

India Mahila Association

P.O. Box 67714, Station O, Vancouver, B.C. V5W 3V2

January 13, 1983

TO: Samaanta

FROM: India Mahila Association

In 1981 the India Mahila Association proposed that an action coalition, representing various organizations and individuals from the Indian Community, be set up to deal with the issue of violence against women in our community. In January 1982 Samaanta was formed, to eradicate violence and discrimination against women of Indian origin, with a specific focus on the internal education of its members, and education of the community in general with emphasis on changing men's attitudes towards women. In other words Samaanta's intended objective was to work with men. It was also understood that Samaanta was to be a complementary organization to the I.M.A., taking its general direction from, and being accountable to the I.M.A.

It is commonly known that many of the I.M.A. members who joined Samaanta, have never been invited to any general or special meetings of Samaanta over the past year. In fact, Samaanta has refused to meet I.M.A. to discuss common concerns and issues affecting both organizations. The women on the Samaanta executive have been practically outnumbered by men, which is contrary to one of its fundamental principles.

Samaanta is ignoring its objectives and pursuing duplicitious activities. Nothing significant has been done to educate men. We are outraged and disappointed that a group of men and women, created to educate men, has chosen the way out -of simply "educating" women.

The India Mahila Association is unable to work with Samaanta under these circumstances, and therefore is withdrawing its support from Samaanta. With respect to your invitation, dated January 7, 1983, re Women's Drop-In Centre, suffice to say that we are not prepared to meet with you until you have agreed to rectify the error pointed out herein.

Date

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

We wish to inform our friends that the India Mahila Association is withdrawing from the coalition SAMAAANTA.

SAMAAANTA was formed in January 1982 to 'eradicate violence and discrimination against women of Indian origin.'

We were part of the coalition with the expectation that the primary function of the group was self and community education on violence against women. That during the process of education and discussion we would develop short and long term strategies for dealing with this violence.

We are unable to work with the coalition at this time for the following reasons:

a) We feel that most of the focus of SAMAAANTA so far has been on 'victim support'. The JMA has been doing 'victim support' almost since our inception 9 years ago. Consequently, we cannot work with the coalition, since its a duplication of our work and we do not have the time or resources to do the same work in 2 places.

b) We are dis-satisfied with how the group has functioned so far and feel that there has been insufficient communication between JMA and SAMAAANTA. In our efforts to remedy this situation, we asked for a meeting with the executive of SAMAAANTA. In our special meeting with the executive in August 1982 we were not able to reach a mutually satisfactory solution to our differences.

c) There are more active men in the committee than women. Under different circumstances this would be an asset but in this case we feel that the men dominate the coalition.

Furthermore, we feel that the first function of the coalition should have been self-education. This would have enabled men to better understand the position of women in this society and the hows and whys of the violence against women from the women's perspective. This would have benefited our work together both men and women. Unfortunately this did not happen.

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