

“Ahimsa” and Domestic Violence in the Metropolitan Area of Durban, South Africa

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ABSTRACT This paper is aimed at promoting the role of the South African Hindu Maha Sabha (SAHMS) (hereinafter referred to as the Maha Sabha), a faith based organization (FBO), to increase awareness and change attitudes that influence behaviour among people from all walks of life, as an important factor in preventing and ending violence against women. Its focus is on domestic violence and hopes to stimulate an interest in an area that has been inadequately researched by scholars who study people of Indian origin. Domestic violence is a universal problem which occurs across all economic, ethnic, religious, gender and cultural groups. Data for this paper was drawn from two sources: firstly, evidence based on violence against women reported to the Advice Desk for the Abused located at the University of KwaZulu-Natal and secondly, informal interviews conducted with women who were known to experience domestic violence. This paper advocates that within Hinduism, Ahimsa is the cornerstone of traditional Indian values. Thus, it is of paramount importance that FBO's such as the Maha Sabha are in the forefront of efforts to bring about change which will help to eliminate violence against women.

“If one does not practice non-violence in one's personal relations with others, and hope to use it in bigger affairs, one is vastly mistaken. Non -violence like charity begins at home” (Mahatma Gandhi).