

**An Introduction to  
Forced Marriage in the South Asian  
Community in the United States**

*Debjani Roy*



working to end violence against South Asian women  
New Jersey, USA  
2011

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## Foreword

With great pleasure, I would like to introduce the next several papers in Manavi's Occasional Paper Series, launched in 2007. Our work to end violence against women is reinforced by this documentation and welding of connections between theory and practice.

Manavi is a New Jersey-based women's rights organization committed to ending all forms of violence and exploitation against South Asian women living in the U.S. Established in 1985, Manavi was the first organization of its kind in the U.S. Manavi's programs involve direct service provision for women survivors of violence; grassroots organizing for social change within the South Asian community; and informing the practice of mainstream U.S. institutions and organizations to better serve South Asian battered women. Through its work, Manavi ensures that women of South Asian descent in the U.S can exercise their fundamental right to live a life of dignity that is safe and free from violence.

Like much of the work in immigrant communities, the area of violence against women among South Asian immigrants also suffers from an enormous paucity of research. At Manavi, we believe that research and practice are inextricably intertwined. Research provides direction to the practice of direct service to battered women, just as direct service informs future areas of research. Together, both research and practice have policy implications that create lasting change. In other words, it is essential to continually build upon and refine a body of knowledge. The Manavi Occasional Paper Series was conceptualized in order to further this thought.

This series was launched with funding from the Office on Violence Against Women, U.S. Department of Justice. We are grateful for their assistance in helping us start the process, as well as continue it. Ultimately, we hope to develop a comprehensive series of papers that will inform the research and activist communities in the U.S. and beyond. Scholars who are interested in contributing to the series are encouraged to contact us with their ideas. Such collaborations, we believe, will not only enhance the series but also expand the Manavi community.

Maneesha Kelkar  
Executive Director  
Manavi



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# 1

## Introduction

The practice of Forced Marriage, where one or both persons involved are coerced through pressure or abuse to consent to a marriage against their will, has been widely addressed in places such as the United Kingdom, but it has only recently begun to enter the framework of women's rights advocacy work here in the United States. I am an Advocate at Manavi, a New Jersey-based South Asian<sup>1</sup> women's rights organization (SAWO) who has been trained on the issue of forced marriage in the UK. In this position, I have observed that in the US we are only beginning to understand what this practice is, what populations it affects, how prevalent it is and how we can effectively respond to this form of violence against women and girls so as to ensure the safety and well-being of those subjected to it. In June 2010, for the purposes of this paper, I conducted a 10-question web-based survey amongst frontline advocates at 25 SAWOs across the US. The responses I received from the survey, in addition to the cases emerging through Manavi's advocacy work, confirms that forced marriages are happening in South Asian communities in the US. As frontline, grassroots advocates and activists in the South Asian community, we have witnessed a recent increase in reported cases even though this harmful traditional practice has been happening for many years.

I first developed knowledge and expertise on forced marriage in the UK first through a training program at the Ashiana Network, a London-based women's rights organization whose mission is to empower South Asian, Turkish and Iranian survivors of domestic violence. I also worked as an advocate for a short while at a refuge in the UK that housed young women between the ages of 16 and 30 who faced multiple forms of domestic violence and abuse, including forced marriage. Although I was very much aware of the types of violence and abuse that happens to women and girls globally, I was still struck by this group of young women at the refuge, most of them born and raised in the UK, who were forced to flee their homes because their safety and well-being had been compromised by their parents and family members. They had been bartered, abandoned, threatened, abused and ultimately betrayed by their families who were forcefully pushing them into marriage. Despite having grown up as a South Asian in the United States, when I learned about the experiences of these young British Asian<sup>2</sup> and Middle Eastern women, I felt deeply connected to them through our shared sense of entitlement to equal opportunities and choices in our lives as well as our struggles to fight for



these rights as immigrant women. These bright, young and intelligent women and girls at the refuge had not only been prohibited from having the freedom to make their own choices in life, but their lives were threatened for wanting to exercise many of their basic human rights. Whether it was socializing with friends, choice of dress, finishing school, pursuing higher education, having a career, dating, marrying someone of their choosing or not marrying at all, the parents and families attempted to exert full control over the course life took for each of these individuals.<sup>3</sup>

During this time I remember working with a young woman, Sonia,<sup>4</sup> who had fled a forced marriage. As a teenager, Sonia was forced by her aunt to marry a much older man unknown to her. Sonia's mother and father abandoned her as a child and left her in her aunt's care. As her legal guardian, her aunt coerced her with threats of abandonment into a marriage with a man who turned out to be extremely physically, verbally and emotionally abusive. One day when I accompanied Sonia to the doctor's office, she recounted an incident where her husband had grabbed her by the hair, dragged her across the kitchen and slammed her head against a door several times to the point where she lost consciousness. This type of abuse was not unusual in Sonia's married life. In fact, it appeared that over the course of Sonia's life thus far, she was subjected to several forms of oppression, violence and abuse, forced marriage being only one.

Sonia's story and the multiple stories I have heard since meeting her further highlight the fact that under a system of patriarchy, forced marriage is yet another tool of oppression, power and control. It is a form of violence and abuse faced by women and girls<sup>5</sup> around the globe, the United States being no exception. In Sonia's life, everything that preceded the forced marriage was a form of oppression, violence and abuse and what followed was more of the same until she was encouraged by a friend to seek assistance from the police and escape to a refuge.

As advocates at Manavi, in addition to working with survivors of other forms of domestic violence and sexual assault, we also work with victims of forced marriage. The cases we see are intermittent and the likely reason for this is an overall silence that pervades the issue of forced marriages in the United States. Through conversations with women who are at risk, or those who call us because of the domestic violence and abuse they are facing in their current marriage, or from the stories my fellow advocates hear in their respective communities, it is fair to conclude that in the US forced marriage is an overall hidden problem and therefore one that is seriously underreported. One of the primary reasons for this is because forced marriage is often confused with the practice of arranged marriage, and therefore difficult to identify as a form of violence against women and girls. In order to appropriately address the problems associated with forced marriage in the US, it is first important to gain a clearer picture of it. Utilizing what I learned from the UK, this paper will provide that background and will act as a basic guide for women's rights advocates and practitioners around the U.S. to identify and effectively respond to such cases through safety planning and the offering of resources. I also hope that this guide contributes to the conversation about the face of forced marriage in the

United States so that we can develop a more cohesive and coordinated national response to this issue. Although forced marriage is an issue faced by many communities, this paper will examine ways to address and respond to this issue specifically in the South Asian community in the US. Some of the suggestions may also be applicable to other communities affected by this problem.

## 2

### **What is Forced Marriage?**

Based on the 10 question web survey I conducted in June 2010, one of the questions posed to SAWOs was, “How would you define forced marriage?” The purpose of this question and the survey overall, was to gauge where we are as grassroots frontline advocates of South Asian women’s rights in the United States when it comes to our understanding of this issue. The most recurring responses I found in the survey defined forced marriage as

- marriage to someone against one’s will due to cultural/familial/societal pressure,
- when a man or a woman is put into a situation where she or he has no choice of choosing his or her own partner in marriage and is forced into this communion,
- a patriarchal tool to control women’s sexuality,
- holding a woman captive physically or emotionally and forcing her to marry someone her parents have agreed upon
- or forcing a women/child to marry a person against her will.

All of these definitions capture the essence of what forced marriage is—when two individuals, irrespective of gender or age, are coerced into marriage without consent from one or both parties. Coercion is a key component of forced marriage, where subtle or explicit pressure is placed on the individuals involved. This includes mental abuse, emotional abuse, financial abuse and blackmail, all of which can eventually escalate to, or are used alongside, physical violence. In the most extreme cases, survivors of forced marriage are threatened with their lives if they refuse to marry the person chosen for them. What makes forced marriage an especially difficult issue to report and respond to is the fact that very often the perpetrators or those committing this act of abuse are members of the immediate and extended family; this includes parents, siblings, grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins of the victim in question.

Below are several working definitions of forced marriage:

- The United States Department of the State describes a forced marriage as a marital arrangement where “at least one party does not consent or is unable to give informed consent to the marriage, and some element of duress is generally present. While forced marriages are known to occur worldwide, they are more prevalent in some countries and within some cultural and religious groups.”<sup>6</sup>
- The United Kingdom’s Forced Marriage Unit,<sup>7</sup> which gave advice and support to 1735 cases in 2010, defines forced marriage as a scenario where “one or both spouses do not (or, in the case of some adults with disabilities, cannot) consent to the marriage and duress is involved. Duress can include physical, psychological, sexual, financial and emotional pressure.”<sup>8</sup>
- The London-based Ashiana Network has expanded the definition as follows: “A child marriage can also be seen as a forced marriage since children do not have the capacity to give consent. A marriage becomes forced if there is any duress, whether physical or mental, to marry without free and valid consent. It is the perception of the individual under pressure to marry which matters when defining duress. The main point is that the individual is the only one that can really know if they are being forced or not.”<sup>9</sup>
- Shamita Das Dasgupta, co-Founder of Manavi, defines forced marriage in the *Encyclopedia of Interpersonal Violence* as “a marital union where at least one intended spouse refuses to participate but is intimidated to capitulate.”<sup>10</sup>

Each one of the above mentioned working definitions adds a different angle to the issue, noting the need for consent and the ways in which it is sought using various tactics of coercion, duress or intimidation. Additionally, the above definitions note how certain groups who are unable to show consent are forced into marriage, including adults with disabilities or younger persons and children.

# 3

## Forced Marriage vs. Arranged Marriage

There exists a commonly perceived ambiguity between the practice of arranged marriage and forced marriage. One respondent to the survey question, “What is forced marriage?” said, “[Forced marriage is] a subtler form of abuse towards women, which is usually looked at as a duty that good responsible parents have to fulfill.” This response highlights the common confusion when it comes to understanding the differences between arranged and forced marriage, especially since traditionally in South Asian cultures, it has been the parents’ primary duty, role and responsibility to arrange the marriage of their son and/or daughter. Historically in South Asia and in many other parts of the world, individuals were married at a younger age. Due to their lack of experience, they were not entrusted with the decision as to who they would marry since it was assumed that the elders would have better judgment regarding this very serious matter.<sup>11</sup> Also, within the South Asian context, marriage was and often still is seen as a union of not only individuals, but also of families. One reason for this is because the joint family, where generations of family members live in the same household, used to be the standard living arrangement. This meant that upon marrying, when the bride would move to her husband’s home, as custom dictated, not only would she have to adjust to her new husband, but she would also be expected to adapt to an entirely new family. In other words, “. . . it [was] only logical for parents to assume the responsibility of selecting spouses for their sons because the bride was part of the whole family environment rather than a wife only to her husband.”<sup>12</sup>

According to the book *Marriage, the Family and Women in India*, six reasons why the practice of arranged marriages has historically taken place in Indian society are as follows:

1. It helps maintain the social satisfaction system in the society.
2. It gives parents control, over family members.
3. It enhances the chances to preserve and continue the ancestral lineage.
4. It provides an opportunity to strengthen the kinship group.
5. It allows the consolidation and extension of family property.
6. It enables the elders to preserve the principle of endogamy.<sup>13</sup>

Although nowadays many South Asians both in the United States and ‘back home’ are choosing their own spouses independently, those who still participate in the practice of arranged marriage, in its many modern derivations, are meant to have a say in the choice of spouse. Whether they are introduced to potential partners through parents, family, family friends, matrimonial websites or even sometimes marriage brokers, the key issues of choice and consent separate the practices of arranged marriage from that of forced marriage. However, it is worth noting that under a system of patriarchy as it manifests in South Asian cultures, the degree of choice that a woman has who is generally expected to be married to a man by a certain age is questionable when it comes to arranged marriage.

One of the ways in which the practice of arranged marriage has affected South Asian communities in the United States is through the process and experience of immigration. As one example, many South Asian men who immigrated to the United States through the various waves of the 1960s and 1970s, were pressured by parents and family members to return to their home country to get married before they permanently settled abroad. Marrying and settling with someone outside of their particular background (i.e. race, region, religion, caste, etc.) was not encouraged. Both men and women may not have been explicitly asked if they wanted to marry the chosen person at that time, but they obliged out of respect for tradition and their parents’ choice, perhaps believing that this was the natural next step in life. Also, for women at that time, marriage was not so much a choice but rather an expectation, her identity primarily being defined through her role as a wife and mother. This sets up a general overview and context within which arranged marriages historically and traditionally took place among a certain South Asian immigrant population in the United States. Of course, there are variations of this trend amongst the immigrants from the 1960s and 1970s. Also, the immigrant waves that followed, including those of the 1980s, may have experienced something different where arranged marriages took place in the home country, children were born, and then the family immigrated to the United States, based on a visa or green card sponsorship from family members already in the United States. The marriage practices of the more recent wave of H-1B visa holders are a combination of the first and second major waves.

The U.S. Department of State explains the difference between arranged marriage and forced marriage as follows:

*Arranged marriages have been a long-standing tradition in many cultures and countries. The Department respects this tradition, and makes a very clear distinction between a forced marriage and an arranged marriage. In arranged marriages, the families of both spouses take a leading role in arranging the marriage but the choice whether to accept the arrangement remains with the individuals.<sup>14</sup>*

Although it is clear that the fundamental difference between arranged and forced marriage comes down to the issue of choice and consent, it is important to understand what choice and consent means and looks like in situations of marriage in the South Asian context.

# 4

## What Are the Motives of Forced Marriage?

In order for advocates and practitioners to effectively respond to situations of forced marriage in the South Asian community, it is important to develop our understanding of the social and cultural contexts within which forced marriages happen. Some of the key issues impacting situations of forced marriage include cultural identity, parents' duties and roles, community pressure and family reputation, socioeconomic status and questions of honor and shame.

The nature of the immigrant experience in the United States, where one is displaced from one's native country, customs, culture, religion and community, carries with it a certain level of burden, unease and insecurity. One is asked to renegotiate their identity and ideas, which in the best-case scenario, allows an opportunity to merge various influences, ideas and approaches to life. This requires asking questions, taking a certain level of risk, not being afraid to create a new path for yourself and your family. With the stresses of such a shift, the possibility of this process can be tremendously daunting. In the name of self-preservation and for the sake of continuity, immigrant families sometimes may choose to uphold certain beliefs and practices that they grew up around and with which they are familiar. They may even adhere to different versions of those ideas and practices to maintain control in their changing and new environment. This can pose challenges between first generation immigrants and their American born and/or raised children, the former trying to uphold the ways of a world left behind and the latter being asked to balance home life with culturally assimilating at school and as they socialize with people outside of their immediate ethnic or religious community.

In South Asian communities, ensuring that your son or daughter is married is an important duty as a parent and is sometimes handled through the process of arranging the marriage as discussed earlier. In such cases, marriage is a practice that is meant to ensure the continuity of cultural or religious traditions and strengthens family ties. In these cases marriage may be viewed as not only a union between two individuals, but a union between two families, preferably with a shared ethnicity, faith, caste and/or class.

In these situations, there may exist expectations and a level of acceptability both from the family in the United States and the family "back home," not to mention the wider ethnic,

religious and cultural community to which the particular family belongs in the U.S. Whether these expectations and levels of acceptability of a choice of partner are real or perceived does not lessen the pressure placed upon parents when choosing a spouse for their son or daughter. From this notion of acceptability comes the dichotomous idea of “honor” and “shame,” both having to do with the immediate family and individual’s reputation in the extended family, the family of the potential spouse and greater community. Parents may expect the son or daughter to abide by their wishes. This pressure is not only limited to marriage, but (especially for young women) can also be extended to manner of dress, social conduct, or socializing with the opposite sex—however innocent or casual. It can be considered shameful behavior to defy a parent’s and family’s choice of a suitable partner since marriage can be the ultimate display of deference to one’s elders, something valued within, although not exclusive to South Asian cultures.

### ***Izzat* and Honor vs. Shame**

*Izzat*, which has an approximate translation into English as “honor,” is an important concept when it comes to forced marriages in the South Asian context. *Izzat* refers to the issue of an individual or family’s reputation. Because South Asian societies generally value the communal or group over the individual, an individual’s actions are often perceived as a reflection of the family they come from or how they were raised. Amongst South Asian immigrant groups, whether vocalized or not, families are concerned about judgments that may befall their offspring through the life decisions they make. Young South Asian Americans are under tremendous pressures to achieve academically, succeed professionally and financially, and to marry the right partner in order to portray and perpetuate certain ideals of family life. Whether it is referred to as *Izzat*, honor or neither, parents express community, familial and societal pressures by worrying about what others will say or think about them and their children.

There are several factors that may put into question a family’s reputation, especially when it comes to issues of marriage. Of course, attitudes can vary significantly amongst South Asians in the United States, but in certain communities it is frowned upon if a young woman or man dates before marriage or dates someone who is not within a similar class, caste, race, religion or if they enter into a same sex relationship.

Rules for young women can be particularly stringent where honor can be based on a young woman’s sexual purity. Some communities may consider it shameful behavior if the woman dresses inappropriately, is boisterous or outspoken, has any intimate relations with men or is labeled as “loose,” an idea often perpetuated through community gossip.<sup>15</sup>

A family’s choice or preference of a spouse for their son or daughter can be viewed as an opportunity to confirm their social or economic status within a particular community. For some this could mean having to marry within your particular caste or class. This is not only common amongst South Asian communities, but also in the United States and other Western societies,



where socializing, dating and marrying within an individual's particular class is the norm, however subtle. The expression "from the wrong side of the tracks" is primarily a Western construct, deeply imbedded in discourses of class, with examples mythologized throughout popular culture. Also, pre-arrangements of marriage can be made between families when the children are younger. The Western equivalent of this has been prevalent throughout history among royal and aristocratic families. The point of such comparisons is to draw attention to the fact that these are norms that exist in various forms and to various degrees across cultures and communities.

According to the Forced Marriage Unit's handbook *Multi-Agency Practice Guidelines: Handling Cases of Forced Marriage* some of the key motives of forced marriage are to<sup>16</sup>

- control unwanted behavior and sexuality (including perceived promiscuity, or being lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender)—particularly the behavior and sexuality of women;
- control unwanted behavior, for example, alcohol and drug use, wearing make-up or behaving in what is perceived to be a "westernized manner";
- prevent "unsuitable" relationships, e.g. outside the ethnic, cultural, religious or caste group;
- protect family honor or *Izzat*;
- respond to peer group or family pressure;
- attempt to strengthen family links;
- achieve financial gain;
- ensure that land, property and wealth remain within the family;
- protect perceived cultural ideals;
- protect perceived religious ideals which are misguided;
- ensure care for a child or adult with special needs when parents or existing carers are unable to fulfill that role;
- assist claims for UK<sup>17</sup> residence and citizenship (In this case, it would be U.S. citizenship or Legal Permanent Residency through a greencard);
- and to maintain long-standing family commitments.

Further, according to the handbook, there are several "aggravating" factors that may increase the risk of forced marriages. These include the urgency of marrying off a child if one parent, especially the father, passes away. Also in the case where the eldest daughter refuses to marry, the younger sisters may be forced to marry to keep the family's honor or reputation in the community since one member of the family has already brought about shame and dishonor. Another scenario that can increase the risk of forced marriage is if a woman discloses childhood sexual abuse. It may be believed that marrying her off will help protect her reputation as well as

that of her family since the childhood sexual abuse may bring a sense of shame upon her and the family and put into question her sexual purity. Forced marriage can also be seen as a way to hide a person's sexuality. In the case that someone is lesbian, gay, bi-sexual, transgender, queer or questioning, some families may believe that marriage will prevent any questions from extended family and the community, or even that marriage will act as a "cure" for what may be seen as abnormal sexuality.<sup>18</sup>

Those family members who place pressures on their children to marry, as discussed above, may not be aware of the fact that what they are doing and how they are doing it is harmful or wrong. There is a point when an arrangement turns into force through coercion and marriage becomes a medium through which control is exerted upon individuals to maintain order within a family unit. In such cases, there is little or no regard for the individuals involved and consent is no longer, if it ever was, considered. At this point, marriage becomes something altogether different, where the initial objective of preserving communities and traditions or strengthening family ties, turns into situations of abuse and violence through emotional blackmail, kidnapping, assault, rape, incest and, in the worst cases, murder.<sup>19</sup>

# 5

## Forced Marriage in the United States

There has not been much research or writing done on the issue of forced marriage in the United States and it is yet unknown whether the problem is as widespread as it is in the United Kingdom. According to the U.S. State Department, the majority of forced marriage victims are young women and girls who fall within the age bracket of 13 to 30 years old.<sup>20</sup> Forced marriages also happen to men and this will be discussed in a later section. The US's general stance on the issue of forced marriage states that "the [U.S.] Department [of State] considers a forced marriage to be a violation of basic human rights. It also considers the forced marriage of a minor child to be a form of child abuse, since the child will presumably be subjected to non-consensual sex."<sup>21</sup> As a preventative measure, the U.S. Department of State has recently published information flyers on their website under "tips for traveling abroad" for US citizens who are being taken to the countries of their family's origin to be forced into a marriage.<sup>22</sup> The South Asian countries included are Bangladesh, India and Pakistan.

How is forced marriage understood amongst South Asian women's rights organizations across the United States? Based on the survey I conducted, out of 12 organizations that responded, all of them had heard of forced marriage and 83.3% of them said they have worked with women who were facing the issue and repercussions of forced marriage, whether before or after the marriage. Although the numbers were not staggering in terms of documented cases in the last five years by these grassroots groups, there is a clear indication through this survey and statements issued by the U.S. Department of State that forced marriage is occurring to those of South Asian origin in the US as well as abroad.

One question asked on the survey possibly revealing the reason why forced marriage is often unidentified or underreported is: "Who identified the case as a forced marriage, the person calling or the advocate taking the call?" In many cases, it was the advocate who identified it as such. For many, one of the biggest challenges of forced marriage is being able to name it as a form of violence and abuse, especially because it is often confused with the cultural practice and tradition of arranged marriage. Also, many individuals who seek assistance from South Asian women's rights organizations around the U.S. make the call because they want to talk about the violence and abuse they are currently experiencing in

their marriage at the hands of their husbands, in-laws and/or extended family, therefore never mentioning the forceful circumstances under which they may have married. When working with South Asian women, if they choose to talk about the circumstances leading up to the marriage, sometimes it is unclear if choice and consent were involved since marriage is often spoken of as a duty or something you are expected to do as a woman and by a certain age. As exemplified by Sonia's story earlier and according to the Asian & Pacific Islander Institute on Domestic Violence diagram entitled "Abuses Endured by a Woman During her Life Cycle," forced marriage is yet another form of violence and abuse that a woman may face in a long continuum of violence, abuse and oppression throughout her life.<sup>23</sup> As in Sonia's case, if a woman is forced into a marriage, there is a strong chance that domestic violence, abuse and/or sexual assault will follow.

Since little has been written or explored on the subject of forced marriage in the United States, one of the best ways to familiarize oneself with this issue is through examples. Manavi has seen a fair number of situations of forced marriage where some of the women were at risk of forced marriage and some were actually forced into the marriage and either escaped or were encountering other forms of domestic violence, abuse, and/or sexual assault within the marriage. The following composite case studies borrow various circumstantial details from forced marriage scenarios as seen on the frontlines at Manavi.<sup>24</sup>

## **Elah**

*Elah is 20 years old and a senior in college. She commutes to college from her parents' house and works part-time in a department store. One day Elah returns home from work an hour later than usual and finds her parents waiting for her. They ask where she has been and do not believe she was at work. They suggest she was with a boy. It is true that Elah has a boyfriend, but she was not with him this evening. She wonders how her parents know about him, but before she can say anything they tell her that a family friend had seen her with him at the mall last weekend and that this is unacceptable and shameful behavior. After this encounter, Elah notices a change in her mother and father's treatment of her. She feels her brother is keeping a close eye on her by asking her questions about her friends and her whereabouts. She also begins to notice that text messages she never read are opened and someone is sifting through her schoolbag, closet and drawers in her room. One day at the end of the Spring Term her parents suddenly announce they will be taking a family holiday to India. Not only has she not been asked if she wants to go, but some months back her parents had agreed she could take summer courses at her college. The next evening, Elah's mother comes into her bedroom with a printout of an email and a photograph. She tells Elah that the letter is from a man in India who was interested in marrying her. He is 28 years old, works in finance and comes from a reputable family. That evening, she learns that her parents know his family very well from the old neighborhood back home and they always hoped that when she was old enough, she would marry him. Elah is shocked and when she expresses dismay, her mother tells her that it was not her decision alone, but a family decision. Her mother also tells her that she has*

*embarrassed the family already by being seen with a boy and she should count her blessings that the groom's family is still interested in her. If she knows what's good for her she will happily go to India and get married as she is told. In fact, the purpose of this summer visit is to finalize the engagement.*

## **Shabnam**

*Shabnam is an extroverted and vocal 18 year old who has just graduated from high school. She has enrolled in the local community college for the Fall Term and has not yet decided what she wants to study. This summer her parents decide that they will send her and her younger brother to Pakistan so that they can spend some time with their grandmother, who they are told is unwell. The plan is that the siblings will go on their own for a week and then they will be joined by their parents. When Shabnam and her brother arrive in Pakistan, they are greeted by many relatives at the airport and are then taken to their grandmother's house, where she appears to be doing okay. Upon arriving to Pakistan, Shabnam's uncles ask her for her passport and other important documents to keep in the family safe because she is told that there have been robberies in the area recently. That evening Shabnam's aunt and grandmother come into her room and start talking about how much she has grown and how the coming weeks will be very hectic with activity before her parents' arrival. Shabnam is then told about the arrangements being made for her engagement to a man named Sameer. Shabnam is shocked and protests, telling them that she is not ready for marriage and that she is not interested in marrying someone who was not raised in America, like herself. She is told that this has been arranged by both sets of parents, and now that she is 18 years old and has graduated from high school, this is the next step in her life as a woman. She is told this, and more importantly, that it is her grandmother's wish to see her youngest granddaughter married before she passes. Shabnam tries to talk to her brother about it but feels he is too young to understand. Being abroad, Shabnam is not sure what to do and feels trapped, especially since she is surrounded by family. She also feels betrayed by the fact that this has been planned by her own parents without her knowledge and consent.*

These examples highlight only a few types of forced marriage scenarios that are occurring in the South Asian community in the United States, where the individuals involved are given little or no choice in the matter. In these situations, subtle forms of control and coercion are used and the marriages are planned or scheduled to take place in the women's parents' country of origin. The methods through which the family plans to take them there is under the pretense of a family vacation or the illness of a family member, which is often used to induce guilt, using explanations such as, "Their last wish before they pass is to make sure you are married and settled." The fact that Elah has a boyfriend is seen as a threat to her family's reputation and her sexual purity, and therefore, they feel compelled to intervene by planning a marriage with someone they think will be suitable for her. Shabnam is expected to get married once she finishes high school, and especially because her grandmother is ill, it is even more urgent. In both cases, marriage is prioritized for these young women, restricting their futures and

imposing upon their overall safety and well-being. Such key characteristics are what discern the fine line that can exist between forced and arranged marriage. These examples can be seen as more tame versions of the types of coercion used, including guilt and emotional blackmail, but there are many situations where subtle forms of coercion escalate to more serious forms of abuse and violence, which will be discussed further below.

# 6

## Forced Marriage Scenarios

There are several Forced Marriage scenarios and the risks and courses of action vary in each case. The more common scenarios are described below.

### Scenario 1

*Rather than being asked, a victim is told that she will marry someone of her parents' or family's choosing. If she shows any signs of non-cooperation, family members will use various tactics and methods to coerce her into the marriage.*

### Scenario 2

*A marriage is planned to take place abroad. The victim is taken abroad under the guise of a vacation or to visit a sick relative, but upon reaching her destination she finds out that she is there to get engaged or marry someone of her parents' or family's choice.*

### Scenario 3

*The forced marriage takes place either in the United States or abroad through a religious or civil ceremony. Even though the victim goes through with it, the abuse and violence happens over the course of the marriage.<sup>25</sup>*

In each forced marriage scenario, the consequences upon the victim vary and can include isolation, domestic abuse, divorce, abandonment, so-called “honor-based” violence and family break-ups.<sup>26</sup> According to the UK Forced Marriage Unit's outreach video,<sup>27</sup> survivors recall the feelings of isolation, anger and helplessness that they experienced once their parents told them that they would be marrying someone of their family's choosing. Survivors expressed feelings of confusion; on the one hand they wanted to abide by their parents' wishes, believing

that it was out of love and in their best interest. On the other hand, they did not want to get married because they were too young and were not ready, or they had other plans for their lives, such as going for higher education, starting a career, travelling or marrying/moving in with a boyfriend or girlfriend. These scenarios left them feeling scared and trapped, especially because of the sudden pressure that was being placed upon them.

If a young person openly refuses to marry or makes threats to run away from home, there are a series of tactics that a family may use to ensure that the marriage happens. This can include emotional blackmail, where a parent may say that if the woman does not get married to the person of their choice, she will ruin the family's reputation, which will affect her sister's marriage prospects. In this case, a woman is made to feel accountable for her sister's future and family's reputation. Women may be verbally abused and told that they are "too modern," "too Westernized" or "too opinionated." She may also be referred to as a "whore" or as "loose" if the parents feel she is dating. Parents may mentally torture the woman by threatening to commit suicide or claim that they might have a heart attack or another ailment if the woman does not abide by their wishes, claiming that the whole family will be shamed in front of extended family and the entire community. Other actions parents might take to exert control over the woman include taking her out of school, depriving her of food, imprisoning her in a room at home, cutting off her social ties and networks, confiscating her passport and other official documents. In worst cases scenarios, parents or family members may physically abuse and torture her until she agrees to the marriage. The forms of power and control used are similar to other forms of domestic violence and abuse such as spousal abuse.<sup>28</sup> The violence and abuse can escalate to murder in honor-based violence,<sup>29</sup> which was mentioned earlier, where a family may believe that the young woman is out of their control and is bringing dishonor and shame to the family through her actions and behavior.<sup>30</sup>

If the marriage is meant to happen abroad in the parents' native country, the young woman may be tricked into going on a vacation or she may be told that a grandparent or other relative has fallen ill, as in the case of Shabnam. If she is taken abroad, she becomes even more isolated and is usually kept under the constant surveillance of relatives. This can lead to feelings of betrayal, as stated by a survivor in the UK Forced Marriage Unit's outreach video, who was taken to her home country in South Asia under the pre-tense of a holiday, only later to find out she would be forced into a marriage. In her words, "Once my parents told me, I felt angry, alone . . . I felt quite betrayed, actually very betrayed."<sup>31</sup> Except for her 12-year-old sister, she felt that she could not confide in anyone. "I didn't feel like there was anyone else I could speak to from my family or anyone that would understand."<sup>32</sup> In this situation, she conveyed feelings of isolation and helplessness as her parents and family decided her future. Further, this type of treatment can make a woman lose her sense of agency, feeling more like a piece of property than an actual person.

Sometimes women choose to leave their family home once they sense that they may be taken abroad or to escape abuse and violence. This is a very difficult decision to make for a young person who perhaps has never lived anywhere else or has never been on her own.



Some parents believe that they are doing what is in the best interest of their daughter and the family and therefore, up until this point, relations between parents and their children may have been trusting and safe. Leaving can mean being disowned by your parents as described by Jasvinder Sanghera, who faced forced marriage at age 15 and left home because of it. Through her activism, Sanghera has brought international attention to this issue. Her book, *Shame*, describes it well:

*I wanted to talk to my mum . . . to know that she and Dad were missing me. . . . I wanted Mum to tell me to come home. . . . My heart was beating double time and I could feel the courage draining out of me as I lifted the receiver and fed in the first of my coins. . . . Mum answered almost immediately. I said, 'Mum, it's me. . . .' She was off straight away, screaming and crying down the phone, and the voice I'd yearned to hear was harsh and shrill. 'What have you done to us? How could you do this? You've shamed us. Why should we suffer this disgrace?' My dreams of a happy family reunion were instantly shattered. I'd been so stupid. Shame and dishonour were what Mum dreaded more than anything. I should have known she wouldn't forgive me. . . . But some stubborn part of me was still determined to defend myself. I was crying too by then, but I managed to say, 'Mum, you know why I left.' 'Live your own life then, and good luck to you. In our eyes you're dead!' And with that she slammed the phone down. My legs seemed to give way beneath me. I was still holding the receiver, staring into it as if I needed visual proof that Mum had cut me off. . . . I had never felt so alone. It was as if someone had taken all my childhood memories and ripped them apart.<sup>33</sup>*

If a young woman escapes from her family home she is at risk of not only being estranged from her parents and family, but she can face homelessness, may get pulled into excessive drug use or may develop a pattern of being in abusive relationships.<sup>34</sup> She may also face the risks of being followed and found, the consequences of which can be of the utmost detriment to her livelihood and well-being. According to the Ashiana Network training, women in this situation “are haunted by extreme feelings of guilt, accusations of bringing shame on the family and living in fear of being found by family members. They may become victims of homicides and [honor] killings.”<sup>35</sup>

# 7

## **Impact of Forced Marriage: After the Fact**

The impacts of forced marriage upon a woman's life can be devastating. In addition to feelings of isolation, loneliness and helplessness, she may face further dangers in the marriage including domestic violence, sexual assault and the impending effects of this, including emotional withdrawal, depression, anxiety, low self-esteem, self-harm or suicide.

On the frontlines at Manavi, advocates speak to many women who are facing domestic violence, abuse and/or sexual assault in their marriage. Only later in these conversations does it emerge that the conditions upon which they may have been married were under duress, pressure and ultimately against their will. Through the continuum of violence, if a woman is forced to marry, it is likely that she will be exposed to forceful sexual relations and possibly forced pregnancy. In some cases, she will be exposed to domestic violence, including emotional abuse, mental torture, verbal abuse, financial abuse and physical violence.

Feeling like they have little control over the circumstances of the forced marriage, as a coping strategy, women may inflict harm upon themselves as a way of dealing with the emotional distress. According to the Newham Asian Women's Project's, self-harm is described as "the deliberate injury of the body, as a method of managing emotions that are too painful to express in words. It is not associated with an intention to commit suicide and covers a range of behaviour."<sup>36</sup> For some women, forced marriage can lead to thoughts and/or acts of suicide. Jasvinder Sanghera's sister, Robina, committed suicide after being forced to marry and live under a situation of extreme domestic violence and cruelty at the hands of her husband.<sup>37</sup>

Efforts to prevent forced marriage are important because once a forced marriage happens, it becomes much more difficult for the woman to leave. Traditional notions of marriage in the South Asian context rely on ideas of a woman's sexual purity. This idea coupled with the taboo of divorce and separation in South Asian cultures, leaves little room for South Asian women to see a life for themselves outside the existing marriage. At Manavi, we have heard women say, "Nobody will want to marry me if I'm a divorced woman. He (the husband) may be able to move on and marry again, but I will be seen as no good." For this and other reasons, even

if a woman is experiencing domestic violence and abuse in the marriage, she will hesitate to follow through with such actions and is likely to feel trapped. With children, the situation is further complicated.

Women who leave their husbands or get a divorce may face consequences beyond a spoiled reputation or judgments from family and the community. One such story is that of 25-year-old Sandeela Kanwal, who was murdered by her father in Atlanta, Georgia in January 2009, after wanting to divorce her husband.<sup>38</sup> Her father, Chaudry Rashid, allegedly strangled her to death with a bungee cord. It is unclear as to whether or not her marriage was arranged or forced. Another story was the murder of Noor Almaleki, of Iraqi descent, who in October 2009, was run over by her father in a parking lot in Arizona after she had moved out of her family's home. Her friends, who were interviewed in an article for the magazine *Marie Claire*, said that her father, Faleh Almaleki,

*had enough of Noor asserting her independence and talking to American guys, so he and her mother tricked her into traveling to Iraq, telling her they needed to visit a sick relative. Only upon arrival did Noor learn of the real reason for their trip: to marry her off. It's unclear whether a wedding actually took place. Some friends say she only attended an engagement ceremony; others tell me they believe she did get married, albeit against her will. Still others say Noor was given a choice of five brothers, but her parents didn't like the one she chose, so the wedding was called off. Noor's parents, in police documents, maintain that a marriage did, in fact, occur. Whatever the case, Noor returned to Arizona a few months later without a husband, and moved back in with her family.<sup>39</sup>*

These are only a couple of examples of highly publicized cases of the violence and abuse that ensues if a woman is forced to marry and decides to leave the marriage.

As we can see, situations of forced marriages that happen can lead to further experiences of domestic violence, sexual assault or even abandonment, where the husband who may have not wanted to be in the marriage leaves his wife and children with limited or no resources.

# 8

## Forced Marriage and Men

According to the U.S. Department of State, there is evidence showing that 15% of victims of forced marriage are men.<sup>40</sup> The UK Forced Marriage Unit's statistics from 2010 show that among the 1735 people served, 14% were male.<sup>41</sup> Most male victims in the UK are aged 15–24.<sup>42</sup> In recent headlines in major papers across the United Kingdom, there is a notable increase in forced marriages of men and the leading reason is because parents may suspect that their son is gay or bisexual and therefore may force him into a marriage.<sup>43</sup>

Men can also be forced to marry for reasons outside of their sexual preference, including some of the same reasons that young women are subjected to forced marriage, such as preserving the honor and reputation of the family. A recent article on BBC News reported that other reasons why a man may be forced into marriage has to do with “family commitments and expectations, securing visas or the desire to control [behavior] and protect a family’s reputation.”<sup>44</sup>

Men are more likely to go through with the forced marriage and then possibly abandon their wives either in the country of their parents’ origin (where they may have undergone the religious or civil marriage) or within the United States after bringing their wives here. She may have agreed to the marriage, without knowing that he did not. Men who are forced to marry may also pursue or continue extra-marital affairs after the forced marriage. In some cases, men are forced to marry because the parents are disapproving of the woman he has chosen to date, perhaps because she is of a different race, religion, class or caste. If he was forced to marry another woman according to his parents’ or family’s wishes due to the various reasons outlined above, the repercussions can befall his wife in the forms of neglect and/or domestic violence and abuse. Manavi has seen examples of forced marriage where the husband was questioning his sexual identity and this led to domestic disputes, neglect and verbal abuse aimed toward the wife.

Men are also more likely to go through with the forced marriage and are less likely to report it due to the fact that a male victim may view it as emasculating and shameful to have been forced into marriage.<sup>45</sup> In the piece “Raj’s Story” in the UK Forced Marriage Unit literature, Raj himself states, “People don’t realize that men can also find themselves in this situation. I don’t

know if I could have told anyone even if I'd had the chance to. It's not exactly macho, is it, admitting that you were held hostage by your family and forced to marry someone you'd never even met."<sup>46</sup>

When working with male survivors of forced marriage, it is important to keep the above information in mind. Being aware of the different motivations and the possible consequences on the male survivor may inform and instruct an advocate's response. Also it is worth noting the effects that this can have on the woman whom he has been forced to marry.

# 9

## Forced Marriage and LGBTQ Identities

One key motivation for forcing someone into marriage is to control his or her sexual preference and identity. If a woman or man in the South Asian community is suspected of being gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, queer or questioning she or he may be at risk of a forced marriage as discussed above. Some families believe marriage will “cure” their son or daughter of their “incorrect” sexuality or behavior. According to Mehrotra and Munshi, “The larger context of homophobia, heterosexism, and transphobia mean that South Asian LGBTQ people often have to fight for the legitimacy of their relationships and identities.”<sup>47</sup> The following is a composite case study of such a situation.

### Kareena

*Kareena is 27 years old and has moved back with her parents because her father is undergoing chemotherapy for lung cancer and her mother needs her help in taking care of him and the house. Over the years, Kareena’s parents would ask her about marriage. At family and community gatherings, aunts, uncles, grandparents and family friends would also question her. Through the years, there had been several requests for marriage from various male suitors in the community, but Kareena dated women. She suspected her parents had an idea that she was a lesbian, but every time she tried to talk to them about it, they changed the subject. Recently, her younger sister got married and her parents started to put pressure on her saying she would end up single for the rest of her life or it would be too late for her to have children. Without her knowledge, her mother and brother created a profile for her on several matrimonial websites. Over dinner, her parents began to show her the various responses and eventually coerced her into going on a few dates. Kareena was crushed by these experiences and finally came out to her family. She was told that this was unacceptable and shameful behavior and that if her father’s health got worse, it would be her fault. They also said that she just had not found the right man. One day her parents sat her down and gave her an ultimatum, that if she did not decide to pursue any one of the proposals, they would decide for her and arrange for a wedding in the coming months.*

The pressures faced by South Asian LGBTQ individuals to have a heterosexual marriage and family can be overwhelming and this can lead to situations of forced marriage.

# 10

## Forced Marriage and Disability

As discussed, the issue of consent is one of the main differences between arranged marriage and forced marriage. The forced marriage of individuals with disabilities who may not have the ability to give their consent, is a demographic also affected by forced marriage. In 2010, out of 1735 cases reported to the UK Forced Marriage Unit, 70 involved individuals with disabilities (50 with learning disabilities, 17 with physical disabilities and 3 with both).<sup>48</sup> Voice UK, a charity in the United Kingdom that works with people with learning difficulties who have been the victims of crime has conducted research looking into the nature of forced marriage of those with learning disabilities by speaking to direct service providers. They have outlined the reasons for forced marriages amongst this demographic as follows:

1. Marriage can be seen as a means of providing a carer and continuing support. Parents may be primary carers. As they get older and less able to provide support, they may view marriage as a means to ensuring continuing care for their son or daughter with learning disabilities.
2. Marriage can be seen as a means of improving the chances of getting a visa to the UK. A person with learning disabilities may be seen as easier to deceive or coerce into such a marriage and then acting as a visa sponsor.
3. Families may believe that marriage will “cure” learning disabilities and/or allow a person with learning disabilities to lead a “normal” life.

Also, according to Voice UK, the consequences of the forced marriages are several and include:

- **Sexual assault and rape**—The expectation that marriage will be consummated and lead to children means that people with learning disabilities who are forced into marriage may be subjected to sexual assault and rape. As many people with learning disabilities do not receive sex education, they may be ill-equipped to handle unwanted sexual advances, not understand sex, be unaware of contraception and not understand that children can be a consequence of sex.

- **Domestic violence and abuse**—Families may keep from the potential spouse that a person has learning disabilities because of the stigma some attach to learning disabilities. They may fear that openness will lead to a wedding being cancelled. Also, a spouse may have little understanding of learning disabilities and how they might support the person they have married. The spouse's resulting feelings of resentment and confusion may lead to domestic violence and abuse.
- **A double forced marriage**—If a spouse has not been informed that their partner has learning disabilities, it is questionable whether they have given informed consent to the marriage. Questions about informed consent also arise if the spouse is unaware that they are being married into the role of full-time career.
- **Abandonment**—A person with learning disabilities who is forced into marriage may be abandoned by their spouse. This can create feelings of rejection, stigmatize the person and possibly lead to the loss of the primary career. This abandonment could be because (a) the spouse was unaware of all of the circumstances of the marriage; (b) and/or they simply used the marriage to facilitate improving their immigration status.<sup>49</sup>

Even though the reasons and consequences are specific to those who are learning disabled, the issue of forced marriage also affects those with other types of disabilities. According to the UK Forced Marriage Unit, "A learning or physical disability or illness adds to a young person's, or an adult's vulnerability and may make it more difficult for them to report abuse or to leave an abusive situation. Their care needs may make them entirely dependent on their careers."<sup>50</sup>



# 11

## **Practical Guidance— The First Step Is Identifying a Forced Marriage**

According to the survey I conducted, advocates stated that when they received a call from a forced marriage victim in the United States, it was often the advocate who had to identify it as such. There are a few scenarios where the girl or woman may call your organization herself, but in many instances a third party such as a sibling, boyfriend, girlfriend, friend, community member, relative, teacher or neighbor may contact your organization regarding the potential victim. In many cases, they may not be able to clearly state that the woman or girl is facing a forced marriage but they may mention certain behavioral signs, noted absences from school or work, or describe family histories that may help identify the situation as a potential forced marriage. According to the UK Forced Marriage Unit’s handbook, the list of possible signs below may help identify that a woman or girl may have been or faces being forced into a marriage. If a woman, girl or third party calls and mentions any of these signs, there is no guarantee that she is a potential victim of forced marriage. However, some of these signs may help an advocate assess whether or not a woman is at risk, and if she is, to what extent. According to the *Forced Marriage Unit’s Multi-Agency Practice Guidelines*, the signs fall into five categories: family history, employment, education, health and police.<sup>51</sup>

<b>FAMILY HISTORY</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• siblings are forced to marry</li><li>• siblings married early</li><li>• self-harm or suicide of siblings</li><li>• death of a parent</li><li>• family disputes</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• running away from home</li><li>• unreasonable restrictions (e.g., kept at home by parents, or “house arrest”)</li><li>• financial restrictions</li></ul>
<b>EMPLOYMENT</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• poor performance</li><li>• poor attendance</li><li>• limited career choices</li><li>• not allowed to work</li><li>• unable to attend business trips or functions</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• subject to financial control, e.g. confiscation of wages/income</li><li>• leaving work accompanied</li><li>• unable to be flexible in their working arrangement</li></ul>

<p><b>EDUCATION</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• absence and persistent absence</li> <li>• request for extended leave of absence and failure to return from visits to country of origin</li> <li>• fear about forthcoming school holidays</li> <li>• surveillance by siblings or cousins at school</li> <li>• decline in behavior, engagement, performance or punctuality</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• being withdrawn from school by those with parental responsibility</li> <li>• removal from a day centre of a person with a physical or learning disability</li> <li>• not allowed to attend extra-curricular activities</li> <li>• sudden announcement of engagement to a stranger</li> <li>• prevented from going on to further/ higher education</li> </ul>
<p><b>HEALTH</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• accompanied to doctor's or clinics</li> <li>• self-harm</li> <li>• attempted suicide</li> <li>• eating disorders</li> <li>• depression</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• isolation</li> <li>• substance misuse</li> <li>• early/unwanted pregnancy</li> <li>• Female Genital Mutilation</li> </ul>
<p><b>POLICE</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• kidnap victim or other siblings within the family reported missing</li> <li>• reports of domestic abuse, harassment or breaches of the peace at the family home</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• convicted of petty offences, such as shoplifting or substance misuse</li> <li>• threats to kill and attempts to kill</li> <li>• victim of serious criminal offences, such as rape, kidnap or Acid Attacks<sup>52</sup></li> </ul>

Many of the above signs show the effects of a certain level of power, control and pressure that the parents, siblings or other relatives may be exerting onto the woman or girl in various areas of her life. Several of these signs may show up prior to the forced marriage or during the planning and/or preliminary stages. The absences from school or work may refer to the stage when a woman or girl has shown her non-compliance and is therefore being held captive in her home and is cut off from any source of communication. Or it may mean that she has already left for the country of her or her parents' origin where, as we now know, many forced marriages occur.

# 12

## **Safety Planning**

Since the majority of forced marriage victims are women and girls, I will address methods of providing support and conducting safety planning with her in this section. There are several steps that an advocate can take to help ensure the safety of the woman or girl who may be facing a forced marriage. Because forced marriage manifests through acts of domestic violence and abuse, some of the considerations and steps to take are similar to those that would be taken within other domestic violence and abuse situations involving women or girls. As mentioned earlier, there are variations of the forced marriage scenario, each of which will require a different plan of action. Additionally, the safety planning for adults and minors will look different and will run distinct risks. It is worth noting that the options for minors at this stage are somewhat limited and a precaution to take is to call your State Child Protective Services. In such situations, it is crucial to advocate for the girl in question, educating the caseworker on the harmful practice that is forced marriage, so that appropriate precautions and measures can be taken to ensure her safety and well-being. By conducting this type of education and informal training about forced marriage with all involved agencies, we move closer to developing a more effective coordinated response to forced marriages of both minors and adults. The following are some general tips on safety planning for both adults and minors. In a separate section below, I have listed some resources that may be useful when working with minors as well as working through third parties.

According to experts on forced marriage at the Ashiana Network in London, when speaking to a woman or girl at risk, three basic needs that ought to be considered are:

1. personal safety
2. confidentiality
3. accurate information about her rights and choices

Should a woman or girl call your organization herself, believing she is at risk, the following guidelines (some of which overlaps with general domestic violence safety planning) are important in providing support and ensuring her safety:<sup>53</sup>

1. **Make sure the woman or girl is in a safe.** Confirm that she is in a private and secure place to discuss her situation with you.
2. **Ensure confidentiality.** Calling an organization or seeking help for forced marriage is a tremendous risk. Considering the fact that it is usually the parents or a family member who is placing the woman or girl at risk, it may be very difficult for her to place trust in you. Always let her know that whatever she shares with you will not be shared with anyone else, and only with her consent will you access any further assistance or resources.
3. **Try not to pass judgment on her family, religion or culture.** Family, religion and culture are part of a woman or girl's identity. When you pass judgment on these aspects of her identity, you are passing judgment on her. This could alienate her or dissuade her from calling back and seeking safety.
4. **Take her fears seriously.** If a woman or girl for any reason suspects that her family may be planning to force her into marriage abroad, take her fears seriously. Parents may not always explicitly say that this is their plan. Try and understand her suspicions and fears.
5. **Listen.** Listen to the woman or girl for some of the signs mentioned earlier in the paper. Is there a history of forced marriage in the family? Are there any other signs of abuse and control in the relationship between the girl or woman and her parents, or with other family members who may be posing the risk? Do her parents suspect she has a boyfriend? Has their behavior changed with their suspicions?
6. **Be emotionally supportive.** Provide a comfortable space to express her fears. Reassure her that she is not alone. Validate the breadth of feeling she may be experiencing, such as guilt and confusion, especially considering the fact that the source of the trouble is likely to be her parents and family.
7. **Inform her of her rights.** Explain to the woman or girl that nobody has the right to force her into marriage. Marriage is something that requires her consent. You can mention some of the international human rights laws and instruments and/or State Department regulations which state that she has the right to choose her marriage partner. Let her know the law is on her side.
8. **Get contact details.** Request that she provide a phone number and/or e-mail address where it will be safe to contact her.
9. **Conduct a risk assessment.** The events leading up to a forced marriage reach various degrees of risk. In the case scenario of Elah, there is more time to safety plan since she knows when she will be going abroad and her parents have made it explicit. In other cases, the risk level is more severe and may require a swifter plan of action.

10. **Screen for violent coercive abuse.** If there is any form of abuse taking place to coerce her into the forced marriage, let her know that she has the right to contact the police or dial 911 for help. Describe possible scenarios she can expect when the police arrive at her home. Let her know that you are willing to speak to the police to help explain what happens in a situation of forced marriage. If a minor is involved, it is likely that the police will involve Child Protective Services. Because the issue of forced marriage is unfamiliar to many people, it is important to advocate for the woman or girl by explaining to all involved agencies and/or law enforcement the context within which the abuse is occurring as well as the fact that forced marriage in and of itself is a form of abuse.
  
11. **Let her know she has the right to protect herself.** Check your State Legislation on the laws on obtaining protective orders (who can get one, against whom and under what circumstances, especially if she is a minor). If applicable, discuss the options of a Temporary Restraining Order and a Final Restraining Order with sensitivity considering the fact that it is likely that she will be obtaining this against family members.
  
12. **Give key contact information.** Provide the woman or girl the contact number of the local domestic violence shelters if she qualifies for this service and explain the shelter system to her. Because forced marriage is unfamiliar to many people, you can advocate for the woman or girl in terms of explaining to the domestic violence shelter caseworker what forced marriage is and how it is a form of domestic violence. Please keep in mind that many young women and girls who call may never have been on their own, therefore it is important to describe what kind of support they would receive from a shelter service.
  
13. **Help the woman or girl in danger plan/prepare.** Support her through this process, which can be very conflicting. In such cases, you may be one of few people she can trust. For many women and girls for whom their parents and family are the primary support, it is important to remember that she is taking a big step by leaving her familial home. Also, please keep in mind that the woman or girl may be leaving a parent that she is close to and who also may not necessarily agree with the forced marriage but is abiding with the plans due to the existing family dynamic. The following are suggested plans of action:
  - (a) Let her know what documents and possessions she will need to take with her if she plans on leaving the home (passport, green card, birth certificate, social security card, degree certificates, etc.). If they are hidden from her, suggest that she be discreet when taking them and that she take them close to the time when she leaves.
  
  - (b) Suggest that she make photocopies of her important documents in the case that her parents or family members are planning on taking them away (passport, green card,

birth certificate, social security card, degree certificates, bank statements, tax related paperwork). If the documents are kept somewhere by her parents, suggest she be very discreet in taking them so as to not cause any suspicion.

- (c) Let her know that she can alert the police that she is feeling threatened by her parents or family.
- (d) Tell her not to discuss any of her plans with very many people, especially family members and members of the community.
- (e) In the case she has to leave her home on short notice, discuss escape routes.
- (f) Ask if she can pack a bag with some clothes in the event she has to leave on short notice. Ask her to hide the bag or leave it with a trusted friend.
- (g) If she is planning on leaving, you can suggest that she start saving some money when and where she can.

The woman or girl may be in the United States and a citizen, but the plan is to take her abroad for the marriage. This is a very common scenario and the safety planning will have to take into consideration the possibility that she may be taken abroad against her will through pressure, coercion or force. She may also be taken abroad under the guise of a family holiday or due to the illness of a close relative. In the event that a girl or woman feels a risk or threat of being taken abroad for marriage, the steps below can be taken.

1. Let her know that her means of escape once abroad will be more difficult since laws and practices may differ greatly in the destination country. Also, once abroad she may experience further obstacles, such as
  - isolation,
  - emotional pressure,
  - being watched all the time,
  - no money,
  - confiscation of passport and/or ticket,
  - and no telephone or internet.<sup>54</sup>
2. Ask her to gather as much information as she can regarding the address where her parents may take her or even the nearest city, town or village where she may be.
3. Ask her to get a phone number of the residence where she may be staying (e.g. grandparents', aunt's, uncle's). If she has the means, ask her to take a phone that will work abroad.

4. Take the phone number of the closest U.S. Consulate to where you think you will be (Please see Appendix A).
5. Ask her to try and find out the travel details and make note of the flight departure and return details.
6. Ask her to make copies of her important documents such as her passport and green card that she can keep with her in the event that her documents are taken away.
7. Suggest that she leave the above information (Steps 2 to 6) with a trusted friend.
8. Ask her if it is possible to save a bit of money and make traveler's checks to be used at the destination in case of an emergency.
9. If she is a U.S. Citizen/National, let her know she can call the State Department number at 1-888-407-4747 if she is still in the United States, and if overseas, she can call 202-501-4444.
10. Let her know she does not have to go and she can leave home and go to a shelter or safe house. Alert her of the possible risks involved in this decision (e.g., losing her family, having family looking for her, etc.)
11. If she is coerced to go to the airport and is being forced to leave the country against her will, let her know that she can inform authorities at the airport. Especially if she is a minor and/or a U.S. citizen/national, she can alert them to the fact that she is being taken against her will and/or being kidnapped.

## **Things to Consider When Working with a Minor**

As discussed earlier, special considerations need to be taken for minors who are facing forced marriage. Some of the general safety planning above is applicable and here are some additional resources:

1. If the minor is reporting any form of abuse, you are required in many states to report the abuse to Children's Protection Services and she can contact them directly.
2. In the case that she is a minor and a U.S. national or citizen who may be taken abroad, you can refer directly to the State Department guidelines and ensure her of her rights.<sup>55</sup>
3. Call the State Department for guidance in the case that there is a threat she may be taken abroad (Please see Appendix A).
4. Let her know that she has the right to call 911 if she is feeling threatened if within the United States.

5. Call the respective consulate (Please see Appendix A) if she is taken abroad.
6. Consult with the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (Please see Appendix A) if she is feared missing.

### **Safety Planning Through a Third Party**

Your organization may be contacted by one of several people to inform you that a forced marriage may be taking place. The point of contact may be a friend, boyfriend, girlfriend, cousin, sibling or other concerned family member(s). If a third party contacts you, it is important to verify if this person is a trusted source. It can be explained that your organization prefers to speak with the woman or girl directly because she can convey her situation best. There are situations where a woman or girl may be unable to make the call herself because she is regularly under surveillance or her phone calls are monitored and conversations overheard. In these cases, it would be useful if she could send an email verifying the third party as a trustworthy source. In some cases, the third party may be her only lifeline to the outside world. Once you have her permission or you trust that the third party is acting in her best interest, it is advisable to conduct safety planning through him or her according to the steps discussed above.

Please note that it is not advisable to seek out the family when a forced marriage has been reported, especially because it is often the family that is perpetrating the abuse and violence.



# 13

## Forced Marriage and International Instruments

There are several international agreements that include language on the individual's right to choose when it comes to marriage. They are the following:

- The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 16 (2)

*“Marriage should be entered into only with the free and full consent of the intending spouses.”*

- Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)—General Recommendations No. 21

*“A woman’s right to choose a spouse and enter freely into marriage is central to her life and her dignity and equality as a human being.”*

(NOTE: The United States has signed but has not ratified CEDAW. Ambassador Susan Rice, U.S. Permanent Representative to the UN, pronounced, “The Obama Administration strongly supports this landmark treaty, and is committed to United States ratification.”<sup>56</sup> Also at the annual Commission on the Status of Women meeting at the UN, Secretary Clinton promised, “The Obama Administration will continue to work for the ratification of CEDAW . . . because we believe it is past time, to take this step for women in our country and in all countries.”<sup>57</sup>)

- UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 19

*“State parties shall take all appropriate legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to protect the child from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse, while in the care of parent(s), legal guardian(s) or any other person who has the care of the child.”*

- UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 3

*“In all actions concerning children, whether undertaken by public or private social welfare institutions, courts of law, administrative authorities, or legislative bodies, the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration.”*

- UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 35

*“State parties shall take all appropriate measures to prevent the abduction of, the sale of or traffic in children for any purpose or in any form.”*

# 14

## Conclusion

Members of societies, communities, and families play an important role in encouraging women to seek safety and protection from abuse by making that first step of calling a helpline, organization or an advocate in order to speak out against these experiences and seek assistance. When a woman courageously makes this call, it is also crucial that she is provided with adequate resources and support so she can take steps to move away from the abuse and towards safety. This includes being able to access culturally and linguistically specific peer support and counseling services, having access to shelters and safe homes, being offered free legal advice and referrals, being asked to participate in support groups to prevent feelings of isolation, being supported by a community of people who will stand by her throughout this process, and being treated with dignity and respect by law enforcement who are sometimes the first point of contact for a survivor of violence. Also needed are everyday members of the community, including men, who will provide moral support and/or speak out against such abuses. In order to put an end to these long lines of abuse there must be an increased sense of societal, communal and governmental accountability and the first step to accomplishing this is understanding the various forms in which violence and abuse manifest, in this case the dynamics of forced marriages.

By identifying forced marriage as a form of domestic violence and abuse, community and youth outreach and education can be conducted to raise awareness about how it affects South Asian women in the United States. Changing community attitudes on certain issues can be very challenging; it is helpful to keep in mind that forced marriage is a human rights violation. Not only is it unacceptable according to international human rights agreements, but it is also something that is not condoned by any of the world's major religions.

Being that the perpetrators of forced marriage are usually parents or family members, it can be a challenge to report it as a form of domestic violence and abuse. This challenge was addressed in the United Kingdom when the Forced Marriage Civil Protection Act was being introduced in its earlier stages (then called the Forced Marriage Civil Protection Bill) by Lord Lester of Herne Hill<sup>58</sup> and the Southall Black Sisters.<sup>59</sup> The main issue of concern being that young men and women would not want to criminalize their parents or family members for

having forced them into a marriage. This is why the proposed Bill became a Protection Act that says the following:

*If a forced marriage has or is about to take place, courts will be able to make orders to protect the victim or the potential victim and help remove them from that situation. The courts will have a wide discretion in the type of injunctions they will be able to make to enable them to respond effectively to the individual circumstances of the case and prevent or pre-empt forced marriages from occurring.*<sup>60</sup>

In the United States, forced marriage is not yet identified as a widespread problem as much as it is in the United Kingdom where this type of legislation has been passed. It also has not been that long since the issue of forced marriage started being addressed in the UK. The purpose of this paper was to open up the conversation and discuss what many advocates at South Asian women's rights organizations are already witnessing. It is at the grassroots level where the nature of issues affecting a particular community can first be seen and identified, and my work at Manavi has shaped my learning and understanding of the nature of forced marriage in the South Asian community in the US. My hopes are that this paper will act as a resource and guide to help understand the complex issue of forced marriage and to contribute to the development of a national coordinated strategy that seeks to protect and provide safety to those facing this form of violence and abuse in the South Asian community and beyond.

## Appendix A: Resources

### U.S Resources

#### The U.S. Department of State

Washington D.C.

Office of Overseas Citizens Services: 1-888-407-4747

If calling from overseas: 202-501-4444

General Web-site: <http://travel.state.gov/> (search for 'forced marriage')

Forced Marriage Prevention Flyers (gives information on marriage laws by country):

[http://travel.state.gov/travel/tips/safety/safety\\_5475.html](http://travel.state.gov/travel/tips/safety/safety_5475.html)

#### Manavi

P.O. Box 3103

New Brunswick, New Jersey 08901

(732) 435-1414

E-mail: [manavi@manavi.org](mailto:manavi@manavi.org)

Website: [www.manavi.org](http://www.manavi.org)

#### National Center for Missing and Exploited Children

1-800-THE-LOST (1-800-843-5678)

Website: [www.missingkids.com](http://www.missingkids.com)

#### Tahirih Justice Center

6402 Arlington Blvd, Suite 300

Falls Church, VA 22042

Phone: 571-282-6161

Fax: 571-282-6162

TTY: 711

Email: [justice@tahirih.org](mailto:justice@tahirih.org)

Website: <http://www.tahirih.org/>

## **UK Resources**

### **Ashiana Network**

Ph: +011 44 (0) 208 539 0427

Ph: +011 44 (0) 208 539 9656

E-mail: [info@ashiana.org.uk](mailto:info@ashiana.org.uk)

Web-site: [www.ashiana.org.uk](http://www.ashiana.org.uk)

### **Forced Marriage Unit**

Ph: +011 44 (0) 207 008 0151

E-mail: [fmufco.gov.uk](mailto:fmufco.gov.uk)

E-mail for outreach work: [fmoutrreach@fco.gov.uk](mailto:fmoutrreach@fco.gov.uk)

Website: [www.fco.gov.uk/en/travel-and-living-abroad/when-things-go-wrong/forced-marriage](http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/travel-and-living-abroad/when-things-go-wrong/forced-marriage)

### **Iranian and Kurdish Worker's Rights Organisation (IKWRO)**

Phone: +011 44 (0) 207 920 6460—9:30—5:00pm

Phone: +011 44 (0) 786 273 3511—24 hrs

Website: [www.ikwro.org.uk](http://www.ikwro.org.uk)

### **Karma Nirvana**

Help-line phone: +011 44 (0) 800 599 9247

Office phone: +011 44 (0) 113 218 0114

Website: [www.karmanirvana.org.uk](http://www.karmanirvana.org.uk)

### **Southall Black Sisters**

Helpline Phone: +011 44 (0) 208 571 0800

(Mon-Fri, 10am-5pm, closed Wed 12:30-1:30pm)

General Enquiries Phone: +011 44 (0)208 571 9595

(open Mon-Fri, 9am-4pm, closed 12:30-1:30pm for lunch)

E-mail: [info@southallblacksisters.co.uk](mailto:info@southallblacksisters.co.uk)

Website: [www.southallblacksisters.org.uk/index.html](http://www.southallblacksisters.org.uk/index.html)

## **International Resources**

### *Bangladesh*

#### **Telephone:**

During business hours (0800–1630) please contact the American Citizen Services Unit at: (2) 882-3805. You can also call the main Embassy switchboard at (2) 885-5500 and ask for American Citizen Services Unit.

If you need assistance after-hours, please call the main Embassy switchboard at (2) 885-5500, press “0” and ask for the duty officer.

#### **Email:**

You can contact the American Citizen Services Unit at [DhakaACS@state.gov](mailto:DhakaACS@state.gov)

#### **In Person:**

You can appear in person any work day, Sunday through Thursday, from 1300–1600, and proceed to Window 11 in the U.S. Embassy, which is located on:  
Madani Avenue, Baridhara  
Dhaka 1212, Bangladesh

#### **If You Are in the United States:**

If you, or the person being forced into marriage, is still in the United States, please contact your local authorities or the Department of State in Washington, D.C. at 1-888-407-4747.

#### **If You Are Calling from the United States to Report a Forced Marriage in Bangladesh:**

During business hours (0800–1630) please contact the American Citizen Services Unit at: + (880) (2) 882-3805. You can also call the main Embassy switchboard at + (880) (2) 885-5500 and ask for American Citizen Services Unit.

If you need assistance after-hours, please call the main Embassy switchboard at + (880) (2) 885-5500, press “0” and ask for the duty officer.

Please remember, Dhaka is 11 hours AHEAD of U.S. Eastern Standard Time.<sup>61</sup>

## *India*

If you are forced into marriage in India, you can contact one of five embassies, depending on where you are.

### **U.S. Embassy in New Delhi**<sup>62</sup>

The U.S. Embassy, New Delhi serves American citizens in the Indian states of Delhi, Jammu and Kashmir, Punjab, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand, and the country of Bhutan.

**Telephone:**

2419-8000

**E-mail:**

acsnd@state.gov

**Address:**

U.S. Embassy  
Shantipath  
Chanakyapuri  
New Delhi, India 110021

### **U.S Embassy in Chennai**<sup>63</sup>

The Consulate General in Chennai provides consular services for the states of Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Kerala, and the Union Territories of Lakshadweep Islands and Pondicherry.

**Telephone:**

(0)44-2857-4000. If you are calling from the United States, first dial 011-91-44-

**E-mail:**

chennaics@state.gov

**Address:**

U.S. Consulate General, Chennai  
Gemini Circle, No. 220 Anna Salai  
Chennai – 600006



### **U.S. Embassy in Mumbai**<sup>64</sup>

The Consulate General in Mumbai provides consular services for the states of Maharashtra, Goa, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat, and the Union Territories of Daman and Diu, and Dadra and Nagar Haveli.

**Telephone:**

24-hour reception – (91-22) 2363-3611, ext.0

**Email:**

MumbaiACS@state.gov

**Address:**

U.S. Consulate General, Mumbai  
Lincoln House, 78 Bhulabhai Desai Road  
Mumbai – 400026

### **U.S. Embassy in Kolkata**<sup>65</sup>

The Consulate General in Kolkata provides consular services for the states of West Bengal, Bihar, Jharkhand, Nagaland, Mizoram, Manipur, Meghalaya, Orissa, Arunachal Pradesh, Sikkim, Assam, and the Union Territories of Andaman & Nicobar Islands.

**Telephone:**

If you are an American citizen with an after hours emergency, please call our primary hotline cell phone (91) 99030 42956. If unable to reach the cell phone, please call (91) (33) 3984-2400 and dial “0” and ask for Duty Officer. (Note: “91” is India’s country code; please omit it if calling from within India. “33” is Kolkata’s city code; please omit it if calling from within Kolkata. If calling from within India but outside of Kolkata, one must dial “0” before “33.”).

**E-mail:**

consularkolkata@state.gov

**Address:**

U.S. Consulate General, Kolkata  
5/1 Ho Chi Minh, Sarani  
Kolkata – 700071

## **U.S. Embassy in Hyderabad<sup>66</sup>**

The Consulate General in Hyderabad provides consular services for the state of Andhra Pradesh.

### **Telephone:**

24-hour operator at (+91-40) 4033-8300. Ask for American Citizen Services. If you are calling from within India, but outside Hyderabad, first dial 040-. If you are calling from the United States, first dial 011-91-40-.

### **E-mail:**

hydacs@state.gov

### **Address:**

U.S. Consulate General, Hyderabad  
Paigah Palace  
1-8-323  
Chiran Fort Lane,  
Begumpet  
Secunderabad- 500003  
Andhra Pradesh

### **If You Are in the United States:**

If you, or the person being forced into marriage, is still in the United States, please contact your local authorities or the Department of State in Washington, D.C. at 1-888-407-4747.

### **If You Are Calling from the United States to Report a Forced Marriage in India:**

If you are concerned about a U.S. citizen friend or family who may be forced into a marriage in India, please contact the Embassy in New Delhi at 2419-8000. If you are calling from the United States, first dial 011-91-11- or email [acsnd@state.gov](mailto:acsnd@state.gov).

Please remember, India has one time zone and is 9½ hours AHEAD of U.S. EST during daylight savings time (March–Nov) and is 10½ hours AHEAD of U.S. EST from mid-Nov to mid-March.

## *Nepal*

Marriage under the age of 18 is illegal in Nepal. If in a forced marriage situation in Nepal, recourse can be taken by contacting local authorities.

### **U.S. Embassy in Kathmandu**<sup>67</sup>

If you or someone you know is in Nepal and at risk of being forced into a marriage, the number to call is 977 400 7200. Also, it is safe to contact local police to report the incident and obtain immediate help with safety concerns. Request a copy of the police report.

### **Email**

You can contact the American Citizen Services Unit at ConsKTM@state.gov

### **If You Are in the United States**

If you, or the person being forced into marriage, is still in the United States, please contact your local authorities or the Department of State in Washington, D.C. at 1-888-407-4747 during business hours and 202-647-5225 after hours.

## *Pakistan*<sup>68</sup>

If you are in Pakistan, and are at risk of being forced into a marriage, you can call the following American Consulates, depending on your location:

### **American Consulate in Islamabad:**

During the daytime, you can call the American Citizen Services Unit at 92 51 208 2186 or 92 51 208 2116

If you need assistance after-hours, please call the main Embassy switchboard at 92 51 208 0000 and ask for the duty officer

### **Email:**

acs\_Islamabad@state.gov

### **American Consulate in Karachi**

During the daytime or evening, you can call 92 21 3520 4200

**American Consulate in Lahore**

During the daytime or evening, you can call 92 42 603 4000

**If you are in Peshwaria, it is advised to call the Consulate in Islamabad**

**If You Are in the United States**

If you, or the person being forced into marriage, is still in the United States, please contact your local authorities or the Department of State in Washington, D.C. at 1-888-407-4747.

*Sri Lanka*

**American Consulate in Colombo<sup>69</sup>**

During business hours, the Embassy may be contacted on 011-249-8500 or 011-249-8686 during normal working hours.

If you are dialing from the United States: 011-94-11-249-8500, 011-94-11-249-8888

If you are dialing from a mobile phone anywhere in Sri Lanka or from a land line outside the Colombo District: 011-249-8500, 011-249-8888

If you are dialing from a land line within the Colombo District: 249-8500, 249-8686

After hours:

If you should call after-hours, please identify yourself as an American citizen requiring emergency services and ask to speak to the "Duty Officer".

If you are an American citizen with an after hours emergency, please call our hotline at: 011-249-8888.

If you are dialing from the United States: 011-94-11-249-8888

If you are dialing from a mobile phone anywhere in Sri Lanka or from a land line outside the Colombo District: 011-249-8888

If you are dialing from a land line within the Colombo District: 249-8888

## Notes

1. In this paper, South Asian refers to those who trace their lineages to Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka.
2. 'Asian' in the British sense refers to those who trace their origin to Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka.
3. The issue of forced marriage also affects men, but the focus of this paper is on female survivors of forced marriage.
4. Names have been changed for purposes of confidentiality.
5. Men are also subjected to forced marriages. In 2010, the UK's Forced Marriage Unit gave advice or support to 1735 cases. 86 percent of these cases involved females and 14 percent involved males.
6. U.S. Department of State Foreign Affairs Manual Volume 7 – Consular Affairs, 2005.
7. The Forced Marriage Unit (FMU) 'provide(s) practical support, information and advice to anyone who has been through or is at risk of a forced marriage. The Forced Marriage Unit is a joint initiative between the Foreign & Commonwealth Office and the Home Office. <http://www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk/partnersandfamilies/forcedmarriage/forcedmarriageunit/>
8. Stobart, 2009.
9. Lall, 2006.
10. Das Dasgupta, 2008.
11. Rao, 1982
12. Ibid.
13. Ibid.
14. U.S. Department of State Foreign Affairs Manual Volume 7 – Consular Affairs, 2005..
15. Ashiana Network, Forced Marriage Training, 2006.
16. Stobart and the FMU, 2009.
17. This can be applied to the US citizenship and legal permanent residency.
18. Stobart and the FMU, 2009.
19. Roy, 2008.
20. <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/86822.pdf>
21. U.S. Department of State Foreign Affairs Manual Volume 7 – Consular Affairs, 2005.
22. [http://travel.state.gov/travel/tips/safety/safety\\_5475.html](http://travel.state.gov/travel/tips/safety/safety_5475.html)
23. Asian & Pacific Islander Institute on Domestic Violence, 2007.
24. Due to issues of confidentiality, the following are not real cases and names have been changed
25. Ashiana Network, 2006.
26. Forced Marriage Unit, 2010.
27. 'Forced Marriage Unit Video, 2008.
28. Domestic Abuse Intervention Programs, 1984.

29. “So-called honour-based violence can lead to people being denied the right to exercise choice and control over their own lives. It can include forced and early marriage, dowry-related incidents and female genital mutilation.” Government Equalities Office, [http://www.equalities.gov.uk/what\\_we\\_do/violence\\_against\\_women/so-called\\_honourbased\\_violence.aspx](http://www.equalities.gov.uk/what_we_do/violence_against_women/so-called_honourbased_violence.aspx)
30. McVeigh, 2009.
31. Forced Marriage Unit Video, 2008.
32. *ibid.*
33. Sanghera, 2007.
34. Ashiana Network, 2006.
35. *Ibid.*
36. Newham Asian Women’s Project, 2007.
37. Hattersley, 2007.
38. Tarabay, 2009.
39. <http://www.marieclaire.com/world-reports/news/latest/honor-killings-in-america-3>
40. *Ibid.*
41. <http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/travel-and-living-abroad/when-things-go-wrong/forced-marriage/>
42. Hill and McVeigh, 2010.
43. *Ibid.*
44. “Specialist Unit Reports more Male Forced Marriages.” 2010. BBC News UK. June 30.
45. Forced Marriage Unit Outreach Video, 2008.
46. Forced Marriage Unit Brochure, 2010.
47. mehrotra and Munshi, 2011.
48. <http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/travel-and-living-abroad/when-things-go-wrong/forced-marriage/>
49. This section is from Voice UK ‘Forced Marriages of People with Learning Disabilities – Briefing for Parliamentarians’ presented at the Voice UK All Party Parliamentary Group on May 14th, 2008.
50. Stobart and the FMU, 2009.
51. *Ibid.*
52. *Ibid.*
53. Some of the safety planning tips below are from [http://www.ncadv.org/protectyourself/SafetyPlan\\_130.html](http://www.ncadv.org/protectyourself/SafetyPlan_130.html) and existing Manavi literature.
54. All listed are from: <http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/travel-and-living-abroad/when-things-go-wrong/forced-marriage/information-for-victims>,
55. <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/86822.pdf>
56. Ambassador Susan E. Rice, U.S. Permanent Representative to the United Nations, statement on the 30th anniversary of CEDAW, 2009.
57. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, remarks at the U.N. Commission on the Status of Women, March 2010.
58. “Anthony Lester introduced the Forced Marriage (Civil Protection) Bill to provide civil and family law protection and remedies to victims and potential victims of forced marriage. . . . [he] drafted the Bill together with a team of family lawyers with practical experience of working on cases of forced marriage.” (Taken from the invitation to the meeting) January 2007.
59. Southall Black Sisters is a not-for-profit organization, was established in 1979 to meet the needs of black (Asian and African-Caribbean) women. (<http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/travel-and-living-abroad/when-things-go-wrong/forced-marriage/>)
60. <http://www.justice.gov.uk/news/newsrelease260707c.htm>
61. [http://dhaka.usembassy.gov/forced\\_marriage\\_home.html](http://dhaka.usembassy.gov/forced_marriage_home.html)

62. [http://newdelhi.usembassy.gov/emergency\\_contact.html](http://newdelhi.usembassy.gov/emergency_contact.html).
63. <http://chennai.usconsulate.gov/emergency.html>.
64. [http://mumbai.usconsulate.gov/emergency\\_contact.html](http://mumbai.usconsulate.gov/emergency_contact.html)
65. [http://kolkata.usconsulate.gov/service/emergency\\_contact.html](http://kolkata.usconsulate.gov/service/emergency_contact.html)
66. [http://hyderabad.usconsulate.gov/emergency\\_contact.html](http://hyderabad.usconsulate.gov/emergency_contact.html)
67. <http://nepal.usembassy.gov/service/emergency-contact.html>
68. All the following information was gathered from the U.S. Department of State
69. [http://srilanka.usembassy.gov/emergency\\_services2.html](http://srilanka.usembassy.gov/emergency_services2.html).

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- Embassy of the United States, Hyderabad, India. Retrieved on July 21, 2010, from [http://hyderabad.usconsulate.gov/emergency\\_contact.html](http://hyderabad.usconsulate.gov/emergency_contact.html)
- Embassy of the United States, Kathmandu, Nepal. Retrieved on July 21, 2010, from <http://nepal.usembassy.gov/service/emergency-contact.html>
- Embassy of the United States, Kolkata, India. Retrieved on July 21, 2010, from [http://kolkata.usconsulate.gov/service/emergency\\_contact.html](http://kolkata.usconsulate.gov/service/emergency_contact.html)
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