

# *Chapter-IV*

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### IMPACT OF FAMILY COUNSELLING CENTRES

The family is the primary system responsible for meeting the needs of its members. Therefore, it is the system most apt to influence the functioning of its individual members as individuals and their families are inextricably interoven. Problems in individual functioning often arise from family functioning, past or present. Family-centred interventions in the form of marriage and family counselling gained momentum in the 1980s in India. These counselling centres deal with a wide variety of family-related problems in rural and urban areas such as wife battering, ill treatment of spouse, dowry related issues, wife burning, pre-marital and extra-marital affairs, abductions, rape, sexual abuse, out of wedlock pregnancy, drug addiction, alcoholism, child custody, legal aid, conflict with family members and property disputes.

This study focuses on the actual counselling process in familial problems. It, therefore emphasized the conceptual framework for working with the multi-client family system, then provides an understanding of the process, tools, techniques and skills involved in family-centred counselling, and in family crisis intervention which are the major interventions used in direct work with families in the Indian context.

## ROLE OF THE FAMILY COUNSELLING CENTRES

Family counselling centres of Jayaprakash Institute of Social change are working in the two broad fields. The first category consists of interventions directed towards the individual victims of violence. These tasks have been done by the counsellors through individual counselling and psychotherapy (when need arise) services for the victims, legal aid and obtaining legal redressal for the victims (this includes getting the accused convicted, seeking monetary and other custodial rights for the client in cases of legal separation, striving to obtain legal aid or police help for protecting of the victim from further harm, etc.), medical aid, linking the individual (victim) to existing community resources and building new linkages for long term support to the client and other potential victims.

The interventions in the second category aim at making some positive difference in the larger environment of the client. This category includes advocacy interventions, extending the scope of existing services and developing new services for dealing with the issues at the macro-level. Generally, through these services Family Counselling Centres try to influence the general public opinion and mobilise community network for prevention of such instances and promotion of gender equality.

The counsellors not only direct the interventions towards the victim alone, but also try to look into the other dimensions of the problem such as, the custody of children, emotional impact of parental conflict on children, economic need of the individual/family in combating the current crisis etc.

When an individual comes to the Family Counselling Centre, the case is first registered on a prescribed format. The counsellors constructed the socio-cultural background to understand the psychic and emotional status of the individual with respect to her/him immediate and larger environment, i.e., family, community and society.

In order to arrive at an understanding of the functioning of the couple on the family who have sought help, the following dimensions are assessed by the counsellors—

- family structure : sub-systems and boundaries
- leadership patterns
- communication patterns
- role functioning
- cohesiveness
- reinforcement
- adaptive patterns
- social support

These functions are assessed over the life cycle stages of the family/married couple. The life cycle stages comprises :

- unmarried individual
- married couple without children
- families with pre-school children
- families with school going children
- families with teenagers
- families as launching centre
- middle aged families and

- aging families

The changes in the family functions as the family transits from one stage to the other help the counsellors to arrive at a better understanding of the dynamics of the family and the problems for which they have sought help. This process is time-taking and is generally completed over many sittings either in the counselling centre or through home visit. Case records are simultaneously prepared and this tells the complete story and the counsellors' diagnosis of the case and action plan. Through such a process, the counsellor builds up the potential intervention points of a case, i.e., whether the case requires simple counselling, mediation, negotiated settlement, conciliation or whether it requires other institutional supports such as the police, legal, psychiatric help and shelter home, etc.

Our society does not keenly approve of seeking help outside the family for family disputes. They are to be kept within the family and its well-wishers. Couples/family members approach counselling centres, if at all, as a last resort. Professional help is sought only when matters become too complicated for anybody to handle or when there is a threat of immediate separation or divorce.

Occurrence of marital coalition is the hallmark of a healthy marriage. In a marriage, when both the partners take care of the needs of each partner and recognise the differences between their conceptual and societal reality, it leads to a healthy embeddedness. A marriage, devoid of any difference of opinion between the spouses is as bad as a marriage having a high degree of consensus between the spouses leading to enmeshment in marital relations. A marriage is good where the partners work together to fulfil individual and collective desires, wishes, mission(s) in life and mutual growth leads to a better and

healthy mental life. This is possible when the partners are able to shift their primary relationships from parents or family of orientation to their marital relationship. If the symbiotic relationship with their family of orientation continues with the same strength, that is to say, if that relationship continues as the primary relationship, then marital coalition, the essential foundation for healthy marital life, fails to occur. Formation of marital coalition does not mean that one has to sever one's ties with the parental family. Instead, the spouse has to learn to strike a balance between the marital unit and relation with the parental unit.

Family counselling centres in this marital conflict are applying holistic approach. The Family Counsellors do not treat the marital relationship as a unit outside the familial and community system. This study indicates that when a son in a family gets married, he with his wife forms a marital sub-system within the family system. Power equation changes as there is a shift in the primary relationship. There is more territorial delineation – for example, the son who used to share a room with his brother, gets a separate room after marriage. In the marital sub-system that he forms with his wife, there are rules and powers for behaviour between the marital dyad. When this boundary is invaded, problems arise. Therefore, the counsellors give more attention to the marital sub-system and its existence in the family. In order to deal with this, counsellors first understand the family's functional utility rather than understand it as a structural unit – nuclear, joint, and extended and so on.

The counsellors always try to prevent disintegration in the family and to promote a harmonious relationship among the family members. For example, a woman (Mrs. A) came to the counselling centre for seeking help and moral support. She was widow and passing her days with two children at her parental house. Once, a TV mechanic came to

her house for repairing the technical fault of their TV set. After few days the mechanic visited her frequently and developed friendship. Few days later, the mechanic proposed her to marry. But she refused as she has a son and a daughter. The mechanic requested her again and again which leads her give consent for marriage. And finally they got married according to Special Marriage Act, 1954.

After their marriage both the spouses were leading their marital life happily along with her children. Days are passing and the lives are going on smoothly. She was engaged in child rearing and caring related work and her husband was engaged in repairing TV, Tape, Radio in a servicing centre.

After two years of their conjugal life problems aroused and she was facing mental and physical torture by her husband. One day her husband told her that he had given '*Talaq*' to her and will not continue their conjugal life with her. She astonished to listen this as the '*Talaq*' was not utter in front as well as in presence of her. So she refused to accept this '*Talaq*'.

After this happening, she contacted with the Family Counselling Centre to seek help to overcome her marital discord. After going through the individuals, the counsellor of F.C.C. called her husband to F.C.C. to reconcile their marital maladjustment. When her husband came to the F.C.C. the counsellor had a discussion with him and observed during the discussion that fellow had a soft corner for her children and very much anxious for them. And also he is interested to get back her children to him. But due to '*Talaq*' and fear of parents and relatives he could not restore his former lives with her. With the persistent efforts of the counsellor of F.C.C., he agreed to withdraw the '*Talaq*'.

Then the counsellor and Mrs. A went to the Chief Secretary and Mufti Sahib of Tipusultan Masjid, Kolkata and talked about the problem. After listening the cases, they concluded that—

- (1) the '*Talaq*' was not utter in front as well as presence of her;
- (2) there was no witness during uttering the '*Talaq*';
- (3) after '*Talaq*' she was not return back her 'Den Mohar' and finally
- (4) the '*Talaq*' was not utter consecutive three months.

Then the Chief Secretary and Mufti Sahib of Tipusultan Masjid of Kolkata declared that this '*Talaq*' is illegal.

After that both the spouses restore their conjugal marriage life and living happily with their children.

Women coming to the counselling centres with problems such as harassment from their mother-in-law, husbands or others express their anguish by saying, 'I don't like my mother-in-law', 'I hate her, she is horrible', 'She is like this from the beginning', or 'My husband has an affair with another woman'. In such situations, the efficiency of the counsellor lies in identifying and understanding the other person's frame of reference.

The counsellor, by noticing the language and the type of the words used by the person, can identify the nature of the person as visual, auditory or kinaesthetic which means, seeing, hearing and feeling oriented person for or a combination of these. To establish a rapport the counsellor uses similar language as the client. For example, in a family if the mother-in-law is a hearing oriented person, and the daughter-in-law is visual-oriented person or vice-versa, both cannot perceive each other's point of view as the language used does not

appeal to their senses. This, in turn, creates misunderstandings and subsequent distancing.

The counsellor enables the client to move from confusion to clarity, set goals for personal and family's growth through dissociation exercises. The counsellor identify the inner resources of the client and reinforce them such that they become a pattern.

In family situations, counsellors established good rapport by matching each other's words from seeing to feeling or hearing with changes in tone and words. If the wife has a negative image of the husband, the husband makes it positive by using the similar language as his wife for proper alignment.

Children are normally extremely sensitive to strained relationships. Their feelings are frequently underestimated because they do not express themselves in the same way as adults do. Sometimes, they actually keep their feelings hidden because they do not want to cause their parents more grief and pain.

In this situation children express a variety of behaviour and emotions. Some children feel very distressed and anxious on first hearing about the marital discord. Some feel confused, hopeless and abandoned by the negative, ambivalent and hostile emotions expressed by their parents. Some also feel fearful about what will happen to them and they imagine terrors for beyond the actual situation. They use denial for self-preservation. Some of the physical symptoms they exhibit are trembling, restlessness, loss of appetite, nausea, diarrhoea, disturbed sleep, nightmares and so on. They also show attention – seeking behaviour such as truancy, running away, juvenile delinquency, aggression, acting out, introversion and so on.

Younger children show regressive behaviour. They show loss of interest in studies, they become lethargic and diffident in interpersonal relationships. In extreme cases, they show self-destructive behaviour. At the same time children show anger at the situation, at the parents.

Children of violent marriages begin to internalise the notion that they cause the behaviour of others. The children's guilt compounded by a sense of inadequacy for not having prevented a parental battle. In addition to experiencing a sense of failure and helplessness, the children also experience anxiety regarding self-control, which hinders their achievement of autonomy. Just as children assume the responsibility for the violence, they often blame themselves for the break up of the families, if separation occurs. For children, one effect of separation or a divorce is either a permanent, partial or total separation from at least one parent. As a result, most children miss or grieve for the absent parent. When the separation or divorce has not been amicable, post separation or divorce turbulence is also traumatic for them. When there is a tussle over guardianship, they face emotional stress specially when they are made to choose one parent to live with.

When a deserted women brings up her children alone, they are likely to become adults prematurely or show pseudo-maturity. They develop various complexes and carry a negative image of a father and parenthood throughout their lives. Children of divorced parents have to defend themselves against adverse public opinion and loss of prestige. It also affects their peer relationships. They grow up with low self-esteem.

In this situation, the counsellors of F.C.C.s first assess the child's understanding of the reasons for the conflict, separation or divorce, the child's affective and attitudinal responses and coping strategies. That is,

the counsellors explored the feelings of self-blame, fear of abandonment, hopes of parents reuniting and fear of ridicule by peers. The counsellors, while dealing the children, aware that, it is impossible to 'interview' a child. They use variety of media such as play material, art, books, games, clay, puppets etc. for assessment and intervention.

The counsellors create an atmosphere and build a relationship with the child, which is conducive to self-expression by being congruent, empathetic and showing a non-judgemental acceptance of the child's thoughts, feelings and behaviours. The counsellors keep in mind the age related expected effects on the child and intervene accordingly.

In order to help the children to perceive the situation accurately, the counsellors help them to understand that both parents are good, but they cannot get along and it is all right to separate. They are to be assured that they are not responsible for the situation, but cannot change the situation either. Sometimes children have been sent away from home to an institution, boarding school or to relatives or friends, then, they are to be understood that this step was not taken to punish them, but that the decision was in their interest. Also, they have to be assured that separation or divorce is not the end of the world and that they can still be happy.

While counsellors are working with parents, helping them to make decisions in the best interest of their children and themselves, so that children emerge as capable of proceeding with age appropriate developmental tasks.

Counsellors through the process of counselling encouraged the parents to listen to their children and help them express their feelings. Parents and children together be helped to work through fears,

fantasies and increase their self-esteem through family centred intervention.

When separation is inevitable, counsellors help both parents focus on how to make the separation less traumatic for their children and sort out what basic information they need to give their children. For example, parents reassure their children that they still love them, that they (the children) did not cause the conflict and/or separation, and cannot change the situation, that there will be some changes in their lives and reassure them about practical arrangements. The counsellors also help the parents understand the importance of continued access to the extended family and the non-custodian parents whenever possible, and make these contacts, satisfying for both the parent and children. Counsellors help the parents make support system (i.e., siblings, extended family members, friends, neighbours and the school) available to their children and cooperate with them in the interest of their children.

## **SERVICES OF THE FAMILY COUNSELLING CENTRES**

As our world becomes increasingly crowded and the pace of life becomes faster and faster, people yearn for a quiet place where they can speak without fear, in the hope of finding a true listener. The family counseling centres of Jayaprakash Institute of Social change provide an answer to the rush and the noise of today's world – a quiet place where people can sit and tell their troubles to an empathetic listener. Counselor of these centres have vivid imagination, which enables her/him to visualize the problems of their clients and to experience them indirectly, so that she can actively participate in finding a solution. A large amount of patience, a mature understanding and some common sense are required in the mental make-up of the ideal counselor.

The counselling services provided by these F.C.C.s have proved to be a boon for families which were in danger of breaking up. In several cases, the family has been greatly strengthened by being able to see problems in a new perspective.

In counselling settings, the family enters the intervention system, through the problem of one of its members. Counsellors based on their frame of reference develop a working relationship with the client and family members using their skills and qualities of genuineness, acceptance and empathy with each member and the family unit. In a relaxed atmosphere, the counsellor explains the general nature of the sessions and through small courtesies tries to install hope, develop trust and enhance the motivation of the family members. Professional use of skills such as sensitive observation of verbal and non-verbal behaviour, listening and responding with acceptance enhances the nature of the family's participation in the counselling process.

The counsellor helps the client and the family in identifying the problem situation and exploring each family member's understanding of what happened in the conflict situation. By using the techniques of exploration and open questioning, the counsellor elicits the necessary information about the problem. While encouraging the family members to get involved and helping the family to examine a given situation, the counsellor stresses the need to focus on the facts, feeling and opinions related to the situation. By using the various assessment tools such as genogram and the eco-map, the counsellor involves the family unit to reflect on the issue, describe the events, and also help the family members to understand the connections between their thoughts and feelings that is, between their affect and cognition. When the family unit is involved in the exploration process, family members start identifying with their feelings and reaction about the problem and start thinking about their goals.

Through skills of reassurance and encouragement, the counsellor promotes self-disclosure by the family members. Through observation the counsellor listens to the family's verbal and non-verbal expression of feelings. The counsellor encourages ventilation of feelings and makes the family feel comfortable about the fact that it is natural to experience various emotions – especially feelings of anxiety during the period. Among the many emotional reactions, denial is one of the primary coping devices used by family members from becoming overwhelmed. Counsellors recognise this emotional reaction and do not confront it directly in the early stages of intervention. Denial, as a defense, permits a more gradual transition to facing the reality of the situation. In this phase, along with shock, denial and anxiety, early experiences of feelings reflect anger towards self, other family members, and the

others connected with the event. So, counsellors listen and accept their emotional outbursts.

The set of skills and procedures used by the counsellors are support, ventilation of feelings, exploration, education and facilitation of communication. At the end of the session, the counsellor provides a brief summary of what has happened in the session focussing on their feelings, concerns and ideas towards each other in connection with the conflict situation and engages them in making a decision to continue in family counselling sessions.

In the second stage, the focus is on helping the family members find out the different ways of coping with the difficulties related to the problem situation. Here, an attempt is made by the counsellor to help the family to come out of their state of disorganization. In this counselling process, the intensity of the crisis can be reduced by providing necessary knowledge and teaching certain skills to the family members. The counsellor attempts to channelise the family's anxiety into positive participatory events.

The family is further encouraged to continue to ventilate feelings and understand the same in relation to the conflict situation. Emotional reaction such as anxiety and denial of the reality of the problem is continuing. They are blaming of self or others anger is more openly expressed and is directed towards the person connected with the crisis situation. After expressing their anger, the client and family members express feelings of remorse and feel guilty for blaming the individual. They begin to perceive their role in precipitating or provoking the violence. This is a period of integration. The counsellor helps the family members to make a balanced appraisal of the situation and helps them to move on the next stage of making essential decisions and

reorganizing their world. So, the family at their stage become reconciled to their family discord and survive the stress. The family is helped to get ready to mobilize resources – both internal and external – and develop a plan of action for coping with the situation. At this point, family members are helped to reflect more accurately on the reality of the situation and are helped to increase their ability to cope. In this stage, cognition and action are interrelated for the benefit of understanding of the family members. Skills relate to exploration and decision-making techniques are used by the counsellor to help the family pursue its desire to restore the steady state.

Some of the tasks have done by counsellors are helping the family unit in deciding about the role changes brought in by the situation, further improving their communication, mobilizing resources and making plans for future. The family members have been engaged in their problem-solving process to assess the realistic capacities of each member and to make decision about task assignments. Planning has been done in a manner that it provides a sense of developing more control over their lives. A crucial factor in this counselling process is the direct intervention by the counsellor with the significant persons who are integral to the family's life and are important to each other.

This act of blaming and the expression of anger prevails at these times. So, the counsellor then recommend that the family members talked the event more realistically. The counsellor helped the family to analyse the situation, reflect on the conflict and discover ways to deal with such issues in the future.

Then come stage of consolidation. This is a stage of withdrawal by the counsellor. By now the family members begin to reach a state of equilibrium and come terms with the reality of the crisis situation. It does

provide scope for the development of intensive relationship between the family members and the counsellor. So, naturally, the family members experienced mixed feelings towards the counsellor in this final stage. Some family members have been experienced sadness, while some become anxious about their abilities to manage themselves without professional help. Yet, most of the families engage in reflective thinking about the situation and prepare themselves to accept the separation.

Hence, the counsellor focuses on issues such as enabling the family members to discuss their perceptions about coming together as a family to deal with the crisis situation, discussing and clarifying the family's feelings about separation, deal with final concerns, if any, identify various other sources for self-help and finally, enable the family to recapitulate the whole enabling experience.

Battering is not characterized as one partner attempting to control or dominate the other but by the couple's combined communicational deficits to discuss 'marital communication, resolving conflict and ending violence' and that both partners in marital relationship need to change.

When the counsellor of the F.C.C. is working with this issue, he/she (counsellor) facilitates the woman to think carefully about her situation and also makes her realize that she (client) is not alone, strange or unusual. As a result of violence, the woman often goes through feelings such as fear, helplessness or hopelessness.

Women often find it difficult to open up about the violence they go through and experience a lot of negative emotions. The counsellor has been created a conducive and non-judgemental environmental where the woman feels respected and valued. The counsellor tries to build the trust of the woman so that she (client) feels comfortable to disclose.

Then counsellor helps the woman to define her problem clearly. A woman in a difficult situation feels ambivalent or confused about what she really wants and she even avoid being honest with herself about how she feels.

The counsellor understand the woman's feeling about resolving the problem, recognises the woman's avoidance behaviour to evade tackling the problem, and explains to her the implications of not resolving a problem and the consequences she and her children suffer in the future. The counsellor facilitates her to make her own decisions and encourages her to think through her available options and list the positive and negative consequences of each alternative plan of action, e.g., the advantage of getting a divorce verses the disadvantages. Through this process the counsellor helps her in bringing about realistic changes in her life.

The counsellor analyses the ways in which violence has controlled and limited the woman's life and help her to increase her self-confidence and gain more control over her own life. She needs to be taken her through a process of self-reflection so that she can be equipped to take her own decisions and also be encouraged to take certain risks by providing her with the necessary support. The counsellor uses the strategies that help the women to ensure her safety and also provide her support. The counsellor provides the required help, information and other resources, when woman (client) deals with the legal or bureaucratic system.

The counsellor knows that it is difficult for a violent man to change his behaviour. Even then, it is not appropriate for the counsellors to advise the woman to leave her violent partner, as no one can make this

decision, expect the woman herself. The counsellor's role is to support the woman through whatever decision she takes.

Being in violent relationship with an intimate partner, it often is difficult for the woman to take a stand and make a decision. At this position, the counsellor offers support and helps the woman to improve her situation by encouraging her to be more assertive about her needs and wants and help her to see through her problem and the risks involved before taking a decision to stay in the relationship.

In the time after the attack, many men feel sorry and guilty for battering their wives and are hence, more amenable to change at this time. The woman has been encouraged to utilize this opportunity and time to seek improvement and suitable changes in her life. The counsellor encourages the violated woman to take full advantage of the opportunity to gain support.

When the woman chooses to stay in a violent relationship, the counsellor empower the woman to recognize any signs of mood changes in her husband that lead to another violent attack directed towards her. Once she learns to identify the signs, the counsellor and the woman together can work out a strategy to escape the assault and build her confidence. Here, the woman works towards her goal. Now, the woman makes a lot of decisions regarding her future course of action. This helps the battered woman to understand the hindering and the facilitating factors affecting her life. The counsellor plays an important role once the woman has decided to leave her husband. A part of this role of counsellor involves providing her with emotional support and information, building her confidence and helping her to think through the various options available to her and assisting her with practical matters.

The counsellor helps the woman before she (client) leaves her matrimonial home such as a safe plan of action for leaving which include taking her 'streedhan' and personal belongings (like money, jewellery, certificates, ration card, passport and so on) along with her. Securing support from the natal family, friends and relatives is also very essential. In case the woman does not have immediate support the counsellor helps her in locating a safe place to stay for a short while such as a short stay home till she finds a permanent accommodation.

The counsellor also helps the woman to prepare future plan for her and for the children (if any) and how she sustains herself financially. The counsellor also elicits support from the police in helping the woman to file criminal complaints, if necessary. If the woman wants to take legal action for example, apply for maintenance, divorce, judicial separation, custody, injunctions – the counsellor of the F.C.C. provides adequate information, support and referral services that she required.

Psychosexual counselling become very important in our context because a proportion of couples who seek marriage counselling are experiencing difficulties in their partnership but does not talk openly about it. In this situation counsellor of FCC offers psychosexual counselling. When the counsellor is counselling couples with sexual difficulties, concentration is on the psychological blocks rather than physiological difficulties that couples are experiencing. These start from conflicts and unresolved difficulties from the past that come through to the current relationship to straight forward 'performance' anxieties fuelled by poor information.

In counselling session, the counsellor is building a therapeutic relationship so that the individual or couple feels fare enough to discuss sexual matters, obtaining a clear picture of the couple's sexual

relationship of both the behaviours and the feelings attached to the behaviours, exploring the myths and their impact on the couple's sexual activity. A vital task of the counsellor is to give permission to each client to say how he or she feels about his or her sex life, the families and the needs.

The counsellor sensitivity challenges the half-truths and misinformation emerges. Then counsellor uses straight forward anatomical terms and gives the necessary information to the clients to understand their own sexuality.

Some clients need more information. The specific suggestions have been by the counsellor related to exploring their own body in order to examine their own self image or talking and touching exercises or rethinking positions for intercourse. When couples require intensive therapy then they have been referred to a sexual therapist.

There is another dimension of the power dynamics which instigate and complicate the couple relationship, i.e., 'Third Force'. Generally, the 'third force' are the members of the couple's social milieu who directly or indirectly influence the behaviour of the husband and/or wife, or are in a position to control or exert power over them causing marital distress and sometimes separation or divorce. They are the members of the biological family, members of the in-laws family, extended family members, colleagues from the work place and people from couple's social circle.

The two lady counsellors of the Jayaprakash Institute of Social change play a critical role in the functioning of the Family Court (Bankshal Court) given the court's underlying objectives of settling disputes through conciliation. These two Family Counselling Centres indicates that mental and physical torture by husband and in-laws,

(75.8%), in-laws interference of both the side made marital relation complex (5.7%), tortured by son and daughter-in-laws (5.7%), deprived from parental property by own brothers (4.3%), not allowed to maintain parental relationship (2.8%), sexually harassed (1.4%) cases were reported in the F.C.C.s.

Counsellors broadly agreed that women in our society continue to live in violent relationship due to lack of parental support and sake of children. They also told that women remained in the matrimonial home after the first incident of violence because they loved their husband, tended to excuse the negative behaviour, and acted on their commitment to make the marriage work. The women cling to the hope that their husband will change. Besides this, a complicating factor is the feelings of guilt and shame which abused women sometimes experience. If the marriage or relationship is not working, they look for the fault in themselves, accepting the view that women are responsible for maintaining and nurturing relationships. The feelings of shame prevent the women from seeking help, even from friends, neighbours and relatives. The women also have been suffering from fear. The fear is that the man will find them and become even more violent, the apprehension is connected with the uncertain future and doubts about their ability to manage on their own. Being constantly subjected to violence and abuse damages self-esteem and diminishes confidence.

The counsellors admitted that more women now leave violent relationships, simply because of the publicity given to the problem and the greater knowledge of the help available.

The counsellors insisted that both educated and uneducated women from all strata sought their assistance. Some victims of domestic violence approaching family counselling centres for the purpose of

discussing their problems, getting empathetic hearing and experienced guidance on how to handle the situation. Mainly they sought moral and emotional support.

Because of professional counselling, clients are becoming bold and their marital strength is increasing. Earlier women would refuse to go to a counsellor due to a kind of inertia rooted in the traditional thinking or owing to social taboo. Now motivated by others or with inspiration within they are coming to the F.C.C.s with the object of redressing the problems they are facing.

This also hints at another important fact that people, who earlier used to shy away such problems and would not intervene, are also coming more and more aware about the importance of Family Counselling Centre as an effective tool and are involving them privately or publicly to motivate the victims to visit FCCs.

This is evident from the fact all the respondents under review were informed about and motivated to visit the FCC by neighbours (40%) and friends (10%). They got indirect help from the neighbours and friends about FCCs. Here it is seen that mass media is an influencing factor because 16% respondents knew about the FCC through newspaper, journals, radio, television, etc. Former clients and local bodies (34%) also helped the victims and referred them to FCC. So it is evident that community is by and large aware about the role of FCC in solving and preventing marital discord. This also speaks of the positive impact of FCC on the society.

Though the respondents came to know about the FCC from different sources, they required motivation and encouragement to visit the FCC to pour their minds out. The study indicates that 50% of the respondents were motivated by their inner urge to visit the FCC in

search of a solution to their problems. Percentage of respondents motivated by relatives were 30%. Motivations in varying degrees were also available from friends (10%), the local bodies (6%) and from child development project officer of ICDS (4%), what is important here is that self-motivation of the victims have been a stronger motivation than extraneous motivation.

This study shows that 40% respondents have the impression that the FCCs greatest strengths are in helping the victims fighting their battles against the perpetrators of violence and injustice, 34% of the respondents feel that these FCCs are sincere in approach, purposive and punctual. While 16% remark that the FCCs have an empathetic attitude and 10% believe that FCCs could build awareness on variety of issues in the area of marital relations, law, reproductive health etc. counsellor's professional and empathetic attitude, sincerity and commitment were highly satisfied by the respondents. The FCCs also offered them professional consultation to facilitate cognitive restructuring for rational thinking (36.6%) and to develop better insights (33.3%) into their own problems. The FCCs are also effective in the sense that they have helped the clients to regain confidence (50%) and rejuvenate their faith for a purposeful social mainstreaming. The professional services rendered through FCCs have also been successful in reconciliation (56%). The FCCs are also very successful in providing referral services for enhanced social functioning.

The findings of this study reveals that, the FCCs are an important right based scheme, not only in redressing the problems of women victims of violence and atrocities but also bringing about a positive change in the family spectrum.

The FCCs are not only confined within the problems of victimized women, now it reaches to all members of the family, especially those in vulnerable situations. Although women in marital conflict and those facing domestic violence still remains the major group of client but other family members have also started seeking help from the FCCs for redressing a variety of problems, e.g., problems related to premarital relationship, teenage pregnancy, property disputes etc. This reflects that the scope of intervention of the FCCs have been widened to address wide range of problems faced by different members of the family.

## **OBSTACLES TO RENDER SERVICES BY THE FAMILY COUNSELLING CENTRES**

Some bottlenecks in rendering effective and better services stand to reconcile the family / marital conflict which describes as follows :

When, a case comes to a counsellor of the Family Counselling Centre that does not in any way involve the issue of human rights. Because protections of human rights are not the focal point of a counsellor's intervention, in many cases, directly or indirectly, it touches upon the issue and sometimes even takes care of it. However, with the passage of time, an increasing number of cases are seen to be coming to counsellors with major issue of violation of rights of individuals within families.

The most common cases the family counselling centres have to attend to are cases of a man's remarriage without legal divorce / annulment of the first marriage as is required under law. This first wife (and often with children) is alive. The first wife has been deserted, while the second wife is accorded all support and recognition from the family. It also happen that the second wife is never made a part of the family although she supported financially by the husband, even she and her children are entitled to have all claim on husband's / father's care and support as member of a extended family. Ethics demand that the counsellor works for the betterment of both women and children, if any. As human beings, their worth and dignity and their needs are of prime importance to the counsellors. As human beings, just as the first wife has rights, so also the second wife. But legally, the second wife's status as a wife is not recognized. The question before, the counsellor is—whom should she/he advocate? The make the counsellor's position clear if the second wife has entered into the relationship with full prior

knowledge of her husband's first marriage and still formalised the relationship by marriage. The counsellors get away by pointing at her fault, but that does not help the situation or the family much. The situation becomes all the more complex if the second wife has dependent children. Social values and human rights are in clear conflict in such a situation.

The reverse is also true in many cases when the first wife is in the dark about her husband's second marriage. She becomes the victim of her husband's illegal actions. While ethically and legally the counsellor takes a firm stand on behalf of the first wife, it is a distressing situation when she has to address the question of the second wife as well. In such cases, counselling sessions witness clients being very vocal about their rights. Obviously, at the early stage of the work itself the counsellor has to focus on this issue. The effectiveness and usefulness of the Family Counselling Centre's service is judged by the client – whether her rights and interests are being protected or served, as the case may be.

It has also been found that in some cases, all three—the first wife, the second wife and the husband—arrive at an understanding and live together, sharing the common resources. The terms of agreement are however, not respected throughout, and thus conflicts become inevitable. There is an ambivalent feeling all along in the first wife. Anticipating undesirable developments, she becomes defensive and precipitates crisis.

From this kind of violation of women's rights, the most common feature is domestic violence. The cause of violence ranges from the slightest or no provocation to serious ones, for example, food is being served late, refusal to comply with unacceptable demands from the

husband, like demanding her entire earnings and so on. If the husbands are habitual drinkers, the wives are often subjected to physical assault.

In the process of providing their services, counsellors of F.C.C.s are often required to mobilize services of other agencies like local self-government bodies (panchayats and municipalities). Police, court, lawyers, hospitals and health centres and the like. The personnel managing the organisations are often the ones drawn from the similar socio-cultural milieu as the clients. They are guided by the prevalent social customs and values. When the counsellors have to seek redressal in many matters concerning their clients, the personnel often have to assume the role of an arbiter in the cases. It is quite common to find such personnel, especially in rural areas, working against their welfare instead of protecting their rights. They do just the opposite of what the counsellor has been trying to do, even slow down the pace of progress in the case.

Sometimes, counsellors seen that the panchayats are settling family disputes. Being politically oriented, settlements by a panchayat cannot often be termed as a real settlement. In a case of land dispute, the counsellor, in association with the panchayat, succeeded in getting the ownership right of the wife on the land (from her husband). At a later period the counsellor found out that the leaders were interested in getting permanent tenancy rights for one of their party sympathisers on the land, which would have been impossible if the land was under the husband's ownership as he belonged to the opposition (political) party. Since the panchayat took an active part in helping the wife, for her it was a choice for the lesser evil.

However, effective counselling depends as much on the counsellors' ingenuity in linking the individual in distress to institutional

supports. It is crucial to understand that the client, who is a product of a society riddled with low societal perceptions of women, would again have to seek remedies, through the counsellors in that very society which perpetrates such atrocities. Hence instances of non-response, non-cooperation, wilful and prejudicial actions have been faced and counteracted by the counselling if they win the faith of their clients. Instances, such as, the police letting off the dowry takers with bribes, delay in grant of legal aid or delay in provision of maintenance by the courts, high legal costs, an insensitive police and judiciary, completely damping the morale of even the most committed counsellors.