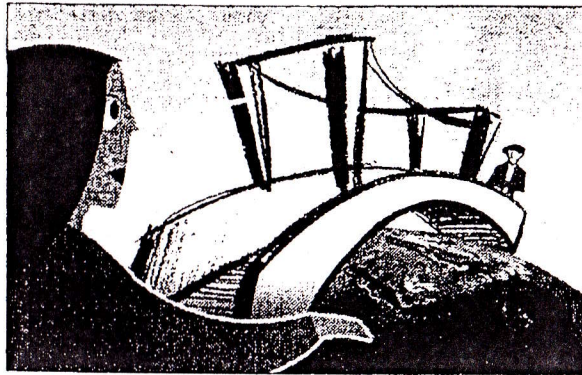


# Thorough probe before marriages is vital

By Swati Desai

Hyderabad: Laxmi was married to a professional in the US with good recommendations and a good family. Gradually, her parents realised that her husband was isolating her from them, and she was a victim of domestic violence. This set them through a whirlwind of conflicting emotions. They blamed Laxmi for being too headstrong and themselves for sending her to a foreign country. They were caught between a strong belief in the sanctity of a marriage and an urge to get Laxmi out. Besides the anger they felt against the husband and his family, they were worried about the future and the shame the matter could bring to them. They were also helpless due to the distance.

Parents of daughters with



similar failed marriages, especially in foreign places go through these emotions. They are faced with two questions — what they could have done to prevent such situations and how does one deal with it?

Parents are typically well-wishing and trusting, but it pays to take stringent pre-

cautions. Firstly, a thorough investigation among grooms' close friends and NOT just his family pays off. One should not get into the dollar dream trap. Encourage the daughter to have a frank conversation with the prospective groom so that there are no skeletons in the cupboard. If he is willing to discuss

past relationships, it is a good sign. However, if he justifies past relationships saying, "I found out that she was crazy or she falsely accused me of hitting her," it is a bad omen. Such confessors pin blame on others and emote self-pity. Further investigation through friends is vital in such cases.

Parents must check if the conditions are right for financial independence — through work or education. The ability to stand on one's own feet is paramount to survive in a foreign country. Parents must also ensure a safety net of sound finances (in case, she needs to travel back) and friends outside the husband's family, before the daughter departs. Do not insist on a grandchild until she has settled. Remember that it is OK to call social service agencies for help because the

legal and immigration issues can be costly and overwhelming when on your own. Also, she can call directory assistance and ask for an infoline that can give her toll-free phone numbers to get help.

If an unwarranted situation arises despite these precautions, stop blaming yourself and try to look at the situation as an outsider. Your pain, worry, and shame being conveyed to your daughter will worsen her experience. Second, convey your support without interfering in her decision-making process. This requires tremendous patience — difficult but vital.

**(To be continued)**

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