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Published: November 26, 2013 00:00 IST | Updated: November 26, 2013 05:31 IST

Self-defence workshop for women packs a punch

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Staving off danger: Around 30 college students and IT professionals attended a self-defence workshop held at Russian Centre of Science and Culture, in Chennai—Photo: K.V. Srinivasan

Would the recent attack on a woman inside an ATM in Bangalore have played out differently if the victim had been trained in the basics of self defence?

If you ask any of the 30-odd college students and IT professionals who took up a session on self-defence techniques at the Russian Centre of Science and Culture here on Monday, they couldn't agree more with their instructor when he said the result would have rather been a "funny image than a horrific one". Forget pepper sprays, expensive stun guns or fancy tasers. These participants had just learnt how to quell a potential attack through a sequence of steps ranging from a hostile glare and a vehement "Stop!", to a blow to the nose or a kick in the groin— in training jargon termed "psychological", "technical", "legal" and "physical" strategies of self defence.

"There is always a spike in demand for self-defence training after some sensational crime, which is not necessarily a good thing," said Anoop Madhavan, founder of Chennai-based organisation Survival Instincts and a certified health-and-safety instructor of the American Red Cross, who led the session. Self-defence preparedness should, rather, be imbibed as a culture, he added.

Nonetheless, Survival Instincts has added slides on how to deal with attacks such as the one in the ATM to its training repertoire, which usually involves a set of simulated exercises, handy tips and power-point details. The session taught women how to deal with attacks, which come from the front or from behind, and the imperative of a crouching stance where the body is stable as a triangle and the

knee is slightly bent— a deceptively-defensive position from which one can launch a counter strike.

“In these days of increasing acts of violence against women, it is best to have a certain level of preparedness,” said Gayathri, a student from the SRM College of Science and Technology, who attended the session along with her mother.