



2019

Knowledge, Attitude and Practices on Gender Equality, Participation and Gender Based Violence

Baseline Survey Report

This report present knowledge, attitude and practices in community on gender equality, gender based violence, female and adolescent participation in decision making and knowledge about Domestic Violence Act. This is based on a baseline survey conducted in 10 Panchayats of Patna and Bhojpur district where Sahyogi is implementing a project on GBV.

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Executive Summary:

Sahyogi conducted a baseline survey to gather insights from the target community on the sensitive issue of domestic violence—a subject rarely discussed openly in the public sphere. The objective was to understand perceptions, attitudes, and awareness levels among women, men, teachers, and community representatives, in order to inform strategies under the SAFE Project being implemented in ten panchayats across Bihta and Koilwar blocks of Bihar.

Domestic violence remains one of the most common yet least discussed forms of subjugation in society. The social stigma attached to its disclosure often silences victims and normalizes such behavior within households. Recognizing the need to bring this issue to the forefront, Sahyogi undertook this pioneering survey to generate evidence-based understanding and guide community engagement.

The survey was conducted randomly across all ten panchayats where the SAFE project operates. A professional team—comprising both male and female animators—was engaged to ensure gender-sensitive and inclusive data collection. The project’s local field staff accompanied the team to provide familiarity and facilitate trust with respondents. In total, 1,477 female and 631 male respondents participated in the survey, which was carried out over a period of more than 20 days.

The findings reveal striking insights into how domestic violence is perceived and rationalized within the community. Gender-based discrimination emerged as a pervasive reality, with many female respondents unaware of their rights and continuing to accept long-standing social norms of neglect and inequality. While initial hesitation was evident, with encouragement and reassurance many respondents—particularly women—gradually opened up about their experiences and opinions.

For the first time, the survey also engaged male community members and elected representatives, enabling a more comprehensive understanding of societal attitudes toward domestic violence. The insights derived from this exercise will help the Sahyogi team refine its approach to community mobilization, awareness generation, and advocacy efforts under the SAFE Project.

By uncovering deeply rooted perceptions and barriers, this survey marks a critical step toward building a more informed, aware, and responsive community—one that recognizes and acts against the evils of domestic violence and its detrimental impact on individuals and society at large.

Survey Methodology

The study adopted a purposive sampling approach to collect information from respondents representing diverse occupational categories across ten panchayats situated in two blocks of two districts of Bihar. The selected areas largely comprise rural and semi-urban populations. Both women and men above 16 years of age were included in the sample to ensure representation across age and gender groups.

In total, the survey covered 631 male and 1,477 female respondents. Data collection was carried out through a structured questionnaire, which was administered verbally by the Sahyogi survey team. Given that a significant portion of the respondents were illiterate or semi-literate, the verbal approach was considered most appropriate to ensure clarity and accuracy in responses.

The question-and-answer method facilitated meaningful interaction, allowing respondents to express their views comfortably and ensuring that the survey team could capture nuanced perceptions and experiences related to domestic violence. This participatory method also helped in building trust with the respondents, thereby enhancing the authenticity and depth of the collected data.

Key Highlights

- A first of its kind survey where male, female and also PRI members are the respondents in this demographical area
- Door to door sampling method was adopted
- Married and unmarried women both were identified as prospective respondents
- Male members were also targeted for the first time.
- Survey to find about the prevalence of Domestic violence was a huge challenge
- The form of violence which people are reluctant to confess,
- Survey completed within a span of one month.
- Men and women animators were used to elicit response from the respondents
- Domestic violence in some form or the other is widely prevalent
- High percentage of women reported about domestic violence perpetuated by their own family members
- Female in-laws are more inclined to commit such violence than the male members.
- Domestic violence is an accepted norm in most of the families covered under the survey
- Men also complained about the prevalence of violence within the society and accepted the cultural heritage as the leading factor.

Major Achievements

An overwhelming percentage of women agreed that domestic violence exist and they have been subjected to such in some form or the other. Verbal abuse is the most common form of violence which came out of this survey. Social stigma and honour are the common factors which prevent these women to talk freely about their plight.

Majority of the men admitted that domestic violence does exist in the society and they have indulged in it. Domestic chores are still a women's prerogative and men seldom ask the advice of the female folks in matters of finance, property and other important matters. Physical abuse was also admitted by a sizeable percentage of the male respondents.

Maximum numbers of men and women who are part of this survey agreed that social taboos are very strong and to talk about such things lower the dignity of their respective families. Most of the respondents have grown up seeing such violence in their own households and have accepted this to be normal routine.

Though domestic violence is widely prevalent in our society which was clear from the survey, it has serious ramifications and that is why it is always talked in hushed tones. The survey covered nearly 45 villages across both the districts of Patna and Bhojpur. The respondents covered in respect of male and female are as follows:

MALE RESPONDENTS

Village	47
Panchayat	10
Block	2
District	2
Patna villages	24
Bhojpur villages	23
Patna Panchayat	5
Bhojpur Panchayat	5
Patna Block	1
Bhojpur Block	1
Patna respondents	780
Bhojpur respondents	696

FEMALE RESPONDENTS

Village	45
Panchayat	10
Block	2
District	2
Patna villages	24
Bhojpur villages	21
Patna Panchayat	5
Bhojpur Panchayat	5
Patna Block	1
Bhojpur Block	1
Patna respondents	330
Bhojpur respondents	300

Facts and background of the respondents

Social configuration:

Tab.3. Social configuration of respondents

Category	General	OBC	SC	ST
No. of respondents (Male)	22	335	266	7
No. of respondents (Female)	52	796	618	10

It is evident from the data presented above that the majority of respondents belong to the backward and marginalized sections of society. The project implementation areas were deliberately selected keeping in view the social and economic background of the community, where issues such as domestic violence often remain hidden and unaddressed due to entrenched social hierarchies and limited access to awareness or support mechanisms. This strategic selection ensured that the survey captured the perspectives of those most vulnerable and directly affected by such social realities.

Religious beliefs:

Tab.2. Religious configuration of respondents

Religion	Hindu	Muslim	Sikh
No. of respondents (Male)	602	28	0
No. of respondents (Female)	1410	64	2

As reflected in the data above, most of the respondents belong to the majority community, with a small yet significant representation from the minority community as well. This diversity is important to note, as it highlights that the problem of domestic violence transcends religious and cultural boundaries. The findings reaffirm that such issues are deeply rooted societal concerns, affecting individuals across communities irrespective of their faith, beliefs, or social standing.

Marital status:

Table 5. Marital status of respondents

Respondents	Married	Unmarried	Widower	Divorced/Separated
Male	585	37	6	2
Female	1422	9	43	2

The survey findings indicate that most of the respondents were married, while only a small proportion were unmarried. A notable number of widows, primarily from the older age group, were also part of the sample. The perspectives shared by these widowed respondents during the interactions provided valuable insights into the long-term experiences and social realities faced by women in domestic settings. Their reflections have been particularly informative for the analytical interpretation of the survey findings, offering

a deeper understanding of how perceptions and experiences of domestic violence evolve over time.

Educational background:

Educational status of respondents								
Education	Illiterate	Std. I-V	Std. VI-VIII	Std. X	Intermediate	Graduate	PG & other professional courses	
No. of respondents (Male)	164	98	111	126	90	36	5	
No. of respondents (Female)	839	265	172	119	53	26	2	
No. of respondents (Teachers & Panchayat members)	1	11	3	8	13	4	6	

As evident from the data above, more than 50% of the female respondents are illiterate, and only two out of 1,422 women reported having completed post-graduation. The level of higher education among male respondents is also relatively low; however, a majority of them are semi-literate, indicating that educational opportunities are still largely viewed as a privilege for boys. The findings clearly demonstrate that gender disparity in education persists, with boys receiving greater preference and support for schooling compared to girls. This imbalance reflects deep-rooted social norms that continue to hinder women's educational advancement.

Occupational preference:

Prime occupation of respondents								
Occupation	Agriculture	Agro labourer	Daily wage labour	Animal husbandry	Private job	Govt. Job	Only household chores	Others
Male	115	180	197	7	93	15	0	23
Female	67	540	66	5	13	19	756	10

As evident from the data above, the majority of male respondents are engaged in agriculture and related activities, followed by a significant number working as daily wage labourers—nearly 180 individuals fall under this category. In contrast, most of the female respondents identified themselves as homemakers, while a considerable proportion reported working as agricultural labourers. This pattern indicates that in many households, married couples work together in farms or fields, reflecting the agrarian nature of the local economy and the shared economic responsibilities within rural families.

Genesis

An ideal society, as we envision it, should ensure the well-being and dignity of every individual, irrespective of race, religion, or gender. Equal opportunities and equitable access to services are the foundation of such a society. Violence against women is not confined to any specific community, region, or faith—it is a universal issue, and its consequences are equally devastating across all social and cultural contexts. True social progress can only be achieved when roles and responsibilities are shared fairly, and discrimination on the basis of gender is eliminated.

Gender discrimination and violence against women are not new phenomena; they trace their origins to ancient civilizations and have persisted through generations. The underlying cause lies in deep-rooted patriarchal structures that reinforce male dominance. Women, often perceived as physically weaker, have historically been assigned menial or subordinate roles. This systemic bias has normalized discrimination, making it one of the most enduring and accepted injustices within human societies.

When we talk about violence against women, it must be understood in its broadest sense—not limited to physical abuse, but encompassing mental, emotional, social, financial, and cultural forms of violence. Many women endure such suffering believing it to be a normal part of life. The consequences of such violence are severe and long-lasting: it erodes confidence, inflicts deep psychological trauma, and isolates victims from society.

Conducting a survey on domestic violence under the SAFE Project was, therefore, a challenging and sensitive task for Sahyogi. The issue often evokes strong and defensive reactions, as it is perceived as an intrusion into personal and family matters. The challenge was compounded by the rural and semi-urban nature of the population, where most respondents were semi-literate or illiterate. In many cases, questions related to domestic violence triggered unease and resistance, particularly among male respondents.

Despite these challenges, the survey marked a significant milestone. For the first time, women, men, and Panchayati Raj Institution (PRI) members were engaged in open dialogue about domestic violence—a subject long shrouded in silence and taboo. The exercise not only broke centuries-old cultural barriers but also laid the groundwork for community awareness, reflection, and change.

Thoughts about Household chores

Before initiating the survey, it was essential to ensure that respondents clearly understood the intent and context of the questions being asked. Since the majority of participants came from rural backgrounds and were semi-literate or illiterate, the survey team took special care to explain the meaning and concept of domestic violence in simple and relatable terms. This helped in creating an environment of trust and openness during the interaction.

The first set of questions focused on everyday household chores, which form an integral part of domestic life. By exploring who performs these tasks and how responsibilities are shared within families, this section aimed to assess the mindset of respondents and to understand the traditional behavioural patterns and gender roles that shape household dynamics. These insights provide a valuable foundation for analyzing how societal norms contribute to gender inequality and, in many cases, to the acceptance or justification of domestic violence.

Have you ever seen your father or any male person cooking on regular basis in your childhood?			
Respondents	Yes	No	Not applicable
Male	7.14%	91.59%	1.27%
Female	1.56%	97.22%	1.22%

It is amply clear from the responses that day-to-day cooking and related household tasks are not considered part of the male domain. The responsibility for daily cooking continues to rest almost entirely with women, reflecting deep-rooted gender roles within the household. The next question was....

Have you ever seen your father or any male person wash clothes of whole family?			
Respondents	Yes	No	Not applicable
Male	5.71%	93.33%	0.95%
Female	3.79%	95.05%	1.15%

It is evident from the above findings that a majority of respondents, regardless of gender, responded in the negative when asked about male participation in domestic work. This clearly indicates that household chores continue to be viewed as the exclusive responsibility of women, with minimal involvement from male members. The next set of questions in the survey further reinforces this observation, shedding light on the deeply ingrained beliefs and

social conditioning that shape such attitudes. These entrenched perceptions reflect how traditional gender norms remain firmly rooted in the collective psyche of the community.

Tab.24. Have you ever seen your father or any male person cleaning the house?

Respondents	Yes	No	Not applicable
Male	31.27%	67.62%	1.11%
Female	13.62%	85.23%	1.15%

When it comes to household cleaning, the survey findings indicate a slight shift in perception. A number of male respondents acknowledged that they either participate in cleaning activities or have seen their peers doing so. In contrast, female respondents were far more vocal, asserting that male members rarely take part in cleaning tasks. This particular question revealed a notable divergence in opinions between men and women, reflecting the gendered perceptions and differing realities of domestic responsibilities within households.

Tab.9. Feeding and bathing children is the responsibility of women only

Respondents	Yes	No	Can't say/not sure
Male	39.84%	58.57%	1.59%
Female	50.54%	47.76%	1.96%
Teachers & Panchayat members	8.70%	89.13%	2.17%

When the discussion turned to childcare responsibilities, the survey revealed a positive trend toward shared participation. More than 50% of male respondents disagreed with the notion that it is solely a woman's duty to look after the children, acknowledging that men also share this responsibility. The responses from female participants were equally encouraging, indicating a gradual shift in perceptions regarding the shared role of parents in child rearing.

Further, when the PRI members and teachers were analyzed as separate respondent groups, a majority of them expressed agreement that the welfare and upbringing of children are joint responsibilities of both parents. It was particularly heartening to observe that many men recognized childcare as a shared obligation, reflecting emerging changes in traditional gender roles and a growing awareness of balanced family responsibilities.

Importance of the male child

It is an open reality in our male-dominated society that there remains a strong preference for male children over female children. This bias has been deeply ingrained for generations, with boys often receiving preferential treatment in matters of care, education, inheritance, and social value. The darker side of this mindset is reflected in the abandonment or killing of girl children and the continued practice of female foeticide in certain parts of the country.

Despite numerous government campaigns and awareness initiatives aimed at addressing gender imbalance—such as Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao—the problem continues to persist. This indicates that laws and policies alone are not sufficient; there is a pressing need for sustained political commitment, coupled with community-level awareness and advocacy led by civil society organizations to help shift societal attitudes. The findings reveal interesting and often concerning insights into the reasons why boys are still regarded as symbols of social and economic security, while girls continue to be seen as a lesser choice within many families.

Whether your opinion on the matters of marriage, property, etc. were sought in your adolescent (12-18 yrs.)?			
Respondents	Yes	No	Not applicable
Male	26.67%	72.54%	0.79%
Female	7.05%	91.94%	1.02%

Whether your opinion on the matters of marriage, property, etc. were sought in your adulthood (18-25 yrs.)?			
Respondents	Yes	No	Not applicable
Male	90.79%	8.25%	0.95%
Female	77.85%	20.93%	1.22%

The significance attached to being born a boy is clearly reflected in the data presented above. In many households, the opinions of boys are valued and sought, even when they are still in their adolescent years. In contrast, the majority of women respondents reported that their views are seldom considered in important family or social matters. This disparity underscores the deep-rooted gender bias that continues to influence decision-making within families, where male voices are prioritized and female perspectives are often overlooked or ignored.

Do you discuss on a particular issue (sitting together) with all family members?		
Respondents	Yes	No

Male	93.17%	6.83%
Female	88.41%	11.59%

Did all members of your family use to take meal sitting together (including females)?			
Respondents	Yes	No	Not applicable
Male	33.97%	65.08%	0.95%
Female	26.69%	72.43%	0.88%

Although there is no major difference between the opinions of male and female respondents, the findings reveal that even in seemingly simple aspects of daily life—such as eating together as a family—women’s participation remains comparatively lower. This subtle yet telling pattern highlights the persistent social hierarchy and gender divide within households.

A certain dichotomy in responses was also observed, as mentioned earlier. Many respondents appeared hesitant to speak openly when asked direct or personal questions about family practices. This reluctance reflects the sensitive nature of such topics and the social discomfort associated with discussing issues that challenge established family norms and traditions.

Opinions matter

The next set of questions focused on societal hierarchy and the perceived superiority of the male gender. In many communities, men continue to dominate decision-making processes, particularly in matters related to ownership, inheritance, and marriage. Social conventions still restrict open discussions or independent choices regarding marriage, especially for women, as such interactions between prospective brides and grooms are often discouraged by conservative norms.

To better understand these attitudes, an extensive set of questions was designed to gauge the respondents’ views on important family decisions—including those related to marriage, property, and inheritance. The aim was to examine how decision-making power is distributed within families and the extent to which the opinions of boys are prioritized over those of girls. These questions provided valuable insights into the persistence of gender bias and the limited autonomy often experienced by women and girls in crucial aspects of their lives.

Do male members take opinions of female members of their family for matter regarding land, property?		
Respondents	Yes	No
Male	95.40%	4.29%
Female	93.36%	5.42%
Teachers & Panchayat members	91.30%	8.70%

Although many male respondents claimed that they consult female family members in important decisions, the female respondents expressed greater hesitation on this point. The disparity suggests that such consultations may be more symbolic than substantive. Furthermore, when the same question was posed to teachers and PRI members, the percentage of those affirming female participation dropped even further, indicating that women's voices are still not accorded equal weight in decision-making processes—whether within households or in broader community settings.

Do male members in your family take opinions of female members for matter regarding marriage, relations?		
Respondents	Yes	No
Male	95.40%	3.17%
Female	94.24%	4.00%
Teachers & Panchayat members	97.83%	2.17%

Here again, we observe that there is not much difference in the opinions of the respondents, and the graph clearly shows that teachers and elected representatives are somewhat more vocal in affirming that the opinions of female members are both sought and valued. This indicates a gradual shift in attitude among certain segments of the community. The gender gap in this context appears marginal, which can be viewed as a positive sign, reflecting a slow but steady movement toward gender inclusivity in family and community decision-making.

Do people take opinion of daughters for the matter of land/property?		
Respondents	Yes	No
Male	25.24%	31.11%
Female	23.10%	37.06%
Teachers & Panchayat members	52.17%	47.83%

It is amply evident that there is still a long way to go before achieving gender parity in decision-making related to land and property ownership. The opinions of daughters

continue to hold limited relevance in such matters. Only 23% of female respondents reported that daughters are consulted by their elders or parents — a statistic that highlights a deep-rooted gender bias still prevalent in society. This is clearly not an encouraging sign.

To build a truly equitable and inclusive society, it is imperative to ensure greater participation of daughters and women in family discussions and decisions related to property and inheritance.

When the same set of questions was posed regarding sons, the data revealed a significant increase in affirmative responses. This sharp contrast once again underscores the persistent preference for boys and the higher value placed on their opinions within the family structure.

Do people take opinion of sons for the matter of land/property?		
Respondents	Yes	No
Male	36.83%	23.97%
Female	41.33%	23.85%
Teachers & Panchayat members	93.48%	6.52%

A very interesting insight emerges from this table — 93.48% of teachers and PRI members responded that sons are consulted in matters related to land and property. This finding is particularly significant, as these groups represent the educated and respected sections of the community, and their opinions often influence broader social attitudes.

Although the male and female respondents from the general population were less forthcoming in acknowledging this reality — possibly due to peer pressure or socio-cultural constraints — the underlying truth remains evident: boys continue to enjoy a distinct advantage when it comes to property and inheritance decisions.

Do you take opinions of your sons in the matter of marriage/relations?				
Respondents	Yes	No	Not applicable	Didn't respond
Male	36.83%	23.97%	32.70%	6.51%
Female	42.48%	22.90%	33.54%	1.08%

Here again, the situation appears somewhat different, as a large number of respondents marked “not applicable”, primarily because many were unmarried or their children were too young to provide a meaningful response. Among those eligible, however, the data clearly highlights the advantage that a male child continues to hold over his female counterpart. The central purpose of this exercise was to understand such underlying patterns — and the results reaffirm that gender bias and discrimination remain deeply entrenched in our social fabric.

When the same question was directed towards respondents regarding their daughters, the responses were often evasive or non-committal. It was particularly evident that female respondents showed a higher percentage of negative answers compared to their male counterparts, indicating the internalization of gender bias and the social conditioning that normalizes such disparities.

Do you take opinions of your daughters in the matter of marriage/relations?				
Respondents	Yes	No	Not applicable	Didn't respond
Male	29.84%	29.05%	34.60%	6.51%
Female	24.32%	36.04%	38.08%	1.56%

What about choices?

When we talk about gender equality, one of the most fundamental aspects is the freedom to make personal choices, especially when it comes to selecting a life partner. In the Indian context, however, arranged marriages continue to dominate, with nearly 80% of marriages still being finalised by parents or elders, leaving the boy or girl with limited say in the matter. Although love marriages or arranged-cum-love marriages are slowly gaining acceptance, they are still at a very nascent stage, particularly in rural and semi-urban areas.

When our survey decided to explore this sensitive and often taboo subject within a rural setting, it was expected that the responses would be both revealing and thought-provoking — and indeed, they were. The key purpose was to understand the extent of freedom girls enjoy compared to boys when it comes to making personal choices, especially in life decisions that directly affect their future.

The results are given below:

Do parents/guardians ask their sons when they want to marry?		
Respondents	Yes	No
Male	16.35%	77.94%
Teachers & Panchayat members	86.96%	13.40%

Do parents/guardians ask their daughters when they want to marry?		
Respondents	Yes	No
Female	12.90%	87.53%
Teachers & Panchayat members	76.09%	23.91%

The results are quite revealing. An overwhelming percentage of female respondents stated that their opinions are not taken into consideration when it comes to decisions about marriage. Interestingly, even among the male respondents, the proportion of those who said yes to being consulted was surprisingly low. This clearly indicates that marriage decisions continue to be largely dominated by parents and elders, leaving very little room for individual choice among both boys and girls.

However, a distinct shift in perspective was observed among teachers and PRI representatives, who expressed a more liberal outlook. This suggests that exposure to education and urban influences plays a crucial role in shaping more open and inclusive attitudes. Those with greater awareness and social exposure are gradually recognizing the importance of allowing young people to have a say in such significant life decisions.

Do parents/guardians ask their sons about their likes and dislikes for bride?		
Respondents	Yes	No
Male	13.49%	78.73%
Teachers & Panchayat members	93.48%	6.52%

Do parents/guardians ask their daughters about their likes and dislikes for bridegroom?		
Respondents	Yes	No
Female	6.78%	91.67%
Teachers & Panchayat members	82.61%	17.39%

It is clearly evident from the data that there exists a significant level of discrimination in matters of personal choice. More than 90% of the female respondents stated that they are not consulted about their choices, while the percentage among male respondents, though slightly lower, still remains considerably high. This stark contrast highlights the deep-rooted gender bias that continues to prevail within the social fabric.

An interesting dimension emerges when we compare these responses with those of the teachers and PRI members. A substantial proportion of them believe that opinions of boys and girls are indeed considered — a finding that likely reflects their own personal experiences and greater social exposure. This distinction underscores the transformative impact of education and awareness, which tend to foster more equitable and progressive attitudes toward gender roles and decision-making within the community.

Did you give your assent for the girl/boy chose by your parents/guardians?			
Respondents	Yes	No	Didn't respond
Male	20.63%	71.59%	7.78%
Female	70.73%	27.71%	1.56%

It is evident from the above table that many boys initially protested or voiced their reservations regarding their parents' choices, whereas most of the female respondents denied doing so. The contrast between the two genders is quite striking and highlights a deep-seated disparity in autonomy and expression. This clearly indicates that women are often discouraged or outright denied the freedom to express disagreement, and any attempt to do so is generally frowned upon by both family and society. The next set of findings brings forth an even more startling revelation about the extent of gender-based restrictions that persist within households.

Before marriage, did you get the opportunity to meet or talk to your wife/husband alone?			
Respondents	Yes	No	Didn't respond
Male	6.51%	85.71%	7.78%
Female	3.86%	94.58%	1.56%

The data clearly shows that a vast majority of respondents were not permitted to meet their prospective partners before marriage, a trend that holds true across both genders. Only a very small percentage reported having met their spouses prior to the wedding. This long-standing practice continues to be deeply entrenched in Indian society, transcending religious, social, and economic boundaries. Given its historical and cultural roots, these findings did not come as a surprise to the field animators, who observed similar sentiments during their interactions in the community.

How much did you know your wife/husband before marriage?				
Respondents	To some extent	Didn't know	Knew very well	Didn't respond
Male	6.98%	83.81%	1.59%	7.78%
Female	4.88%	92.82%	0.75%	1.56%

We can safely conclude that, when it comes to marriages, the decision-making power still largely rests with the parents. It continues to be viewed as their privilege and responsibility to choose suitable spouses for their children. Only a small percentage of boys and girls reported having any say in this crucial life decision. This clearly underscores the limited agency that young people—particularly women—have in matters of marriage, reflecting the deep-rooted cultural norms that continue to govern family structures in rural and semi-urban settings.

Marriages are made in heaven?

It is often said that God decides our soulmates. Marriage is the union of two hearts beating as one, each willing to sacrifice for the other's happiness and well-being. Marriage is something so beautiful that, in the natural world, it would be like an open rose — always with radiant petals unfurling toward the warm sun. Marriage is the blessing we give to one another, an eternal bond of soulmates.

As one poet says, "Marriage is a place where the savage winds cease, where no clouds can block the warmth of the evening rays. It is a place where the sun may set with no fear of the darkness to come; where one soul can whisper to another in a language only its mate can truly hear — a place where togetherness means peace."

When we write at length on the beauty of the union between two human beings, we imagine everything to be rosy and glowing, free from any darkness. However, the reality is not as glorious as we presume it to be. Let us now explore the truth through the following set of questions.

Should women get permission for most of the matters from their husbands			
Respondents	Yes	No	Can't say/not sure
Male	70.63%	28.57%	0.79%
Female	77.51%	22.08%	0.41%
Teachers & Panchayat members	19.57%	80.43%	0.00%

The majority of respondents believe that the husband holds the authority and that the wife must seek permission for most matters. In stark contrast, the teachers and PRI members strongly disagreed with this notion. This contrast clearly suggests that education and awareness play a pivotal role in helping individuals move away from such regressive and discriminatory beliefs, which continue to dominate much of the rural population in our country and perpetuate gender inequality within households.

Beating wife by husband is correct/fair if she goes out without informing him			
Respondents	Yes	No	Can't say/not sure
Male	17.62%	79.05%	3.33%
Female	19.92%	78.79%	1.29%
Teachers & Panchayat members	2.17%	95.65%	2.17%

The majority of respondents feel that the husband has the right and that the wife needs to seek permission for most matters. In complete contrast, the teachers and PRI members disagree with such a belief. This indicates that education and awareness help individuals move away from this negative perception, which still influences most of the rural population and remains discriminatory against women.

Is it right for a husband to beat his wife if she does not cook properly?			
Respondents	Yes	No	Can't say/not sure
Male	6.19%	91.43%	2.38%
Female	12.06%	86.52%	1.42%
Teachers & Panchayat members	0.00%	97.83%	2.17%

The reaction to the above query elicited largely consistent responses from all groups. Not a single teacher or PRI member agreed, with an overwhelming 97.83% responding negatively. No one answered affirmatively, while a minimal 2.17% either declined to respond or expressed feigned ignorance.

Has husband ever slapped his wife?			
Respondents	Yes	No	Didn't respond
Male	34.76%	59.52%	5.71%
Female	46.68%	52.85%	0.47%

Nearly half of the female respondents reported having been slapped by their husbands. It is important to note that many of these women belong to the younger generation, who tend to adopt a more liberal approach compared to the traditional ways followed by their parents. Despite this, the high prevalence remains a serious concern.

Is it right for a husband to beat his wife if she does not agree with him ?			
Respondents	Yes	No	Can't say/not sure
Male	6.83%	90.79%	2.38%
Female	12.94%	85.30%	1.76%
Teachers & Panchayat members	0.00%	97.83%	2.17%

A close examination of the table and graph above reveals a surprising finding: although women respondents are fewer in number, a higher proportion of them believe that it is acceptable for a husband to beat his wife during a disagreement. While the male respondents and PRI members stated that such behavior is wrong, the data suggests that this may be more a matter of idealistic belief than actual conviction. From childhood, women are socialized to regard their husbands as superior and to obey and fulfill their demands.

Different parameters of violence

The below given table deciphers the response to the various questions related to violence by the husband against his wife other than the above-mentioned questions...

Questions	Male		Female		Teachers and PRI members	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Is it right for the husband to beat his wife if she makes a mistake?	27.30%	67.14%	33.81%	62.47%	2.17%	97.83%
Is it right for the husband to beat his wife if she does not take care of the children as he wants?	9.3%	85.56%	14.77%	81.10%	2.17%	97.83%
Is it right for the husband to beat his wife if he has suspicion that she is not loyal?	54.29%	39.36%	56.30%	36.79%	2.17%	97.83%
Is it right for the husband to beat his wife if she refuses to have physical relations?	2.86%	93.17%	2.85%	90.85%	2.17%	95.65%

The table indicates that male and female respondents hold nearly similar views regarding loyalty. Most respondents agree that a husband has the right to beat his wife if she is disloyal. A considerable number of male respondents also believe that a wife's mistake justifies some form of physical punishment.

These findings highlight the critical role of education and awareness in transforming mindsets. Nearly all teachers and PRI members strongly condemn any form of violence, demonstrating that knowledge and awareness can lead to more progressive thinking even among individuals from similar social backgrounds.

The survey also proved valuable for the project's ground staff. The responses concerning violence underscored for them the importance of continuing awareness programs within the target area.

Other forms of violence

Do there such time/occasion come when beating women become appropriate?			
Respondents	Yes	No	Can't say/not sure
Male	36.51%	60.63%	2.86%
Female	36.79%	61.59%	1.63%
Teachers & Panchayat members	6.52%	61.59%	2.17%

This is a sensitive area where even the PRI members and teachers appear somewhat inclined to justify physical punishment. The table and graph suggest that they wish to retain the option of using physical force in situations not explicitly covered by the parameters discussed. Although the increase in acceptance is not substantial, it is nevertheless noticeable. Among male and female respondents, there is no significant difference in their views on this issue.

Has husband ever condemned his wife before others or have tried to hurt her or somebody close to her?			
Respondents	Yes	No	Didn't respond
Male	10.16%	84.13%	5.71%
Female	10.37%	89.16%	0.47%

The response in this case is noticeably more subdued compared to the previous charts. The difference between the two groups of respondents is minimal, with only a slight variation observed between male and female participants.

Has man ever committed any kind of violence with other women/girl in family?		
Respondents	Yes	No
Male	3.02%	96.98%
Female	5.01%	94.99%

The responses to this question were largely in line with expectations, showing only a slight difference between male and female participants. As the set of questions approached its conclusion, there appeared to be some reluctance among women respondents to express their views openly in front of unfamiliar individuals. Although the percentage of affirmative responses from women was marginally higher, this outcome was consistent with the anticipated trend.

Is it right for a husband to ask his wife whom she can talk, who she can't talk, or whom she can meet, whom she can't meet?		
Respondents	Yes	No
Male	36.51%	63.49%
Female	42.14%	57.86%
Teachers & Panchayat members	17.39%	82.61%

Interestingly, a higher proportion of women respondents answered “yes” to this question. The chart indicates that more women than men believe a wife should seek her husband’s permission regarding whom she may talk to or meet. This finding reflects the persistence of a male-dominated social structure. The survey further reveals that many women, particularly older respondents, remain deeply influenced by traditional beliefs and view male authority—especially that of the husband—as legitimate and appropriate.

Is it proper for a husband to not allow his wife to go out alone?		
Respondents	Yes	No
Male	32.70%	67.30%
Female	63.69%	36.31%
Teachers & Panchayat members	67.39%	32.61%

Here again, a higher percentage of women agreed with the question. Interestingly, male respondents expressed a more liberal view, while women, as well as teachers and PRI members, appeared reluctant to support women going out alone.

This response is not merely rooted in bias, tradition, or culture but reflects genuine concerns about safety. Given the rising incidence of crimes against women in both urban and rural areas, the reluctance stems from the unsafe environment in which we live today.

Financial matters

Many people perceive physical or verbal abuse as the sole forms of violence, overlooking other equally harmful types. The following set of questions addresses the financial dynamics within the family structure, focusing on who holds control over financial matters. Specifically, it examines whether women in general, and wives in particular, have any rights regarding financial decisions. A lack of such rights constitutes another form of violence experienced by women.

Should husband decide alone/chiefly that how to spend money in the family			
Respondents	Yes	No	Can't say/not sure
Male	38.89%	59.84%	1.27%
Female	43.97%	54.74%	1.29%
Teachers & Panchayat members	8.70%	91.30%	0.00%

A significant proportion of women respondents believe that it is appropriate for the husband to make decisions related to financial matters. Although the majority disagreed with this view, the considerable number of affirmative responses once again reflects a traditional mindset among women. In contrast, teachers and PRI members showed an overwhelming rejection of this notion, underscoring the positive impact of education and awareness on attitudes toward gender roles and decision-making.

Do any female member of your family pursue job/wage/farming outdoors?				
Respondents	Yes	No	Not applicable	Can't say/don't know
Male	65.40%	32.86%	0.00%	1.75%
Female	70.73%	28.46%	0.34%	0.47%

Do female members of panchayat pursue job/wage/farming outdoors?		
Respondents	Yes	No
Teachers & Panchayat members	97.83%	2.17%

The comparative chart above clearly indicates that working outdoors is no longer a major concern in the present context. A majority of female respondents are employed and must go outside their homes to earn a living. Women from the teaching and PRI communities are also participating in the workforce in substantial numbers. Although most of the female respondents work outside their homes, the survey reveals that many are engaged in the agricultural sector as laborers or farmhands.

It is evident that most families have female members who work in the fields, serve as teachers, or are employed as daily wage laborers. The participation of women in the workforce is no longer considered taboo as it once was, which is an encouraging sign in terms of progress toward gender equality.

Have husband refused to pay his wife for domestic expenses while he has money for other things?						
Respondents	Never	Once or twice	Sometimes	Many times	Don't know/can't say	Didn't respond
Male	83.49%	8.57%	1.75%	0.16%	0.32%	5.71%
Female	88.89%	6.30%	1.49%	1.08%	1.76%	0.47%

Have husband ever taken his wife's earnings/savings against her will?						
Respondents	Never	Once or twice	sometimes	Many times	Don't know/can't say	Didn't respond
Male	84.13%	8.25%	0.79%	0.32%	0.79%	5.71%
Female	83.47%	12.06%	1.69%	0.95%	1.36%	0.47%

The data indicates that, in financial matters, the community largely agrees that husbands contribute to domestic expenses. However, the percentage of both male and female respondents who fully support this statement remains relatively low. Regarding the issue of taking or controlling the wife's earnings and savings, the findings show a higher proportion of respondents selecting "never," with only minimal variation between genders. These results suggest that most families value financial responsibility and that women enjoy a reasonable degree of autonomy in spending their earnings according to their needs and preferences.

This leads to the next, and particularly important, issue—the perception that discrimination or violence against women often persists due to the silent acceptance of such behavior by victims. Only a small number of women possess either the courage or the supportive environment necessary to protest against these injustices. In rural settings, this challenge is even more pronounced, making it difficult for victims to express dissent or seek redress.

Should women/girls tolerate violence committed against them?			
Respondents	Yes	No	Can't say/don't know
Male	7.30%	92.38%	0.32%
Female	8.47%	90.79%	0.75%
Teachers & Panchayat members	15.22%	84.78%	0.00%

The responses to this question were unexpected and surprising. More than 15% of teachers and PRI members agreed that women and girls should tolerate violence against them, while male respondents were the largest group to state that such violence should not be tolerated. Based on the overall responses, it appears that some among the educated and informed groups believe that women should compromise for the sake of maintaining family harmony.

This finding reflects a deep-seated societal bias wherein women are expected to uphold family honor and peace, even at the cost of personal suffering. Despite being vocal opponents of violence against women in general, many respondents appear to justify tolerance of such behavior under the guise of preserving family reputation. This contradiction underscores the continued influence of long-standing traditions surrounding honor and respect within families.

Responsible society / community

Societies represent the most inclusive and complex forms of social organization in the modern world. They encompass all aspects of human social life, and the way a society functions significantly shapes the social structures and cultural values within it. Societies are functionally autonomous in several respects. First, most social relationships occur within the boundaries of a society. Second, societies strive for self-sufficiency by developing systems to secure the resources they need and to meet the requirements of their members. Third, a society serves as the ultimate decision-making body for its members, exercising authority over matters that concern them.

Cultural autonomy reflects the shared and distinctive culture and identity that unite the members of a society. Language, in particular, plays a vital role as one of the most powerful forces binding society together—especially in the context of our country.

With this understanding, it becomes essential to examine the role society plays in perpetuating or challenging gender discrimination.

If there is squabble in your neighbourhood, then do people readily come up to mollify it?

Respondents	Yes	No
Male	93.49%	6.51%
Female	93.49%	6.51%
Teachers & Panchayat members	82.61%	17.39%

For the first time, the responses from both male and female participants align closely. We can confidently say that the community does come together in times of crisis. Although the affirmative responses from teachers and PRI members are comparatively lower, this nonetheless reflects a positive indication of societal unity.

If there is a squabble in your village, then do the panchayat members do something to mollify it?

Respondents	Yes	No
Male	87.78%	12.22%
Female	85.09%	14.91%
Teachers & Panchayat members	100.00%	0.00%

Here, the elected panchayat members and teachers are unanimous in their response, with 100% affirming participation. However, individual male and female respondents from the community express some reservations, as reflected in the graph above. While the overall numbers are high, it is clear that increased active involvement by panchayat members is needed to build greater confidence within the community.

Has someone ever discussed about domestic violence with you alone or in group?		
Respondents	Yes	No
Male	53.17%	46.83%
Female	53.32%	46.68%
Teachers & Panchayat members	100.00%	0.00%

As anticipated, all PRI members and teachers (100%) responded affirmatively, whereas only about 50% of the other respondents—across both genders—shared the same view. The issue of domestic violence continues to be less openly discussed compared to other social topics. The persistent fear of social stigma prevents many individuals from speaking about it freely, reflecting an ongoing reluctance within the community to address this critical issue in an open and transparent manner.

Knowledge of Law

As the session concluded, the final two questions focused on the respondents' knowledge of legal provisions related to domestic violence. During awareness campaigns, it is crucial that the community understands the laws in place and the remedies available to victims. Assessing their awareness of the relevant legislation and the principles of justice it upholds was therefore a key objective of the survey.

Have you heard about domestic violence act which is designed to safeguard women against domestic violence?		
Respondents	Yes	No
Male	66.03%	33.97%
Female	53.12%	46.88%
Teachers & Panchayat members	91.30%	8.70%

The graph above reveals that even a portion of teachers and PRI members were unaware of the existence of such an act. Among the general respondents, only 66% of men and approximately 53% of women reported being aware of it. These findings highlight the need for greater efforts to inform and educate the community about these legal provisions, emphasizing that they exist for their protection and welfare. A concentrated effort by the government and civil society organizations is essential to enhance awareness and ensure that individuals, particularly women, understand and can access these safeguards when necessary.

Can a person be jailed for committing violence against women/girls?		
Respondents	Yes	No
Male	92.86%	7.14%
Female	89.09%	10.10%
Teachers & Panchayat members	97.83%	2.17%

This final question effectively concludes the set of survey questionnaires administered to the respondents. The table above indicates that participants are aware that committing acts of violence against women can result in imprisonment. A high percentage of women respondents also expressed a positive understanding of this legal consequence, reflecting an encouraging level of awareness regarding the seriousness of such offenses.

Conclusion and way forward:

Conducting this survey posed significant challenges, as it required confronting deeply entrenched social taboos. The findings reveal an alarming normalization of domestic violence that threatens the well-being of individual households. Illiteracy and poverty emerged as critical factors exacerbating this vulnerability. Additionally, fear of violence and its social consequences remain major barriers to effectively addressing this grave issue.

The patriarchal household structure prevalent in India profoundly affects women's lives, particularly within marriage. This system perpetuates active discrimination through various forms of abuse—both marital and extramarital—and limits women's agency by restricting their economic opportunities and independence. The survey highlights a clear link between strong patriarchal family dynamics and diminished capabilities and agency for women. These factors correlate strongly with the root causes of domestic violence, including widespread gender disparities.

There is a pervasive reluctance among women experiencing domestic violence to report or seek legal recourse. Domestic violence continues to be regarded more as a private or family matter than a legitimate criminal offense. Intersectional factors such as caste, class, religion, and race further influence whether justice is pursued. For instance, women from poor or

lower caste backgrounds often face significant barriers to legal access and support from law enforcement agencies. Encouragingly, the survey indicates that awareness of these issues is gradually increasing.

Beyond cultural factors, domestic violence in India is also influenced by socio-economic status, education levels, and family structures outside of the traditional patriarchal framework. The true extent of violence against women is often obscured, as many forms of abuse are not recognized as crimes and thus remain unreported due to prevailing cultural values and beliefs. This survey has endeavored to capture these complexities to provide a comprehensive understanding of the issue.

Domestic violence is a profound societal curse rooted in the continued treatment of women as second-class citizens. As a nation, we bear responsibility for the ongoing plight of women in our society. While concepts such as women's empowerment and gender equality are widely acknowledged, their realization demands strong commitment and decisive action. It is imperative to recognize and openly address the serious issues that persist within our homes to develop effective solutions.

The following points require urgent attention:

- Basic education for all members of the population
- Open dialogue acknowledging domestic violence as a reality
- Financial independence and earning ability for women
- The right for women to consent to or refuse marriage
- Complete abolition of the dowry system in all its forms
- Awareness of legal rights and mechanisms for addressing domestic violence
- Timely intervention by the legal and social systems to protect women's rights
- Simplification of laws and procedures related to domestic violence cases
- A fast and dignified justice delivery system that upholds the rights and dignity

of women

A key strategy for preventing domestic violence lies in promoting respectful, nonviolent relationships through change at the individual, community, and societal levels. Dismantling hierarchical constructions of masculinity and femininity that are predicated on controlling women—and eliminating the structural inequalities that support such power imbalances—will significantly contribute to reducing domestic violence in all its forms.