

Sanda & Priya

In November 1999, The WSG was approached by two women who were in desperate need of protection, financial aid and peer support. Sanda and Priya, 21 and 22 years of age respectively at the time, had formed a relationship which put them in jeopardy with friends and family.

Priya had met Sanda at a friend's house, where Sanda was staying. Priya would frequently stay at this friend's house. Sanda was engaged to the friend's brother who was working in West Asia. Sanda was also estranged from her own family, and had expressed to Priya that she was very unhappy living with her fiancé's family as she was treated like a servant. Her fiancé (Nimal) rarely wrote or called her any more. In time, Sanda and Priya got into an intimate relationship.

A letter written by Sanda to Priya was discovered by one of Nimal's sisters on a day that Priya was staying over, and their relationship was discovered. The next morning, when Priya left her friend's home, Sanda was waiting for her on the road, having decided to leave with Priya. They visited a friend's house, after which Priya went back to her own house. By this time, Nimal's family had already confronted Priya's parents and abused them, revealing the incident that happened. Priya was asked to leave because she 'had brought shame on her family by having this unnatural relationship with another woman'.

They had nowhere to go initially, and stayed with different people from time to time who gave them shelter. When she left home, Priya had just finished schooling and was unemployed. She has to find employment to support the two of them. Sanda also asked for her dowry (including furniture) back, but was met with abusive behaviour. She subsequently made a police entry stating that Nimal's family was harassing them.

In the meantime, Nimal returned to Sri Lanka and started harassing Priya's family and friends, determined to find Sanda at any cost. Not knowing this and unable to retrieve Sanda's belongings from Nimal's house, the two women sort assistance from a group of underworld characters who were known to one of Priya's cousins.

A few days later Sanda was asked to collect her belongings, and accompanied by Priya's cousin, the two girls went to the specified place. Priya was told by the man they met that she and the cousin should go and get a lorry to take the things away, leaving Sanda behind. When Priya refused to do this, the man advised Sanda that if she did not go back to Nimal, they would be in grave danger. When Sanda refused to do so, he pulled out a gun and threatened Priya, asking her to leave immediately leaving Sanda behind. Priya still refused and told the thug that they would leave and that he should keep all the belongings. The thug revealed at this point that Nimal had approached him to get Sanda back and given him a contract to kill Priya. She managed to extricate herself and Sanda from the situation and they ran away from there. They had not known that this man was also a friend of Nimal's.

Some time after this, Priya started experiencing problems with her job and soon lost it. It was at this time, October 2000 that she heard of COJ and WSG through a friend and asked for help. The WSG members gave financial aid to them from their personal funds at the time. Subsequently, the COJ provided them with a safe refuge as Priya's life was at risk. The COJ and WSG also arranged for them to live in the COJ's Kandy centre for some months. Eventually, the WSG offered Priya a different job and they moved back to Colombo. After nearly 3 years together, they separated, and some time later Sanda got married. Both live in happier circumstances.

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