

Mahila Sammelan

The India Association of San Antonio held **Mahila Sammelan** on March 22 in honor of the International Women's Month. **Vaishali Dev and Tasneem Qamari were coordinators for this event.** This year, in keeping with the United Nations theme of Women and Men United to end Violence against Women and Girls, we invited both men and women to the screening and discussion of the film "PROVOKED" which deals with the issue of violence. What followed was one of the most vibrant and stimulating discussions we have ever heard on our premises. We heard from our panelists and audience the possible causes and cures for this festering wound that is eating away at the heart of our communities, in the most affluent of homes, the most educated families. Together we decided that it is critical to broaden the community's understanding of domestic violence as everyone's issue, not just a woman's issue. Together we came up with questions to ponder:

- ◆ Would the people in our communities be able to recognize, acknowledge and stand up to violence when they experience, see or suspect it?
- ◆ Do people in our community know what's available if their relative, friend, or neighbor asks for help?

We were blessed with the presence and inspiring words of Mr. Chandu Radia, the founding father of Mahila Sammelan in San Antonio. We thank our panelists from the depth of our hearts for so wholeheartedly participating in this event and for educating and guiding us. Presence of activist and poet Ms. Mamata Misra who works with Saheli, the Austin SafePlace and goes on lecture circuits for motivational speaking added extra color to this activity. Indian community appreciates Ms. Meera Ballal, San Antonio Family Justice Center for providing assistance for the victims and their families and their rehabilitation. Our heart felt appreciation for Dr. Budhi Sagar who so candidly articulated his point of view on domestic violence. A special thanks to Sarwat Hussein for her splendid moderation of the events. IASA appreciates Mr. Pat Patel for always feeding the wonderful women of San Antonio. IASA thanks all the attendees and the coordinators for making this event a huge success.