Chapter VIII

RESPONDENTS AND THEIR NARRATIVES

8.1 Introduction:

This chapter deals with the study of the various aspects of respondents interviewed intensively for the study. There were two groups of respondents: (a) victims of domestic violence and (b) victims of sexual violence outside the home environment. This chapter is divided into three sections. Section I and Section II deal with the study of the socio-cultural, economic, educational, age and family profile of the respondents. Section III gives an account of the case studies of the respondents of both domestic violence and others forms of violence which she suffers outside her home.

Section I

8.2.1 Socio-Economic Background of Respondents of Domestic Violence:

Sixty respondents were intensively interviewed to collect information regarding extent, different forms of violence, frequency and reasons of violence etc against women inside the house. Information regarding their socio-cultural and economic background has also been collected to get a better understanding of the characterisation of the respondents.
8.2.2 Places of Origin:
Many people from the other parts of the state and region migrate to Guwahati for various reasons, such as education, employment and occupation, better way of life and opportunity, etc. Of the 60 (sixty) respondents, 35 percent have migrated from rural areas, 20 percent, from another town. The rest of the 45 percent are permanent residents of Guwahati.

8.2.3 Marital Status:
Only 5 percent of the respondents are unmarried. They are harassed by their own relatives. Of the balance 95 percent, 76.66 percent continue with the marriage and the balance 18.33 percent are either separated or divorced. Of the 76.66 percent married respondents, 18.33 percent are still staying with their husband, 33.33 percent of them are staying with their own parents. There is a small section (3.33 percent) that stays with their in-laws, but not with husbands; 41.66 percent stay on their own, an independent existence and some in State Homes or in other rehabilitation centres.

Table 8.1: Place of Residence of the Victims

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Residence of Victims</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Husband</td>
<td>18.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Own Parents</td>
<td>33.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In-laws</td>
<td>3.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relatives</td>
<td>3.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>41.67</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Based on Field Work by Author, 2003-04
Fifteen percent of the respondents are married for less than a year and the same proportion are married between 1-3 years. One-third of the respondents are married for 4-10 years and another 31.66 percent, more than 10 years.

Table 8.2: Respondent Classes by Length of Marriage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No. of Years</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unmarried</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt; 1 year</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 - 3 years</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 - 10 years</td>
<td>33.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt; 10 years</td>
<td>31.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Based on Field Work by Author, 2003-04

8.2.4 Religion:

Majority of the respondents are Hindus (75%). Twenty percent of the respondents are Muslims, 3.33 percent, Christians and only 1.66 percent, Sikhs. The region-wise distribution of the sample of respondents is more or less in conformity with the overall distribution of population.

8.2.5 Languages:

Even though, Guwahati is inhabited by people of different communities, majority of the people of the city are Assamese speaking (51.66%), 30 percent, Bengali speaking, 1.66 percent, Manipuri speaking, 5 percent Hindustani speaking and the rest (11.66%), other Indian language or dialects.
8.2.6 Caste / Community:

A majority of the respondents belong to the general caste (66.66%). Twenty percent of the respondents are Schedule Castes, 8.33 percent, Schedule Tribes and only 5 percent are from Other Backward Castes. Of the Schedule Tribes, 5 percent of them are Bodo community, 1.66 percent Manipuri community and the rest 1.66 percent are from Garo community.

8.2.7 Educational Status of the Respondents:

Of the 60 respondents, 19.99 percent of them are illiterate, 31.66 percent, under Metric and the same (31.66%) proportion has passed their Metric exam. There are 11.66 percent Graduates and rest 5 percent are high professionals.
8.2.8 Employment Status:
There are 45 percent unemployed respondents of whom 35 percent are housewives and the 10 percent are staying in State Home in Guwahati or in some rehabilitation centres. The rest of the 55 percent of the respondents are employed.

Of the 55 percent employed respondents, 8.33 percent are in Government services, 20 percent, in private organisations, 25 percent, are self employed and 1.66 percent are engaged in other services.

8.2.9 Occupations:
The respondents in this study are engaged in a variety of occupations, from very low paid to very high paid job. Of the employed respondents, 18.33 percent are wage workers, 5 percent- small businesses women, 3.33 percent- vendors, 1.66 percent- sales persons, 13.33 percent- office goer, 13.33 percent- high professional, 1.66 percent are high profile business women and the rest 6.66 percent of the employed respondents are engaged in some other occupations ( NGOs, private companies, teachers etc).

Table 8.5: Occupations of the Respondents: Domestic Violence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unemployed/HW</td>
<td>45.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wage worker</td>
<td>18.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small business</td>
<td>5.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vendor</td>
<td>3.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sales persons</td>
<td>1.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Office goers</td>
<td>13.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Professionals</td>
<td>5.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business women</td>
<td>1.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>6.67</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Based on Field Work by Author, 2003-04
8.2.10 Monthly Income of Respondents:

There is wide variation within the monthly income of the respondents (from <Rs. 500 to Rs.30000 a month). For the convenience of the study, the monthly incomes of the respondents are grouped into categories which will highlight the variation clearly.

More than half of the respondents (53.33%) belong to very low income group- less than Rs.500 in a month, 13.33 percent of the respondents earns between Rs.500-1000, 23.33 percent are of moderate income (Rs.1000 to 5000), 4.99 percent are of high income group (Rs.5000 to 10,000 per month) and the 5 percent are from very high income group (more than Rs.10000 a month). Table 8.6 indicates that the proportion of respondents decreases with the increase of the income. Women belonging to low income group are more willing to share their experiences than the women from higher income group.

Table 8.6: Monthly Income of the Respondents: Domestic Violence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Amount in Rupees</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-500</td>
<td>53.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>500-1000</td>
<td>13.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1000-2000</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000-5000</td>
<td>13.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5000-10000</td>
<td>4.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;10000</td>
<td>5.01</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Based on Field Work by Author, 2003-04

8.2.11 Ownership of Property by the Respondents:

There are 61.66 percent respondents staying in their own houses, 25 percent, rented houses and the rest 13.33 percent are staying in quarters.
There are 36.66 percent respondents staying in independent houses, 11.66 percent, in three room apartments, 15 percent, in two room apartments and 6.66 in one room apartment. Large proportions (28.33%) are staying in shanty houses.

**Table 8.7: Nature of housing**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nature of housing</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Shanty</td>
<td>28.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 room apt.</td>
<td>6.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 room apt.</td>
<td>15.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 room apt.</td>
<td>11.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent house</td>
<td>36.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>1.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Based on Field Work by Author, 2003-04

8.2.11 Durable Goods in the House:

The use of thirteen different durable goods by the respondents are taken into consideration to ascertain their economic status; television set, refrigerator, radio, VCD/DVD player, sound system, washing machine, computer, telephone, cooking gas, car, scooter, motor cycle and bicycle. It was found out that 16.66 percent of the respondents did not even have a single durable good in the house, 23.33 percent of them have one to three durable items, 41.66 percent, four to eight durable goods and 18.33 percent respondents owns more than eight durable goods.

**Table 8.8: Durable Goods in the House: Domestic Violence**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No of items</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0 items</td>
<td>16.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 - 3 items</td>
<td>23.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 - 8 items</td>
<td>41.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 8 items</td>
<td>18.33</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Based on Field Work by Author, 2003-04
8.2.12 Family Profile of the Respondents:

Family profile of the respondents can throw certain reflections on the causes and types of domestic violence on the women.

8.2.13 Age of the respondents:

The age of the respondents are classed into certain intervals. There are lesser women in the lower and the upper limits, 11.67 percent (20 years and below) and 13.33 percent (40 years and above). Majority of them are between 21-30 years (50%) followed by the women between 30 to 40 years (26.67%).

Table 8.9: Age of the Respondents: Domestic Violence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age in Years</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>20 and below</td>
<td>11.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21-30</td>
<td>50.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-40</td>
<td>26.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40 and above</td>
<td>13.33</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Based on Field Work by Author, 2003-04

8.2.14 Nature of the Family:

Fifty percent of the respondents are staying in nuclear family, 41 percent, in joint family and 8.33 percent in extended family.

8.2.15 Members of the Family:

More than half of the respondents (51.66%) have a small family (1-4 members), a common feature in an urban setup, 36.66 percent, a moderate sized family (5-8 family members) and 11.66 percent have large family with more than eight members. There are 43.33
percent of the respondents who have families with two or less adults with them, 45 percent, with three to six adults and the rest 11.66 percent have more than 6 adults. Twenty percent of the respondents are childless. Respondents with one or two children constituted 65 percent and 10 percent of them have more than two children.

8.2.16 Literacy Status:

Twenty percent of families have one or two illiterates in the family and 11.66 percent with more than two illiterates. Fifty-five percent of the respondents have 1-3 members in the family who are below metric (above 15 years of age) and 5 percent have more than three persons below metric. In cases of 53.33 percent respondents, 1-3 members in their family have tertiary education, and in 6.66 percent cases, more than three members.

8.2.17 Employment Status:

To understand the employment status of the families the total number of employed, self-employed and unemployed members in the family is taken into account. In cases of 48.33 percent respondents one or two members in the family are employed and in 16.66 percent cases, more than three. Fifty percent of the respondents have 1-3 self employed members in the family. The families of the respondent as reported by the respondents have fewer unemployed, but many (90%) did not wish to react to the question.
8.3.1 Background of the Respondents (Crimes Outside Home):

Twenty respondents were surveyed to collect information regarding crimes committed against women outside home from different walks of life and of different age groups. Of those surveyed, 85 percent of them were unmarried and only 15 percent married. Eighty five percent of the respondents are staying in nuclear families, 5 percent in joint family and 10 percent of them do not have a family as such, because they are orphans/single women living in orphanages, run by some NGOs, or in working women’s hostels. Out of the 20 respondents, 60 percent of them do not belong to Guwahati. They have come to Guwahati for their studies or for jobs. Forty percent of the respondents are permanent residents of Guwahati.

8.3.2 Age Distribution:

In this study, 15 percent of the respondents are below the age of 17 years, 45 percent, between 17 to 20 years, 30 percent between 20 to 30 years and the rest 10 percent of the respondents are above 30 years.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&lt;17 years</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17-20 years</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-30 years</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;30 years</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 8.10: Age of the Respondents: Crimes Outside Home

Source: Based on Field Work by Author, 2003-04
8.3.3 Economic Status:

To illustrate the economic background of these respondents a number of parameters are taken into consideration. They are the monthly income of the family of the respondents, occupation of the respondents and their educational status. A wide range of respondents from varied income groups were included in the study. Respondents from very low income group earning less than Rupees 1000 a month comprise 10 percent, respondents from low income group (Rupees 1001 to 5000) is 15 percent, 5 percent belong to moderate income families (Rupees 5001 to Rupees10000), 20 percent of them belong to high income families (Rupees 10,001 to Rupees 15,000) and 50 percent of the families earn more than Rupees 15,000 a month (relatively affluent families).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Monthly Income in Rs.</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&lt; 1000</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1001-5000</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5001-10000</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10001-15000</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;15000</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Based on Field Work by Author, 2003-04

8.3.4 Occupation of the Respondents:

There are 70 percent respondents who are students, 25 percent, employed and 5 percent are self employed. A number of housewives were approached for interview, but they are reluctant to provide information of sexually harassment.
8.3.5 Educational Status of the Respondents:

Thirty five percent of the respondents have not cleared their metric examination, 40 percent are metric pass, 5 percent, Graduate and 20 percent are Post Graduates.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Educational Status</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&lt; Metric</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metric</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduates</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P.G.</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Based on Field Work by Author, 2003-04

Section III

8.4.1 Narratives of (Cases) the Respondents:

This section deals with the case studies of the respondents who have been victims of domestic violence and violence outside home. These case studies are essential as they give a detailed account of the nature, intensity, causes and consequences of the violence against women and helps in developing “understanding” the issues involved. It also highlights the family backgrounds of both the victims and the perpetrators, which may influence the actual acts of violence against women. These case studies also reveal the hidden factors and circumstances, which cannot be totally brought into light by statistical analysis alone. For purposes of keeping the identity of the victims confidential, the specific victims have been provided with pseudo-names, like Ms. 1, Ms. 2, and so on. Of the 60 cases, for which
detailed data were collected, a selected 16 have been analysed in this chapter, representing different issues, economic classes etc.

8.4.2 Case Studies of Domestic Violence (Husband/In-law):
Three groups are differentiated on the basis of the economic background of the respondents. The economic conditions of the family in which the women are staying are taken into consideration for this categorisation. They are divided as the high income group, middle income group and the low income group.

8.4.3 Cases of High Income Respondents:
The cases are from Chandmari area.

Case 1
Mrs. 1 is a daughter-in-law of a rich family. She is 24 years of age and is married for less than a year. She is an Assamese Hindu. She got married just after completing her graduation. She stays in a huge palatial house with all the modern amenities and several servants to look to her needs. Though a joint family, it is small with only three members who are all highly qualified.

Mother-in-law of Mrs. 1 has a dominating personality and wants everything to be done as per her wishes. Mrs. 1 needs to follow strict instructions of her mother-in-law and for everything she needs to take her permission. Whenever she puts up her own views or wishes and goes against her mother-in-law, she is scolded and even threatened of assault. Even for petty matters, she is scolded in front of the servants, which makes her feel
miserable. These unpleasant scenes are frequent. She is scared of the intemperate nature of her mother-in-law and stays all the time in mental tension. She wants to do some work outside, to keep herself engaged and stay away from frequent showdowns, but that too is strictly prohibited. She is at times threatened of divorce and getting her husband remarried if she is not cooperative. The husband is a silent spectator and never says a word against his mother. He hardly spends any time with her and stays most the time with his mother.

This behaviour of the mother-in-law is due to a sense of insecurity in her old age. She had three sons; the two elder sons are living separately with their families. She fears that the youngest son now staying with her may also leave her for which she is very possessive about him. This is having an adverse affect on Mrs. 1. Husband of Mrs. 1 is also scared of his mother, both for emotional as well as reasons of the huge property that his mother is likely to bequeath him.

Mrs. 1 lacks self confidence, both being too young as well as being newly married. After each instance of humiliation, her confidence sinks further. She feels let down and alone, except a few encouraging words from her sister-in-laws. Moreover, she belongs to a middle class family with three unmarried younger sisters and aged parents. She is afraid of taking any bold step by going against her mother-in-law because it may disrupt her marriage that may have an adverse impact subsequently on the marriage of her younger sisters. Her parents are also against her acting with haste but advice her to be patient and adjust to the situation.
Case 2

Mrs. 2 is married into a rich family at a very young age of 16 years. Both Mrs. 2 and her husband were stage artists and hoped of pursuing their careers together. After her marriage she had to stay at home leaving her professional career and interests and the husband continued his work. Currently, Mrs. 2 is 23 years of age and the mother of two children, and has completed seven years of married life. She was staying with her in-laws in a huge independent house in Chandmari. Her husband is still a stage actor who stays away from home for more than nine months a year.

She is often psychologically brutalised by her in-laws with who she has to spend most of the time during long absences of her husband. There are frequent quarrels. The in-laws often used abusive languages and threatened her of assault. She was even sexually harassed by her father-in-law a couple of times, when she was newly married. Whenever her husband used to come home for short vacations, he used to be provoked by all her in-laws with accusations and allegations, for which Mrs. 2 was physically assaulted number of times by her husband, with a degree of drunkenness. There have been many instances when her husband and in-laws threaten her of sending her out of the house.

According to Mrs.2, her in-laws dislike her because she comes from a poor family. Her lower economic status is looked down upon and is a matter of embarrassment to the family in the eyes of the larger society. Her parents are ill-treated whenever they visit her, for which they have ceased visiting her any more. She is even accused of not bringing any dowry. She suspects that her husband may have illicit relations with other actresses
working with him, for which he is loosing interest in her and can stay away from her and their children for such a long periods of time.

Two issues can be discerned in this case. First, being from a poor family she could not fulfil the dowry demands. Second, she must be shown her place, being from a poor family and no independent income of her own, she ought to serve others.

Being fed up with her undignified existence, she left her husband place and started living with her own parents, with her children. It was observed that except her mother, rest of her family members want her to go back to her husband as the family is already overburdened with three unmarried daughters and a son. Her father is the only earning member in the family with a number of competing demands on his resources.

She now desperately wants to be economically independent and live on her own. But she has neither educational qualification (having married at school-going age) nor has any capital for her to do something on her own. She knows she cannot stay with her parents for long. She weighs the alternative of returning to her abusive in-laws and husband for financial security.

It is an interesting fact that none of them had registered any case of atrocity of either the husband or the in-laws at any police station. Mrs 1 and Mrs. 2 sought advice from certain NGOs and did not go beyond that.

These two cases are in families with better economic circumstances. In these cases, the main issue is the lack of economic independence of the women or a profession to fall upon, out of an unhappy marriage. Since living with parents does not provide a choice to
the women both for economic and social reasons, the women live a life of indignity and despondence, with abusive husbands and in-laws.

8.4.4 Cases of Middle Income Respondents:

There two cases are from Noonmati area.

Case 3

Mrs. 3 is 40 years old. She migrated to Guwahati from a small village after her marriage. She is married for more than 10 years but now she is staying on her own with her two daughters. She is an Assamese Hindu belonging to the Scheduled Caste community. She has not completed her metric level education and is employed in a private company. She got married into a middle class family. Her husband is a Government employee.

She was born to a middleclass family, brought up by a step-mother. After her (arranged) marriage, she came to know that her husband is an alcoholic and spends all his earnings on drinks. Moreover, she had disappointments over economic circumstances of her husband. Few months after their marriage, marital discord arose due to money demands of the husband followed by physical assaults. Consistent demands of money (from parental family) and physical abuse led to her loosing a child in pregnancy. The husband once even attempted to murder her by burning alive! Since her existence became impossible with constant physical violence and torture, she parted ways, with a legal separation. This was a courageous step for a lower middleclass woman with two young daughters with no sources of earning. Subsequently, she managed to get a job and gain economic independence to look after her self and the children.
Feeble support from her parental family influenced her to live with the situation till she could. Initially she was not confident enough to come out from the situation because she lacked proper educational qualification to seek employment for an independent life. But when she realised that her daughters are also affected psychologically by growing up in the violent atmosphere, she got legally separated from her husband.

Case 4

Mrs. 4 is 21 years of age. She is from Guwahati and is now staying with her mother. She is the eldest of the three children of her widow mother. She is a Bengali Hindu. Immediately after completing her graduation her marriage was arranged with a business man.

Her husband is from a mediocre family. They were staying in a joint family where both the brothers stay and run the business together. But her husband has an upper hand in all the business matters. He stays away from her all the time, sometimes even at night. Later on she discovered about her husband having illicit relation with his sister-in-law. When she enquired about his relation with her, she was beaten up and threatened her to stay away from it and not interfere. From that day onwards, she is frequently physically abused by her husband and treated as maid servant. She was not allowed to communicate with her family members. Her sister-in-law together with her husband attempted to slowly poison her by administering with toxic medicines.

She told about all her sufferings and her unwillingness to stay with her husband any longer to her aunty, who was on a visit. Her aunty hesitated to take the decision all by herself but later on agreed and convinced Mrs. 4's husband to take Mrs 4 home for few days. While leaving for her parental home, she was not allowed to bring any of her
belongings and her jewellerys taken off by her sister-in-law. Since then, she is with her parental home. Mother of Mrs. 5 has sued a case against her husband for spoiling her daughter's life. Mrs. 5 wants to pursue her academic qualification and be economically independent.

From the narration of Mr. 4, it is clear that the elder brother is aware of his brother’s evil deed. But he is a silent spectator fearing of being asked to leave his house and live on his own. Then why was the need of the marriage? May be, a show to the society and put a curtain to their illicit relation. The victim knew that she had no hope in this marriage as her husband was not at all interested in her and above that he tried to kill her by providing her toxic medicines.

She was willing to leave the situation as she knew her widow mother will be supportive and can stay with her, go for higher education or some professional course and be economically independent.

8.4.5 Cases of Low Income Respondents:

These two cases are studies from Paltanbazar area.

Case 5

Mrs. 5 is 38 years of age. She is married for more than ten years but staying on her own. She was born in Guwahati but belongs to Bihar. She speaks Hindustani (Bhojpuri). She is a vendor living in a shanty rented house with only two durable goods in it. She is staying is a nuclear family with her three daughters and a son. All her children are under metric and two of her daughters are self employed.
Since the last few years she along with her children is battered daily by her husband in drunkenness at night. His physical atrocities have damaged her ear. He tried to strangle her couple of times, curse her, use abusive languages, emotionally blackmailed her and would not provide her with food. This was the daily affair. His intention was to drive her out from the house and remarry the women with whom he has an illicit relation. Even after these tortures when she refused to leave the house, he left her and is now staying with the other lady.

Now even though she is on her own and leads a peaceful life, she wants her husband to come back and stay with them because of the social security provided by the marriage and also for the sake of the children. She is worried that she will not be able to get her daughters married without her husband. Her parental relatives are supporting her emotionally and a NGO is fighting for her legally.

A married Indian woman very often feels socially secluded and unsecured without her husband. It is more so for a women who have daughter and belong to the poorer section of the society. Again, there are many customs and traditions in the Indian society which are patriarchy. Generally the lower sections of the Indian society are not flexible to these traditions due to their conservative mind set and lack of adequate education. Her illiteracy together with her cultural backgrounds groomed her conservative outlooks and made her weaker, mentally.

Case 6

Mrs. 6 is 35 years old married for more than 10 years and is now living on her own. She is a Hindu and speaks Telugu. She belongs to Schedule Caste community. She is an illiterate
and is as a vendor. She earns very less for a living. She is living in a shanty rented house with not a single durable good in the house.

They were staying in a nuclear family with two sons. In the first few years of their married life everything was normal. Later on, he got indulged into alcoholism and daily returns drunk, beat Mrs 6 and her sons. The frequency and the intensity of the violence gradually increased. It is more during financial problems (demanded her earnings). Later on she came to know that he has married another woman and has a two year old child. When Mrs 9 inquired about the relation, he got violent and tried to stab her with a sharp object. She somehow managed to escape by overpowering him as he was drunk. Since then they are separated. She has strong support from her family and has filed a case for legal separation. She wants him to provide maintenance to her and their sons. Her two sons are her greatest support and security now.

Mrs.6 is confident and bold to live on her own because her two sons and they are her physical and social support. On the contrary, Mrs. 5 lacks confidence to stay on her own because of her three unmarried daughters. Another cause which is like a boost to Mrs 6 is the strong and consistent support from her parental relatives.

8.4.6 Cases of Respondents Bengali Speaking Muslims:

Two cases are taken from Sijubari area under Dispur police station.

Case 7

Mrs. 7 is 35 years of age and is a Bengali Muslim. She migrated from a village along with her six daughters to stay with her husband in Guwahati, now for ten years. She is illiterate
and a daily wage worker. Their nuclear family of eight members stay in a shanty (rented) with only two durable goods. All of them are illiterate. Her two elder daughters always accompany her to work.

The husband is not interested to work and thinks the seven females to look after him but still needs a male off-spring, the lack of which is the source of torment of the wife. The violence on the wife used to be more whenever there are serious financial difficulties at home or when she opposes his fancies. She is always blamed for not being able to run the house efficiently. He punishes her by rubbing chilli into her eyes. On one occasion her limbs were broken with a hard object.

Ironically, she compromises with her husband and blames herself and her ill fate for all her owes. For all this constraints she is ready to bear all the torture and stay with her husband and her sense of guilt is at the same time giving opportunity to her husband to exploit her situation.

**Case 8**

Mrs. 8 is 25 years old Bengali Muslim. She migrated to Guwahati with her first husband. She is now staying with her second husband. She comes from a very poor family. Her marriage was arranged with an elderly person when she was only sixteen years old. She is under metric. Both she and her husband stay in a two room rented apartment. They had four durable good in their house.

He initially was a very caring husband and often promised her of a flight trip to distant lands. Subsequently he turned out to be very harsh and a rude person. He used to mentally abuse her for no reasons. One day he brought with him a girl who stayed with
them for three days and during the stay her husband was having physical relation with the unknown lady. Gradually it became a regular practise. Some times he used to bring two girls and some time more and they are all different girls all the time. She suspected that her husband was involved in immoral trafficking in women. He warned Mrs.8 to treat them friendly so that their neighbour does not suspect anything unusual. He also wants her to join the trade. On one occasion he sent two men into their house when she was all alone. They demanded to have physical relation with her. They could not proceed further when she refused and threaten to raise her voice. When she narrated the incident to her husband she was surprised when he started to batter her mercilessly for refusing. After few days of this incidence, she observed a total change in his behaviour again. He was very caring and promised to take her to Kolkata. She became suspicious of his nature and ran away when there was nobody at home. He too never came looking for her. Later on she remarried and since then she is with her second husband.

In this case the violence was more of mental and psychological. She was compromising as long as she was feeling safe with her husband. The husband was able to have his own way because she was young and at the same time was from a rural area and lacked a network of support system within the city. When she smelled the threat in her life (targeting her next) she ran away from the situation. It was easier for her to come out of it and remarry again as she was single and had no children.

8.4.7 Cases of Mixed Community Respondents:
The two cases of mixed community are taken from Fatasil Ambari area.
Case 9

Mrs. 9 is 20 years old, a resident of Guwahati. She is married for less than three years and is now staying with her mother. She is a Hindu Assamese belonging to the Bodo community. She is under graduate and is working for a private company. She earns satisfactorily. She is the youngest of the three daughters of her widow mother.

She got married when she was only 17 years old. Theirs was a love marriage. Both of them belong to middle class families and were living in a nuclear family. Since her husband was unemployed Mrs 9 mother set up a business for him. Hardly after one month of their marriage marital discord stated to exist. He lacked interested in work and demanded her to seek monetary help from her mother during any financial crunches. Mrs. 9 often agreed to his wishes. Her mother-in-law also accuses her for inadequate dowry during her visits. Since she has no brother and their economic condition was poorer than her other sisters (married), he subsequently demanded her to convince her mother to transfer her parental property in his name. He wanted the property as dowry. She was physically and mentally abused for more than two year over this issue. She never uttered a word about her torture to any of her family member. On one instance when her husband was abusing her, Mrs. 9’s mother happened to visit them and was horrified seeing her daughter battered. Fearing that he might kill her in other instances her mother brought her home. Mrs 9 has sued a case against her husband and her mother-in-law for atrocity for dowry and has sought for legal separation. She wants to stay with her mother and is economically independent.
Mrs. 9’s is a case of atrocity for dowry. They are residing with the communities where dowry is a common practise. Her husband and his family are maybe influenced by the society in which they dwell. Her husband tried to exploit her situation since her mother is a widow and there was no strong resistance from any of the other members of the family. Moreover, Mrs 9 was of tender age and use to be terrified by his violent nature and never dared to resist aggressively to her husband’s motives. Her mother played an important role to bring her out of the abusive life. This very much has to do because she is a Scheduled Caste where the status of a man and a woman are more so less same and a married daughter is not considered as a burden.

Case 10

Mrs. 10 is 30 years old, a resident of Guwahati. She stayed with her husband less than three years after her marriage and is now staying with her own parents. She is a Bengali Hindu. She is a graduate and was staying in a joint family (7 members). Her in-laws are stay in an independent house. They are of middle class family and all of them are literate and employed except Mrs.10 and her mother-in-law.

From the very day of her marriage conflict between both the families started. On her marriage day they were not satisfied with the food provided and the hospitality extended to the groom’s side. It was an indirect indication of their dissatisfaction with her dowry. Her mother-in-law took away all her jewellery from her on the very next day of her marriage. Later on she was battered for petty matters by her mother-in-law and her sister-in-laws. Occasionally her husband was also provoked to physically abuse her. She was cursed for not bringing sufficient dowry, called evil, used abusive languages, emotionally
blackmailed and was threaten of assault if she did not bring her demanded dowry immediately. All these assault used to occur frequently but more when her husband was away. The dowry demands gradually increased. Her parents were aware of it but could not meet to all their demands as her father was a retired person and has two more daughters to marry off. They were also ill treated during their visits.

On one instance her husband left her in her parental house and never came to take her back. When her father went to enquire about it when there was silence for a long time, her in-laws clearly told him that they did not want Mrs.10 back and was preparing for their son's second marriage.

This is a case of atrocity for dowry. When her in-laws knew she will not be able to fulfil their demand they dumped her in her parental house. Mrs.10 is considered more so a property of the family after her marriage and every member of the family owe a sense of ownership over her. It is for this sense of belonging, the in-laws abuses her more than the husband unlike the other cases. At the same time they never hesitated to go to the extreme because Mrs.10 never resisted aggressively and her parents were also helpless.

Mrs. 10 still wants to go back to her husband but stay separately as she feels as a burden in her parental house. She fears social ostracism. She lacks confidence as she is not economically independent and was never outgoing from her childhood and has grown up with a conservative mindset which makes her feel as a subordinate as a woman all the time.
8.4.8 Cases of Respondents belonging to Assamese Community:

Case 11

Mrs 16 is 40 years old, from Guwahati. She was married for more than 10 years but is separated and is on her own now. She is Assamese Hindu belonging to general caste. She is a Govt. employee earning satisfactorily.

They were staying in a nuclear family. They have a son. Both of them were working in the same department and were staying in the quarter. During the first few years of their marriage everything was sailing smoothing. Later on her husband got indulged into alcoholism. She was frequently battered in his drunken state. Later on she too used to hit back but was often overpowered by him. Once he kicked her so hard that couple of her ribs were fractured. The harassment stopped for a period when he was posted in some other place. Few months after his transfer, she was informed of her husband having illicit relation with a local girl. When she visited her husband she came to know that they have married secretly in a temple and the other lady was expecting his child. Soon after this incidence she filed a case against her husband and sought for legal separation.

Now they are legally separated and her husband, provide maintenance for their son and the property right to their son.

From the narration it is clear that Mrs 16 has a strong personality which may have hurt the ego of her husband and made him feel inferior. He could not accept her being more powerful for which he looked for a partner who was less powerful and submissive. On the contrary Mrs 11 did not compromised with her husband’s action because she was economically strong and stable. Another important fact is that since she was working in the
police station she was aware of the laws. Awareness of her rights and the procedure to procure them made her stronger.

Case 12

Mrs. 12 is 38 years old. She lives with her husband and is married for more than 12 years. They have a daughter who is 10 years old and is a bright student.

Both Mrs.12 and her husband come from a well to do families. After her marriage she was staying in a joint family (twelve members). Her husband was the youngest of the three brothers and was running their family business together. Soon after her child was born their business share was divided between the three brothers by her mother-in-law. Mrs. 12 was also given a certain share (in cash) as their daughter-in-law. Since then her problems started to erupt one after another. Her husband was always in loose in his business. After the downfall of his business he started asking for his wife’s money. In the first few instances she gave him willingly but when she discovered that he was wasting the money in gambling and alcohol, she refused to part with her share. Since then, there used to be quarrels between them which subsequently intensified until they were asked to leave the house by her in-laws. She came to know about the darker side of her husband’s nature much late. Her in-laws always used to put a curtain to all his habits fearing that the marriage will fall apart when they were newly married. But after their daughter was born they stopped hiding it further. She feels that maybe it was this nature (gambling and alcoholism) of her husband the reason behind the division of business. Soon her in-laws also stated being indifferent toward her and there was a total change in their behaviour.
Case 13

Ms 13 who is 30 years of age belongs to a very poor section of the society. She is unmarried and is now staying in a destitute home. She is a Christian belonging to the Scheduled Tribe community (Garo). She is an illiterate.

Ms. 13 migrated to Guwahati with her father in her childhood. After her father expired she was staying with her mother and sister. When she was eight years old her mother remarried. From then onwards atrocity by her step father became a part of her life. He physically abused her at all instance and would not let her stay with her mother. She was not allowed to stay inside the house or to be fed. She used to sleep outside the house. Even in her sleep she used to be kicked and physically harass her. He becomes violent when he is drunk. Her mother smuggled food for her. When she was around sixteen years old, after a number of attempts, her father finally sold her off to a Muslim man who was about forty years of age. She was kept in hostage for three days in a dark room where she was repeatedly raped by a number of persons. On the forth day she managed to escape but was caught by them. The commotion of her escape alerted the neighbour and after their report she was rescued by the police. Both the Muslim guy and her step father were arrested. When she was taken back home by the police, the neighbour would not allow her to stay there anymore. The police keep her in a destitute home and since then she is there. Later on she gave birth to a girl child who is kept in an orphanage.

While staying in the destitute home her mother wanted to take her home. But she refused to go as she did not trust her. Now she wants to come out of the destitute home and live on her own and be economically independent.
Mrs. 13 is left with fewer avenues. After taking account of her past life, nobody wanted to adopt her (last 14 years) as she is a rape victim. But she is confident to stay on her own as she feels that her life cannot be worse than her past life and also because she excelled in all the vocational training provided by the state home.

8.4.10 Cases of Crimes Outside Home:

Three cases are taken for study which will reflect specific issues regarding sexual harassment outside home.

Case 14

Ms 14 is studying in a Government Higher Secondary School. She belongs to Guwahati and come from a well to do nuclear family. She is 16 years of age.

She innocently admitted that she is subjected to different forms of sexual harassment both within the educational institute and elsewhere. She is subjected to sexual harassed everyday in the crowded public transport on her way to school or on her way back home - busy school hours. She is pushed intentionally or suggestive physical contacts are made (public transport). And this tends to occur more when she is alone. While walking in the crowded public places she became victim of sexual harassment a number of times, at times even abused. The perpetrators are the middle aged male (above 30 years). She never reported any of these incidences to her parents but shared them with her friends. She always kept quite when harassed, sometime out of embarrassment or sometime not knowing how to retaliate, resist or react.
She is also a victim of sexual harassment in her institution. The perpetrators are two specific male teachers. They touch out of context that makes she feels uncomfortable. They behave in the same manner with many of her friends. Sometimes they even pass some lewd remarks. She never acted against these persons out of fear. At the same time she is not aware of any law from which protections can be sought.

She feels that there should be special buses meant for women and children during the busy school/office hours and complain box, for intimation with confidentiality about harassment, within the institution’s premises. She strongly feels that the other passengers should retaliate when they notice any unpleasant scene in the public transport than act as an indifferent co-passenger.

Case 15

Ms 15 is 23 years old. She is unmarried and is a nurse in a private nursing home. She stays in a working women hostel. She has come to Guwahati to pursue this job as the economic condition of her family is not satisfactory. She is a victim of sexual harassment both within the workplace and in public places.

She is harassed frequently on the way to her workplace as she her job demands working in the odd hours. She is victimised in the public transport (pushing and suggestive physical contacts) and while walking (lewd remarks, stalked) to/from her workplace at night. This occurs frequently. The perpetrators are generally the middle aged men. She does not react when eve teased or stalked (out of fright) but resist aggressively when abused in the public transports. She has shared about her experiences to her guardians. They suggested her to retaliate or ignore depending on the situation.
In her workplace lewd remarks are passed and sometimes advances are made by the attendants of the patients. Ms 15 has made number of verbal complains to the concern authority but no action is taken against any of them maybe because it may harm the reputation of the nursing home. She had this feeling from the reaction of the management. Even though it happens occasionally she feels that these incidences are professional hazards for a working woman.

Case 16

Ms. 16 is a student who comes from a well to do nuclear family of Guwahati. She is 22 years of age and doing her Post Graduation.

She is a victim of sexual harassment in public places. These tend to occur on the way to her institution, market or wherever only when she is alone. It happens occasionally (once a month). In the public transport and crowed public places (which is a common place of harassment for all the cases) pushing and suggestive physical contacts are the forms of harassment, sometime even when the bus is not crowded. While walking, lewd remarks are passed. Here again the perpetrators are the middle aged persons. She always resisted aggressively to these incidences. These types of harassment have occurred in different places and by different persons in all the three cases. She usually reports these incidences to her parents and shared it with her friends. On one instance she has reported to the police about an incidence of eve teasing but is not sure of what happened thereafter but thing remained the same. She too agrees that these types of incidences are professional hazards to women.
She feels that self defence is the best way to retaliate for which martial arts training should be made compulsory for a female child in the school level itself. At the same time there should be easy access to police complain and prompt action from the legal authorities.

8.5 Findings:

1. It is observed that the causes of violence against women are varied. But in more than 60 percent of the cases alcoholism was associated with the crime and the perpetrator tends to become more violent when he is drunk.

2. The harassments are due to various causes; financial problems, illicit relationship, alcoholism, frustration, the typical domination of a daughter-in-law by her mother-in-law etc. but in number of cases dowry and bigamy are the causes of violence.

3. A victim coming out of the situation depends basically on her educational qualification and her being economically independent. In a number of cases it was noticed that the victim wanted or went for higher qualification to pursue a job after their separation. Education was not only their confidence but also their awareness building agent. Illiteracy on the other hand drags them to conservative outlook.

4. Of all the supports, parental support is the vital and the strongest support for the victim. If this support is feeble or weak a victim is usually hesitant and compromises with her situation. And in many cases strong parental support has assisted the victim to overcome her problem.
5. In almost all of the cases it is the husband who abuses the victim physically, and the in-laws harasses mentally and psychologically, except Mrs. 14 who was physically abused more by her in-laws.

6. The victims approach towards the crime and her decision to deal with the situation are very much influenced by the cultural norms and values with which she grew up. If she is brought up with conservative outlook she is reluctant to come out from her abusive life. On the contrary, she feels bold enough to take a decision against the flow if she grew up in a broad minded family.

7. The girls of lower age groups are victimised more outside their home and in varied places because of their innocence and at the same time their fear and embarrassed to retaliate.

8. Sexual harassment at public places is more for Case 15. Since she has to move out at night she is stalked but usually women of her age are not stalked during the day time but a girl of lower age is also followed during the day time.

9. Ms 15 could not put forth her complain strongly to the authority because she has a fear of loosing her job and at the same time she feels as an outsider to the city.

10. The public transport is the common place where all the women are subjected to sexual harassment in the form of pushing and suggestive physical contacts.

11. All the perpetrators are middle aged (above 30 years).

12. The harassment occurs at different places by different persons.

13. In most of the cases the victims share their experiences with their friends than with their parents.