

The Story of a Sikh Girl Who Was Victimised

The following story was related by a Sikh girl not very long ago. Copies of it was distributed at Guru Nanak Nishkam Sevak Jatha, Soho Road, Birmingham, to alert youth and parents of what is happening.

"My story started when I was 16 years old living in Handsworth, we had just finished our last GCSE exams. To celebrate, we all decided to go to a "bhangra gig" during the day, as we knew we would not have been allowed to go in the night. There were 4 of us, best of friends, we decided to go, although we knew we would get into trouble if our parents found out, but we thought that we "only live once" and as it was a special occasion, so we went. This was the first time any one of us had done something like this, it was an experience. When we got there we could not believe how many people our age were there from all over Birmingham, all Asian! I was shocked more than my friends, there were people drunk, boys/girls smoking, this was the new generation of Asians enjoying the western world freedoms. I remember saying to my friends, "We need to stick together, no matter what happens the way we were as we always danced at wedding parties.). I went over to them to see what had happened, they totally ignored me and encouraged me to drink which I then did. My dad would drink a lot so I assumed it be ok). We left the club at the end, it was about 4 o' clock, I remember thinking how the hell are we going to get home? We were giggling, And we were late and drunk. I knew my gran would, phone my mum at work if I did not get home in the next 20mins, (I was normally home about 3:50pm, and it was already ten past four, I was in the middle of Birmingham City centre, 40mins away from home by bus!! I was so scared, I knew I was going to get into serious trouble once I got home, and I smelt strongly of smoke and alcohol. My dad was going to kill me. We did not know what to do? Then the guys, who we were dancing in the club, came over and asked us if we were alright? or if we needed anything?, i.e. a lift home, because we were so desperate, we said yes. They dropped us home, we exchanged numbers and they went. I got slapped that day, my dad went absolutely mad, because I had lied, went to a club, danced with boys and got drunk! The whole family was really upset. I remember thinking I will never do anything like this again. My friends got the same treatment.

It was not until a couple of weeks later, that some one kept ringing my house number, anonymous caller, and my gran, bless her, would go over to answer the phone, but no reply. Then one day, as my gran was cooking my roti, the phone rang and I answered, it was that guy from the club. I didn't know what to do. I was scared and yet anxious to what might happen. He wanted us to meet up again, he wanted to know how we were? This was going to be my first relationship. I got to know "Abs" over the next couple of months, we would arrange, the best times for him to call me, it was

exciting, no one knew about him, I felt needed and loved. He was 18 at the time, and I had just turned 16. He drove a really nice car and worked for his uncle, in I.T. It got to a stage where we would meet up in the middle of the night, I would sneak out of my house, he would pick me up at the bottom of my street, and we would go everywhere together I was loving every minute of it and every time we would not see each other, I felt like dying I was truly in love with him. I did notice that he was not Punjabi, he dressed different to normal Punjabi boys that age, and he didn't drink and smoke. He knew a lot of Muslims, but I decided to ignore that fact, as I was having the time of my life. I had a funny feeling he was Muslim, but he wore a Kara? and I never had the courage to ask him, because I didn't want to ruin anything between us.

But finally that day came when he revealed that he must go to the mosque, I was taken back, I didn't know how to respond, my boyfriend was a Muslim, and I loved him too much to let him go. I asked him about his name, his nickname was Abs. he had told me his name was Harbinder, but in fact his name was Yasseen. This was a distressing situation, he had lied to me and led me on to believe he was Sikh, but was in fact a Muslim. I confronted him, I asked him, you knew I was a Sikh, then why did you get into this relationship with me? He answered my question with a question, does it matter? And I remember replying "No" after a few minutes, I thought to myself he's not your typical Muslim, and he has treated me with respect. It was a hard time, I felt like breaking up with him, he was a Muslim, it wouldn't work? But I could not help it, he loved me, I loved him, and I kept reminding myself, he was different, and all those good times we had during the start of our relationship. So we decided to give it a shot, (what fool I was), we would spend a lot of time together, he got me job at his uncle's firm, they all treated me with respect although I was a Sikh, and all of them were Muslim, they were so nice to me. I felt wanted and at home with my boyfriends family. We saw each other for over two year's(all through college) and then came the time for me to leave my home and go to university, I went out of town a good few hours away, I wanted to live as far as away from my family as possible, as they were the obstacle, in my life from him. I had stopped wearing my Kara and my gold khanda necklace. I also stopped going to the Gurdwara, because I did not want to offend him, and I would use that time instead to be with him. I loved him and would do anything for him, anything. At university. Things got a bit serious, I lived in halls, first, but everyone would look at me and call me names to my face and behind my back, they even trashed my flat twice!! All because I was going out with a Muslim, I would try to explain to them, he was different and he loved me, they would not have none of it, I felt so bad, he had to go through a lot because of me. This was a really bad experience for me, and I felt vulnerable and weak. Things started to change a lot during the first few weeks at university. I quit uni, and moved into a flat with him, he got me another job, and again his cousin helped us financially. I never told my parents that I had done this, they would phone me, I would say everything was going excellent, and I would lie to them. During this time, I started to stop going home, I would say that I had too much uni work to do, and so I couldn't come home. Then, I

stopped answering my phone from my family and friends, because I knew all they would say is to stop seeing him, and come home etc.so I changed my number, that's not the only thing I changed, a few months later I changed my name! We were happy together, we were in love, we were made for each other!!

A few months later I even changed my faith, I became a Muslim, I was happy then to finally be apart of something that was so great, everyone loved me, and I was finally at home and peace.Islam then offered everything to me, it made sense and was the truth, Sikhism had to many flaws in it, or that is what I was told, and I believed everything he said, it all made sense, Sikhism was a man-made religion, it believed in caste (we had Gurdwara made on caste) we would make our women dance half naked on bhangra video's, while Islam would teach us to cover the women because she is so precious, like an diamond. I was duped, I knew nothing about Sikhism, my parents never told me, and I never learnt anything at the Gurdwara, never understood what the Granthi's were saying. And as a result I believed everything he told me.We then decided to get married, but he said we should go to Pakistan to do that, because his sisters were there, and they were all dying to meet me! So I agreed, we went. The year was 1994,I was 19 years old. What I am about to tell you now, is themost disturbing part of my life, I have had to receive medical treatment from Doctor's on a regular basis for a long period,due to this. I would like to say something before I continue, whatI am about to tell you, is no exaggeration in any way, this is exactly how it happened, and the metropolitan police are well aware of it. Whilst I was on the flight over to Pakistan, I was so excited, I was finally going to get married to the love of my Life, I never thought about my family or friends, as I had everything I ever needed through him. And because I was taught to believe that they were the devil, they will take me to hell,and I did not want to go there.

When we reached Pakistan, there were a few people there to greet us, I had worn the hi-jab, as a sign of respect to my new in-laws and faith. They were so happy to see me. We were then herded into a 4x4, and then of we went to meet the rest of Yasseen's family. We were driving for a few hours, and I was absolutely worn out.We then stopped at what seemed to be a police station or the local sheriff's office, the luggage was taken out of the jeep, and these men came and took the luggage away, Yasseen came over and took my personal belongings, everything, my passport, money even my toothbrush, he said the police wanted to check our things, in case we were smuggling drugs, I remember laughing at first, but when looked at his face, he was deadly serious, I gave him everything and then I was taken to a room, where I was told to wait. They asked Yasseen questions. It seemed like ages, while I waited in that room, on my own. I was getting very worried for Yasseen. During this time, two more cars and a jeep had come to this police station. Finally, a middle aged man came over and started to ask me personal questions. I had trouble understanding what he was saying, he spoke so fast, in Urdu. I kept asking him to take me to

Yasseen. He said "Yasseen has gone", those three words stopped my heart beating, I was alone in a remote village in Pakistan, with no belongings and locked up a room. I did not know what to think? What was happening? This was not supposed to happen?

Where had Yasseen gone? I cried, and pleaded with the men there to take me to Lahore, they would simply laugh at me and beat me. a few days, I did not eat or sleep, I was disorientated, and I did not know what to do? I became ill, I was very weak, a doctor was called, he gave me some medicine, with which all I did was sleep. The next thing I remember was, when I woke up in a room, with a small barred window, and a small door. This door was locked from the outside, I started to scream, a women came rushing over. I was relieved for a moment that women had come over to my aid, until she started to shout at me and curse me. I didn't know what was going on. I just sat there in that small, cold room, with blank mind. They would give some bread and water three times a day. I was allowed to go to the toilet only once a day. By now I had realized, I was not going home and Yasseen was not coming to my rescue. The building I stayed at was 3 storeys, and was very big. It must have had more than 30 rooms. It was the only building there, there was nothing anywhere around this building, just fields and 1 tarmac road. It was a brothel. I was not a lone there were 3 other girls (Sikh and Hindu) that were in the same situation as me. We were all kept on the top floor, we were all given one room each. The other girls had been there longer than me, we would get a chance to speak during the night. They told me of their stories and how they got here, they sounded familiar. It would be very cold during the night. They told me, on the 3rd day, what happens here. This where, the locals came to enjoy themselves. I was very frightened. This is where they would come to quench their desires. I remember how they treated us, they would treat us like animals, they would rape us, and then spit on our faces after they were done. It was a living nightmare, with no escape. I spent 15 months here, over that period of time, I have seen 36 more girls been brought here, I have seen 7 commit suicide, by jumping of the building and 20 odd taken away by rich businessmen who would use them in their own brothels. I saw and lived in HELL, I saw young girls being raped, I herd the screams of these girls and their frustration, that no one would help them. When I first saw the police approach the building, I thought that we had been saved, was I proved wrong, they beat a girl to death right in front of us all, to show us who was in charge, and what would happen if we didn't co-operate. If you think for a second, that what I am saying is lies, go and approach the Scotland Yard, they have the full details of who the girls were and where they were from. I saw this with my own eyes, and no-one ever helped us. A time came when me and another girl, got the opportunity to escape, we had been taken to a local tribesman's house, a fight had broken out, in his house, in the confusion Guru ji gave us an opportunity to escape, we took a jeep, and set out on the roads, we didn't know where we were going, we just went, where ever the road took us. We got close to a town Called Eminabad, here we informed the police of what had happened to us, they helped us,we were handed over to the British embassy and sent back to the UK. Once back in the UK, the police tried

to hand us back to our families, OUR OWN families had disowned us, my family told me to go away, that I had brought shame to the family name, I tried to apologise, and they would not accept it.

I even tried to get help from the Gurdwara, they said they could not help us. We had to go back to the police, who then put us in a witness protection programme. The year is 1996, I was then 21. We both were given a new chance to start a fresh, the police helped us a great deal. In the programme we were given a place to stay and they gave us new jobs, to rebuild our lives. I am now 29, married and a 3 year old girl. I re-initiated into Sikhism in 1998, me and my friend, we took Amrit and took an active role to combat what had happened to us and help others in the same situation.

There is not a single second that goes by, without me thinking about those poor girls locked up in Pakistan. I have been scared for life. But I must do everything I can to try to create awareness to help those girls that scream every night and go through that abuse. I am thankful to the Police who are trying to help those girls, but I think we as a community need to do much more. We must come out of hiding, and face the danger these girls now face. But what we find is a really negative attitude employed by all parties, the families, Gurdwara and the girls, to do anything about this. I know what happened to me and what is still happening to those that are in Pakistan. Accordingly to the latest figures, there are 300 girls there right now, facing constant abuse, who are getting drugged up everyday and then raped. One of them is your relative!! Just keep that in mind, your cousin who you have not seen for over 3 years, went to university and never came back! When you ask your uncle and auntie, where is your cousin who you nor your family have seen for so long, you get the reply, that she has brought a house there and she has found herself a good job, and so she is constantly busy.

I beg you please stop these lies, please help my sisters' in Pakistan, who no-one helps, their families are too scared, or they don't know where she is? We must put a stop to this, I saw what is happening there, believe me, I do not even wish this to happen my enemies, when you see a young girl being raped by savages, who beat her and then spit on her you remember God, believe me when all you can hear is her screams to stop and her cry for help all you can do is watch. Those girls need your help! I pray all the time to Guru, to please help, those girls, every time I get the chance. We must make sure not a single girl goes to that living Hell from today. We must educate every one of our girls and boys about our religion. We must take it upon our selves to educate ourselves and our own families about Sikhism and the dangers it faces constantly. We must thrive to make sure this never happens to any girl, irrelevant of her religion ever again. I hope Guru Ji helps us. I hope you at least help your self and your own family. I would like to thank both the Pakistan and British police that are trying to combat this

increasing trend, I hope all those that took those poor girls over to Pakistan, realise that God is within us all, and not just in the heavens, I wish they could just imagine for 1 single second, that one of those girls was their own sister! No one would ever want this to happen to anyone, believe me. We have altered the above account to safe guard our source. The name and locations have been changed and how our penji escaped has been changed dramatically for the simple reason not to jeopardise any other girls opportunity to escape. Please note this is not racial incitement as it was MUSLIMS that finally got penji back into Britain. We would like to thank penji for giving us this account, we can only appreciate how hard it must have been to write this or what she went through! I would also like to say, please do not discriminate a whole race because of a small minority. This is against the principles Sikhi.

PLEASE EDUCATE OUR BROTHERS AND SISTERS ON OUR BEAUTIFUL HISTORY, LEARN ABOUT YOUR RELIGION SO THIS WILL NOT HAPPEN TO OUR FELLOW BROTHERS AND SISTERS AGAIN."

PLEASE SEND THIS TO AS MANY SIKH BOYS AND GIRLS AS POSSIBLE