



# MIND MATTERS

Rotary  
RID 3030 India  
Action Group on  
Mental Health  
Initiatives

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE DISTRICT ACTION GROUP ON MENTAL HEALTH INITIATIVES MARCH 2022 ISSUE 12

## EDITORIAL



### "GLORIFICATION TO VILIFICATION"

**The Biology** of women is a given. **So is Patriarchy**, as the socio-cultural reality. What happens to the **Psychology of women** in this interplay of biological and sexist social forces is what we are concerned about?

**In spite of constitutional equal rights, the ground reality leaves a lot to be desired.** In India we need campaigns led by the Prime Minister to stop female foeticide, as the government realised that in specific northern states the sex ratio of the girl child was sharply declining and in some villages not a single girl child was 'allowed to be born' in a few years! Such is the level of misogyny. Many people deny the fact that 'this does not happen in their region and homes' but clearly the **shades of sexism, subtle and gross are all pervasive. Patriarchy is a global phenomenon and not restricted to India alone.**

Contradictorily, the second woman in the world to become the Prime Minister was in India. Mrs. Indira Gandhi rose to power in 1966 and ruled for 15 years. Actually, India worships a woman as a Goddess. It believes every Soul is divine. On certain festivals we invite little girls to our home, touch and clean their feet, feed them and give gifts! The belief being the girl represents a Goddess and brings blessings! **What a contradiction in practices- from foeticide to worship!**

**The mental health of women as such swings like a pendulum, from elevation to humiliation creating cognitive confusion about her self-image, self-beliefs, role stereotypes, status, power, and autonomy. She tries hard to 'fit into the imperfect box' and compromises herself.**

*Jita*  
-Rita Aggarwal.

## ROTARY CLUB AMRAVATI PRESIDENT RTN. CHARUDATTA DESHMUKH



President Rtn Charudatta Deshmukh is a dedicated Rotarian and also a professional singer and musician. After a successful career, he retired as Associate Professor, Amravati College of Agriculture, in 2019. His wife is a teacher too and works as a lecturer in Golden Kids Junior college. Their son Yashodhan is pursuing post-graduation in architecture.

Rtn Deshmukh truly believes that everyone needs to safeguard their mental health. He thinks that Mind Matters is very relevant for all age groups from children to the aged. His club has been involved in varied activities on mental health. They had organised a session by counsellor Mohana Kulkarni for Std 10 students of Kasturba English school. She spoke about stress management, mainly anxiety during exams. The club is also associated with an old age home Madhuban Vrudhasram. Recently club members organised a get together and played games, sang devotional songs, and spent quality time with the residents.

He leads a simple and active life. He practises waking up at 5 am followed by a walk. He is also a yoga and meditation practitioner. The childhood habit of daily meditation has helped him during challenging times.

He has studied classical Indian music and also learnt to play the Tabla and Sitar. He is a member of many music groups notably, Symphony orchestra with whom he has performed 20 stage shows. His passion is singing ghazals and bhavgeet. It is indeed our gain to have this talented and committed Rotarian as an advocate of mental health.

-Dr. Shantala Bhole,  
Rotary Club of Nagpur Vision, Director, DAGMHI.

## CLUB PROJECTS

**DAGMHI RID 3030 had organised a review writing competition - The good, the bad & the ugly of Bollywood romance & it's impact on social / mental health.**

Films have a great impact on our minds and hence on our life too. We aimed to gauge what people think about the 'take home' messages conveyed through films. We received a good response, making it tough to decide the 'winner' article which was published in Mind Matters February issue.

**DAGMHI RID 3030 and Rotary Club of Nasik Grapecity hosted a webinar on Yoga and Mindfulness.**

60 Students along with their parents and teachers were benefited. This will help the students to improve their concentration and enjoy life in a stress free manner.

The session was conducted by Yoga Guru Neeta Jajoo. Yoga Sadhak Miss Archita Rane demonstrated the Sun Salutations (Surya Namaskar).

Dr Aabha Pimprikar and Dr Pratiksha Mayee President and Secretary of DAGMHI organised the program. PP Alka Singh proposed a vote of thanks. The recording is uploaded on DAGMHI's you tube channel - 'Rotary Cares for Mental Health'.

## CO-EDITORS



**Dr. Aabha Pimprikar,**  
Dentist & Entrepreneur,  
President DAGMHI,  
RC Nasik Grapecity.



**Dr. Geetanjali Jha,**  
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READERS MAY SEND QUERIES TO THE EDITOR ON [mindmatterseditor@gmail.com](mailto:mindmatterseditor@gmail.com)



## WOMEN'S MENTAL HEALTH SPECIAL

### "OUT OF PATRIARCHY"



"Women's life experiences differ from those of men in many ways, including childbearing and rearing, women's double shifts (at home and at work), and their lack of power in personal, working, economic, social,

professional, and political relationships. Not surprisingly, these experiences have an impact on women's self-esteem, sense of mastery and mood." (Koblinski et al., 1993). Due to these and other such compounding circumstances, there is a higher rate of anxiety and depression in women than men.

Studies have shown that teenage girls have a higher rate of body-image related concerns than boys such as low self-esteem, self-harming tendencies, and suicidal ideations. A study mentioned, **90% of eating disorders are that of females due to body image issues. Research shows that married women are more inclined to depression than married men and single women.** Women are most likely not given the same opportunities at work as their male counterparts. Women are more likely to experience sexual harassment, domestic abuse, be less educated, be given less food than men.

**Such societal prejudices against women create an environment where they do not have autonomy over their life.** The lack of autonomy over one's life and being groomed to fulfil **gender stereotypical roles** makes women more prone to depression and anxiety. **The patriarchal mindset that rules majority of the world deems women as second-class citizens preventing them from having the same luxuries a man can have.** This leads to subjugation of women from a very young age, they are groomed to behave a certain way to please men. This is only if she is lucky to survive after birth. Research from the United Nations reports that the female population is 60-100 million less than what would be expected from natural birth.

The theoretical research and attitude toward women's mental health has been in line with patriarchal views. **Sigmund Freud** believed women suffered from penis envy and show signs of mental health issues simply because they lack a particular organ. In psychological history, majority of women's mental health has been pinned down on their biology and internal mental states. **The feminist movement** has given importance to research to determine the impact of cultural and environmental factors on women's mental health thus shifting the focus away from women's biology to the larger external psycho-social context.

**World Federation of Mental Health 1996 Theme for Women and Mental Health states,** "Psychological distress for women often has social origins. Discrimination against women in employment, education, food distribution, healthcare, and resources for economic development renders them vulnerable to physical and sexual violence, psychiatric disorders, and psychological distress."

-Radhika Malhotra,  
Psychosynthesis Therapist in Training, (UK).

### FEW CAMPAIGNS FOR GIRL CHILD

#### "BETI BACHAHO BETI PADAHO" ("SAVE THE GIRL CHILD EDUCATE HER")

This was launched by the Prime Minister Narendra Modi, on 22nd January, 2015 in Panipat, Haryana to address the issue of decline in sex ratio and female foeticide. It was initially launched in 100 districts in 2014-15 (Phase-1), was expanded to 61 additional districts in 2015-16 (Phase-2). It was expanded to 640 districts of the Country (as per Census 2011) on 8th March 2018.

#### "SAFE CITY CAMPAIGN"

The growing incidence of violence and sexual harassment in public places against girls and women led to this campaign. After the 2012 Delhi gang rape and murder that shook the country, ElsaMarie D'Silva co-founded Safe City with Surya Velamuri, Aditya Kapoor and Saloni Malhotra, to track and map incidents of public sexual harassment, abuse, and violence in India.

#### "THE PINK LADOO PROJECT"

An inspiring campaign headed by London based lawyer and activist Raj Khaira. Having started in October 2015, its followers have grown on social media to a more than 30,000! A box of pink laddoo (an Indian sweet) is distributed to celebrate the birth of a girl child. The Project aims to encourage South Asian families to open conversations on gender-equality.

#### "SELFIE WITH DAUGHTER"

The social media campaign started by Sunil Jaglan, a sarpanch at Haryana in 2015 was later picked and promoted by Prime Minister Narendra Modi through a radio program against female foeticide.

-Khushi Agrawal,  
B.A Psychology, Nagpur.



### F\_ACTUAL

- Male-female ratio in India: 51.96 : 48.04
- Depressive disorders and neuro-psychiatric disorders:  
Women: 41.9% men: 29.3%
- Lifetime prevalence rate of violence against women ranges from 16%-50%.
- 1 out of 5 women suffer from rape or attempted rape.
- 2 out of 3 Indian married women are victims of domestic violence (UN Report)
- Sexual coercion was reported by 30% of 146 women in an Indian study.
- Postpartum blues/anxiety/depression is seen between 50%-80% of new mothers.
- 1 out of 6 pregnant women and 1 out of 5 new mothers experience common perinatal mental disorders.

(Source: Women and mental health in India: An overview. By Savita Malhotra, Ruchita Shah. Published in Indian Journal of Psychiatry, December 20, 2017)



## WOMEN'S MENTAL HEALTH SPECIAL

### "HORMONES AND MOODS"

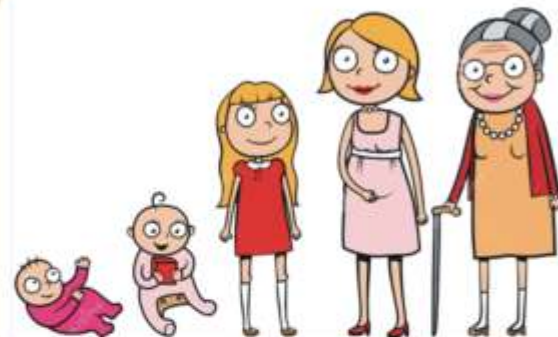
A lot of misconceptions surround mental illnesses. More often than not having a mental illness is attributed to a weak mind or poor tolerance. **But the truth is that mental health issues arise due to a complex interplay of biological, psychological and social causes and can affect anyone.**

Biologically speaking, genetics aside, hormones have a major effect on our day to day functioning and behavior. The brain has the master control of hormones through a small pouch like gland called the pituitary gland. This gland controls the time and duration of secretion of different hormones in the body in both men and women. **The cyclical rise and fall of estrogen and progesterone starts in female from menarche and ends at menopause.** Although their primary function is to enhance and maintain fertility, these also affect the cholesterol levels, bone health, mood, sleep, heart, water retention and skin.

Thus, they have a huge contribution in making women more prone to certain mental health issues like anxiety and depression. Estrogen keeps gradually increasing during each cycle till ovulation and falls after that. While progesterone rises after ovulation and if the women doesn't become pregnant in that cycle, the levels fall. **Almost 90 % women experience some form of mood changes, low sex drive and bloating and tenderness a week or two prior to their periods. This is called Premenstrual Syndrome (PMS).** But in some women whose receptors are more sensitive to these hormonal changes experience more severe symptoms including sleep disturbances and irritability affecting their day-to-day functioning may be seen. **This is known as Premenstrual Dysphoric Disorder (PMDD).**

Pregnancy is a life changing event and the levels of estrogen and progesterone are very high during pregnancy. But as soon as you deliver, these hormone levels drop sharply and this increase chances of anxiety, depression and even psychosis in as many as 40% females in first 6 months following childbirth. Some women experience very mild forms of self-doubt, feelings of being overwhelmed, crying easily and difficulty coping with the responsibilities of motherhood. **This is known as baby blues.** More severe symptoms with sleep disturbances, appetite changes, thoughts of self-harm are characteristic of **post-partum depression** while some experience post-partum psychosis with development of hallucinations (hearing voices when there are none), delusions (false, firm, unshakeable beliefs), poor self-care, poor care of the baby and thoughts of hurting the baby.

**Peri- and post-menopausal period** is another vulnerable time for women to develop depression, anxiety and empty nest syndrome. The decline in hormonal levels as well as changes in the life roles predispose women to these disorders. Associated symptoms like hot flushes, mood swings, sleep disturbances, oversensitivity, feeling unproductive and unwanted are common during this phase. **Thus, our hormones can play havoc on your brain chemistries and cause mental health issues. But like I mentioned at the outset this occurs when there are other factors like genetic vulnerabilities, psychological factors and social stressors in the mix that they take a form of illness.**



**-Dr. Abha Bang Soni,  
Consultant Psychiatrist  
BRAMHA Hospital & ASSAN Hospital, Nagpur.**

## THE GREAT INDIAN KITCHEN

**A lot has been talked about this movie. What we have not thought of that this monotonous mundane work takes a toll on women's health - physical as well as mental health.**

The fact that has troubled me the most about the movie is that the 'bahu' does not discuss her problems with anyone, even her mother. All her negative emotions keep on clogging up as does her kitchen sink.

Her sister-in-law seems to have adopted and accepted 'modern' changes in her house, so does the mother-in-law; when she visits her daughter. But these ladies don't talk to the men in the house about what is bothering them except in one brief episode.

We all get impressed and salivate with the elaborate and lavish spread at the beginning of the film, but the repetitive amalgamation of pre and post - preparation errands make us feel agitated and restless.

Imagine the plight of the women, who in real life, do this, every day for years together without complaining.

Few people argue that if a woman is not 'earning,'; she should not expect 'her' man to help her in the housework.

But whose house, is it? Is it only hers?

How to divide the housework? Which is her work and which is his?

What if she is earning more? What if she is not allowed to work like in the movie?

Considering the fact that everyone is getting paid for various jobs, should the housewives get paid? If yes, how are we going to evaluate her work?

Most importantly, if the 'housework' is her 'job'; shouldn't she be allowed to take her decisions? Ask yourself- who decides if a gadget (machine) is to be bought? The company, the model? The height of kitchen platform, may be?

**All these small stresses might take a toll on her body either physically or psychologically or both ways in the form of psychosomatic disorders.**

All we have to do is give her a helping hand and be sensitive to her.

Help her by doing small chores. Listen empathetically.

Little details and small considerations will clear things out.

**-Dr. Aabha Pimprikar,  
President, DAGMHI,**



## WOMEN'S MENTAL HEALTH SPECIAL

### "CREATIVITY ON THE GO.....!"

Do you know who was "**Gaura Pant**"? She was a novelist, who pioneered in writing women centric stories in the 20th century. Popularly known by her pen name 'Shivani', she was awarded the Padma Shri in 1982, for her contributions to the Hindi Sahitya.

She, like most women, played the roles of a daughter, a wife, mother and daughter in law. Her household responsibilities were paramount. But she had a creative streak, which she did not suppress in spite of the everyday routine. She would keep a notepad and a pen in the kitchen and whenever an idea came to her, she penned it down immediately. She compiled all of these ideas into beautiful stories portraying various aspects of women's lives.

It was awe inspiring to know how she kept her creative juices flowing.

Talking on behalf of all women, we usually curb our hobbies and interests in the name of duties - domestic or professional. Duties which take precedence over interests and hobbies. This is a very unhealthy habit which we have fallen into leading to frustration and self-deprecating thoughts. Haven't we all at some point felt like our choices, interests, personal time and space don't matter? This is because we give our creativity a permanent backseat.

**It is not necessary to always monetize one's hobbies.** The returns of pursuing our interests are way more precious than money, it is our "**emotional currency**".

In 2015, Dr. Cathy Malchiodi, a psychologist and art therapist stated that several researches have confirmed that being creative leads to - positive emotions, sense of fulfillment, better relationships. It lessens the symptoms of depression, stress and anxiety and even boosts our immune system, giving way to better mental and physical health.

Here is what I usually do to fulfill my creative cravings -

- 1) I put on some music while I'm cooking, and sing along.
- 2) Sometimes I do a little dance while dusting the house or sweeping.
- 3) I keep a small sketchbook and some pencils in my purse, to doodle while traveling.
- 4) When I have to write articles like this one, I let the ideas incubate in my mind, and when I get an insight, I voice record it on my phone.
- 5) I make use of my desk and chair to do some stretching on the days when an hour of workout is not possible.

To keep your mind happy so that your smile reaches your eyes and heart - **be creative on the go!**

-Dr. Geetanjali Jha,  
Homeopath, Counsellor, Bhopal.

## KNOW YOUR LEGAL RIGHTS



"A strong woman is able to smile this morning like she wasn't crying last night."

This inner strength of women comes from their drive of showing everyone that "All is well", even if it is not, as the social norms expect her to do so. Women have been sacrificing their self-respect, dignity, ambitions and life for their loved ones, have been tolerating disrespectful and abusive behaviour, all which leads to anger, fear, exhaustion, hopelessness and depression. The most important factor affecting the mental health of women is the psychology, the mind-set created by Patriarchy. Even today, irrespective of education, status and position, the man has the last word in decision making, women are constantly put to test on the grounds of gender and still face disrespect and humiliation at home and workplace and women still have the fear of doing non-conventional roles and being judged (ironically by other women) for not doing gender specific roles.

To break these mental shackles, women are empowered with legal rights, some of which are given below:

**Right against Domestic violence:** Is a comprehensive legislation protecting women from any kind of physical, sexual, mental, verbal or emotional violence.

**Right to Maintenance:** The right to maintenance entitles women to get maintenance, which includes the basic necessities, even after the divorce till she doesn't remarry. The maintenance depends on the standard of living of the wife and circumstances and income of the husband.

**Right to Dignity and Decency:** Anybody outraging the modesty and dignity of a woman is liable for punishment.

**Dowry Prohibition Act** prohibits the act of taking or giving dowry at, before or any time after marriage.

**The Hindu Succession Act** empowers women to inherit parental property equally with men.

**The Equal Remuneration Act** does not allow discrimination between men and women with regards to remuneration for the same work or of similar nature, in recruitment and in service conditions.

**Sexual harassment at Workplace** protects women from sexual harassment at all workplaces (public and private as and organised and unorganized sectors).

**Women should know that law respects their dignity and modesty and they have a right to live a life free of fear, coercion, violence and discrimination.** At the same time, they should remember that instead of abusing and misusing their legal rights, they should empower each other and work towards an egalitarian society.

Be careful of what you are tolerating as you are teaching the world how to treat you and remember that you are the artist of your own life, so don't hand over the paintbrush to anyone else.

-Adv. Ashwini Deshpande  
Author, Social Entrepreneur, Corporate Trainer

