

AustralAsian Centre for Human Rights and Health Inc

www.achrh.org



ACHRH

Empowering Communities

November 2024

Newsletter



Congratulations Professor Manjula Datta O'Connor on being honoured by the Victorian State Government.

Victorian Senior of the Year 2024.

Manjula was also ***Inducted into the Victorian Honour Roll 2024*** 🎉



Editorial

Manjula Datta O'Connor Hon. A/ Professor Psychiatry. Author of Daughters of Durga



I am honoured to receive the two awards, the Victorian Senior of the Year 2024 and being Inducted to the Victorian Honour Roll. In my speech I thanked the Victim-survivors of Family Violence in teaching me about what we need to change in our society. And secondly the community of the Indian Subcontinent for working with us and supporting the AustralAsian Centre. I also acknowledged the significant role of the Board of the AustralAsian Centre. In my speech I acknowledge the fact that I am a psychiatrist and thank the Royal Australian New Zealand College of Psychiatrists for giving me a lot of opportunities to include Family Violence education in the psychiatric assessment and treatment of the victims-survivors

At the AustralAsian Centre we are tireless advocates and keep the community educated and updated.

It is with great pleasure we note that our advocacy is working.

In this edition we record two important changes that have occurred as a result of our tireless work.

The first is the help for victim-survivors on temporary visa. See the article below. the victims will have direct access to the Immigration Departments the staff of the specialised Family domestic violence section.

Second a result of 12 years of research, advocacy, and the community voice – the New Amendments to the Family Law Act brought about in September 2024. Now Dowry Abuse is listed under property settlement as an example of economical abuse and return of dowry at the marriage breakup would be required by law.

We are confident the amendment will become a law

See the article below for more information on dowry abuse

We at the AustralAsian Centre wish everyone Happy Diwali.

Manjula



It is a pleasure to read the new visa support from the Immigration department

Years of advocacy from ACHRH as a member of National Advocacy Group on holders of Temporary visas who are victims of domestic family violence has led to significant improvements in the support and Australian residency position of victims on temporary visas. People in de facto relationships, victims whose sponsorship is withdrawn, the Immigration Department is accepting arranged marriage as legitimate. Previously it was rejected by many in the Department on the grounds “it was not based on love” like the western marriage system.

People who are stuck overseas can get help from the Immigration department. They have 28 days to return back if tricked into going back home, and sponsorship withdrawn.

Victims on tourist visa, student visa, skilled migrant visa or partners are entitled to receiving one off financial support of \$5000, Medicare, legal aid and housing support. There is financial support available to people on temporary visas. This is available through the [Australian Red Cross](#)

The Australian Red Cross Family and Domestic Violence Financial Assistance Program is available for people who are:

- on temporary visas, or with uncertain visa status, living in Australia
- experiencing domestic and family violence
- experiencing financial hardship.

WHAT TO DO IF YOU ARE A VICTIM-SURVIVOR ON TEMPORARY VISA HOLDER

If you are a temporary visa holder, you can contact Immigration Department ‘s specialist Domestic and Family Violence Support Section.

You can do this by completing the online form at [Contact us](#). Once they have received your online form, a Visa Support Officer will contact you to discuss your situation.

They are not entitled to Permanent Residency visa yet. We will continue to advocate to the Government to allow Family Violence visa to such victims.

Save the date!

ACHRH Annual General Meeting

Wednesday December 4th, 2024

6pm to 9:30pm

Scots' Church - 156 Collins Street, Melbourne.

DOWRY ABUSE IN FAMILY LAW ACT AMENDMENTS!!!!

We at the AustralAsian Centre for Human Rights and Health have been successful after years of campaigning and submissions to Victorian Government and Federal Government hearings.

We now have DOWRY ABUSE INCLUDED IN THE NEW FAMILY LAW AMENDMENTS.

Family Law Amendment Bill 2024

Sch 1 – Property Reforms

Section c)

coercing a family member (including by use of threats, physical abuse

or emotional or psychological abuse):

(i) to give or seek money, assets or other items as dowry;

(ii) to do or agree to things in connection with a practice of dowry;

(d) hiding or falsely denying things done or agreed to by the family

member, including hiding or falsely denying the receipt of money, assets

or other items, in connection with a practice of dowry.

You can read more in this article on the ABC website: <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2024-11-04/dowry-abuse-is-widespread-in-australia-but-new-laws-offer-hope/104470096>



Professor Manjula O'Connor is a psychiatrist who works with victims of dowry abuse. (ABC News: Patrick Stone)

You are invited to our 'Mother India' event at the National Library of Australia – 12 November 2024 – 6pm

Mother India: Gender and the Diaspora

Tuesday 12 November at 6pm

at the National Library of Australia.

Join us for a fascinating panel discussion that will explore the issues faced by Australian women with Indian heritage. What are the roles and expectations of women in India and how do these play out among the Indian diaspora in Australia?

The panel includes the editor of "Growing up Indian in Australia", Aarti Betigeri, and selected contributors from the book.



Entry is free to this event, but bookings are essential. A book signing in the Foyer will follow the event.

For further information, to book your free ticket, and to read the speaker bios, please visit the event page: <https://www.nla.gov.au/whats-on/events/mother-india-gender-and-diaspora>

For those unable to attend in-person, the event will be available to view live online via the Library's [Facebook](#) and [YouTube](#) pages. You do not need to book a ticket to watch the event online.

Sneh Project

Sneh, a Hindi term meaning 'affection', is a community theatre project. The project builds on ACHRH's community work focusing on the prevention of family violence.

You can read the Sneh Project Evaluation Report on the ACHRH website at this link:

https://www.achrh.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/SNEH-Evaluation_-Final-Report-.pdf



FINDING AFFECTION

Finding Affection is a moving documentary that delves into the making of the SNEH theatre project, and the journey of the participants as they attempt to harness the power of participatory theatre to address deep-seated issues of domestic and family violence (DFV) within their own communities.

Written and directed by award winning film Director Emma Macey-Storch (Geeta 2021 www.geetafilm.com, Ferguson Film Prize 2022, Best Social Justice Documentary at Santa Barbara International Film Festival, Official Selection at MIFF), and beautifully captured by Melbourne based cinematographer Rudi Siira (Golden Tripod Australian Cinematographers society), Finding Affection captures the raw emotions and challenges faced by the participants of SNEH Theatre as they navigate the complexities of scriptwriting, performing and revealing their own stories to the world.

Under the expert guidance of theatre Director Namrata Sharma, the SNEH performers find a way to transform their fragmented memories into powerful theatrical performances that serve as poignant mirrors of reality.

Funded by The Victoria Government, AustralAsian Centre for Human Rights and Health, Australian India Medical Graduates Association (AIMGA) Sydney, Finding Affection is a true testament to the transformative power of storytelling in breaking the silence surrounding DFV, and the importance of empowering individuals to become catalysts for change in their own communities.

Featuring: Aakanksha Goyal, Amit Muliya, Chris Howse, Deep Dhanoa, Gurbin Kaur, Jagmohan Sharma, Jayati Kalia, Mahinder Saluja, Murli Calpakam, Nitasha Malik, Pooja Chandna, Priyanka Tamhane, Saran Kaur, Shamsia Sanctis, Versha Sharma, Victoria Harrison, theatre director Namrata Sharma and Psychiatrist Prof Manjula Datta O'Connor from the Australian Centre for Human Rights and Health (ACHRH)

With support from the Sneh Theatre Team: Clare Keating, Gauri Kapoor, Marshie Rajakumar, Navjot Singh, Nayana Bhandari, Sara Singh, Shruti Malaviya and project counsellors Dr Ashima Soni and Dr. Mithali Das.

Finding Affection is a Some Kind of Squirrel Productions and AustralAsian Centre for Human Rights and Health (ACHRH) film.

Finding Affection / 34 minutes / Australia / 2024

Writer/Director	Emma Macey-Storch
Cinematographer	Rudi Siira
Sound Recording	Alex Wakefield
	Tim Smith
Editing	Emma Macey-Storch
	Ruiqi Fu
Sound Designer	Ryan Granger
	(from Dead on Sound)
Audio Editors	Johnsen Cummings
	Lachlan Harris
Composer	Petra Salsjo
Colourist	Tim Morton
Camera Operators	Rudi Siira,
	Noah Hodgson
	Michael Ciarlo
	Ruiqi Fu
Associate Producer	Marshie Rajakumar
Runners	Agnieszka Majer
	Benjamin Storch



You can watch the "Finding Affection" trailer at this link:

[https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=ZT-](https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=ZT-OhOLhr7lI&pp=ygUZRmluZGluZyBhZmZlY3Rpb24gdHJhaWxlcg%3D%3D)

[OhOLhr7lI&pp=ygUZRmluZGluZyBhZmZlY3Rpb24gdHJhaWxlcg%3D%3D](https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=ZT-OhOLhr7lI&pp=ygUZRmluZGluZyBhZmZlY3Rpb24gdHJhaWxlcg%3D%3D)

#Justice For Abhaya

By Reejuta Dey

On 9 August 2024, a horrific incident occurred at R G Kar Medical College, one of the prestigious medical colleges in Kolkata, India. A female postgraduate student was found brutally murdered and raped on the college premises while she was on duty. What followed was absolute mismanagement by the college and government authorities regarding the investigation and evidence-collection procedures. The media reports emerging out of Kolkata were extremely disturbing and heartbreaking. India's medical fraternity was rattled, as days passed news regarding the incident and subsequent mishandling by authorities led to a wave of protests across the country. The protests were led by the common people in solidarity with the medical staff to highlight safety issues faced by women in every aspect of society. They demanded justice for the victims of the horrific crime and slogans were raised echoing the pain felt by many deeply shaken by the incident.

As an overseas-based Indian this incident shocked me to the core. While incidents of criminal acts against women are common, especially in India, this incident was different. This time the incident happened at the victim's workplace which was supposed to be a safe space with appropriate security presence. My sister is a postgraduate medical student at a government medical college in Mumbai, and I asked her every hour if she was alright, panicking if the phone went unanswered. It reminded me of my mother's anxiety while I was growing up, worrying sick if I was unable to take a call while I lived away from home in India.

In the days following the incident, I talked to a close friend, Tilottama, and we discussed organising a vigil here in Melbourne. We both felt helpless and wanted to raise our voices seeking justice for the victim. We recounted our numerous painful experiences of dealing with molestation, and harassment while growing up including the constant struggle of dealing with the patriarchy prevalent in Indian society. We did not have any prior experience organising any vigil/protest; however, we were grateful for the overwhelming support we received from various segments of the Indian diaspora. Our first vigil took place on 18 August 2024, it drew in alumni from the RG Kar Medical College, members of the Indian Medical Association based in Melbourne and members of the Indian diaspora. A large section of the diaspora consisted of Bengalis who had families back in Kolkata and were proud of the city's legacy of art and culture. This heinous incident caused them immense pain and they felt keeping quiet was no longer an option.



We had three demands from the government authorities of India, first and foremost a free, fair investigation and trial for the victim without any inference from entities trying to derail the process. Secondly, ensure safety and security at the workplace for individuals across all sectors and genders. Finally, emphasise including sex education, and concepts of consent in every school curriculum to bring change in society from the grassroots level. During our vigil, we had many speakers calling for the authorities to take positive actions towards the betterment of society. We raised our voices in slogans and sang to demand justice for the victim. There was this prevailing sense of sadness and anger throughout the vigil along with a strong resolve to continue talking about the horrific crime and raising our demands through different mediums.

Following the 18 August 2024 vigil, we joined hands with a Global Protest group to gather again on 8 and 29 September 2024. Hundreds of cities across the world joined forces to demand justice for the victim and reiterate the need to create a safe society free from gender-based crime. Our joint efforts garnered significant media attention added to ongoing regular protests happening in several parts of West Bengal. We as a group were able to gather 200K signatures for our petition addressed to the PMO and President of India and our counterparts in New York hand-delivered the petition to the PMO staff while the Prime Minister of India was visiting New York for the recent UNGA summit held on 22 and 23 September 2024. We are resolved to keep our fight alive and stand in strong solidarity with the West Bengal Junior Doctor's Front. We hope to see a significant change in our society towards gender equality, safety and accountability on behalf of the authorities.

To conclude the last few months have been emotional as well as challenging. This incident has shaken me to the core and now all the shackles of fear and shame are broken. It has ingrained in me this urge to keep working towards women empowerment and helping the fight to break the barriers of patriarchy.



Where Happiness Shall Wed Our Fate

By: Shweta Mishra 'shawryaa'

When nations bleed
And wars hang round necks
When all's dark and dead
When swords drip of black blood
And daggers strike the chests
I still see my eyes fixed
Fixed on shores of eternity
Fixed at the end of sky
Fixed on the horizons
Fixed on the dews
Fixed on the burning lanterns
Fixed in hope and desire
Desires that never fade
Desires in you and me

Desires that keep us alive
Desires that never die
Desires of love pure and high
Desires of enduring wait that mystifies
Mysteries of union
That shall take us together
To some unknown land
Where fear and hatred would have no address
Where the verandahs will not have stains of blood
And courtyards will not scream in disdain
Where our doors shall be sprinkled
With faith and integrity
Love and companionship
Your love my walls and roof
My love for you will be our nameplate
In our abode happiness shall wed our fate

BIO NOTE

Dr Shweta Mishra “shawryaa” (M.A. Ph.D.) is an Assistant Professor in English and presently teaches at MBP Government Post-Graduate College, Lucknow (Uttar Pradesh) India. A gold medalist in M.A. English, Lucknow University, she has authored several research papers that have been published in various reputed journals.

Creative writing is what she passionately loves to do.



Donations to ACHRHR are now tax deductible!

Thank you for considering a gift to ACHRHR, which will support our work to create happy and healthier communities; did you know that donations to ACHRHR over \$2 can now be claimed as a tax deduction?

Since 2012, ACHRHR has delivered a range of programs which tackle issues affecting migrant communities in Australia. If you would like to be a part of making tangible impacts for at risk communities, please contact Kate Grimme on 0400 032 821 or email info@achrh.org We will be pleased to provide you with more information on how you can make a financial contribution and to share details on the programs and projects we run.

**What to do if you suffer
dowry abuse?
Help is available and
you are not alone.**

1800 737 732



WHERE TO GO FOR HELP

- **POLICE IN EMERGENCY -- 000**
- **YOUR GP -- they will refer you to the right place.**
- **NATIONAL DOMESTIC AND FAMILY VIOLENCE COUNSELLING SERVICE
1800 RESPECT**
- **INTOUCH MULTICULTURAL CENTER AGAINST FAMILY VIOLENCE –
1800 755 988**
- **Safe Steps Family Violence Response Centre, phone
24 Hour statewide line 1800 015 188**
- **MEN'S 24-HOUR REFERRAL SERVICE
1800 065 973 (FREE CALL VICTORIA ONLY)**
- **WOMEN'S INFORMATION & REFERRAL AGENCY (WIRE)
03 9348 9416
inforequests@wire.org.au**

WHY GET HELP?

- ❖ Domestic Violence damages our culture
- ❖ Domestic violence breaks our homes
- ❖ Domestic Violence causes:
 - Anxiety,
 - Depression,
 - Suicide,
 - Homicide in women, men and children

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

- ❖ Support those who may be victims
- ❖ Encourage victims to seek help and become survivors
- ❖ Encourage perpetrators to seek help
- ❖ DO NOT BE SILENT ON DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

*Say No to Family Domestic
Violence*