



Through this social media campaign Maitri is starting a dialogue with men in our community to identify and eliminate the root cause of gender based violence and partner violence. [#EngagingMenAndBoys](#)

Thank you **Daya Pv** for joining us in this meaningful discussion.

1) Tell us a little bit about yourself, anything you want to share with our readers in terms of changing dynamics of intimate relationships, conflicts and your experiences about the same.

I have lived in the bay area since the past several years and have been an active member in the community. I am also a keen social observer and during my interactions with people, I have witnessed the changing dynamics in society. It has been a solid 20 years. Also, working with people very closely has given me a unique vantage point to witness gradual changes in society. I feel that life in the US is very different from South Asia and when it comes to intimate relationships and marital relationships they do not function on similar parameters. Partly, because the systems in this country are unique in itself. With change in place and time, we should change our outlook as well. When couples are conflicting or the matter has reached beyond

community and household and in the hands of the law enforcement, women tend to contact community members for help who then try to help in whatever way they can, by raising funds or making arrangements to send her back to her home country, if she so wishes. In that sense, community involvement becomes vital.

2) In your opinion, how have gender roles changed in the past years? Could these be a reason for conflicts among couples, spiraling into domestic violence situations?

Since we are talking about life in the US for immigrants, I am noticing that life does not follow a set pattern. For instance, in the initial years when typically women come on H-4 as a dependent of their spouses, the gender role is pretty much set since she does not have a work permit in the US. However, when life moves on and children come into the equation, the scope of work increases dramatically. This is exacerbated by the absence of househelp. One must also remember that men at that stage are still building their career and may be at work for longer periods of time. At this stage, both parties need to show empathy for each other's situation and work it out between themselves. This may also coincide with the woman wanting to get back to work but feels stuck in her role, that is when partner support becomes important. If couples fail to handle the situation, it can spiral out of control and lead to ugly incidents of domestic violence due to unmanaged expectations. Overall, I think one should use communication to nip the matter in the bud and not wait until it gets worse.

3) What is your feeling about division of labor or household chores in a couple or family situation?

Among the South Asian community, I am noticing that men are beginning to understand the necessity to pitch-in even if that role is typically handled by women. For instance, changing diapers or occasionally cooking and cleaning

etc. At a broader level, after the work culture has introduced mandatory paternity leave, I am thrilled to see couples deciding to take turns to stay home for the newborn. This is one example of how policy changes can act as a catalyst for societal change.

With lack of househelp work should not be divided on the basis of gender but on the basis of competence. For instance, if one partner is good at budgeting they should handle it irrespective of gender and so on and so forth. Overall, as work and other dynamics undergo a change, healthy communication becomes the key factor.

4) What would be your message to South Asian community members, who are grappling with keeping a healthy relationship with their partners and are unable to cope due to set mindset?

For community members who are finding it hard to comprehend the changing expectations in South Asian subculture, I would say that they should be open to seek out help from culturally competent organizations or marriage counselors. Do not hesitate to try and seek help, it is the need of the times. Do not consider seeking help as something out of the ordinary, it sometimes puts us in touch with our own feelings and makes things better due to higher understanding. Do not get bogged down with helplessness for a prolonged period of time, it will lead to issues of burnout, depression etc which will in-turn have an indirect impact on relationships.

About the author

Daya PV is a very active and progressive member of the South Asian community in the bay area, particularly in South Indian circles. He has worked tirelessly for the past several years to unify the community by creating community events and fostering community participation.

