

Silent tears - Pashtun traditions as constructed by men. and for men

Friday 25 November 2011, by [SHAH Shahid](#) (Date first published: 25 November 2011).

My culture, the Pashtun culture, has its own traditions that dominate every other law. These traditions are, however, constructed by men. and for men. Women are the silent victims.

To begin with, her birth is always a bad news. A girl's responsibility is to obey all those around her and never to raise her voice. Else, "Khalq ba sa wae" (what will people say?). This good girl is always denied attention her brother gets from parents. While every nonsensical comment by a goofy son is appreciated and applauded, even an intelligent comment by a daughter is ignored.

Good education is not meant for her. If she is lucky enough to go to school, she most likely cannot put her education to any practical use anyway - for she will not be permitted to use her skills and talent and will instead be expected not to roam around outside of her home.

When selecting her life partner, she has to follow her family's choice no matter what. If she dares ask for her rights, she is a 'bad girl'. If she fights for her right and goes for her choice, she has to face the consequences. That may lead to "honour killing."

To have a glimpse into these poor lives, I am narrating a true story of a 'good woman'.

A rich girl born in a good family was proposed by another good family for a good man. Both parties agreed on the marriage as both were socially approved as good. The woman couldn't get education because in her society, good girls were not supposed to go out of their home for anything especially education, as "it turns good girls into bold and bad girls (independent)" who learn bad things (awareness) from bad people (human-rights activists) and then ask questions from elders about their freedom. And girls from noble families (socially approved) stay inside their homes so that they can be protected from the dirty gaze of the so-called respectable men.

Hah! Self-serving theories!

She was married off to that good boy in her teens. The innocent girl started a new life with the usual practices that all girls around her did, but she got confused about her good husband's unusual demands that she had never heard before because she was raised as a good girl, thus failing to prove as a "good wife". She started hearing words about her like ugly, unattractive, goofy and sometimes these words turned into violence like beating, crushing her self-respect and self-esteem.

But sometimes he would become good, talking sweetly. The wife took it as a pleasant miracle, but it was a miracle of her wealth that she brought from her father as dowry - her jewelry and her property. He wanted to become successful in life and for this, he wanted money from his expected-to-be-loyal wife.

She who was raised to be a loyal wife by society gave all her jewelry to see her husband happy. After a few days he again wore his monster mask while coming back to routine life, treating her badly because he knew she could not raise her voice because. This happened often thereafter.

The couple gave birth to a daughter for which only the wife was punished. Daughter! What a sham! An excellent excuse to marry another woman to get a son – a pride. The smart, good man got a chance to live a life of his own choice and his hunt for some new prey began and he married his beloved bird with acceptance of society.

This good girl could only see her fate: sharing her dreams, her rights, her home and her empty bed and was even being deprived of basic rights with flooding tears but couldn't raise her voice.

That could give pain to her beloved parents to whom she promised that she would never do anything that will make society laugh at them that they raised a bad girl.

While bearing all these injustice shedding silent tears, she fell into depression leading to other personality complexities, affecting her daughter, as her husband was living with his other wife and many children who were fed by this good girl's wealth.

After her parents' death, she was left all alone, as no one had right to interfere in husband-wife personal matters. She has a right in religion to get a divorce from such a husband... she has a right in law to punish her husband, but she couldn't knock court for justice as it would make stories in public and society would then call her a bad girl. No one would accept her socially and no one would marry her daughter.

Now her parents' wealth is close to finish, because she cannot work to earn more, but she cannot kill herself because her daughter will then be left alone. Now she is waiting for a miracle.

Shahida Shah

P.S.

* FROM VIEWPOINT ONLINE ISSUE NO. 78, NOVEMBER 25, 2011

<http://www.viewpointonline.net/silent-tears.html>

* The author blogs at: <http://syedashahidashah.blogspot.com/>. E-mail: shahidashah live.com