

# Greencard grooms and grey futures

Marriage to a US-settled boy doesn't always have a happy ending for girls

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A FEW weeks ago, Dr Gayatri Bhaskar, injured in an accident in the US, was brought back home by her husband. He had started a fund for her welfare, but the money collected never reached her. Duping her of funds, he walked out of the marriage. This isn't an isolated case.

And yet it does not dissuade the large number of

mental abuse, sometimes physical.

"Domestic violence usually takes the form of controlling behaviour by the man. The woman is forbidden from talking to neighbours, friends and relatives, visit anyone or to have phone conversation. This is prevalent in India too, but it's worse in a foreign land where the woman is helpless in the absence of family," reveals counsellor Mira Ravi.

But parents of Mamata Reddy, who lives with her husband abroad say, "The situation is not as grim as it is often portrayed," says Mamata's mother. "My daughter is married for three years, and there have been no problems."

Women's organisation Vimochana too feels such cases are rare. "We have had cases where abused women come in for further help and counselling back home, but it is not too common, perhaps because the place of abuse is not here," says Shobhana.

While most feel it is upto the woman to stand up for herself, others think that a girl married off to a stranger from another land is firstly abused by her parents. Ironically, women's NGOs report that "It is when a woman begins to stand up for herself or tries to leave the relationship that she is in the greatest danger."

## MARITAL WOES

"The woman is forbidden from talking to neighbours, friends and relatives"

parents who want greencard-holders as husbands for their daughters. When such a prized groom turns up, they often don't bother to look into the boy's professional or social background.

The consequences reveal themselves in statistics. According to the South Asian Community abroad, one in every four families has experienced some kind of abuse of the girl married off to the US. FBI statistics in the US show that a woman is abused in America every nine seconds. NGOs abroad reveal that of three calls that come in every one call is to report domestic violence, mostly