

Breaking Free

Case stories of men and women trying
to break patriarchal norms



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The contents may be abstracted for non commercial use without prior intimation. We would appreciate acknowledgments of the source.

To our friends in the villages and vastis
who participated in the project
'Towards Equality Working with Men'



Partner Organisations

Astitva Samaj Probodhan Sanstha, Sangola
National Institute for Sustainable Development, Sangamner
Rachanatmak Sangharsh Samiti, Naldurg
Walchand College Social Work Department, Solapur

Preface

Through the cases stories we have tried to bring to the fore the various facets or layers of the 'Towards Equality: work with men' project. Therefore, they include both, the 'success' stories and as well as the 'not so successful' stories. We also bring to you stories of facilitators, men and women, their dichotomies, their achievements, their own personal growth stories and of villages where the programme met with restrained success.

Within the so called success stories too, you will find that Narayan Bhosale has effectively brought forward the layers of change, showing how men view what 'change' actually means to them.

We found the case stories to be also a means of evaluation, bringing out both the difficulties, limitations as well as the possibilities of the work with men. Dialogue is necessary, and important to bring down the defense that men as 'men' wear. Facilitators also found 'tensions' in men to be an entry point. However, violence on women carry many shades, hues and colours. From acceptance at an attitudinal level, to a change in behaviour can be quicker for some, and more difficult in others. Why? Maybe these stories of change can offer some answers.

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I compulsory wash my own plate

Samarth Walekar

(Youth, Udanwadi, Sangola)

I am Samarth Walekar, resident of Udanwadi, Taluka Sangola, District Solapur. My running age is 24 years. Though I'm Dhangar by caste by religion I am compulsorily Hindu. I am studying first year M.A. English at Sangola.

I have two sisters, one brother and sister-in-law, and my parents. One of my sisters is married and living with her in-laws, and my brother has married bringing his wife to stay with us. We have 40 acres of farm land, of which ten acres is under vegetable cultivation (*baagaayat*). The two wells have water for eight months of the year and they run dry in the heat of summer.

The population of my village of Udanwadi, along with infants and older people, is about five and a half thousand, but there are only three thousand voters. It comprises the *vastis* of Karandewadi, Jhapachiwadi, Kalyacha Mala and Khadivasti, and the majority community are Dhangar. People of other castes are in the minority. In the village, schooling is available up to the tenth standard. To study beyond that, the boys and girls have to go 8 kilometres to Naajhare or else 20 kilometres to Sangola. So the poorer students go to Naajhare and those comparatively well off or those opting for the science stream go to Sangola.

Tathapi and Astitva together ran the programme 'Towards Equality: Working with Men' in my village for eighteen months. As a result of this I have come to understand a lot of things with regard to 'woman-man equality'. Actually, in school, when I was in tenth I remember hearing of this phrase as part of a lesson, but then I didn't understand its meaning. Now because of this programme I am starting to be able to explain what it means. Its meaning is that both women and men have equal human rights. Nobody can treat anybody else as if they are lower beings. I don't believe that women shouldn't do work that men do, or that men shouldn't do work that women do. For example, it shouldn't be that only women do the cooking, scrubbing pots and clothes washing, or only men do jobs outside of home. On the contrary, among themselves men and women should share the kinds of work they do and help each other.

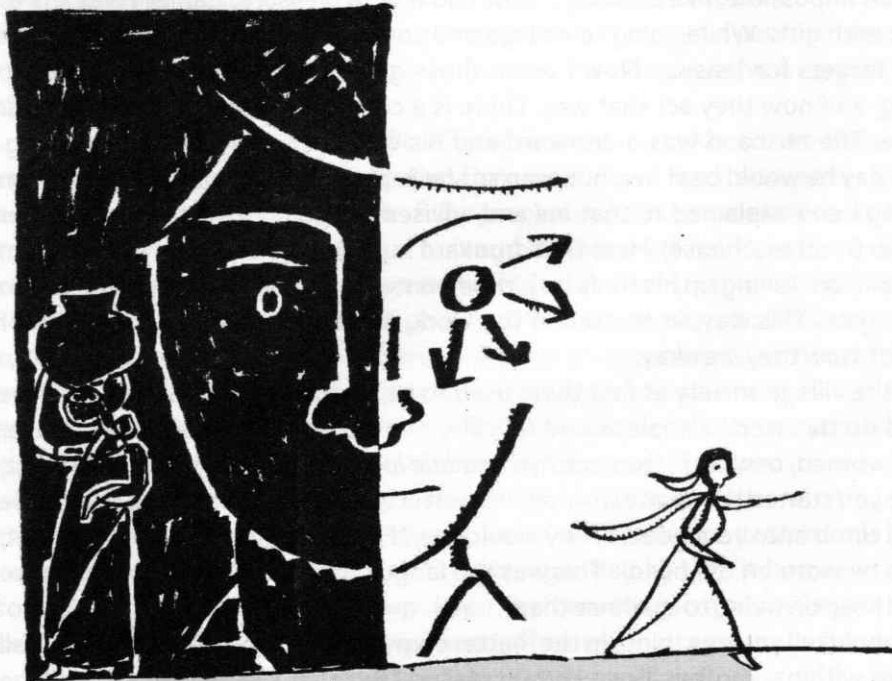
In most places around here, there is a lot of social disparity. I don't mean to say this is anything new. Only women take care of young children, heat the water at home and clean up dirty messes. We assign women to a lower position. Their names are not recorded on the "7/12" land ownership form. Many men beat their wives. Many things like this in my village have begun to change. I would say that the disparity is 70 to 75 percent less than it was.

Earlier in our village women had no part in celebrating the *yatra* of Biroba. So

we started a tradition of celebrating the *jayanti* of Ahilyabai Holkar. For it women of this and even other villages have started to come together and the participation has increased. We held games and competitions like *sangeet khurchi* (musical chairs) and *rangoli*. Being in college, I have quite a few girl friends and they took special part in this. For honouring the statue (*pratimechya pujanasaathi*) we compulsorily called both husbands and wives.

Before this programme started, in my family and within myself too there was a lot of bias against girls and women. I didn't know anything at all about housework. But now I have learned about all of it. Now I make tea and I cook rice. I try to make chapatis but I still can't make them come out perfect. Actually, earlier when *Aai* used to be sick and my sister was still young, I used to try and scrub the pots and pans. Now I don't feel any humiliation in doing this. After eating I always insist and wash my own plate. If my sister-in-law is not feeling well, I wash the kitchen vessels. I bathe at the well and there itself I wash my own clothes. When I have to study for college or some other important work, only then do I ask *vahini* to wash my clothes for me.

As a result of this work by Astitva and Tathapi, not only have I changed but changes have also come about in my friends. Sanjay Walekar, Samadhan Rupnar,



Men should keep their masculine pride to one side, participate in the house work and behave with a sense of equality

Sham Lawate, Tanaji Lawate, Sagar Korpe, Santosh Bansode, Dhanaji Chavhan, Ajmer Shaikh, Pintu Gade, Sanjay Kengar all of these friends of mine are even better at cooking than I am. Those among them who are married can now do everything from taking care of the children to doing the cooking.

There's no shame in saying that earlier in our village there was not even simple discussion about these issues and no one had ever organised such events. This programme took up the disparity between women and men in society and how to bring equality for men to participate in the work that women are traditionally expected to do, to see it as our own work and overall to behave with a sense of equality. In short, men should keep their masculine pride to one side and work along with women. Whatever decisions men take should always have women's participation. Both need to take decisions together and reach a consensus.

The main aim of this programme? I feel it was to bring equality between women and men. You know, if a girl's marriage is to be fixed neither she nor her mother is even asked about it! Men behave arrogantly. Women are treated as lesser beings. She is equated with the feet of a man. So it was a challenge for the *sanshta* to bring about equality.

In this regard, a lot of change has come about in my own self. Some things seemed impossible, like cooking... now I do it with pleasure. Earlier I was shy to speak with girls. While going to college and coming back, the boys would make them targets for teasing. Now I teach those girls how to respond boldly, with daring, and now they act that way. There is a couple husband and wife - in our village. The husband was a drunkard and his wife is simple and hard-working. Every day he would beat her, but even so she kept on feeding him and he kept on beating her. I explained to that *bai* and advised her to go for a few days to her *maaher* (mothers' house). Here that drunkard husband of hers felt the pinch from his stomach. Taking up his tools he jumped onto the tractor started going out to work again. This way, immersed in the work, somehow he forgot his need for alcohol. Now they are okay.

In the village society at first there used to be opposition and insults when we would do this work. People would ridicule, "Are you caught up in a trance over these women, or what?" (*baayaachya naadala laaglaaya*). Or they would protest, "Have you started to elevate women? It's better to keep them at home. Otherwise they'll climb onto your head." They would say, "Footwear is best kept on the feet, not to be worn on the head!" This was the language of the villagers. Even so we would keep on trying to convince them.

I should tell you one thing. In the matter of my brother's marriage, I had a small dispute with my mother. For a certain reason I felt that the marriage should be delayed about 20 days when we could celebrate in style, but Aai wanted it to happen right away. In the end, Aai made me understand how much expense we could save. We had the marriage earlier and saved about twenty thousand rupees. Now we have kept some land in Aai's name. She looks after most economic

matters at home. Sometimes she and my father take decisions together. Aai's name is also there as house owner. But, mind you, these changes have happened since the programme started.

Beyond the gender equality programme in my own village, there was a common programme organised for all of us at the historic site of Naldurg. In this programme all of us were young men, except for some male staff of the organisers and including a madam from Tathapi. There, during one of the competitions, while fast-cutting an onion, one of our friends cut his finger with the knife twice! Then he realised that none of the work done at home is easy. Quite a few of us failed in the competition to wash clothes! We had to wash, rinse and squeeze out the water in the shortest possible time. The work that women do regularly they had to struggle with. There was also a race to fill water like this, holding one bolster on one's side as if it were a child and filling a clay pot with water. I mean, the way women, when in a hurry, hold on to a kid with one arm and fill the *ghagar* with the other that's what we tried to do. And I, for one, slipped and fell down! Several others did, too. So, everyone came to know that the work that women do is not easy.

When I think over the years of my school education up to now, it seems to me that the women teachers have been more understanding and perceptive (*samjootdaar*). Most women teachers do have knowledge from the books, but they also know how to explain it better. Men teach with curtness.

When I went to meet Samarth at Udanwadi, this very open good-natured young man had gone to Najhare to help his sister study for her exams. So I met him first at Najhare and we arranged to have a proper interview at Sangola in Astitva's office. There for over an hour he let his mind roam quite freely, as is evident from the above narrative (Narayan Bhosale).



Me and my vasti (locality)

Raghvendra Alkunte

(Married Man, Maddi vasti, Solapur)

Raghavendra Alkunte is a twenty-three-year-old married youth who lives in Maddivasti, Shantinagar, Solapur. Maddivasti is a large slum settlement. There people of many caste communities who live below the poverty line in the overcrowded hutments. All kinds of essential civic amenities latrines and bathrooms, water, electricity, *anganwadis*, schools, even sunlight and clean air are all in short supply.

Living at home with Raghavendra are his four brothers, two sisters and his parents. They are *Vadaar* (stone masons) by caste. Along with his brothers and father, Raghavendra engages in arduous construction work. Alongside this he studies in second year Arts at Samgameshwar College, meaning that, he attends on days that he gets leave. In addition, at night he attends ICWA (Institute of cost and Works Accountants) classes.

The first time Raghavendra heard about *stree-purush samaanata* was through the *sanstha* and he was involved in almost all of the project activities and events. He says, "Our culture is a patriarchal society, it must be eradicated". He feels that women should get rights to half of the property.

He sees gender disparity in society everywhere. "A wife is supposed to listen to her husband and abide by what he says, and respect him whether he is good or bad. Women are not allowed out of the house. In our *vasti*, for women it is only '*choola aanimul*' (kitchen and children) that's all!" And men hurl filthy verbal abuses at their women and a wife cannot even protest. In reaction to this, he asserts, "The *purush pradhaan* culture should end. Women should also have full rights."

Nowhere does Raghavendra see equality between men and women. Men don't allow their wives and daughters to talk to other men. They educate the boys but not the girls. They put money in the bank in their sons' names. The house property is also in the names of men. At home, men don't wash their own plates, don't spread their own bedding, don't ever sweep the floor... they want their wives to serve meals to them wherever (and whenever) they sit down to eat, to serve water to them any time and to send them off to work with a packed lunch. After his involvement in this project, Raghavendra start practicing in his own family. He began by familiarising his wife, who is not literate, with numbers and alphabets.

On account of the Towards Equality: Work with men project, Raghavendra finds that a change has come about in Maddivasti. Boys who never before filled water or swept the floor have started to do it now. He himself has begun to do his part in housework. Because there are more members in his house, it needs lots of water. He now fills up to 25 *ghaagris* (earthen pots) of water, whenever the water

comes. He does the marketing. He sweeps the house and front yard (*aangan*). From doing all this he has become aware of the work that women do and how much hard work they put into it. Earlier he used to feel ashamed about doing this kind of work. Some of his friends used to taunt him, "Today on what side did the sun rise? You never did this water-filling work before!" But his parents are happy with the change in him. His mother prays to god to grant him the sense to continue doing this kind of work. He has another friend about whom doing the housework was just impossible to imagine. But having seen him fill water and sweep, Raghavendra exclaims, "I would call this one of the eight world wonders!" It shows how strong has been the hold of attitudes to women's housework within the patriarchal system.

In the beginning of the project there was a negative reaction to various activities that the *sanstha* started. People said things like, "Who are these persons? Why have they come? Are we supposed to do housework or something? Just see, are they going to look after our jobs? Why should we waste our time! What use is it to us?" But the *sanstha* people didn't get intimidated or accept defeat at any point. They kept on educating men in the direction of equality. While speaking, satisfaction shows upon Raghavendra's face. Another result of this



He has begun to think about his own Vadaar community. He regrets that in this *vasti* of five thousand people, not a single Vadaar woman is educated.

project is that he has begun to think about his own Vadaar caste community. He regrets that in this *vasti* of 5000 thousand people, not a single *Vadaar* woman is educated.

While Raghavendra works hard for the whole day as a mason's assistant in the construction trade, his aim is towards more education. He appears to be quiet and calm but when he opens his mouth to express himself he comes across as a kind person. He gets irritated when he hears someone giving filthy verbal abuses for no reason. He gets angry when men of the *vasti* beat their women and swear at them, but he has found a remedy for this. He searches out someone to whom the offending person listens and through that person he tries to make the offender understand. He especially doesn't like those who swear at women.

Raghavendra wakes up around dawn at 5am. For half an hour he does exercises on the nearby highway. He studies until 8:30 then he goes off to work and returns in the evening. After freshening up, he goes to attend a night class for the ICWA course. Returning home later he watches TV for awhile. If there is need, he fills water and sweeps, or sometimes brings vegetables. Nowadays he reads regularly.

Raghavendra liked all of the project activities and events. He says the cooking competitions were the best. The *granth-dindi* (book processions) has raised a liking for reading among the youth. Through the haemoglobin testing, anaemia was detected in some of the men, both young and old. From testing his blood group he learned that he is "O positive". Because of his course exams he couldn't go on the group trip. But through his friends' narrative he says, "I saw the trip through the others' eyes." Overall, the organisation's initiative to promote housework by men in the direction of gender equality has really been useful. ■



Got my confidence back

Sunita Dushing

(Group facilitator, NISD Sangamner)

For ten years now Sunita has taken part in various kinds of social work. The work in her village has ranged from running an anganwadi and balwadi, to working for women's health, sometimes doing house-to-house visits. The self-confidence that she has gained through this reflects in her speech. She currently works as *mahila margdarshika* (women's guide and coordinator).

Ever since she became involved in the 'Towards Equality' project with men, Sunita strove to spread the idea of equality between men and women, starting with in her own house to the entire village.

Saikhindi is a small village of about two thousand inhabitants in Sangamner taluka. The people there adhere to various traditional beliefs. Sunita speaks from her experience of working here, in her own village. Even though she is of an 'untouchable' caste, she says she has never found it an obstacle in working for gender equality.

Yet, she has capably used the information she has got from her organisation's meetings as a base to work. She is committed to bring change in her husband and in the village though she has not much access to the varied literature on patriarchy (*pitrasatta*), male-structured society (*purush pradhaanata*) and gender.

Her family environment, actually, was never one of equality. After her mother's illness, she had to leave her studies in the eighth standard. Her father was alcoholic and her three brothers similarly left studies at the level of eighth or ninth. At the age of 14, she had to take on the responsibilities of marriage, and in her in-laws place no one was interested in education. Now she has two daughters and a son. Her husband Kishor thinks like a traditional male. Because of the constant fights between him and his younger brother, the family moved from Gogalgaav to live with her parents in Saikhindi. Then, under the Indira Aavaas scheme, they could build a house of their own. Now her elder son is doing a B.A., her younger son is in the ninth standard and her younger daughter in fifth. Her husband earns a daily wage of Rs.150/-. In this overall situation, Sunita is still eager to learn.

Before joining this programme, Sunita had never even heard the phrase "stree-purush samaanata" (equality of men and women). Now she knows a great deal about this subject. Speaking about the aims of the programme, she says,

"In the beginning I used to be afraid to speak openly with men. You know, if I were to say anything to a man and if he were to come to my house and tell my husband, then what would my husband say? That's what I was afraid of. Now I don't have that fear. Women and men should do the housework on an equal

sharing basis. Bathing the children, sweeping the home, filling water and so on all of these tasks should be shared by both together. Such co-operation by men makes the home environment happy."

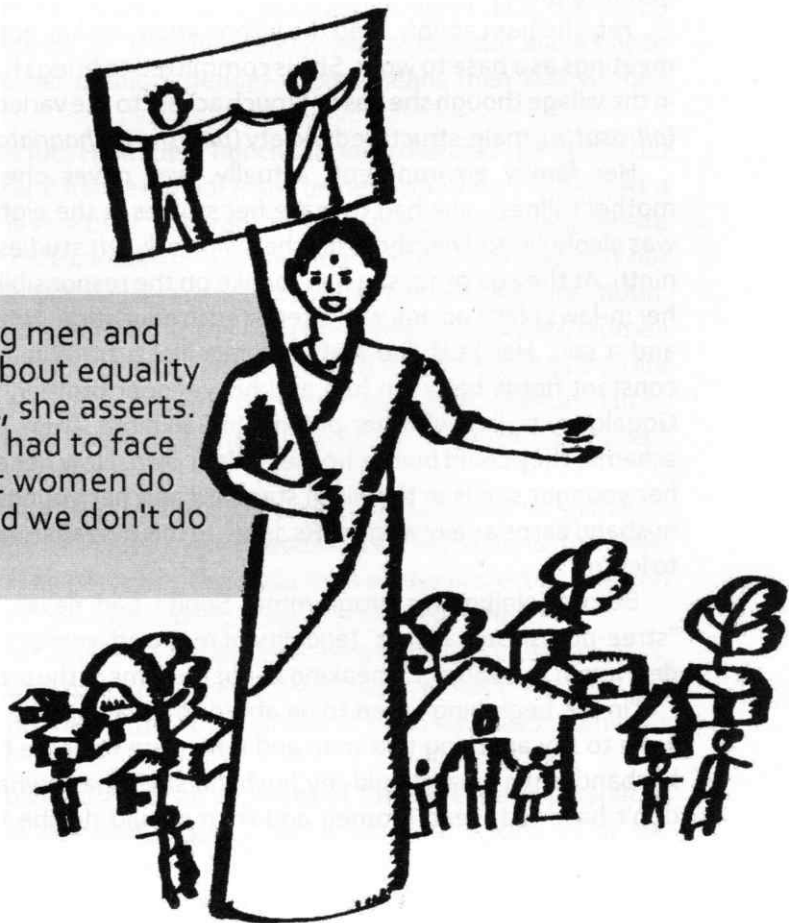
"The social disparity between men and women carries into the family. All the man does is take the lunch-box packed by his wife and go to work. Women have to do a lot more work taking care of the children, doing the housework and also working outside. And we can't tell men to do any of this. Housework is a large amount of work" She explained that she is responsible for matters of the home.

Up to now no other organisation has come to work in this place like this and to put an end to gender discrimination, she notes. For working towards gender equality, the support of men (gadi manase) is needed. Men don't let their women do this kind of equality work, so the organisation's aim of taking men along to work for equality is correct. But never before has there been discussion on this subject in the village. Discussion among men and among women about equality is very important, she asserts.

"No man has ever had to face the question that 'women do so much work and we don't do any of it'. Neither have women really realised before that they do so much drudgery from morning to night."

Sunita speaks as a team member about the project. "Men should help in the

Discussion among men and among women about equality is very important, she asserts. No man has ever had to face the question that women do so much work and we don't do any of it



housework, and there should be no discrimination against women in this matter. The organisation has taken up this programme in order to lead men to realise how much work women do and how important it is."

Joining as a responsible member of the programme, Sunita started with bringing about a peaceful revolution in her own family. She would daily report and patiently explain to Kishor about the programmes of the organisation conducted. She would narrate the reactions of the men, and the women, and about the meaning of equality. She knew that in the process of bringing change in men, it is important to explain to the women and for them to realise their work's worth. However, she didn't try to directly change her husband because she knew it wouldn't work. Kishor never liked the idea of housework earlier and he would always wake up late in the morning. But Sunita has slowly induced a change in him and in her children as well. They all now do all kinds of housework. He does not cook, but helps with the cooking. He spreads the beddings, removes the beddings, fills water, and also helps Sunita to prevent addictions in the village. Even so, Sunita still sees the limit of the participation in housework. There are boundaries. For instance, one cannot expect the husband to wash the wives' clothes. Even today she never tells him to do any work. But he himself has begun to do his part in the housework that is what is special about it.

The people in the village are reacting in various ways. Sunita's in-laws say, "Kishor never filled the water vessels, and if he didn't get up until nine o'clock we didn't dare remove the cover over him. Now he helps his wife in the work. His wife has made him change." Their meaning may be double-edged, she feels, but it testifies to the change. Occasionally when there is tension at home or from the fieldwork, Sunita naturally feels irritated and cribs to her children and husband. But now it doesn't lead to discord (vaadavaadi) at home and after awhile everything calms down.

Of the 18 month-long project period, Sunita was involved only for the last 6 to 7 months. She took meetings with men. And, to solve the issue of poor attendance at group meetings organised sporting exchanges between men and women, based on popular television programmes. She organised competitions, which encouraged a change of gender roles. Among these was the husband-wife ball-in-bucket game, wives making raangoli over the point-grids made by their husbands, husbands making two chapatis, husbands' search for dabbas (of turmeric, salt, sugar or the sewing box), getting a child ready for school in five minutes, and so on. Sunita feels that chapati-rolling was the most significant achievement for men.

While people's responses to these programmes have been mixed so far, Sunita feels that these will become more positive in future. Regarding men's hesitations and difficulties it is not possible to say much at this stage, she says. For them to speak out and actually share the housework equally, a lot more work will have to be done. ■

Housework! It's not so easy man...

Umesh Survase

(Youth, Murta, Naldurg)

Murta in Osmanabad district is a small village. After the Killari earthquake of 1993, the village got bifurcated one is called the old village, while the other is called 'Barad Point'. Umesh stays in Barad point. He is 19 years old and is studying for B.A. part I. He is Maratha. In his opinion, the villagers observe caste-restrictions and the settlements are also separately located.

Umesh stays with parents and two brothers studying in 8th and 5th standard respectively. Both the parents are illiterate. Their family occupation is agriculture. He is unaware of the size of the inherited land. But currently they have 2 acres of land and it is fed on well-water. In 12th standard the Marathi text-book had a lesson from 'Stree Purush Tulana' by Tarabai Shinde. Now also the text-book for B.A. (I) has a lesson by Tarabai Shinde. Because of this Umesh is aware of the concept of gender-equity. However, reportedly, he has understood the real meaning of this term only when he associated himself with Tathapi's project. Umesh's observations help him understand the equity issues. He observes that in agricultural fields men do major manual jobs while minor works are given to women. Nowadays, because of mechanization, women are not getting much work. In our society, a woman is always given a lower status. It is assumed that some jobs are men's jobs only and women can't do them. But it is not true.

Umesh gives evidence of gender disparity. He says, 'if some important decisions like purchasing land etc are to be taken women are not involved or in any particular matter a woman knows better than men and if she tries to express herself, she is not allowed to speak. She is advised not to become too smart. Cooking and child care are the only two areas allotted to her. She is not allowed to work outside; she is not even allowed to attend meetings. However, no one discussed these matters or tried to create awareness. After the initiatives taken by Tathapi some attitudinal changes appear to be taking place. This is true more among the youth. The elderly people do not seem to change.

When asked about his perception about the project, he gave an apt answer, since women are suffering more, they are ill treated, the work has to be with men. Men have to be appraised about the gender-equity issues. If men had a lower status, the women would need counseling.

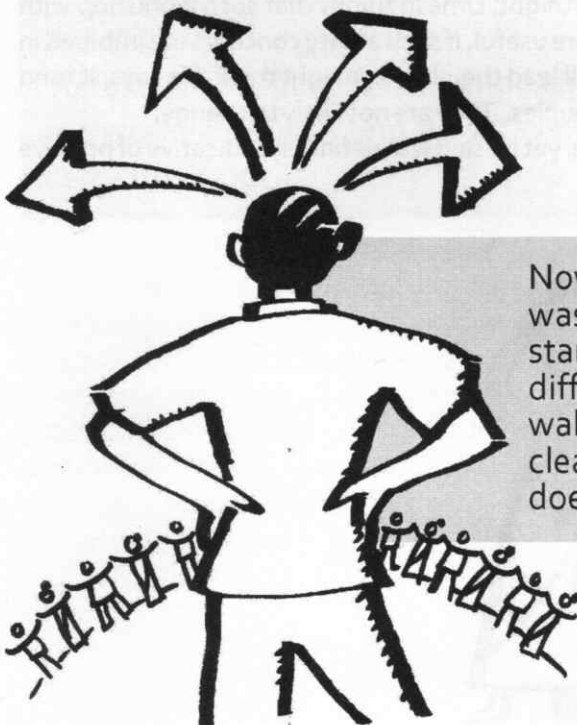
Umesh said, 'since I joined the project 'Towards Equality working with men', my attitude towards sharing the household work changed. Earlier, I never used to do any work; at home or on the farm. However, now I help in collecting water, in cooking etc...I wash my own clothes. Sometimes in mother's absence, manage the entire working of the house. I am aware that I have not completely changed. I

agree with the idea that one should ask for women's opinion in every matter but I want to confess that still I am not able to bring it in to practice.'

Whatever change has taken place in Umesh; has not happened smoothly. Umesh had to try hard for bringing about the change. He did not know how to wash clothes; or how do the clothes become clean. Earlier, when the clothes had even a single stain he used to shout at his mother. Now when he himself is washing clothes, he has started understanding the difficulties. Earlier after waking up, he never used to clean the bed. 'I did not like to do these things.' But now he does all this very regularly.

When such traditions are upset, the people always react; positively or negatively. Same happened in Umesh's family also. His mother's reaction was positive, since she also was associated with the project work. His father did not react but he himself was changing. His scolding has disappeared. His younger brothers cooperated with Umesh. However, some of his friends, who did not join the project used to tease him. They used to say; how do you work like girls? Umesh would then try to persuade them.

Earlier Umesh used to be indifferent with girls. Now he can have a friendly talk with them. He registered some land and home in the name of his mother. Even he persuaded his father for it. Now his mother also is working in Anganwadi as a helping hand. When he joined the project, he did not think about gender-equity...etc. He thought that in meetings since there are girls, a little fun can be there. But now he has started thinking seriously about the equity issues. Now when his parents have some argument, he tries to calm them down. Earlier he was



Now when he himself is washing clothes, he has started understanding the difficulties. Earlier after waking up, he never used to clean the bed. But now he does all this very regularly.

a little bit short tempered. Now he can control his anger. He gets reminded of a method (of controlling anger) explained by the camp organizer. If one gets angry, one should start counting numbers backwards or engage yourself in some other thoughts.

Being a college-going student, most of his day is spent in the college. He wakes up at 5 o' clock, goes to exercise, clean his bed, has a bath, collects water, helps in cooking, has his breakfast and then goes to the college. He then takes the bus to Naldurga at 8 o' clock. The classes are over at 2 p.m. But since there is no bus for returning till 5 o' clock, he studies in the college itself. After having brief break of cricket, he returns. Occasionally he watches a movie at the video parlour. After coming home, he helps in household work, whenever needed. In the evening, he chats with his friends, has his dinner at 8-8.30 p.m., watches TV for a while, studies for some time and goes to bed at 10.30-11 p.m. On Sundays he tries his favourite recipes like dal-fry etc, visits the farms, and helps his mother in preparing some official records.

Umesh likes all the activities of the project, although he could not attend some of them. Discussion about gender-equity issues, preparing slogans, playing cricket with girls, putting up notice-boards, posters, organising youth melas and playing games related to housework in it etc. Umesh liked all these activities. However, he reported that the organisation facilitators were a little controlling, they were not left free. This used to irritate him.

Further according to Umesh, the programme was too packed. He suggested that the interval of a month was too long for periodical meetings and hence the meetings should be held every fortnight. Umesh thinks that such workshop with young men and women will be more useful. If such equity concepts are imbibed in the formative ages, the people will lead their life on a right track. He says, it is no point talking to already married couples. They are not likely to change.

Umesh was not very expressive, yet he said was definitely indicative of positive change. ■

Do you think I will be able to wash clothes then?

Gokul Gavande

(Youth, Pokhari Sangamner)

Pokhari Haveli from Sangamner tehsil of Ahmednagar district is a medium sized village of 2000-2250 population. The settlement pattern is traditional. Being poverty-stricken majority of the people live on casual/manual labour.

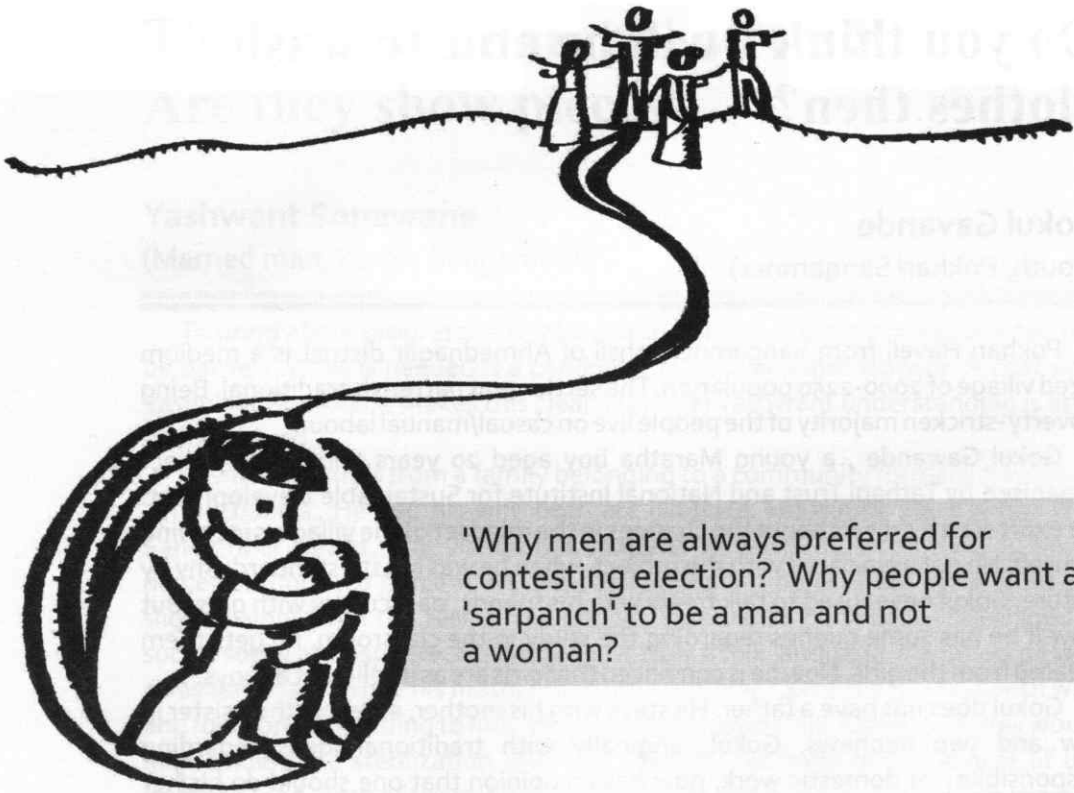
Gokul Gavande, a young Maratha boy aged 20 years joined the project organised by Tathapi Trust and National Institute for Sustainable Development. He expressed his views about the changes in the mindset of the villagers including himself. He got associated with the project, when he was in 11th standard. Shy by nature, Gokul never used to talk freely with his friends, particularly with girls. But now if he has some queries regarding the study in the classroom, he gets them cleared from the girls. Now he is convinced that girls are as intelligent as boys.

Gokul does not have a father. He stays with his mother, elder brother, sister in law and two nephews. Gokul, originally with traditional ideas regarding responsibility of domestic work, now has an opinion that one should do his/her work by himself/herself. Washing his own clothes, making his own bed and collecting water for the family are the activities which he does with his own initiative.

In fact Gokul had never heard 'Gender Equity' before he reached SSC. He came across the same when he got involved in the activities of the institute. About the discriminatory treatment given to women, he says, that there are ample things to talk about. Women are generally not allowed to step outside the house except for some wage-earning activity. For her it is only the kitchen, the children and agricultural labour. The numbers of women are declining. She is never given an opportunity to contest for elections. Truly speaking, women are capable of taking any responsibility but our men folk never give them the chance.

Admitting that his association in the project has changed his thinking, he also talks about different revelations about the gender equality. He said, 'there is no difference between the capacities of girls and boys. We are together in college and have a good friendly relationship. Our teachers in computer class are women only'. He firmly believes that women can do anything that men usually do.

Gokul reveals that there was never any discussion about this topic, before the institution approached the village with this project. He appreciates the project activities. According to him, the project sends a message that men and women should be given equal status. 'Why men are always preferred for contesting



'Why men are always preferred for contesting election? Why people want a 'sarpanch' to be a man and not a woman?'

election? Why people want a 'sarpanch' to be a man and not a woman? Gokul has all these questions. Gokul's shy personality has disappeared and he has become an outspoken person. He likes to participate in various college activities and is enjoying his college life.

Now he has a substantial role in the domestic work. He tries some common recipes like potato sabji or pithale. But he confessed that he cannot make 'chapatis'. Since his sister-in-law is at home, he generally does not have to cook. But now he does not bother about people's remarks while carrying out the jobs, which are supposed to be women's jobs. Once he washed his mother's sari. Occasionally he even washes utensils. However in this male dominated society, one has to face severe criticism, 'so you have started to wash womens' clothes etc., if one tries to break the age-old traditions. Do you think I will be able to wash clothes then? Gokul gets worried by this. "Now, I do not wash women's clothes", he says. "Anyway I do not have time for it".

Gokul's time table is packed. He gets up at 6 o' clock in the morning; heats water for the family to have a bath; has a bath himself, has tea and then goes to collect the cattle feed. He feeds the cow, has his own breakfast, dresses up and goes to the college at Sangamner 13 kms away on a bicycle. After the classes are over, he goes to a computer training class. At 6 o' clock in the evening he returns, After a little 'time-pass' with friends, he does his home work, reads the

newspaper, particularly the political news. At around 10-11 p.m. he goes to bed.

Gokul likes to participate in the games/activities organised by the institute. He attended programmes like AIDS awareness programme, musical chair, and some meetings. But because of the attendance at the college, he could not be present at other activities of the institute.

He says, 'Earlier, people did not know about the institute and its activities. They were even unwilling to put their children in the pre-primary school (anganwadi run by the organisation). We (I and my friends) participated in the institute's activities. We appreciated the work. The institute authorities help us in our difficult times. Slowly people have started to have a liking for the institute.'

Gokul keeps a tab on events in the village. He reveals that the number of girls available for marriage is on the decline. The aspirant bridegrooms find it difficult to get brides. Therefore, these days' men do not ask for dowry.

Women do not go to public places. They do not go to the central chowk place and also do not go to the cremation site. Sometimes, men misbehave, that is why women do not attend public gatherings. He explains that there are many abandoned women in the village, but there are also two graduate women, one police constable, one gramsevak and another two are teachers.

Gokul has decided not to take dowry at his wedding. He is going to get married only after 27 years of age. He has committed to help his wife in domestic work. He also promises that he will not observe the tradition of the caste-system.

Overall, Gokul's mindset has definitely changed for better and he firmly believes that this was due to the work of the institute. He thinks that the institute should strengthen its activities in the village. ■



I'm very frank

Sambhaji Karbhari

(Married man, Jevali Naldurga)

Sambhaji Karbhari is a farmer of 49 years age. He is lingayat by caste. He has passed SSC. When his first marriage took place he was 19 years old, his wife was 16 years old. Because of the instigation by her uncle and cousins, the marriage was dissolved he informed. Now he has remarried, and has two sons and two daughters. The elder son is in the police department at Pune, while the younger one has passed 12th and currently is not doing anything. One daughter also has passed 12th and other one has completed 11th. He has 4 acres land, out of which two acres land is irrigated. Sambhaji Karbhari hails from village Jevali of Lohara tehsil of Osmanabad district. He has a pleasant personality full of innocence. He did not know about gender-equity before he came into contact with this work. He interprets gender-equity as equal rights for men and women. He says women do not come out their houses. They should move around freely, should try to know about the general social, political situation, and should achieve some technical skills like stitching. According to him the organisation, Rachanatmak Sangharsh Samiti (RSSM) has succeeded in creating such awareness. Ten girls from the village have started attending tailoring classes in another village. Since they commute together, they feel secure.

Karbhari is not very firm in his opinions about disparity between men and women. In his view, on the one hand because of the patriarchal society, important matters like finance are looked after only by the men, while in case of other household matters; opinions of both husband and wife prevail.

Other than RSSM and Tathapi no institution dealt with the issues of gender equity earlier. There was no discussion among the villagers. The activists were informing the villagers about violence against women. Karbhari agrees that men and women should have equal rights and the decision of the government of 33% reservation for empowerment of women is in the right direction.

Karbhari argues, 'the wages in the Employment Guarantee Scheme are same for men and women. If the government does not differentiate between men and women, why should we do? Women should not stay behind. They should come together. They should know about their rights. This work is trying to create such awareness.

Karbhari confesses that because of the creation of awareness by the project, he himself has had to change. In his views, formerly, he used to be very aggressive, never used to help in the household chores. But now except for cooking, he offers help in all other jobs like washing clothes, cleaning the floor, washing utensils...etc. He can prepare tea and cook rice. At the time of his wife's monthly

period, he serves her tea, fills water...etc. However, his children do not let him work. One observation about Karbhari is appreciated. Till date, he has not beaten his wife; he has not even scolded her.

One of Karbhari's relatives is a Teacher. Karbhari is pleased to observe this person helping his wife in the household chores. Further, he does not do this secretly. Karbhari always quotes this example to his near ones. He wants to become like this person. However he admits, that even trying hard, he has not learnt much cooking.

Being an open-minded person, Karbhari has a good communication with his family members. He shares his experiences about the project activities with his family. He seems to have fully understood the lessons to be learnt from various games. He talked particularly about two types of games. One was to hop on one foot, spin the wet saree in the bucket and spread it for drying. Another game was to carry a water-filled pot in one arm, have pillow (like a child) in another arm, not letting the water spill out. These games gave men an idea of the hardship of women's jobs.

Karbhari wakes up at 6 o'clock, after the morning chores watches the TV news without fail and then had a bath. Being an atheist he does not believe in



'Men also have serious problems. We must understand them. There is lot of uncertainty on the economic front. Men are becoming more and more addicted to some evil habits. Gambling has increased'

worshipping God. However, for the satisfaction of the family members, puts a white mark on his forehead (as prescribed by Lingayat religion/practices) and says 'Om Namha Shivay' as a prayer. The routine worshipping ritual is carried out by his wife. Around at 9-9.30, Karbhari has his meals and goes to the farm. Activities like weeding of grass, cutting, taking out the thorns are completed and he comes back with the firewood on his bicycle. After a cup of tea, he goes for a chat with his friends. After dinner and watching TV, he goes to bed at about 10.30-11 o'clock. He likes to watch the news programmes on various channels.

With the invitation by the organisation posters about the violence against women were put everywhere. Everybody was having a look at them. Karbhari says that all those who saw the posters might not have changed their thinking but some of them definitely must have taken things seriously. According to him, 'men also have serious problems. We must understand them. There is lot of uncertainty on the economic front. Men are becoming more and more addicted to some evil habits. Gambling has increased'. In Karbhari's view, 'the lack of gender-equity is more pronounced in well-to-do families. The ladies in such families are constrained by their so-called status. They cannot talk about their problems freely. On the other hand, the women in the poorer households do not have such inhibition; they come out and their problems get an outlet.'

When asked about his temper, Karbhari responded, 'I do not generally lose my temper. I am a very free man. I am equally free among the elders as well as among children. I mix freely with all kinds of persons.' Karbhari sings religious songs, which even the women appreciate. Karbhari reported an incidence of a kirtan (Religious discourse) which was performed by a woman and her co-artistes were men. Karbhari appreciates this lack of gender-disparity.

Overall, Karbhari's thinking seems to be influenced by the work with men. ■

Good man: Good partner

Vijay Gujare

(Married man, Maddi vasti, Solapur)

My name is Vijay Gujare. At present I am residing at Maddivasti, Shantinagar, Tuljapurnaka, Solapur. I am 29 years of age and Hindu Patherwat by caste. The traditional occupation carried on by our caste is breaking stone into pieces. Ours is a sub-caste of a nomadic caste-Vadar.

I narrate the changes that have taken place and continuing in me, in my community base and in society at large while I engaged myself in the project Towards Equality: Working with Men. I unfold the story of the process I went through.

I have been a part and parcel of Maddivasti, since my childhood. I sometimes wonder how I manage to pursue education till graduation in sociology amidst a proverbial parental indifference and apathy for formal education. I wanted to study further but adverse economic condition of my family compelled me to earn my daily bread. So I took up a job as grade 4th worker in Precision Camp, Solapur, and I got married too, thus inevitably putting a full stop on further education.

I have two brothers. One of them stays separately. I shoulder the responsibility of a family of seven people, a physically handicapped brother, parents, my wife, our children, a son and a daughter. I have been slogging day in and day out since childhood. My company works in three shifts. It's four km of bicycle ride for me, from my shanty to the S.T. stand. And from there the company bus carries us to the company. One is compelled to do eight hours of standing duty. On an average I receive about 2800 to 3000 rupees as a monthly salary packet. It's too meagre a salary to take care of a family of seven persons.

It is solely due to a program conducted by the organization that in spite of the abject poverty that hounded me, I could use my intelligence to get me out of the situation. In our caste, as a rule, the woman is not taught; yet my wife did her schooling till S.S.C., though she did not get through. My work in the organization was instrumental in bringing about a change within me. I have become an advocate for woman's education. I sent my wife for doing a course of teaching in Community Nursery (Aanganwadi). I would ask her to sit along with me on a bicycle and travel about four to five km to drop her daily so that she could qualify herself for the post. We had hardly any other option as we were not sure about getting the bus in time and the rickshaw was beyond our means. After putting so much effort, the controversy erupted at home whether she should serve, but I stood firm, took the initiative and began sending her to Aaganwadi as a teacher.

In our entire Gujare family, it's a norm that the first new born baby is a male

child. When my wife was pregnant for the first time, everybody echoed the sentiment, 'you too should have a son'. I said, 'I want a daughter' and we had a daughter. But she gave birth to a son, the next time. I told my parents, 'it's enough. There is a daughter and now a son. So far, good. It's time for getting operated.' The people at home clamoured for one more child. But I asked my wife, 'when do you wish to go in for operation? Tell me. Man too can get operated for family planning. But the practice prevails that it/s the woman who does it, hence I don't feel like going in for it.

Earlier I use to do lot of gambling, play cards. Wednesday is our weekly holiday. People would play cards for the whole day. I too used to play for the whole day. The money was squandered. The organizational work of dialogue with men had started showing results. I also had a daughter by then. That drove me into a pensive mood. I believe in God. In the nearby Ganapati temple I took an oath not to play cards hence forth. I haven't touched the cards ever since.

Sometime back, at times I would booze too. I would get irritated in an inebriated mood. If there was less salt in the cooked vegetable I would fume at my wife. Sometimes I would come to blows. Due to being in work, I gave up the drinking habit. I no longer drink. People at home are happy too.

There is lot of inequality in many areas in society. The husband drinks. He spends his earnings on liquor. His wife goes out to work every day and earn some living in anyway for the family. The husband even makes a claim on this hard earned money for pegs of liquor. If his claim remains unrequited, then he beats her black and blue. The daughter-in-law faces the brunt of the mother-in law's harassment. She is verbally abused because she gives birth to daughters only. There is no prestige absolutely for a woman who bears no child. People talk about her infertility.

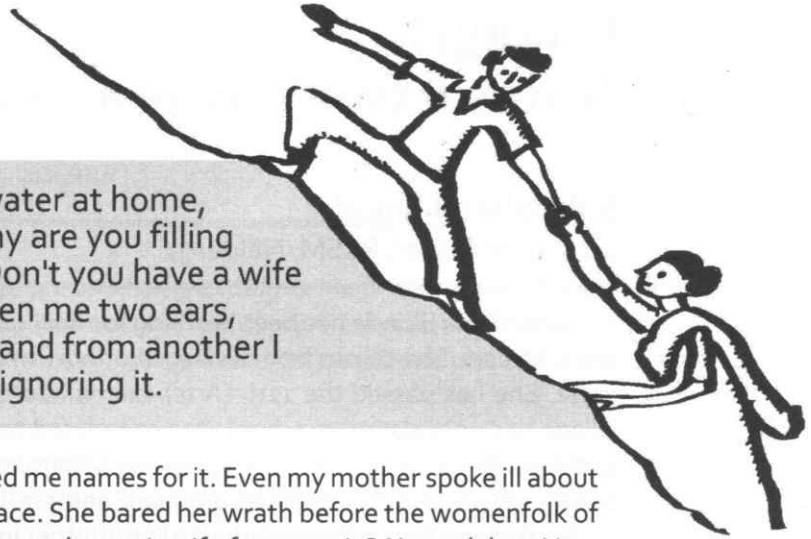
When the program of our organization began, some people would say, 'why should we go for meeting? You too need not go. They've got a project, they get promotions. What benefit do we get?' Now there is less of such idle talk. Some youth are now meaningfully participating in the program.

The program that the organization conducted was meant to stop abuse against women and bestow upon the woman liberty to think freely like a man. It also intended to dismantle structures of fear for the women in the slum. The organizers also felt that the men should be sensitive enough to understand the agony of the woman and help them in house hold chores.

These days I work a lot at home. In the morning I use the bicycle to fill water. If I get up late I tidy my bed and blankets. I make tea. I can cook a little bit; thanks to a recipe competition. If my wife is cooking I take my children for a stroll. I buy vegetables and bring them home on bicycle. My wife exudes contentment. I would never do all this housework before.

At home my verbal communication has increased since the time the program is underway. Formally I used to go to the garden alone or a friend would accompany me. Now I take my mother or my wife for a walk. Once I took my wife

When I used to draw water at home, friends would say, "Why are you filling water like a woman? Don't you have a wife at home?" God has given me two ears, With one I would hear and from another I would just leave it out ignoring it.



for a movie, and my uncle called me names for it. Even my mother spoke ill about it, though not directly on my face. She bared her wrath before the womenfolk of our lane. 'Now, tell me, does one take one's wife for a movie? He took her. Now what next, what would happen to him?' When I used to draw water at home, friends would say, "Why are you filling water like a woman? Don't you have a wife at home?" God has given me two ears, with one I would hear and from another I would just leave it out ignoring it. I am doing it all this while.

I feel lot of anger inside me when I go to the company for work. There is a fixed time of going but there is no fixed time for returning. A lot of work needs to be done. But, nobody is made permanent as per the official order. This angers me and also I have lot of anger for the political leaders. There is no water supply in our community. Toilet facility is absent. Women have to unburden themselves in the open. No leader has even cared to meet us after getting elected. This infuriates me.

Earlier, if there was less quantity of salt in the cooked vegetable, I would get angry. These days, I don't get angry at home. Even if anger erupts I keep quiet or read a book. I work in three shifts. I plan my day accordingly. If I come home by day, then, I take care to see that my children get two or three rounds of bicycle ride. I have recently joined the gym for the police recruitment. I have to give a lot of time for it. If I find time, I bring all people together at home and cook and eat together then I go for work.

Men have variety of their own problems. They are stressed about work and earning. It makes them tense. That drives them to addiction. Consumption of liquor, tobacco, gutka (a form of tobacco) is its manifestations. Many men are uneducated. They are affected by the quarrel of mother-in-law and daughter-in-law. I feel, henceforth, an institution should focus its attention on solving the dispute between mother-in-law and daughter-in-law. A program needs to be formulated. ■

Change!

It was a two-way process for me

Sulakshana Shinde

(Group facilitator, RSSM, Naldurg)

Sulakshana Shinde has been working for Rachanatmak Sangharsh Samiti for last 4-5 years. She comes from a village Lohata in AUSA Taluka. She is Maratha by caste. She has passed the 12th (Arts) examination. It should be noted that her village had only a primary school. She completed her SSC by going to a school in another village. She is the first girl in her village, to have completed SSC. This strong will power of Sulakshana continues, and is reflected in her work.

Sulakshana lives with her father in law, mother in law, brother in law, husband and her three daughters and a son. She got associated with Tathapi's project-Towards Equality Working With Men and worked hard to make the project successful. Sulakshana came across this concept for the first time while working in the project. Her perception about the concept is expressed thus; the household work involves both men and women. Both of them should participate. Husband and wife should understand each other and try to minimize the tension. She admits that earlier her thinking was traditional. She used to think that household work is solely her responsibility. Now she has started rethinking about the whole thing and has decided to bring about the changes, initiating the process with her own family. The household work has been distributed to the household members and they work accordingly.

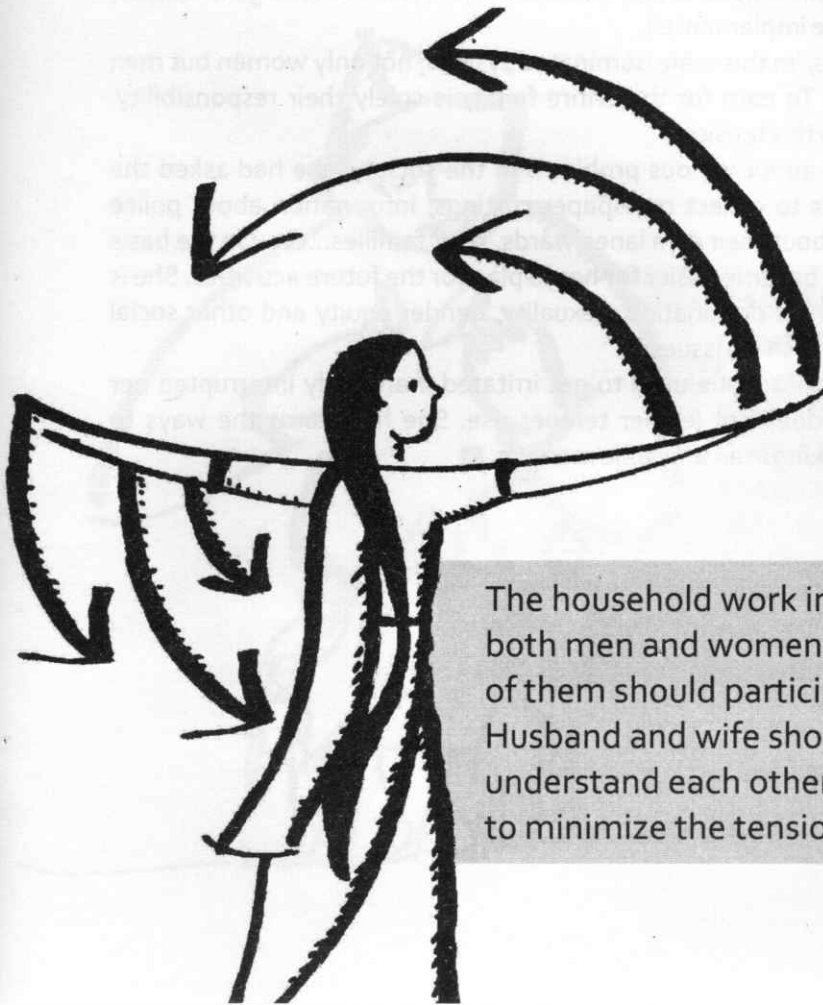
For bringing about this change in the mindset, it was essential to communicate with men, Sulakshana says. Women are busy for the whole day, but still they used to attend the meetings held at night. But men were reluctant to attend the meetings. In the beginning, if there was some discussion on participation in the household work, men used to dislike the same. Sulakshana along with her team-members like Bali, Pandir were determined that they would try hard to persuade the men to accept the concept of gender-equity. They tried different ways, either alone or in a group, to explain the content of the project objectives. One of the communicative expression was as follows, we have to work for three kinds of objectives, i) we have to change the commonly understood expectations from a 'man' ii) we have to work for eradicating the violence against women and iii) we also have to work for enhancing the participation of women in public life.

Games, entertainment programmes or occasional brain-storming sessions were the different ways adopted by the project team. One simple game was that of drawing the village-map. Interestingly, unsafe places for women, water-tank, school etc. were some of the landmarks that were missed by men. Such games

helped the organizers to understand the male mindset. Gradually, men started digesting the gender-equity concept through meetings, discussion, workshops, readings, news boards...etc. Various programmes of similar nature were organised. A procession called 'Granth Dindi' (book processions) was taken to inculcate the reading habits and to read out relevant writings and to discuss the matters with the people. Posters of the project were distributed in the village.

One of the activities expected from the participant men was looking after children for at least two hours. Sulakshana along with her team visited the concerned families to examine if it was really happening. The women seemed to be very happy. They said, 'earlier, we had to look after children, clean them, feed them, to play with them...etc. These things affected our other work like cooking, washing utensils etc. However, now because of husbands participating we feel a little free. Sulakshana reports that the men have started helping in carrying out the general household chores. Some men reportedly confessed that in the beginning they found it difficult but slowly they are getting used to it.

Although Sulakshana has succeeded in achieving the objectives of the project some of the men expressed their opposing views quite aggressively. In the meeting of young and adult men, some men took an extreme view. They asked,



The household work involves both men and women. Both of them should participate. Husband and wife should understand each other and try to minimize the tension

'are we expected to wash utensils? Should the women be made to do all outside jobs?' The organizers explained the issue in a friendly manner. 'Gender equity does not mean only doing each others jobs. Both of them should try to understand the partner's problem. This may lead to a peaceful atmosphere in the home.

One of the activities of the project was the competition of drawing 'Rangolis'. Women judged men's performance while men judged the women's performance.

Formerly, women never used to attend the village meetings i.e Gram sabha. The prize distribution ceremony was arranged on 15th August. However, for this function, they came to the Gram Panchayat for the first time and also attended the Flag hoisting. Thereafter women started participating in the village meetings. This is the clear indication of the success of the project.

Some adventurous women in a few villages took up their mission against alcohol. Men and also police cooperated.

Horti, Hipparaga, Jevali, Murta are the earthquake prone villages and hence some or the other schemes sponsored by government or NGOs are being implemented in the villages. Persons associated with such schemes do get some sort of compensation. In such an atmosphere it was difficult to get people's participation for this project as there was no *benefit* as such in it. It was only with the help of activists like Sulakshana, could the project work to change mindsets, and be successfully be implemented.

Sulakshana states, 'in this male dominated system, not only women but men also have problems. To earn for the entire family is solely their responsibility. Women are free from this tension.'

In order to know about various problems in the society, she had asked the young boys and girls to collect newspaper cuttings, information about police cases, information about their own lanes/wards, their families...etc. On the basis of this information it became easier for her to plan for the future activities. She is more aware about male domination, sexuality, gender equity and other social issues. She reads about these issues.

She admits that before she used to get irritated if anybody interrupted her work. But now she does not let her temper rise. She has learnt the ways to inculcate proper thinking in an amicable manner. ■

To be or not to be

Vijay Dhanwade

(Group facilitator, Astitva, Sangola)

Gaudwadi from Sangola Tehsil of Solapur district is Vijay's native place. His father served at Kolhapur. They have some land there too. He completed his education up to 12th standard in Kolhapur. Currently Vijay and his wife Sunita work for 'Astitwa'. He was narrating his experiences about this programme. However, he was not very open in his expression. The interviewer had to make efforts to make him speak.

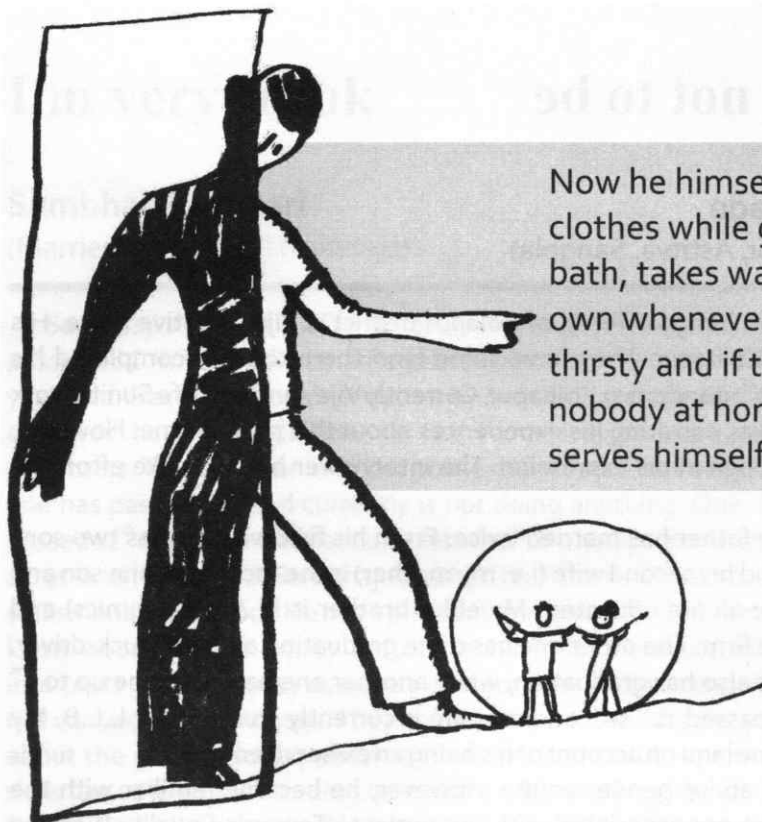
Vijay said, 'my father has married twice. From his first wife, he has two sons and a daughter and his second wife (i.e. my mother) is the mother of one son and one daughter. We all are educated. My elder brother is M.A. (Economics) and works in a private firm. The other one has done graduation and is a Truck-driver. One of the sisters also has graduation, while another one has just gone up to 5th standard. I have passed 12th std. and my wife is currently studying for L.L.B. My father has got some land on account of his being an ex-serviceman.'

He had heard about gender-equity. However, he became familiar with the term only when he got associated with the project- 'Towards Equality Working with Men'. He interprets this term as 'equal work-equal payment'. He comments, 'woman does the same amount of work as the man does. However, she gets paid less.' He thinks that in such cases equality is a must.

While working with 'Astitwa', Vijay witnessed many instances of such discriminating behaviour. He says, 'even if lady is elected as 'Sarpanch', her husband and son only enjoy the power of the position. On the 15th August or 26th January, inspite of being a 'Sarpanch', she does not do the flag-hoisting. It gets done at the hands of some former male Sarpanch or leader. Men do not even pick up their glass of water. All small jobs also are being done by the women of the household, women share also hard jobs, which are supposed to be men's jobs, while men just show off. In schooling also, the proportion of girls is lower. They get married at an early age.'

As a protest against such discrimination, his organisation carried out a project in Kamalapur. With the help of the Sarpanch and Gramsevak, he succeeded in giving joint ownership of the house to the resident families. Womens' names appeared on the name-plate and even on the papers.

Vijay thinks that the programmes organised by Tathapi were for creating awareness about the need to eradicate injustice against women. If the people of any one village succeed in bringing gender-equity, the neighbouring villages also will learn the lesson and the whole community will become aware. Vijay thought that this was the content of the training sessions of Tathapi's project. In his



Now he himself carries his clothes while going for bath, takes water on his own whenever he feels thirsty and if there is nobody at home, he serves himself his meals

opinion, the project has made an impact on peoples' attitudes.

In his opinion, 'creation of awareness among men was necessary. Men always think that household work is a sub-standard and less important work. Giving them the experience of domestic chores was necessary. Similarly, making them aware about the domestic violence was an important activity.'

Giving advice about gender-equity is easy and asking others to implement same in their behaviour is also not that difficult. However, adopting the principles in your own life is rather hard. Vijay's case is an example. Before attending the project programmes, he did not do a single household job, not even his personal work. Now also there is not much change. The only change that has taken place is that now he himself carries his clothes while going for bath, takes water on his own whenever he feels thirsty and if there is nobody at home, he serves himself his meals. However, even now he does not wash his own clothes.

With this meagre change in his behaviour, he reports that his relatives do not appreciate even this change. He reported an instance of his visit to his brother's place. When he took a glass of water for himself, his sister-in-law said, 'why do you have to do this? We are there to serve you. If your brother will come to know about this, he will scold us.' When he visited his friend's house at Kolhapur, after the meals were over, he put his dinner-plate in the 'wash-room'. This irritated his friend's mother and subsequently she scolded her daughter-in-law.

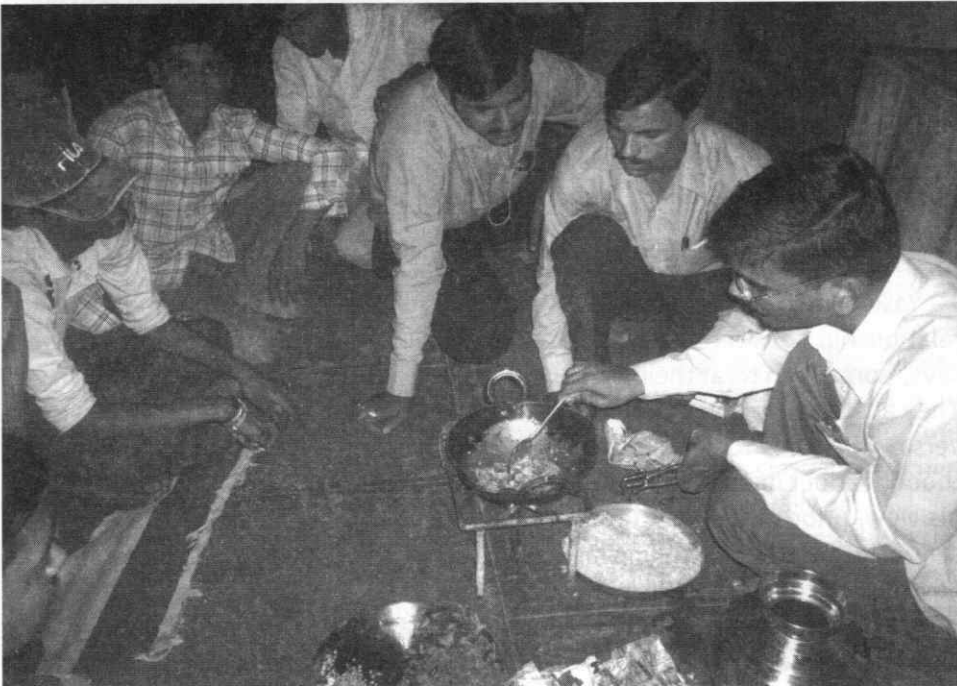
Vijay is slightly short-tempered. At the time of court-case related to a land-

dispute among his close relative, he could not control his anger. His relatives were shocked. Vijay and his wife Sunita fight over dropping children at school, attending parent-teacher meeting or the dinner timings. However, the fights are only short-lived.

Astitva organisation had tried an exercise of having a bullock-cart procession in four villages for discussing the concept of equality with the villagers. A number of meetings were arranged in the villages. Women and youth melas were organised. Competitions were held. However, Vijay could not attend all these programmes and hence could not talk much about them.

There is nothing special in Vijay's daily time-schedule. He spends his day like a traditional man. He gets up at 7' o clock and goes to bed at 10' o clock at night. He rarely helps in the household work. He does not have a liking for reading. He reads newspapers. He focuses only on political news. He has no interest in other 'articles.

From this feedback, it appears that Vijay is an activist in the process of transition. He is not good in studies, but encourages his wife for higher education. He himself can not manage household work but encourages others to do it. He thinks that creating awareness among men is essential and it has to be done in a more different manner. ■



Then what for are the wives? Are they show pieces?

Yashwant Sonawane

(Married man, Kuran, Sangamner)

To bring about progressive thinking and behaviour, caste or religion need not be barriers. What is needed is a conducive culture and atmosphere. A chat with Yashwant Sonawane makes this clear. However Yashwant understanding is little bit haphazard.

Yashwant comes from a family belonging to a community formally treated as 'untouchables'. He and his wife both are illiterate. His native place Kuran is in Sangamner taluka. The village has majority of Muslims amounting to 80-85 percent. About 7-8 percent are Bouddha, while 2-3 percent are Bhils. Bhils are slightly aloof from the rest of the people. Yashwant's personality developed in such a social atmosphere. His language is truly a folk language. His father passed away long back, while his mother died only recently. Currently he stays with wife and four sons. According to him, they waited for a girl child. Otherwise they would have undergone sterilization after 2-3 children. He owns only one acre of un-irrigated land. Both of them work as a labourers and make both the ends meet. It should be noted that all his children are school going.

Yashwant had never heard about 'gender equality' before the project. Even now he is not in a position to explain the meaning of the term very clearly. But he does try to explain his own way. Husband and wife should co-operate each other, he says. Once one gets married, one has to make married life work, just the way our parents did. One needs to earn adequately, one has to look after the children. What we observe in reality is that the men folk beat their wives. The institute authorities have told us that such rude behaviour should be avoided by both the partners and giving such message is good in Yashwant's opinion.

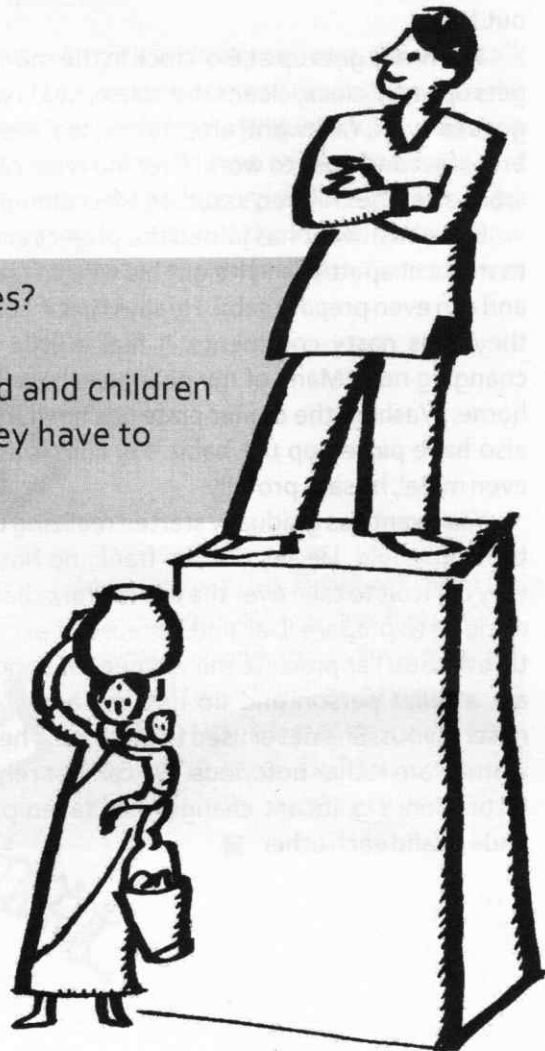
Yashwant's narration gives clear idea about his perception about the relationship between the partners and the discriminatory treatment. Yashwant says, 'some men treat their wives very badly. Some of them even kill their wives'. They are too suspicious about their wives behaviour. Sometimes it can be vice-versa. This leads to serious arguments.' However, Yashwant somehow has not thought about need to make efforts to change this. He does not have the time. In his view, prior to the institute work, nobody was thinking about these matters seriously. Occasionally, elder persons used to refer to such instances and had advised him to treat his wife with due respect.

With a somewhat indifferent approach he says that women will continue to be discriminated against. They will have to suffer violence. It is not right to expect

that such age-old behavioural pattern will change overnight. Earlier, when there used to be serious fights, people used to panic and run for registering complaints. Yashwant however admits that now the atmosphere has changed after the institute initiated its activities. He comments 'earlier women never used to visit the places, where generally the men folk get together (chavadi) or even if they had to pass it, they used to take out their footwear. Now, women do not observe such restriction. They are free to move around. This is solely due to the institute's efforts. They visit the temple, school anywhere. Even they can manage the work in an office. They do not feel shy to speak in front of anybody. Such a daring was rarely seen formerly. They have learnt the tact of communication. My wife also can move around alone'.

When asked about the project 'Towards Equality working with men; its objectives, the selection of his village etc. he said, 'they must have found our village ideal. Nobody drinks alcohol in the village. It is not even sold here. Of

Then what for are the wives?
Are they showing pieces?
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course, some of them might be going out for the same. I do not drink. That is why I can't stand such drunkards.' The expenses of education of one of his sons are borne by a foreign donor. NISD has provided the necessary help. The institute also helped him in purchasing a milk cow, after the earlier one died. Yashwant could bear the educational expenses for other children because of the newly purchased cow. This satisfaction is evident on his face.

Yashwant could not give complete information about the activities under the project on 'Gender Equity'. He himself could not attend some programmes because of his other activities. But he knew about the message regarding men's participation in the household work. However he does not agree with it. He says, 'there are some jobs, which only men can do. Similarly, looking after the kitchen and children are women's jobs and they have to do them. Do you expect that the man will work outside the whole day and in the evening work at home? Will he look after the children? Then what for are the wives? Are they showing pieces? To take care of the husband and children are women's duties and they have to carry them out.'

Yashwant gets up at 6 o'clock in the morning. His wife's day starts earlier. She gets up at 5 o'clock, cleans the house, heats water for bath, prepares tea for all and goes to work. Yashwant, after taking tea, feeds the cow, milks her, has bath, takes breakfast and goes to work. Evening is spent in chatting with friends. At night, he looks after the children's studies, after dinner goes to bed.

Since Yashwant has joined the project activities he has learnt to cook. He was to make chapattis, and he got his wife to teach him. He now can make chapattis and can even prepare sabji. He says that if our relatives happen to see me cooking, they pass nasty comments. 'I feel a little awkward. Any way, the things are changing now. Many of my near ones have learnt cooking and they also cook at home. Washing the dinner plate has been my habit since childhood. My children also have picked up the habit. My sons wash their own clothes and sometimes even mine', he says proudly.

Yashwant has gradually started realizing the contribution of women in running the household. He says, 'to be frank, no household work is easy and further it is very difficult to take over the entire work that is usually managed by wives. Once I decided to prepare 'Dal' and because of excess of salt, the whole thing had to be thrown out. I appreciate the women for handling the kitchen for years together. I am a quiet person and do not get angry easily. Earlier, my wife was a little mischievous. She never used to obey me. Then I used to get furious. Truly speaking women are rather notorious. We can not rely on them. Any way after joining this institution, significant changes has taken place in our behaviour and we try to understand each other.' ■

So who are we to change those customs?

Amaresh Satkur

(Youth, Shastri nagar, Solapur)

Amaresh Satkur is a bold youth of twenty who lives in a slum vasti of Solapur town. Puny looking yet, with the attitude of a hero in an action film. He smugly says, "I belong to the *padmashaali samaaj*, and my religion is *maarkandeya*". He shows self-importance in being a Hindu, and even today after involvement in the project he adheres strongly to traditional beliefs.

Amaresh's paternal grandfather originally came from Warangal near Hyderabad. The people at home and many in his *vasti* speak Telugu, and his Marathi shows this influence. At home he lives with his father, mother, two sisters and a brother. Another sister Kavita got married after tenth and has gone to her in-laws. The second sister Ambika was pulled out of school after eighth with the reasoning that girls get spoiled with too much education. Now her marriage is being planned. When asked why she is getting married off at such a young age and why aren't they thinking of his elder brother's marriage first, he replied, "In our caste we first get the girls married and the boys afterwards. After a daughter goes away to become a daughter-in-law, then it is necessary to bring another girl in her place as daughter-in-law to look after the housework. Marriages traditionally happen when the girl is around the age of 15 or 16 years. This has come from long before, so who are we to change those customs?"

Why shouldn't young people marry after they reach adulthood, and be equal in age? To this, Amaresh replies, "The government itself has decided that the age of marriage for girls should be 18 years and for boys 21 years". And on the other hand, if the marriage age is decided to be equal, and then people will think the government knows nothing, they will ridicule it.

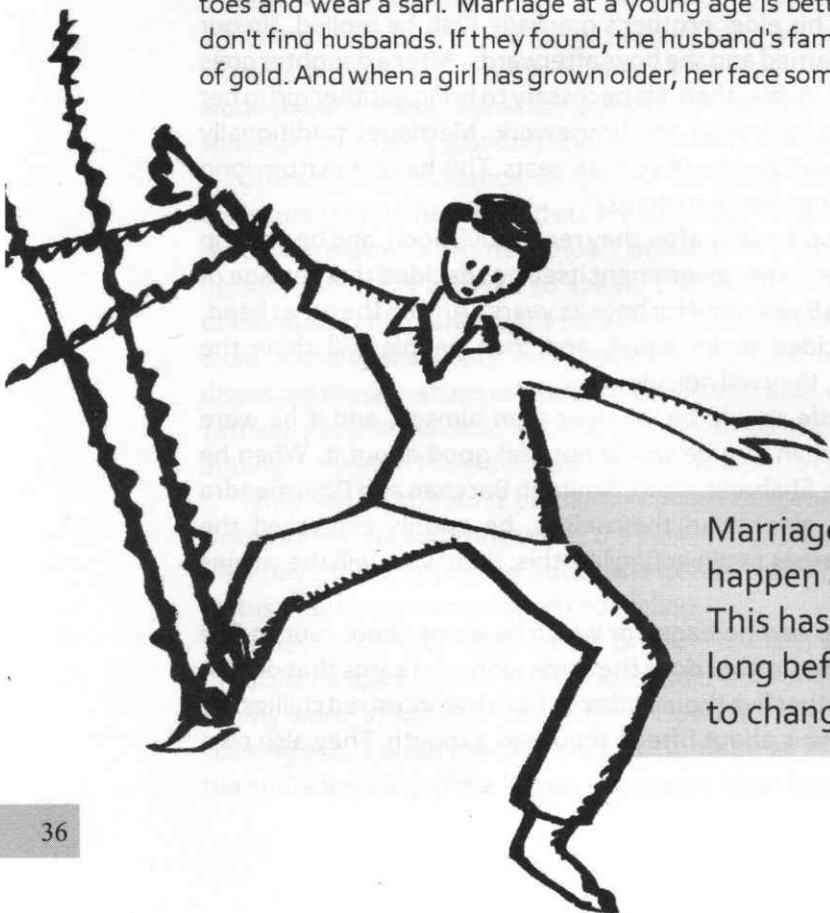
He feels that his own wife should be younger than himself, and if he were married to someone older than him he would not feel good about it. When he heard that Sachin Tendulkar, Shahrukh Khan, Amitabh Bacchan and Dharmendra are all married to women older than themselves, he angrily expressed the problem he saw, "If (film) heroes begin acting like this, then what will the villains do?"

Amaresh works in a shop sewing bags, for which he earns about four to five thousand rupees a month. His brother does the same work and earns that or a bit more. Their father earns another five thousand or so from trading in red chillies. So altogether the family income is about fifteen thousand a month. They also own their own four-room house.

It was during the course of the various activities organised in the project in Shastrinagar that Amaresh first heard the phrase *stree-purush samaanta* (woman man equality). Since this kind of effort had never before been made, he had never heard any discussion about it either. In this part, workers have their weekly off on Wednesdays and in this vasti the men gather in the Ram Mandir. So the organisers held their first meeting in this place.

Amaresh does appreciate that women do a lot of work. 'Even after filling the water and cooking, washing clothes and rolling bidis (for hours on end) nobody feels pity for them. The *sanstha* has told all of us not to give trouble to women and that we should do half of their work. Some men react to this and say, 'Why should I do this work? Am I her servant?' But some men have changed about 25% of men help in the work at home.' This he feels basically constitutes *stree-purush samaanta*. A friend of Amaresh's intervenes, 'You put it well! If there's a meeting sometime, tell all of us. I'll also come.'

With the exception of the 'AIDS Awareness' programme, Amaresh has enjoyed all of the activities put up by the organisation. He says that it provides good relief from his work and reduces tension at home. Every body stays in a good mood. But he feels that traditional values are important. 'Among our customs, a wife is supposed to wear a *tikli*, and if she doesn't, something might happen to her husband. Likewise she should wear a *mangal-sutra* around her neck, *jodavi* on her toes and wear a sari. Marriage at a young age is better because later in life girls don't find husbands. If they found, the husband's family asks for four or five *tolas* of gold. And when a girl has grown older, her face somehow really looks different.



Marriages traditionally happen at early age for girls. This has come from long before, so who are we to change those customs?

A boy who gets into a love marriage doesn't take gold. But after he goes off to work, his parents give the girl trouble. In some places they even finish her off." Amaresh knows of such a case in his *vasti* where the woman was killed by burning. Another woman, fed up of the torture, hung herself. He has also heard of women who have given up their lives by drowning in a tank or a well.

One apparent reason for domestic quarrels and fights in Shastrinagar is *daaru* or *shindi*. When in an intoxicated state the men beat their wives. After the alcohol has worn off by morning, they say, "I don't remember anything forgive me for whatever happened last night."

Regarding equality between men and women, Amaresh reasons that if both do any kind of work together it will happen faster. If you try to do it alone then it doesn't happen. Also if you help another person then people approve. He says that people in the *vasti* have liked the work that the organisation has done. Whenever these people arrive they take out the key to the Ram Mandir for them. Men easily gather to sit there, but women don't come so eagerly. You have to call them again and again, and only a few turn up.

He feels a lot of change in himself as a result of the guidance from the organisation. 'Before I used to swear and curse a lot, and hit anybody. Now I've stopped it. I just keep my mind focused on my work and on my home.' Even so, he still gets fits of anger when he feels like beating up someone or other. He gets angriest when someone uses abuses referring to a person's mother or sister. He has intervened in a few fights between a husband and wife, explaining to the husband. But often the husband refuses to listen and that makes him mad.

Earlier between Amaresh and his brother there was often cursing and beating, but now it has lessened. He says that for a long time he has not carried on a fight, nor uttered curses within his home. But at his workplace the others are fearful of his hot temperament and what he calls his 'irritable self (body)'.

As for his part in the housework, he has started filling water, cooking *daal-bhaat*, making an omelette, *sushela*, *poha* or tea he can make about 5 or 6 things to eat or drink. His mother and father comment that he has improved and he is proud of it. Only some of his friends tease him about doing housework and then he doesn't feel good. He says he doesn't find the work difficult there is nothing hard in it. He washes his own plate every day. Filling the water is satisfying because it gets the water filled and at the same time he gets physical exercise. But cooking food is more difficult.

In a grand finale to his interview, Amaresh said he feels that whoever has taken part in this project should spread these ideas by telling from ten to twenty other people, and in this way the idea of equality will spread over the whole of India, so that the *sansthas* objectives will be met. ■

Increased dialogue at home

Hina Pathan

(Woman, Kuran, Sangamner)

Hina stays in village-Kuran-near Sangamner. The village has a Muslim majority. Hina, aged 25 years is educated up to 12th standard. She is married. Interestingly, she has reported 'Muslim' as her caste and 'Hindu' as her religion.

Hina's parents are well educated. Her father has passed B.A. B.Ed. while her mother is a matriculate. Her brother has completed G.D. (Arts) and is engaged in photography. Although her parents are not orthodox, they did not show the progressive attitude while fixing her marriage. On an uncle's insistence, marriage was fixed while her 12th standard examination was on. As a result she missed one of the papers and ultimately failed in the examination. Later, she reappeared for the examination and succeeded.

She came to know about gender equity only, when she got associated with this men's project'. She comes from a community which still observes the 'Purdha' system. However, her views are quite progressive. In her view, there is no work, which a woman cannot do. It is the society, which does not allow her to show her capabilities. In her opinion, gender-equity means men and women working together.

Because of her father's job, Hina spent her childhood in Nashik. Her father did not believe in orthodoxy and hence did not insist on her observing 'Purdha'. As a result of her upbringing she is very bold. In Kuran, however people do not appreciate her boldness. They also criticize her for not wearing burkha. Hina says, 'in our community, particularly in Kuran, girls are not allowed to go for higher education. Men are allowed to have their choice at the time of marriage. However, women are not given that choice.' In any matter decisions about her (a woman's) own life are always taken by others without taking her into confidence. She has had to study in 'Urdu medium' only. The village has a school only up to 10th. She is not sent outside for further education.

Hina further comment, 'Prior to Tathapi's project, there were no activities dealing with gender-equity. Tathapi's project has definitely led to transition in the thinking of the people'. Hina perceives the objectives of the project as 'making the women aware of their rights and making them exercise the rights'.

Hina reports about the changes in her own thinking compare to earlier days, now she has become more expressive. She does not believe that others will not try to understand her. She thinks that it is our skill of communication, which is important.

Hina reports to her husband about all activities of the project and persuades him to reconsider about the equity-issues. Since Mansoor approves of the

constructive nature of the project, he has started practicing them in his own home. He helps his wife in domestic work. Since both of them leave home for work at the same time, she needs help and he offers her the needed help. He helps her in the preliminary work needed for cooking. Mansoor himself was involved in 'cooking' programme of the project. Gradually, he is changing. But still he is not willing to wash clothes. However Hina hopes that if she falls sick, Mansoor will even wash clothes. Mansoor's mother does not approve of his sharing the household chores. However Mansoor ignores his mother's remarks. She comments, 'if sometimes there is no salt, excess salt, excess chilly or if sometimes chapatti is burnt, the husbands complain and shout. Now, when they themselves, start cooking, they would understand the problems better'. her husband can makedal, rice, ground-nut chutney; potato subjietc.

Hina is slightly short-tempered. She says, that if she has decided to do anything, which is not illegal or immoral, and still if others oppose, she gets angry. Her mother-in-law being elder, she does not raise her voice with her. However, she occasionally has a heated exchange of arguments with her husband. However, her husband knows that her anger is for a right cause and is momentary. Hence, he

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keeps quite. Hina is happy if she succeeds in doing some good work, which is not very routine. However, if she is not allowed to participate in such works, she is upset. Anyway, because of her out-spoken nature, the atmosphere in the house is very healthy.

Hina's day starts at 6 o'clock. After having a bath, she does the cooking with her husband's help. After the cooking is over, both of them move out for 'Namaj'. After bathing and feeding the child and doing the needful for her mother-in-law she goes to the 'Balwadi'. After working in Balwadi up to 5 o'clock, she reaches home at 5.30 pm. By that time her husband is at home. He cleans the house and collects water. Both of them cook together for the dinner. After dinner she goes to bed at around 9.30-10.00 pm.

As a summing up Hina remarks, 'In the beginning very few people in the village could appreciate the 'Gender-equity' project. Even some women had expressed their dislike. However, now the women have started understanding the importance of such programmes. Their participation has enhanced. Still even now women do not visit the 'Chawdi'- where generally men meet together. They do not get to read the notice board put at the Chawdi. Hina suggest that if the notice-boards are put somewhere else e.g. at Balwadi, women will read it. Slowly, the notice-board could be shifted back to chawdi. In this way, the women could be persuaded to visit the chawdi. ■



A tale of a village, Kuran

(NISD, Sangamner)

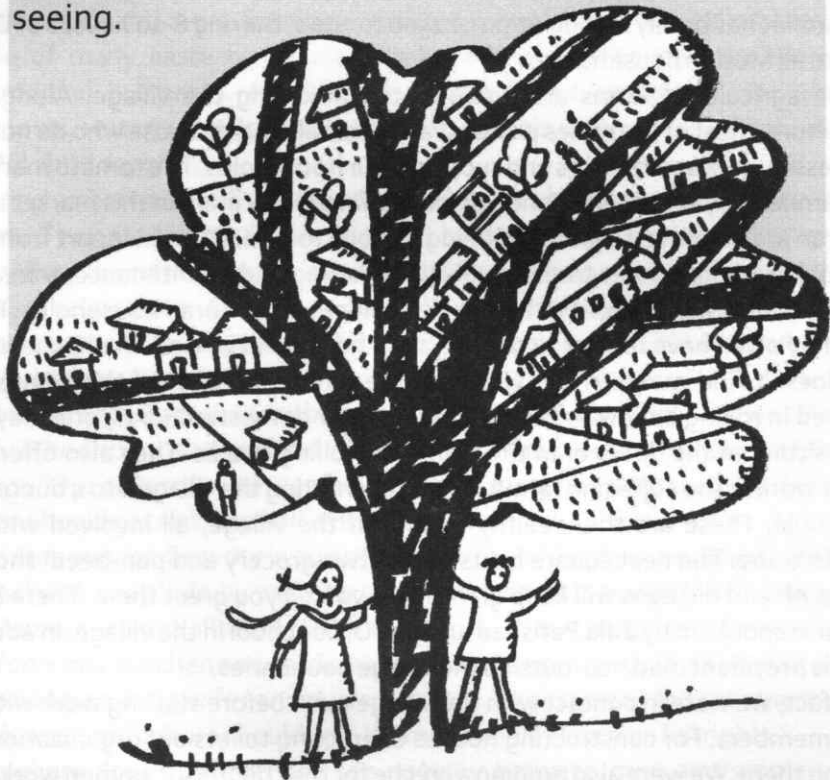
The village named Kuran is not very far from Sangamner. Hardly a distance of 6-7 Kms. While reaching it, we mostly save our time by commuting on our vehicles. The hamlet has barely a population of 2500 to 3000. Barring 8-10 houses of Dalits, rest are all Muslim households.

The agricultural farms are just situated adjoining the village. Along with agriculture, most of the males profess various small trades. Those who do not own businesses work as labourers and support their households. The tomato market of Sangamner employs at least one person per family of Kuran. In this market males of Kuran are employed right from being a coolie to a middleman. Apart from this, livestock trading, timber trading, vehicle repairing and maintenance, transports are few other trades practiced by the male members of Kuran households. For all this, they often have to stay away from their house and village. That is the reason one doesn't find males in the village in the day time. Most of the women are involved in rolling beedis. After completing their domestic chores, one may spot them sitting at the doors or in the courtyard rolling beedis. They also offer their labour work at the adjoining farms. Just after entering the village 2 to 4 bungalows are visible. These are the wealthy people of the village, all involved with the tomato trade. The next square hosts one or two grocery and pan-beedi shops. A few youth and old eyes will keep glancing at you till you greet them. There is one Marathi school run by Zilla Parishad and one Urdu school in the village. In addition there is a resident madarsa outside the village boundaries.

In fact, we were in contact with the village even before starting work with the male members. For constructing houses or erecting toilets our organization was helping them. We were also running a crèche for the children of women workers of the bidi factory. So we were acquainted with them. We exchanged casual talks with these men and women too. However the relations strengthened after we started the work. The very vision was the entirely different nature of the topic of our work. We have to gauge the minds of youths, men and women and initiate a dialogue with them on equality, concept of masculinity, violence against women etc.

This work got started with consolidation of a group of youths, married men and women. Monthly meetings got started. Initially we started off with topics like education, health, gender bias, domestic violence. In particular, we were trying to involve especially the men, but then it became clearer to us that interacting with married men on these topics was not easy. At the group level compare to women married male and even male youths seldom attended the programmes and meetings. Even their consistency was far lesser. Of course it had its own reasons.

Situation is vastly different now-after a working of almost two years. Women are easily coming out for meetings, or training, or other similar reasons-without any barriers from men. In fact, men are supportive. The extent of saving is increased amongst women-which obviously the men are seeing.



As stated previously the men in Kuran, along with agriculture were also involved in various small trades and labour related work. It was different than a permanent job. Their working hours were not fixed. Some members amongst the group were constantly on the move- sometimes for weeks all together. Sometimes they transgressed the boundaries of the state as well. It was always difficult to survive just on the wages of agriculture. As their sources of income were uncertain, they were always leading an uncertain life. If they did not attend to work their wages were reduced. And if one doesn't go to work someone else would always replace them. In this situation creating the dialogue with them proved to be immensely difficult. We tried many solutions as a firm group of married men was almost never formed. We always arranged their programmes when the trading season was off

or talked to them on Fridays, at the Namaz time. Or may be go to their homes directly and talk.

While working we sensed that males were never responding to discussions or regular meetings. The same experience was even repeated in other villages. They always said that they will attend one big event but it is difficult to attend monthly meetings. So we changed strategy. We decided to take such programmes which will involve and entertain all along with meeting our objectives. For example, we had arranged for a meet of couples in the nearby Pokhari village. But the day of the meet was decided in a manner convenient to male members in Kuran along with their partners. The meet was a grand success. It included many games like threading beads, making gajaras, understanding each other choices etc. Games which required participation of both husband and wife. Majority of the people zealously participated in the games. This very experience was totally new for the people of Kuran and other villages. Generally the orthodoxy prevalent in our society regards exchange of pleasantries as a great sin! But there was nothing like this here. Many people gave us the feedback that they could truly live for their own sake that day. The event created its own impact and men demanded many more such events. We also learnt that if the planning is done as per the right time and situations qualitative participation of the male members does increase. Similarly, we arranged cookery competitions for men, parents' meet, a competition based on popular show 'Home Minister'. Through this we propagated the equality.

We also faced some more difficulties while working in Kuran. We three male volunteers had gone to initiate the first meeting. It was altogether a new experience for us. But we were fully prepared. Tathapi's detailed, in depth training, our changed attitude due to it and the provided resource material was with us. On that very day, we communicated with all of them on various topics. That women should transcend boundary of home and men should support, not resist them, whole family will improve if women are empowered with opportunity were the points we discussed. That was by and large agreeable to all. But when the point that women should not be compelled to wear a veil that is burqkha. Matter took a different turn. The locals as expected must have discussed it- as 2-4 days after a group of 4-5 men came to meet us. They warned us that what we were talking may be right, but their maulanans would never tolerate it. More was yet to come. The women's group was getting stronger day by day. It had even led to formation of a small saving group. Even their meetings were far better. Once some women landed in our Sangamner office without wearing a burqkha. A politically active person in the village noticed it. He gossiped in the village that he would deal with this. The village even discussed this loose talk. It even reached the women. They got annoyed and angry. They straight away went to his home together and fired him. They asked what the exact wrong was done by the organization and who was he to question it. He got intimidated and apologized

them all. But we didn't want such an ending. We communicated with him as well along with other men and explained our work, its objectives etc. There after we did not face any such difficulty.

Operating in Kuran was challenging for us in many ways. Although with a six month training we were trained and approaches were defined for such a working, we had a few prejudices and a little fear of working in a village of Muslim Majority. Even while talking internally, we would use phrases like 'those people', 'they', 'their' etc. We also had many other questions-how would they respond? would they get angry? etc. For example we had decided to arrange a readership meet in the village-but were totally uncertain about using the word '*dindi*' for the procession related to it-opinions amongst us differed so much on this issue that we cancelled the event itself. Not jut this, we were fearful to even use the words 'gender equality' in the village. That is why we invited Anwar Rajan from Pune-his visit proved extremely helpful. His meeting was attended by both the men and women members. This must have been the first ever meeting wherein men and women were sitting just one foot away.

His visit proved useful to create the open atmosphere for working which we were looking for. Even at a personal level, it proved beneficial to us to change some of our pre-conceived notions and boost our confidence. It was because of his talk that many of our prejudices about Muslims vanished, and we realized how baseless our fears were.

Situation is vastly different now-after a working of almost two years. Women are easily coming out for meetings, or trainings, or other similar reasons-without any barriers from men. In fact, men are supportive. The extent of saving is increased amongst women-which obviously the men are seeing.

Dialogue with men does not involve any monetary benefits, nor are we providing them any facilities like other projects. But we do not think it is because of this we got a low key response from men. The work has -most importantly changed their attitude. Along with them, even our knowledge level has gone up, our skills have increased, and our thoughts have transcended one level up. The reactions we got from both men and women were also very encouraging." I felt very delighted to attend", "when would you arrange such a program again?", "include my brother in your programs", "I was very dominating at home in the beginning -but now i am more open" to state a few.

This project i.e. dialogue with men on gender and masculinity issues was a very novel kind of task for us. It is our continuing education as well. We felt like sharing these experiences with all of you, and hence this a tale of Kuran. ■

Working with men-Challenges in Hipparaga

(RSSM, Naldurg)

Soon after Rachnatmak Sangarsha Samiti started working in Hipparaga village of the Osmanabad district, they had to face various challenges. As a strategy, the dialogue with men had to be stalled for a while. Patriarchial system imposes restrictions on the conduct and thoughts of men as well. The very purpose of the program was to negate these restrictions, and to initiate more humane a nature in them. However, married men especially were not responding to the initiatives as per expectations. Hipparaga was no exception. There were moments of frustration. But the facilitators combated these challenges by employing various, novel techniques. They used varied form of dialogue and communication, changed their strategies and continued this process of behavioural and attitudinal change.

The following interview of a female facilitator, who worked 'in-situ', highlights some of the experiences in this process.

Que: As you said, compared to other villages response of youths and males in Hipparaga was not encouraging. According to you what may be the reason? What measures did you adopt to increase the response?

Ans: In Hipparaga, mainly Alaka, Bali and I used to work. Pandit also came occasionally. Initially, our programmes got good response as villagers believed some new initiative has come to our village. Many people used to gather at public events. Many people gathered on the occasions like publication of manifesto on gender equality in office of Grampanchayat or inauguration of notice board at square. There were discussions on ill effects of addiction, violence, gender bias etc. Then we realized that youth and men were rather hesitant to attend the meetings especially when only Alka and I conduct the meetings. They thought mingling with women was not a very acceptable idea. In addition, topics discussed were concept of 'masculinity' and gender equality etc. Most of our discussions frequented these words. They felt awkward. Then we started to visit their homes along with public functions/ events. We visited to each house, talked to every group member who so ever was present.

Que: How do you communicate during your home visits? Did it work or not?

Ans: We went directly to houses of group members. We talked about our programmes, our motives. We started to communicate on domestic violence, equality etc. We started to talk on issues like how to increase women's access in public spaces like Grampanchayat, if we want to stop violence against

women what change one can bring in himself etc. Usually children imitate elder people. So we told male members that if they stop using abusive language, the children would surely follow them. These were some of the things we discussed commonly. Anyway, these are not the topics one can discuss on a roadside. Even when we visited their home, firstly we asked them about their well being. Then gradually we told them about ill-effects of addiction, how even being a male, in our system imposes cliché behaviour, men also have tensions etc. We wanted to initiate the campaign-"a house owned by twosome" that is joint ownership of husband and wife. But we couldn't express it in a direct manner. Slowly we started to visit their homes, initiate a dialogue with both husband and wife. We communicated with Sarpanch and other members of Grampanchayat. It was difficult to start the discussion directly. First, it was compulsory for us to take an interest in 'their' topics. After the initial communication, we put forward ours. Some People joined us. But later on they got scattered.

Que: Why?

Ans: Gradually men started to join us. They started attending meetings regularly. Group formation initiated was slow-but steady. But during that period many people had to leave the village as it was becoming increasingly difficult to meet the ends in this small village. Options of earning were almost nil. The land was not fertile and that year rainfall was scanty. So all the equations had changed. Farming became difficult. Supplementary labour work on farm was not available. Male members in the village started to work as cane labours. Many males left for Pune or Mumbai in search of work. It became difficult for us, as regular, enthusiastic group members had left.

Que: Did you face any other difficulties while working in Hipparga?

Ans: Yes, we faced many difficulties. In the initial phase of our work, a few other saving groups of some other organization were operative. Some husband of a woman amongst those groups was murdered. There was a hearsay that wife herself had murdered her husband. So people had become rather skeptic about the work of saving groups- a new idiom got phrased in the village "*Bachat gat ani nawara cut*". One said such kind of work is spoiling our wives. So initially our work was stalled. We never experienced such difficulties in other 3 villages. In fact, in the other 3 villages, youths and males used to attend the meetings and other programmes with enthusiasm.

Que: Now, at this juncture, do you feel that we could have done something more? Do you ever feel that our efforts fell short somewhere?

Ans: No, we don't think that our efforts were not enough. Yes, but a bit of frustration surmounted us. Moreover we faced many difficulties. Alcoholism was rampant in the village. In fact, it was in the course of this work itself that we had supported efforts of women of prohibition of liquors. Because of their

efforts SP closed liquor shops in the village. But we can't exactly cite this reason for the low response by men, as in our group, there were very few addicts. We conducted our scheduled programmes neatly, but they were not much successful on a participatory level. While arranging programmes, meetings we always saw to it that no fraction of the village life was left untouched. We tried to involve men and women from the main village, cane labourers from adjoining locality (tanda), Dalits-all of them. But the number of male cane labourers in the group was very less. During the cane season, most of the men and women had locally migrated to work.

Initially, it was difficult to discuss the above issues. We communicated, but their involvement was less. They use to listen only. But gradually they started opening up. They started to express their opinion. Some of them said that this was not their culture. This won't do here. But some of them agreed with us. The programme would prove to be effective to reduce social, domestic violence, tensions. There should be some space for males to vent out their stresses as well. This was it. This programme would provide them this space. It would be helpful to keep your relations healthy.

Que: While talking to youths and males, do you think that as a facilitator, you have to increase our own understanding and/or knowledge?

Ans: Yes. Sometimes we felt the need to talk on different topics with males, that too in a different manner. We always tried to make each and every meeting innovative. So that they would not get bored. We asked them whether they go to the library, what did you read today? Then we discussed on the books, which they had read. It was two-way communication.

Que: We have planned various events. Some of them involved only groups while some included whole village. Nature of some of them was like a meeting. Some were like public function. From all these programmes which kinds of programmes proved to be more effective?

Ans: Somehow, I feel group meetings do not help. We can not expect that male members can attend every meeting. Instead of these meeting health camps, Youth meets, cookery competitions, parent's meet etc. appealed people more. They started to think that the organization is doing something for our village. In youth meets, young people saw that the youths from other villages have changed so much, they were participating in domestic work, and they stopped abusive language. Because of this they started to think of changing themselves. Such programmes really work. Our Library also got good response in the villages other than Hipparaga. Women also used this facility. They borrowed books. But in Hipparaga women feared their husbands. Many males were addicted to liquor. Moreover that 'saving group' case affected.. In Hipparaga itself a male librarian handed over his responsibility to his wife. He thought at least because of this, women would come to the library. But it didn't

work.. We ourselves used to go to their homes to give them books.

Que: How was the participation of Dalit youth, men and women? Did you take any special efforts to increase their participation?

Ans: In Hipparaga, participation of people in Dalit locality was not any different from that of others. We arranged some programmes, meetings for them where they resided. Youths from core area attended programmes even in the Samaj Mandir, but married men never came. So, usually meetings were organized in the village. Women from Dalit locality always came for the programmes or meetings. But they never came for meeting in Brahmin locality. We tried to involve everyone in the programme. In Jewali village however, participation of Dalit youth was very less.

Que: Motive of our programme was to enhance the reach of women to the social, domestic resources. Do you think, up to some extent we achieved our objectives?

Ans: Yes of course. But compared to other villages in Hipparaga achievement of the programme was not that satisfactory. Let's take an example of village Murta. We organized a programme of publication of manifesto on gender equality in the office of Grampanchayat in Murta. The number of women, who attended the programme, was more than men. These women had never been to Grampanchayat before that. In Jewali village, there were lots of restrictions imposed on women. These women never transcended boundaries of their home. Most of the women were from upper caste and from rich families. Now, these women easily gather for meeting or any special programmes. Their husbands do not restrict them much now.

Because of this programme males also have changed a lot. Now they have started to help their wives in domestic work, to take care of children. So that women can spare a little time for the programmes.

Que: What do you think is the way, to increase participation of males in the village like Hipparaga?

Ans: If we often keep on uttering just the rhetoric of masculinity, violence people would obviously get bored. They think that there is nothing for me in this. Why should I go to this meeting? These programmes won't help me to earn bread and butter. If it is about some business, job or agriculture then only it works. If there is training like skill improvements or programme on health, agriculture, politics, then only they will come. We have to use such media to express ourselves. ■

Tathapi's communication material for a dialogue with men

Male Sexuality and the Construction of Male Identity: Meeting Report 1,2 and 3 : (English/Hindi/Marathi)

These are the reports of national level meetings organised by Tathapi to work with men and boys for building healthy social relations based on gender equity and other democratic values.

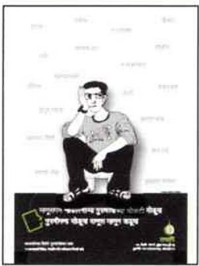
Training Manual



Gender, Sexuality, Violence and health... training manual to work with men (Marathi, Hindi, English)

This type of book is introduced in India for first time. This book emerged and developed through the workshops with four organizations; Sahayog (Uttar Pradesh), Ekalavya (Madhya Pradesh), Sahaj (Gujrat) and Tathapi Trust (Maharashtra). The main objective was to prepare a resource material for the workers who work with youth, men. (Donation price Rs. 200)

Poster



Let's leave the false notions of masculinity... and grow up as human being (Purushipana soduya... manus mhanun vadhuya)

Patriarchal society draws frames of thoughts and behavior for men and women. In addition, more strikingly, this margin is injustice for women. However, right from appearance, body language to division of work these boundaries detach men from humanity. Men also come into this trap of false notions of masculinity. This poster is an attempt to explain what these concepts are and what the need to break those frames is. (Donation price Rs. 10)

Documentary

Yuvak Melava (Youth Gathering) (30 Min., Marathi, English)

"Towards equality...working with men" program was carried out with four organizations in 16 villages of Maharashtra. The walk of these youths towards equality is very interesting, vigorous learning process. This process was to understand the traditional frames of masculinity and to stretch oneself to a good human being. This yuvak melava held at Apla Ghar, Naladurg to make this whole process stronger to inculcate for longer. Also, this helped them to understand that they are not alone in this process of change, instead, there are other youths who are struggling at their end.

Working with Men... experiences of activists (24 Min., Marathi, English)

This is an attempt to convey the experiences of the persons involved on and of field in the process of working with men. The two years were learning process for the activists too.

Towards equality...an Overview (in the making process)

This documentary tells about the experiences in the implementation of this project, challenges and strategies, effective interventions and many other issues included. This is an attempt to make it useful for the organizations that are working and would like to work with men for gender equality.

"He himself has begun to do his part in housework. Because there are more members in his house, it needs lots of water. He now fills up to 25 ghaagris (earthen pots) of water, whenever the water comes. He does the marketing. He sweeps the house and front yard (aangan). Earlier he used to feel ashamed about doing this kind of work."

"He comments 'earlier women never used to visit the places, where generally the men folk get together or even if they had to pass it, they used to take out their footwear. Now, women do not observe such restriction. They visit the temple, school anywhere. Even they can manage the work in an office. Such a daring was rarely seen formerly."

"if sometimes there is no salt, excess salt, excess chilly or if sometimes chapatti is burnt, the husbands complain and shout. Now, when they themselves, start cooking, they would understand the problems better."



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