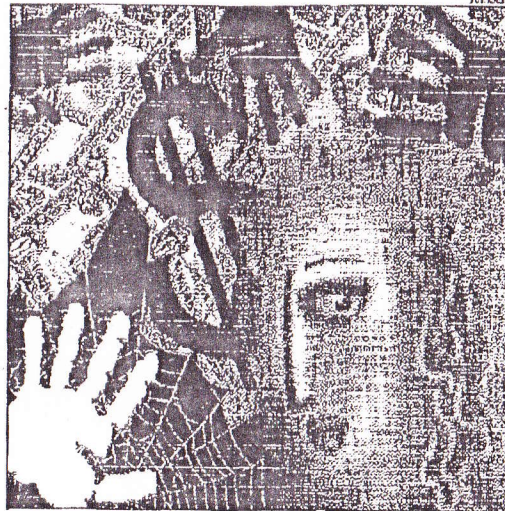


# Dollar dreams turn sour for many brides

By Swati Desai

Hyderabad: Laxmi, Sunita, and Chitra may not know each other, but share a few things in common. They are educated, young, Indian women from well-to-do middle class families who married young professionals working in the US. With similar family backgrounds, they had dreams of a better life. So did their parents. Unfortunately, they also share shattered dreams and broken marriages.

It is unlikely that the severity of their experiences are shared by the majority of women who go abroad after marriage. But the difficulties in adjustments are common and are usually not discussed openly. In most cases, parents of such brides are in the dark as to what to watch



out for.

The first serious issue faced by such brides is that of domestic violence. Although

the high prevalence of violence against women within the South Asian community in the US has been well es-

tablished by studies, it has not been publicised in India.

Cultural disconformity is another serious issue. Women are surrounded by husbands' extended family who demand traditional behaviour. Such in-laws' mind-set belongs to the India of the time they left home. The husband too nurtures these expectations. It does not matter that the woman may be product of a modern, independent and feisty India.

In some cases women encounter mental illness and eccentricity in their husbands. They may find skeletons tumbling out of the closet post-marriage. Men also demand outrageous sexual behaviour. In the absence of the usual family support systems, all these come as a shocker to women.

Wives of the professionals

with a temporary work permit in the US too face hurdles. Such permits do not allow wives to work. In such cases, the woman is passing time in idleness. With husbands busy with work, women get little access to familiar or comforting activities. In the next few weeks, stories based on the lives of Laxmi, Sunita, Chitra, and others will be told in a series of articles, with names changed on request. For parents, the list of precautions will be presented. Help for women in these situations will be discussed.

*(The author is a psychotherapist in private practice in Los Angeles, was a mental health consultant to South Asian agencies. She is currently on sabbatical and visiting the Indian School of Business, Hyderabad.)*