends, family and possibly caring agencies to help them out in the way that those settled in the UK might have, and that this lack could be a factor in receiving poor service. However, they were sure that racist feelings and prejudices also existed among some of the agency officers they had dealt with. Sometimes housing officers, for example, had categorized women who had left their marriages as 'intentionally homeless', even though the UK law on homelessness states that domestic violence is a valid reason for leaving home and should entitle you to housing assistance.

Some of the women interviewed in the focus groups felt that they had minimised the violence they had experienced, sometimes for family, religious or cultural reasons, and so were unable to show 'proper' evidence of violence, as noted earlier. There would then be no records to draw on. Women might be denied housing and other benefits in consequence, because of the lack of official records and evidence. Some women had also had difficulties accessing social security payments after leaving home. Additionally, there had been cases where brothers, fathers or husbands who knew the bank password of the woman had withdrawn all her savings using her credit card. The woman would then find out much later, when it was too late.

Several women had been helped by Social Services Departments (which provide social workers in the UK) and some children had been provided with foster care, if things had got too difficult. However, a few women felt that this had happened without their fully understanding it or wanting this solution. In general, the police were thought to have improved their practice substantially, compared with how they used to be, and this is confirmed by many other studies in the UK (Humphreys and Thiara, 2002; Hague et al. 2003).

The most help was provided by women's projects, especially (but not solely) specialist projects for South Asian women. There is a network of specialist refuges / shelters in the UK run by women of South Asian descent and providing a sympathetic service for women escaping their homes due to violence. These projects provide

support and are aware of the cultural, language and religious needs that the women might have. In general, women applying to state agencies for help fared much better if they were supported by a refuge of this type, or by a project like the Brent Asian Women's Resource Centre which provides comprehensive support and advocacy, childcare support and women's support groups. Such projects can become a lifeline for immigrant women in the UK. It is important to note that directories of these services exist and that they can also make referrals between them.

Our informants advised us that women emigrating to marry need to know about this network and about other projects that could provide support if needed. For example, one said:

Women should try and get in touch with the nearest Asian women's centre or community centre where they reside. They will help you.

Most women's refuges (of all types, not just those specialising in providing accommodation for South Asian women) also operate a 'last resort fund' where they can offer emergency accommodation to women experiencing both domestic violence and immigration difficulties who do not have access to public funds to pay for this.

Other general advice was to try to learn some English if possible or to try to get some UK qualifications.

Try to get some knowledge of the host country and its social situations/services and facilities like the library, community centres, schools etc. You might be able to get a job or do some voluntary work or go to an English class.

BME project worker

Conclusion and Recommendations

In conclusion, three women contributed the following:

Don't be submissive and take things lying down. You need to be assertive and give appropriate responses with courage.

Try not to just stay in the house. You need to get out of the house if you can and meet other people. Tell others if you are being harassed.

Be brave.

While many marriages arranged from overseas are happy ones and evidence to suggest that BME women experience more domestic violence than white 'majority' women in the UK does not exist, their experience of abuse may be different due to

cultural factors, problems with language and immigration status. It can also be very hard to face violence and marriage difficulties if you are a new immigrant or even if you have been resident in the UK for some time. Isolation and vulnerability are magnified for women in such situations. The difficulties experienced are multiple.

The women in the research had much excellent advice to pass on to other women back home, some of which we have drawn out here.

Our main recommendation is that families considering a marriage within the UK for their daughters, and women seeking such marriages themselves, should be vigilant about the issues we have raised and should be as well-informed as possible about the husband and his family in the UK. They also need to be very vigilant about the sort of problems South Asian immigrant women might encounter from the authorities and society, if they subsequently experience marriage problems or domestic violence. This report aims to provide information and advice for women in the situation and for women's organisations in India, based on the direct advice and words of South Asian women resident in the UK.

Selected Additional Recommendations

- The provision of 'no recourse to public funds' for newly immigrant women experiencing domestic violence and marriage difficulties needs to be removed.
- Prior to coming to the UK, women should try to obtain some knowledge of the country, the area that they are moving into and the services available.
- Indian immigration authorities could provide a small card with important basic information on the UK, and with contact numbers of support organisations
- Such a card could be small enough for the woman to keep inside her purse.
- At Immigration, some women recommended that there should be separate interviews for husband and wife. This would enable the immigration authorities to hand over such a document or card to the woman.
- The authorities in both countries need to be sensitized about the possible problems, so that women could be given fair and sensitive treatment by somebody who understands their language.
- Relevant women's organisations in India could caution women about some of the problems that could arise.
- However, it is imperative that the difficulties we have discussed must not be allowed to play into existing restrictions in immigration which the UK government is promoting or any further restrictions in the future.

Appendix

Some case narratives from interviewees

Case 1

A was a UK citizen, married to another UK citizen from the same community. She was only married for 8 weeks when she began to face harassment. She lived in a joint family and her sister-in-law also lived with them. Once she washed her husband's trousers and put them out to dry. However, as it started raining, her sister-in-law took in the trousers and spread them near the fireplace. They were burnt. Her husband was furious and began shouting at A. Her mother-in-law also joined her husband in the shouting and started harassing her verbally, but A would not take this treatment lying down. She started answering back and telling him what exactly had happened. This angered him more and he hit her. A stopped at that. She did not allow him to beat her any more. She dared him to, saying that she would call the police if he raised his hand against her anymore. A has three children. Some of the phrases she used were:

'I am not dirt to take his beatings;'

'I did not allow him to touch me further;'

'A girl should not be afraid to come out and see things that are happening in and around her;'

'If a man can have a life of his own, why not a woman too?'

'We are not some garbage to be treated like dirt. They make us pregnant and then throw us out like rubbish;'

A is now divorced and living separately with her children. She exhibited a lot of courage and grit. The fact that she had become a UK citizen, knew the language, and possibly also knew her rights helped her.

Case 2

B was an Indian citizen when she came to the UK. She was married to a UK citizen, of Indian origin. Before marriage, she worked in Ahmedabad, Gujarat (Reliance). She qualified as a computer operator and was employed before her marriage. She married a man who was already divorced twice and was the third wife. She knew of his first divorce but not of the second one until after her marriage. During the courtship, he was very attentive and polite. He also raised her hopes saying that, with the qualifications she had, she could easily get a job in the UK. B could not speak English well. When she came to the UK, she could not get a job of the sort she had expected. However, she managed to get a lowly paid job. Her husband kept demanding money from her. She had to work very hard at home, cooking, taking care of the family, studying to upgrade her job prospects and working in her job till late evenings. It was very strenuous but she did not want to leave him, so she continued to bear the pain. He also physically abused her a lot. She was not aware of her rights and therefore she did not go to the police. She, however, went to the doctor and reported the injuries she had. She maintained all the medical reports that showed violence. After one year, her immigration papers came through. She also got pregnant during his time and continued to be physically abused. Her husband refused to accept the child as his and she had to do a DNA test to prove it. Because of the constant physical abuse, she was

bleeding heavily and therefore was in danger of losing her child. Her doctor asked her to report the violence to the police. She thought of returning to India by borrowing some money from her employer, but her employer explained her rights and asked her to get help from the Social Services. Her sister-in-law's husband too advised her not to return to India but to fight for her rights in the UK. Her sister-in-law was also very sympathetic towards her. She then took courage and applied for public sector housing. (There is still a considerable amount of public sector housing run by local town and city councils in the UK despite cutbacks in the last 15 years. Women who have experienced domestic violence can be prioritised for this housing, usually after a wait in temporary accommodation.)

The police came to the hospital where she had been admitted for her bleeding, and took her statement of the violence and referred her to the social work (Social Services) department of the council. Initially, the Social Services did not respond favourably. However, after pressure from various quarters – including her employer, her lawyer, the Woman's Resource Centre and the doctor, she was given social work support and public sector housing to which she then moved.

Her suggestions to women who come from India are

'Do not hesitate to go to a doctor and create evidence of violence. It is very important to fight against violence;'

'Before going to the police, go to the doctor;'

At present, B is studying a degree programme in book keeping to upgrade her skills. B now has her own residence and lives there with her daughter.

Case 3

C is a British citizen of Indian origin and a civil servant. She has one son (of 10 years old) from her first marriage. This was an arranged marriage. She divorced her first husband and remarried a few years later. This was a love marriage. However, the second husband ill-treated her and was hostile to her son (saying he was not his). She had a 10-month-old daughter with her second husband.

C underwent all kinds of abuse, verbal, physical and psychological. The harassment began soon after the marriage. His parents from India came to live with him and this worsened the situation. In fact, they tried to throw her out of the house. But C refused to leave as she claimed that it was her house too. Gradually, her husband began to physically abuse her first son (his step-son). The son was very afraid of him. That is when she decided to leave home.

The police were very helpful. They were strict with her husband and, when he denied the harassment and physical abuse, they kept him under lock-up for seven hours which seemed to teach him a lesson. Through a domestic violence help line, she came to the refuge (a specialist refuge for South Asian women) where she is currently living. Being a civil servant, she is aware of all the rights and benefits that she is entitled to. She has taken a career break and plans to move to another UK city where her brother lives. She has applied for a public sector house there. As soon as she gets this (when she reaches the top of the priority waiting list), she will move there with her children. She gets a lot of support from her brother. Her son seems very relieved that he is away from his stepfather. He is mature, bright and intelligent and seems to be doing well in school.

C has a positive attitude towards life and keeps a cheerful face. She was very willing to talk about her problems and wanted other women to be helped. She remarked that

she tries to overcome her sorrow and pain for the sake of her children as they would be deeply affected otherwise.

Case 4

D married a British man and came to the UK to live with the family in a small city. She very rarely left the house. She had one child of one year. She did not know her way around the city or know anyone else in the area. As she rarely went out, she did not learn the streets or shops, where the post office was or how to use public transport. She worked all the time at home and her cooking and cleaning were severely criticised both by her husband and her mother-in-law. She was very unhappy and depressed and cried all the time. Later, the family including her husband became abusive towards her, hurting her quite badly. She didn't know what to do. All her family were back at home thousands of miles away. In the end, she was so desperate, that she ran out of the house with her child. She ran and ran until a shopkeeper helped her. She had no idea where she was or anything about the town she was in or how things worked in the UK. She managed to say a few things in English and they understood what was happening. The people got in touch with the local refuge and she was taken there. She was very frightened as everyone else was white and she couldn't speak any English. The staff tried to help as hard as they could but there was no Asian Women's Refuge in the area or Asian workers. The staff got an Asian worker from a refuge in another city on the phone who spoke to her in Punjabi and then translated for the workers.

D was surprised that she could get social security and some money of her own. She was very pleased about this while at the refuge.

The staff tried to get her to move cities to a specialist refuge but she did not want to leave the one place she had any connection with. They got her a solicitor with access to translators. The husband was then taken to court for a non-molestation order ordering him not to harass or abuse her. She got back in touch with her husband by mobile phone. The lawyer worked very hard on her behalf and was very upset when D later met up with her husband a few times after the court case. These were happy and laughing times, according to D, and she says she 'flirted' with him and decided to go back. She felt bad about letting the lawyer down but she thought it might work out, and it was like being newly married again. Things were better and she dropped all her contacts with the professionals.

However, the abuse started again after a while. She put up with it for several years and learned a little English. Her child went to school and she met some other mothers. Finally, she left again for a refuge and this time she did go to an Asian women's refuge in another town. However, the taxi drivers were contacted by her husband's family who had guessed which town she was in and because they had family connections there. They told the family where the refuge was. The husband came to the refuge. Again, she returned.

D has stayed at home but now has more freedom. Her mother-in-law is quite old now and not so critical. She didn't have any other children. She feels stronger though, gets out more, and knows other women. Her English is a bit better. She attends a support project but her husband does not know this.

Case 5

One of the workers told the story of E, an Indian woman who experienced domestic violence. She went to the Indian High Commission and asked for help but they said they could not help. She then went to a refuge but was turned down because she did not have official 'right to remain' in the country so they could not access public funds to pay for her board and lodging. (If women are not working in the UK, social security will pay their rent in the refuge.). She was asked by the refuge workers to go to the police but she was too scared, as she did not know how they would deal with the issue. As a result, she is still in the abusive situation and the abuse has got worse. She sees no escape.

References

- ACPO, Foreign and Commonwealth Office and Home Office (2001) *Dealing with cases of forced marriages*. London: Home Office, Communications Directorate.
- Ahluwalia, K. and Gupta, .R. (1997) *Circle of Light. The Autobiography of Kiranjit Ahluwalia*. London: Harper Collins Publishers.
- Ahmed, F. et. al. (2004). 'Patriarchal Beliefs and Perception of Abuse Among South Asian Immigrant Women', *Violence Against Women* 10(3), 262-282.
- Amos, V and P. Parmar (1984) 'Challenging Imperial Feminism' *Feminist Review* 17: 3-20.
- Anthias, F. (2002). 'Beyond Feminism and Multiculturalism: Locating difference and the Politics of Location', *Women's Studies International Forum* 25(3), 275-286.
- Barot, R. (1998). 'Dowry and hypergamy among the Gujarati in Britain' in W. Menski (ed.) *South Asians and the Dowry Problem*, New Delhi: Vistaar Publications: 163-174.
- Batsleer, J., Burman, E., Chantler, K., McIntosh, S.H, Pantling, K., Smailes, S. and Warner, S. (2002) *Domestic Violence and Minoritisation: Supporting women to Independence*. Women's Studies Research Centre: the Manchester Metropolitan University.
- Bhopal, K. (1997). 'South Asian Women within Households: Dowries, Degradation and Despair', *Women's Studies International Forum* 20(4), 483-92.
- Burman, E. and Chantler, K. (2004) 'There's "no place" like home: researching, 'race' and refuge provision', *Gender, Place and Culture* Vol. 11 (3) pp. 375-397.
- Burman, E. and Chantler, K. (2005) 'Domestic Violence and Minoritisation: legal and policy barriers facing minoritised women leaving violent relationships'. *International Journal of Law and Psychiatry*, Vol. 28 (1) pp. 59- 74.
- Gangoli, G., Donovan, C., Hester, M. and Westmarland, N. (2005) *Service Provision and Needs: Black and Minority Ethnic Women Living with Domestic Violence in South Tyneside*, Bristol: University of Bristol.
- Gangoli, G., Razak, A. and McCarry, M. (2006). *Forced Marriage and Domestic violence among South Asian Communities in North East England*, University of Bristol and Northern Rock Foundation.
- Hague, G., Mullender, A. and Aris, R. (2003) *Is Anyone Listening?* London: Routledge
- Humphreys, C. and Thiara, R. (2002) *Routes to Safety*, Bristol: Women's Aid
- Phillips, A. and Dustin, M. (2004). 'UK initiatives on Forced Marriage: Regulation, Dialogue and Exit', *Political Studies* 52, 531-551.

Sheehan, H. E., et al. (2000). 'Introduction to the Special Issue on Domestic Violence and the South Asian Community', *Journal of Social Distress and the Homeless* 9 (3).
Wigglesworth, D., Hester, M. and Gangoli, G. (2003). *Developing Domestic Violence Service Provision in West Newcastle - Assessing Local Need*. ICVA, University of Sunderland and Newcastle New Deal for Communities.