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Saturday, July 30, 2005

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**Nation**

**Battered husbands join hands to take on 'better' halves**

**Press Trust of India**

Posted online: Thursday, June 16, 2005 at 11:43 hours IST  
 Updated: Thursday, June 16, 2005 at 12:18 hours IST

**Kolkata, June 16:** Men facing a hard time from their spouses but have none to turn to, can take heart. 'Pirito Purush Poti Parishad' (forum of oppressed husbands) is here to take up their cause.

The organisation, which has 1500 members, takes up the cause of men who suffer mental and physical torture at the hands of their wives, and offers help ranging from counselling and legal advice to fighting their cases in court.

"Women having to face torture from their husbands and in-laws is quite common in the country, but incidents of men being on the receiving end are gradually on the rise, specially in urban areas," says the organisation's president, Aruna Mukherjee.

"For women there are many laws to deal with such problems and many bodies like the Women's Commission and the women's grievance cell, while there is no facility for men who face problems from their wives," she told PTI here.

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"It's not that we entertain the problems faced by men only, but also those of women," Mukherjee, a practising advocate at the Calcutta high court, said of the organisation that was founded in 1992.

"Thirty per cent of the members of our organisation are women," she said with obvious pride claiming that these women have come forward for the

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cause of suffering men.

Demanding amendment to section 498a of IPC (punishment for subjecting a married woman to cruelty), which is "loaded in favour of women", Mukherjee claimed that there were several instances when women have been found to take advantage of this law for wrong causes.

"As a lawyer, I have seen the Act being misused by women, while many women who have really suffered cannot even approach police stations or courts," Mukherjee said.

"Charges under section 498a be either made bailable, or a new section under

498B be introduced wherein males would be able to lodge complaints of domestic torture against their spouses," she suggested.

"We want the guilty, whether husband or wife, to be punished, but not the misuse of law," the elderly lawyer, who comes from a conservative North Kolkata locality, said.

Mukherjee, who has authored a book named "Narir Swadhikar" (women's rights), claimed that in the name of 'women's liberation', a lot of wrongs being committed by a section of women, "breaking up many families on the slightest pretext or issue.

"Our aim is to create a healthy society, where people are happy and families stay together," she said.

"We enquire into complaints received from men and verify whether they are genuine and then act on them," Mukherjee said adding that a panel of lawyers helps these people face domestic problems that they encounter.

Claiming that the organisation receives over 150 complaints from men a month, she said, "We deal with cases neutrally. We first enquire whether the man is speaking the truth."

Asked why being a woman, she was fighting for the cause of men, Mukherjee said "in the 19th century, when women in Bengal were suffering a lot, great men like Iswarachandra Bidyasagar and Raja Ram Mohan Roy took up cudgels for them, so now when some men are suffering due to women we women should come forward and stand by them."

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