

**The curse of domestic violence: An in-depth qualitative study based on biographical interviews of British Pakistani Women to understand the dominant psycho-social factors which influence women's decisions when it comes to leaving or staying in an abusive relationship.**

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## **Abstract**

This paper highlights the domestic abuse of Pakistani/Bangladeshi women living in the UK and highlights the constant challenge for professionals and agencies to protect those “hard to reach” sections of the community; a group of women who feel their circumstances are beyond the help of agencies. This qualitative study is an attempt to peek behind this veil in order to answer the rather elusive question of why victims of domestic abuse do not leave their abusive partners.

The analysis of the research attempts to i) Identify key themes that lead to the ongoing cycle of abuse; ii) identify reasons why, in light of the widest range of policy interventions and practice guidance to tackle forced marriage and domestic abuse, many women will still prefer to suffer in silence; iii) make future recommendations to help prevent further domestic abuse in the Pakistani diaspora in the UK.

“No nation can rise to the height of glory unless your women are side by side with you; we are victims of evil customs. It is crime against humanity that our women are shut up within the four walls of the houses as prisoners. There is no sanction anywhere for the deplorable condition in which our women have to live. You should take your women along with you as comrades in every sphere of life.”

(Muhammad Ali Jinnah; founder of Pakistan).

Six women from the Pakistani community who felt passionate about the subject and had first-hand experience of difficult relationships took part in this study. These six interviews were in-depth enough to stand alone as well as complement each other with overarching themes and similarities. This small scale research was conducted by using the psychosocial method of Free Association Narrative Interviews. Audio recorded interviews were then transcribed and coded to elicit common themes, which helped to analyse data gathered by using principles of Charmaz (2001) constructivist version of grounded theory. As the quality of such research very much depends on accuracy of interpretation of researcher as self, particular attention was paid to unconscious process of transference, countertransference and projection between researcher and interviewee.

Main themes to emerge from the interviews to be considered under the neologism of “culturalcentrism” were:

- Patriarchal society
- Misrepresentation of Islam
- Taboo of divorce
- Acute sense of guilt and failure.
- Fear of disappointing parents
- Fear of rejection by community

The length of time taken to reach a decision was on average over a decade, which reflects upon the seriousness of the dilemma. A recommendation has been made for further in-depth psychosocial research with women from younger age groups and a similar cultural background in order to understand if they too feel pressure to adhere to the same values. A second recommendation is for the need for a multicultural agency trained workforce with greater insight into understanding the pressure of cultural and custom ties.

Violence against women was recognised as a fundamental infringement of human rights in the 1993 United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women and was a major topic at the 1995 Beijing Fourth World Conference on Women. The serious consequences of domestic abuse have also been recognised by the World Health Organisation (Krug et al. 2002).

Clear progress in domestic abuse has been made in recent years in the form of acknowledging, debating and highlighting the issue in the media but it still remains taboo in some parts of communities. Although focus has turned to the emotional impact on mothers and its effect on their parenting capacities, most research is still based on the number and severity of incidents or scale of physical harm. Another constant challenge is how to protect mothers who refuse to leave abusive partners. In such situations they are penalised or threatened by child protection inquiries, and the fear of losing their children hinder them further from seeking support from professional agencies.

This study is an attempt to explore how a Pakistani community, which has been part of multicultural Britain for over 60 years, raising a fourth generation in the UK, can still have cases of forced marriages, honour killings and socially condoned domestic abuse. There are still Pakistani/Bangladeshi British born women struggling to seek help and support without feeling traitors to their community. Why are these women fighting alone, feeling as if these British agencies and policies are only there to serve White British communities?

This research is based on the experiences of six women who represent those who are not part of any statistics and not matching the characteristics of average women victims of domestic abuse. These are women who may hold their cultural customs, family honour and unspoken values so dear to themselves that they make compromising decisions. Their cultural issues may well be so alien to professionals that they do not know how to reach these women. Looking at the cultural fabric of their land of origin is important in order to gain insight into the struggles and barriers that they may encounter.

### Historical, Religious and Political context of Pakistan

According to the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (2017) about 96 percent of Pakistanis are Muslims, the world's second most populous Muslim state and its only nuclear power, therefore placing the country on a level of international standing within the world Community. Pakistan is unique in a way as it is the only country to have been created in the name of Islam. Pakistan was created in 1947 as an independent nation for Muslims from the regions in the east and west of the Subcontinent where there was a Muslim majority. An ethnic civil war in 1971 resulted in the secession of East Pakistan as the new country of Bangladesh. Pakistan has been characterised by periods of military rule, conflicts with neighbouring India and challenges including illiteracy, inadequate healthcare and high level corruption.

By the time Pakistan had been founded by its leader Ali Jinnah, Muslim women were in a strong position. Limited Suffrage had already been granted to women by the Indian Government in 1935, after pressure from the Muslim League. Ali Jinnah, along with his influential sister Fatima Jinnah had encouraged Women to partake in public life, though not so much as claimants of feminist rights but as symbols of the Muslim cultural identity. However, Jalal (1991) argues that Muslim women of Pakistan considered the gender struggle and role of symbols of Muslim culture to coincide. They campaigned to abolish Islamic cultural practice of polygamy and

purdah<sup>1</sup> as well as reinstate their inheritance granted to them by the Prophet Muhammed. According to Faiza Ali quoting; (FRD, 1994)

“Following the creation of Pakistan, women attained voting rights and the right to elect. As earlier mentioned, the first legislature of Pakistan in 1947 had two women representatives, Begum Jahan Ara Shah Nawaz and Begum Shaista Ikramullah. Both of these women along with other elite Muslim women in Pakistan continued to advocate women's political empowerment through legal reforms. These women mobilised support that led to passage of the Muslim Personal Law of Shariah in 1948, which recognised a woman's right to inherit all forms of property in the newly created state of Pakistan.” (Ali, F 2006)

They were also behind the futile attempt to have the government include a Charter of Women's Rights in the 1956 constitution. The 1961 Muslim Family Laws Ordinance covering marriage and divorce, the most important socio-legal reform that they supported, is still widely regarded as empowering to women.

However, these laws only benefited the educated women of higher social standing and did not really help those women from poorer areas. Purdah may have been on the decline over the years but “the boundaries of mobility for the majority of women continue to be shaped by the domestic considerations.” (Jalal 1991)

Being an Islamic Republic, every rule and regulation in Pakistan is supposedly based on Islamic law. In pre Islamic Arabian society, women were treated as men's property. The Holy Qur'an sought to re-address this disenfranchisement. However, like many Modern Islamic countries this

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<sup>1</sup> Purdah is the term used primarily in South Asia meaning "curtain". It takes two forms: physical segregation of the sexes and the requirement that women cover their bodies. It is globally observed Islamic practice but also seen in some South East Indian Hindu Communities. While Purdah has been criticized as oppression of women by limiting female autonomy, freedom of movement, and access to resources such as education, employment, and political participation, other defend this as form of female protection.

is not the reality in Pakistan. According to Bhattacharya, S (2014), as Islam spread across the world; it invariably came up against other customs and parochial cultures that have eroded the teachings of Islam. Many Muslims live in ignorance, believing for example the seventh century patriarchy based Arabic customary laws to be divinely binding and part of the sharia<sup>2</sup>.

Bhattacharya also considers how patriarchal rule has resulted in a total disregard for women in the Pakistani society. At the family level, she suggests a “skewed perception” that a daughter can neither be a ‘provider’ nor a ‘protector,’ resulting in discrimination of the female at birth.

These early years of re-establishing enfranchisement for women such as inheritance and divorce rights are considered by Jalal (1991) as a “thin veneer over Islamic morality,” and must also be considered within the historical context of a new nation desperate to establish its own post-colonial identity; the Land of Islam sought to distinguish itself from the infidels by reaffirming the family unit, with women taking their rightful place at the head as had been granted to them by the Hadith.

It must also be taken into account that these rights, although by law granted to all women were never really accessible to women of the lower classes, whose boundaries have since been set by their economic disenfranchisement. Overtime, successive politicians in power have also sought to appease the conservative religious leaders.

### Domestic Violence in UK

For the purpose of this thesis, the term domestic abuse is used rather than the more common term domestic violence for the very simple reason that violence according to the Oxford Dictionary definition is behaviour involving physical force whereas abuse is to “treat with cruelty or violence”; therefore, encompassing the mental torture and coercion that these case studies were subjected to.

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<sup>2</sup> Sharia, Sharia law, or Islamic law is the religious law forming part of the Islamic tradition. It is derived from the religious precepts of Islam, particularly the Quran and the Hadith (teaching of Prophet). <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sharia>

Statistics claim (ONS 2015) that as many as 1.2 million women experience some kind of domestic abuse in Britain each year; many do so silently, having little faith in protection agencies. Those who do find the courage to report an abusive partner often do not do so until there have been at least 30 incidents. It can be too late for some as the escalating pattern of abuse and violence sees an estimated two women murdered by a partner or ex-partner every week in Britain. Domestic violence is defined as;

*“any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive, threatening behaviour, violence or abuse in those aged 16 or over who are, or have been, intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality. The abuse can encompass, but is not limited to psychological, physical, sexual, financial, emotional.”*

*(Home Office 2013)*

At the core of domestic abuse is forced marriage. Often practice of cultural traditions become more poignant in diasporic settings; a result of the migration trauma when parents try to cling to their roots and identity. Arranged Marriages are a widely accepted custom in Pakistan which when moved to the UK can easily slip into Forced marriage. One of the controlling factors is the female sexuality; fearing that they will become “too Westernised.” Forced marriages, either consciously or subconsciously retains the cultural rigidity. According to the 2016 Forced Marriage Unit (FMU) Statistics, 80% of all reported cases were perpetrated against the female and over 50% of all reported cases were of Pakistani (43%) or Bangladeshi origin (8%). Out of all those cases, 11% had no overseas element, with the potential or actual forced marriage taking place entirely within the UK. (Home Office, 2017)

The UK has a wide reaching law on Forced marriage with the 2007 Forced Marriage Protection Order which immediately states that it is there to protect;

“a) a person from being forced into a marriage or from any attempt to be forced into a marriage; or (b) a person who has been forced into a marriage. “However definite loop

holes begin to appear when it further states that before a prosecution can be made, “the court must have regard to all the circumstances.”

It further states that;

“In ascertaining that person's well-being, the court must, in particular, have such regard to the person's wishes and feelings (so far as they are reasonably ascertainable) as the court considers appropriate in the light of the person's age and understanding..” (FM protection Order 2007)

The problem here is that unless the woman is under the legal age of 16 to marry, coercion may be considerably difficult to ascertain, particularly in a culture where girls have acquired learned helplessness. Gangoli, G. Razak, A and McCarry, M (2006) research and interviews with North East area's FM support groups, highlighted the blurred border between coercion and consent. A young woman who says no then no and then yes because she doesn't want to upset her mum suggests a collective coercion. Would a court therefore step in to protect the daughter on grounds that coercion is “reasonably ascertainable”?

Gangoli et al's heuristic research also highlights what they term as the “slippage” between Forced and Arranged marriage definitions. Here is an extract that highlights that slippage from two women who considered their marriages to have been “arranged.”

*“I was given a choice [about my marriage], my father did sit down with me and discuss it but I could see the pressure that he was under and I agreed. So is this a forced marriage then? Interviewer: How do you see it?”*

*“Well I was given the choice but if I look at why I said yes then I could say it was forced. The nature of coercion within some forced marriages and in some marriages defined as arranged is the result of social expectation and emotional pressure from the family.” .*  
*(Gangoli et al 2006)*

Much of the research on Forced Marriages (Brandon, J. and Hafez, S. 2008 and Chantler, K. 2012), highlights this slippage and the detrimental effect of what is effectively criminalising parents and relatives of FM victims.

Chantler, K. (2012) notes the MoJ study (2009) aimed to establish the number of Forced Marriage Protection Orders (FMPOs) made in 2008 in England and Wales and to gain an understanding of the processes of seeking an FMPO. The key findings were that of the 15 designated courts, two thirds of FMPOs were made in just 3 of the courts; fears of offending communities or being thought of as culturally insensitive prevented people from acting.

A number of the European critiques; for example, Bredal, 2010 in relation to Nordic Countries, Razack (2004) and Myrdahl (2010) in relation to Norway; Fair (2010) in relation to Denmark; Gill and Anitha (2011); Gangoli and Chantler (2009); Wilson, (2007) in relation to the United Kingdom; have all pointed to the discriminatory nature of a law that prohibits Muslim community girls from marrying until 18 or 21 when European nationals can marry at an earlier age with consent; that it interferes with genuine love marriages and so is a breach of human rights. Within the Asian community, this law is seen as not Forced marriage prevention but as a way of controlling immigration numbers.

Anitha, S. and Gill, A. (2009) in their paper; ‘Coercion, consent and the forced marriage debate in the UK.’ summarised three key issues discussed by all the European Critics as i) lack of adequate reporting of incidents of forced marriage; ii) lack of professional knowledge of forced marriage and their fear of intervention; iii) the tension between conceptualizing forced marriage as purely cultural or as a form of gender based violence.

Culturally specific concepts of izzat (honour) and sharam (shame) seem central to forcing women into marriage and to keeping quiet over gender based violence. This paper supports Gangoli’s research in that young women often marry in order to please their parents. It also

highlights examples of women who did leave their husbands and were then faced with being ostracised by their own parents.

There is no evidence that correlates the causal effect of domestic abuse with Forced Marriage (FM), Actual Marriage (AM) or Love Marriage (LM). This thesis deals exclusively with domestic abuse of the female spouse, with FM being defined as a form of domestic abuse. Further research could be to interview male perpetrators of domestic abuse who may have also been coerced into marriage and men who perpetrated abuse because they felt it was sanctioned by their culture.

#### Controlling or coercive behaviour in an intimate or family relationship

Controlling behaviour is a range of acts designed to make a person subordinate and/or dependent by isolating them from sources of support, exploiting their resources and capacities for personal gain, depriving them of the means needed for independence, resistance and escape and regulating their everyday behaviour. Coercive behaviour is an act or a pattern of acts of assault, threats, humiliation and intimidation or other abuse that is used to harm, punish, or frighten their victim. This form of abuse is the core issue under discussion in this study.

While the government's definition of domestic violence recognises the impact of coercive control and threatening behaviour, this has not previously been reflected in law. Police investigating reports of domestic abuse, were often left frustrated as abusers were not prosecuted due to a lack of clear evidence or gaps in the legislation. In cases where perpetrators were brought before the courts, they were often only charged with isolated crimes, with years of psychological and emotional abuse not taken into account. Many respondents noted that psychological and emotional abuse are the most likely to be minimised or thought not to count as domestic violence and that victims of non-physical abuse may not see themselves as victims which is clearly an issue in some male dominating cultures. It was also noted that perpetrators may not consider non-physical abuse to be termed as "domestic violence." However, a repeated

pattern of emotional or psychological abuse by which one party seeks to control another can be harmful to a person's wellbeing. (Home Office 2012)

This particular scenario may allow for perpetrators of domestic abuse to escape prosecution as the Serious Crime Act of 2015 states that prosecution can happen if;

1(d); “A [perpetrator] knows or ought to know that the behaviour will have a serious effect on B [victim].”

Presumably if the perpetrator is interpreted as being unaware, it would be a difficult case to prosecute.

The Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (the “Istanbul Convention”) was adopted in April 2011. The Council of Europe website explains what the Convention means for state parties: (...) Governments that agree to be bound by the Convention will have to do the following:

- train professionals in close contact with victims;
- Regularly run awareness-raising campaigns;
- take steps to include issues such as gender equality and nonviolent conflict resolution in interpersonal relationships in teaching material;
- set up treatment programmes for perpetrators of domestic violence and for sex offenders;
- Work closely with NGOs;
- involve the media and the private sector in eradicating gender stereotypes and promoting mutual respect.

When the domestic violence disclosure scheme, commonly known as Clare’s law, was rolled out, Government announced a £3.2 million fund to boost the provision of services, including refuge for victims of domestic violence. However, the question is how these funds can be spent so that

services are reaching all groups of the community. Safe lives claim that since the beginning of work, almost a decade ago, they have trained more than 1800 IDVA (Independent Domestic Violence Advisor) workers. These professionals are experts in high risk cases and provide emotional and practical support to victims. There are MARACs (Multi-Agency Risk Assessment conference) meetings to discuss cases of serious risk and harm. All this help and support is out there for those who are seeking it but there are hidden victims who are struggling alone believing it's still a "family matter."

There are girls under the age of sixteen being coerced into forced marriages who would not be covered by the Serious Crimes Act 2015 as this is specifically aimed at coercion in intimate relationships.

“(3)But A does not commit an offence under this section if at the time of the behaviour in question—

(a)A has responsibility for B, for the purposes of Part 1 of the Children and Young Persons Act 1933 (see section 17 of that Act), and

(b)B is under 16. (Serious Crimes Act 2015).”

### The influence of Sharia Law on Pakistani UK community

There is an acknowledgement of the need for prevention of domestic violence by promoting gender equality from preschool age. However, Mosque Committees and Community Leaders must also be held accountable for their all too pervading attitude toward women. In order to eliminate domestic violence, tough checks should be carried out in order to understand the type of advice being offered to women who approach the Sharia Courts in desperation.

Sharia is Islam's legal system derived from the Koran, Islam's central text, and fatwas - the rulings of Islamic scholars. There are thought to be around 100 Sharia Law courts operating throughout the UK. These Judgements have no legal basis, but still there are fears that their presence has resulted in Muslim women not being able to get the justice they deserve. The

majority of cases involve women wanting to end their Islamic marriages. This topic gained high political profile recently when current Prime Minister Theresa May was thought to be defending these courts.

Bano, S (2012) carried a research under the topic of “An exploratory study of Sharia councils in England with respect to family law” to learn more about the nature and scope of Sharia councils in England, with a particular focus on their administration. She explains that there is no single authoritative definition of the term ‘Sharia council’ and the majority of organizations to which this term can be applied appear to have a primary role of helping Muslim women to obtain a religious divorce. Men do not need to approach a Sharia Council to obtain a Muslim divorce certificate. They can pronounce a talaq divorce while Muslim women can only divorce their husbands by involving a religious scholar, hence they have little alternative but to turn to Sharia Councils. (This will be discussed in detail in further chapters).

The six women I have chosen in this study are unique in a way that they do not meet average characteristic of victims of domestic violence as claimed by some researches (Walby, S. and Allen, J. 2004) and (Safe Lives 2015). There is no criminal history of perpetrators and they are not from low income group households. There is no substance misuse by either victims or perpetrators.

### **Personal Position**

My interest in this topic lies in my own Ethnic background. As a Pakistani Muslim woman who arrived in the UK as a twenty-year-old wife, I have a very deep rooted connection to the culture and traditions of my land of origin. Initially I had to adapt to a new culture; the language, the weather and it seemed that no sooner had I arrived that I found myself having to cope with the responsibilities of being a young mother. I have had to overcome many of the same challenges represented by the six women in this study; the isolation and absence of extended family support in the face of coercive control, being the most common factor.

I was raised in a strict Patriarchy where the moral integrity of a woman of any age, living alone, would be questioned. The receiving of any male visitors would without any consideration of possible extenuating circumstance, lead to ostracization by the community. Growing up in the second biggest city of Pakistani Punjab from late 1960s to late 1980s, the single woman household; the independent female driver ferrying her children around would have been unheard of. In cases where the husband/father was working abroad, the wife/mother would either be expected to move back in with her parents, or with in -laws with a male relative as protector.

Young women would only be expected to leave their parents' home and the guarded security of father and brothers in exchange for the same guarded protection from a husband and his family. The message to a departing bride from her parents, (and perhaps most significantly, her mother), would be that marriage is for life and you try to make it work at any cost. Divorce was rare. Tradition was so ingrained, that women would suffer the abuse of violent husbands, or return to their parents for the rest of their lives, rather than risk the stigma of divorce.

Love match in marriages is rare and have often resulted in tragedy when young couples run away from home and live in some remote location, having to watch over their shoulders for the rest of their lives. In some cases, reports would be heard of an unclaimed body of a young (sometimes pregnant) woman found in a river, presumably the consequence of the love marriage not working out; the boy deserting her with nowhere for her to return to.

Looking into my own personal life, I briefly met and gave my consent to marry my husband over a cup of tea. And I was lucky to have had that opportunity because meeting your husband prior to marriage was not a common practice. I would not have considered it a forced marriage; I could have refused the proposal. However, I was 18 at the time and according to custom, pressure was on my widow mother to give my hand in marriage and I did not want to disappoint. Furthermore, being in love with your chosen partner was not important; once you were married and living together, either you grew into love or you carried on, regardless.

I was married at 20, came to the UK to join my husband and within the first four years in this emotionally cold marriage, had had three children. There was never much in common between

us but he was doing his job as a father and I was trying desperately to do mine as a mother in a foreign land, away from any support of my immediate family. I knew I wasn't content but I never thought initially that I had any genuine grounds for divorce or for leaving him.

Not being compatible or in love was not a qualifying reason to end the marriage. It's a gamble; you win or you lose. Any complaints of the lack of love or compatibility would be repudiated by the community.

That was the norm. He couldn't be blamed for that. Such was my conscience for ten years; trying to convince myself that what I had was better than most. Once I started a social work degree and got to know myself, and his behaviour and cycle of abuse better, I started questioning if what I had was enough. I started questioning my situation and so began my own quiet rebellion. Being a Pakistani Muslim female and living in a highly Asian populated area but working for a British NGO, most of my contacts both in social and professional networks were quite culturally diverse and so were the influences.

### **Research Position**

For the last twenty years I have been working with the social services sector. I have worked in a wide range of settings, including schools, pre-schools, after school clubs, voluntary organisations and local authorities. For over a decade, I worked on a project that offered therapeutic support to children and their mothers who suffered from some form of abuse or trauma, where domestic violence was a factor. These were children and mothers who had to seek refuge in local centres. During the length of my practice and working in multi-agency settings, most domestic violence cases I dealt with were those who were physically hurt or threatened. In such cases, emergency accommodation and ongoing support services are at hand but my concern has always been with those who are on the receiving end of emotional torture on a daily basis. This group is emotionally controlled to such a point that they feel paralysed. They would not even think of seeking support or believe that they are entitled to help because they have no bruises. It would never occur to them that they are victims of abuse. These are women with extremely low self-

esteem who have been systematically made to feel worthless by abusive partners and gender hierarchy social systems.

Finally, lack of cultural knowledge and customs on behalf of the Professionals, coupled with the fear of being accused of cultural insensitivity, has played a part in the lack of necessary services being provided or thoroughly investigated. Lack of clarity and limitation in definition of domestic violence, until very recently, has also played a part in the reluctance of agencies to get involved. Responsibilities have often been shifted from one department to another. My personal circumstances and cultural empathy has helped me to engage deeper in such cases.

My personal and professional background, along with my solution focused and enquiring nature, has fired my passion for learning and studying a topic so close to my heart. Successful completion of my Master's Degree and my admission to Tavistock as a doctoral student, has enhanced my confidence; knowing that I am among the best teachers and mentors to explore a topic of a very sensitive nature. I remain mindful of my position as "insider outsider;" being a member of that community, trying to take a stance of an outsider to gain an insight, not only for myself, but also for my cross cultural colleagues and above all those women who remain in desperate need.

### **Aims of this study**

This research is an attempt to understand realities of domestic abuse through emotional control and violence. These are the cases where instead of physical violence, the mind and soul are targeted so that damage is not apparent to others. I am interested in looking beneath the surface in order to discover what the veiled factors are which make victims of domestic violence so fearful of escape; sufferers who are not aware of the support available to mothers and children who flee domestic violence as a straightforward and safe option.

My particular interest is with the South Asian community of which I possess an inside knowledge and an awareness that domestic violence is widespread, unreported, minimised and still a taboo. This question stems from my previous quantitative research study where I

thoroughly examined case files of 64 service users subject to domestic violence who received long term therapeutic support from a voluntary organisation. It was the experience of those women and children which alerted me to the complexity of the issue and raised the question of quality and nature of support for such victims where cultural values are paramount.

The aim of the research is to determine the hindering factors for women who stay in abusive relationships. I hope that stories of such struggles, both successes and continued discontent, will help agencies, communities or professional and voluntary organisations to act accordingly or at least to acknowledge that these barriers are deeper rooted than originally envisaged. I also hope that some of these accounts will be inspirational for those who struggle to see any light at the end of the tunnel.

The aim of the investigation is to engage a small sample of Women who experienced abusive relationships to explore what factors determined their decisions to leave or to stay, focussing on their childhood, upbringing, social and cultural influences:

- To identify if it is abusive partners the women can't escape or childhood indoctrination and cultural pressures?
- To examine if external social support can make up for internal battles and fears.
- To highlight the enabling characteristic of those who managed to flee domestic abuse?

## **Outline of Chapters**

### **Introduction**

This chapter offers background information to this research, including researcher's personal and professional position. The latitude of the issue of domestic violence globally and UK in particular is also explored. Pakistan's history and societal influences are also considered to make sense of the issue under discussion.

### Literature Review

This chapter will aim to offer contextualised available research on this topic, organisational policies, services and societal attitudes to domestic violence. Particular attention will be paid to literature in the last ten years to explore if there are any positive discoveries contributing toward the protection of subjects of such abuse.

### Methodology

This chapter will describe methods employed to explore the topic of domestic violence, its root causes, impact and if there is a solution to end it.

### Case Studies

This chapter contains each participant's description of their experience in detail. Their narratives are explored in depth by using a theoretical framework to interpret their lived experiences. Psychodynamic process of these interactions between interviewer and interviewees will be of highest focus.

### Discussions

This chapter captures collective themes from all case studies and explores its position in context with other research in this study. This chapter offers scope to discuss and explore the nature of these narratives to extract a meaning and make sense of issues under exploration.

### Conclusion & Recommendations

It will begin by formalizing the theory. This chapter will attempt to highlight specific causes of domestic violence according to the findings and suggest future recommendations for practice and research. It includes areas of progress in political systems already underway.

## **Chapter Two**

## **Literature Review**

This chapter aims to look at any existing and relevant literature to understand discourses and the cultural fabric of the issue of domestic violence, particularly in the form of emotional abuse in marital relationships. The main focus group is the South Asian community living in the UK. This is first generation Pakistani women born or raised in the UK by Pakistani parents, therefore cultural transition, conflicts and fusion is playing a big part in this study. Global and societal attitudes around gender power imbalance are the core of the study, with major focus on its role in the Pakistani community.

All relevant databases from the fields of psychology, psychiatry, sociology and mental health such as PsycINFO , MEDLINE and PubMed were thoroughly explored. PubPsych was accessed for a more European focused literature while GetCITED and Google Scholar were helpful for academic publications. SAGE publications both in books and online form were frequently used. Some Social and medical journals and publications were accessed through Tavistock and Portman's search engine MOODLE.

Although historical information was needed in order to contextualize the cultural fabrication and its origin, particular attention was paid to literature in the UK and South Asia in last 10 years. To narrow down the search phrases and keywords such as female, Asian, domestic violence/ abuse and culture were used.

UK Home Office online publications and websites were frequently accessed for legislation and policy documents. Some major studies (Gill, A. 2004, Zakar et al 2012, Hamid et al 2010, Fikree et al 2005, Gangoli et al 2006, Hester, M. 2012) both in UK and Pakistan were more relevant to provide base for this research therefore these were closely linked and examined throughout this research.

Among other useful research links were Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ); Access to Research; Social science Research Network (SSRN); Research Council UK (RCUK); National

Statistics Online; The UK Data Archive (UKDA) and International Bibliography of the Social Sciences (IBSS).

The Literature Review is also an attempt to see how much progress has been made to date in locating the problem or to get to the bottom of the issue; an issue which has a far reaching impact on three or even more generations.

Most of the literature or research around domestic violence is based on statistics, severity of physical injuries or occurrence of violent events but little research exists on what is happening beneath the surface for victims. This study is about the group which does not formulate any statistics; the issue being of such subtle nature that most of the time even victims themselves are not sure they are being victimised. There are no physical injuries to alarm others or raise suspicion among close friends and no reason to call the police.

Gangoli et al (2006) looks into the perpetrators behaviour as ‘triggers to change.’ These arise when the male’s preconceived perception of desirable sequence of events, failed to materialise. This range of circumstances that the men might consider to be the ‘normal’ state of affairs, in particular, relates to the status relationship of himself as head of household and spouse and offspring as subservient. It is when these relations became chronically disturbed and a perceived threat of change emerge that there is a potential for the man to re-assert his control and become even more violent.

Connell, R. W (1987) shares similar views that in heterosexual contexts, constructions of power and violence are highly gendered and linked to culturally constructed and idealized forms of masculinity and femininity.

Hester, M. (2012) also states that the social construction of masculinity, as embodied in heterosexual men, helps to explain domestic violence as the exertion of power and control by men over women in intimate relations within the contexts of gender inequality.

The social status of women in Pakistan varies considerably and depends on their social class, upbringing and regional divide, due to uneven socioeconomic development. Pakistan has had a long history of feminist activism since its birth in 1947. All Pakistan Women Association (APWA) has played an influential role in generating awareness in both genders of women's rights in the country and worldwide. In recent years, Benazir Bhutto was the first woman elected to lead a Muslim state, and is the only one to be elected twice. Malala Yousafzai is the youngest-ever Nobel Prize laureate.



A meeting of the All-India Muslim League in Lahore in 1940 show a woman in a body length burqa<sup>3</sup>. (Picture from Wikipedia)

The most favoured occupation for females accepted by society is teaching. In urban areas of the country, more and more women are assuming professional roles and are contributing to the family finances but the number of *these* women to those still in traditional roles is considerably low. By global comparison, the situation is quite alarming. In 2014, the World Economic Forum ranked Pakistan as the second worst country in the world in gender equality.

### Rural and urban divide

The status of women also varies considerably due to rural/urban divide. In the rural and tribal setting, local customs of male authority and power over women's lives are deeply embedded. On the other hand, women belonging to the upper and middle classes have increasingly greater access to education and employment opportunities and can assume greater control over their lives (Mariam S. Pal 2000). The literacy level for urban women is more than five times higher than rural women (ESCAP, 1996). This disparaging gap between rural and urban lives of

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<sup>3</sup> A **burqa** (also known as chadri or paranja in Central Asia) is an enveloping outer garment worn by women in some Islamic traditions to cover themselves in public..<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Burqa>

Pakistani women can be related to the customs and traditions still practiced in rural areas. Girls are encouraged not to go to school because they are needed in the home to do work at a young age. In most rural villages, secondary schooling simply does not exist for girls. Some rural practices are unknown to women in Cities.

#### Child marriage (Vani)<sup>4</sup>

Although the Child Marriages Restraint Act makes it illegal for girls under the age of 16 to be married, instances of child marriages are commonly found in rural areas. The young girls are forcibly married off in order to resolve feuds between different clans. The Vani can be avoided if the clan of the girl agrees to pay money.

#### Watta satta<sup>5</sup>

This is a tribal custom in which brides are traded between two clans. In order to marry off a son, one must also have a daughter with marriage potential in return. If there is no sister to exchange in return for a son's spouse, a cousin, or a distant relative may be accepted. Even though Islamic law requires that both partners explicitly consent to marriage, women are often forced into marriages arranged by their fathers or tribal leaders and their consent to marriage holds no significance.

#### Dowry

Like other parts of South Asia, the custom of dowry is practised in Pakistan, more commonly known as Jahez. Conflicts related to it often result in violence, even dowry deaths. Demands may not always be verbalised but there is that unspoken expectation. In order for many parents' daughters to get married, they start "obtaining" loans, utilising their life savings and even sell

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<sup>4</sup> Vani is a cultural custom found in parts of Pakistan and Afghanistan whereby a young girl is forcibly married as part of punishment for a crime committed by her male relatives. *Vani* is a form of arranged child marriage, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vani\\_\(custom\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vani_(custom))

<sup>5</sup> Watta Satt: An exchange marriage in rural Pakistan can play just such a role. Bride exchange, known locally as watta satta (literally, 'give-take'), usually involves the simultaneous marriage of a brother-sister pair from two households.

their homes. In cases where demands are not met there is constant blackmailing with threats of divorce.

### Honour killings

A majority of the victims of honour killings are women and the punishments meted out to the murderers are very lenient. In December 2004, the Government passed a bill that made “karo kari” punishable under the same penal provisions as murder. In 2016, Pakistan repealed the loophole which allowed the perpetrators of honour killings to avoid punishment by seeking forgiveness for the crime from another family member, and thus be legally pardoned. Many cases of honour killings have been reported against women who marry against their family's wishes, who seek divorce or who have been raped.

### Marriage to Quran

In some parts of Sindh, the practice of marrying a woman to the Quran is prevalent among landlords, although this practice is alien to Islam and has no religious basis. The practice is often used by males of the family to keep and grab the land of their sisters and daughters.

### Birth of a female child in Pakistan Society

A daughter in Pakistani culture is seen as a symbol of obedience, sacrifice, devotion and a humble spirit. According to Islamic guidance, daughters are said to be “Rahmat” a blessing but often the birth of a female child is seen as a worry or a burden. Although society, tradition and customs are changing rapidly, there are still widely observed traditions where a birth of a son is announced and celebrated with the sharing of sweets door to door in the neighbourhood, whereas a birth of a daughter is kept quite or almost hidden, particularly if there is more than one daughter and no son in the family.

There are financial and emotional afflictions associated with the birth of a daughter. Parents of a girl may feel helpless due to common traditions that once the daughter is married, she moves to her husband's family. In this family she becomes entirely at their mercy. She is expected to

adapt to their “rules” and perform her duties or her parent’s will be blamed for not raising her properly.

There is also a tradition of “jahez” or dowry. At the time of marriage, parents are not only giving their daughter away but also providing refurbishment for her new family home. These are supposed to be voluntary gifts but often greed on the part of the groom’s family leads to bullying demands for more than the bride’s family can actually afford. There are often cases of suspicious death of newly wedded females by explosion of kitchen gas devices.

More money is invested in the boy’s education than the girl’s as they are expected to be the breadwinner for the family. Girls are preferred as “good homemakers” and this is a crucial belief and expectation which somehow tie them to their commitments willingly, believing they alone are responsible for making their marriage work.

The unique angle of this research is that none of my case studies were stereotypical victims on spousal visas, with language barriers or financial dependency. So what were the factors for most of them in prolonging their individual decisions to leave their abusive partners? There is a lot more help available to victims of physical abuse than those who suffer mentally, emotionally and psychologically. To such victims, abuse continues for so long that it damages their self-esteem and impacts their power of decision making so often that they give up and accept their lot.

#### Historical progression of Domestic Violence Law and current policy in UK

Home office is the lead Governing department for the coordination of domestic violence policies and initiatives, providing guidance to other governmental departments and co-operating with non-governmental organisations to develop and implement policy. The Home Office also provides information, undertakes research and releases statistics on the prevalence of domestic violence (Matczak et al.2011).

Over the past 30 years there has been particular attention and subsequent reforms in the national policy and understanding of domestic violence in the United Kingdom. The 1990s was an era when the negligence of women's rights gained significant attention. Two major events where a fundamental infringement of their rights was acknowledged were the 1993 United Nation Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women and 1995 Beijing Fourth World Conference on Women (UN Women, 1995).

Previously there had been no shared definition of domestic abuse amongst relevant agencies which had led to confusion and obstructed research and policy recommendations with different agencies and governments using a variety of different definitions. In 2004 there was a more comprehensive yet clearer definition with joint agreement of all agencies that:

“any incident of threatening behaviour, violence or abuse (psychological, physical, sexual, financial or emotional) between adults who are or have been intimate partners or family members, regardless of gender or sexuality to be considered as domestic violence.” (Home office 2005)

An adult is defined as someone 18 and over, therefore the only flaw or concern with this definition is the lack of protection for 16 and 17 year olds. This gap is now filled by the latest revision. Since March 2013, the UK Home Office has amended its definition of domestic violence to include 16 and 17 year olds, and will be defined as:

“any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive or threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are or have been intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality. This can encompass, but is not limited to Psychological, physical, sexual, financial or emotional abuse.” (Home Office; 2013)

The Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims (DVCV) Act 2004 was the biggest renovation of the law on domestic violence after several years of Family Law Act 1996 (FLA 1996). DVCV 2004

contains a wide range of reforms in the three distinct areas; domestic violence, crime and victims. Prior to the Family Law Act 1996 (FLA 1996), domestic violence issues were covered under the old law of Domestic Violence and Matrimonial Proceedings Act 1976 (DVMPA 1976). FLA 1996 simplified the law relating to domestic violence but it was not deemed successful in providing greater protection to the victims, often giving unsatisfactory results (Humphries, 2001).

In order to gain the trust of victims and to encourage them to have the confidence to come forward, the Government proposed that both the civil system as well as the criminal system need to complement each other effectively. The ultimate result came in the form of the Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act 2004 (DVCVA 2004) which made vital changes to the law relating to domestic violence, as explained by Ward, R. & Bird, R. (2005).

The Government's view in providing more protection to the victims of domestic violence is clearly demonstrated by the changes made to the Family Law Act 1996 by the DVCVA 2004. I agree with Gore (2007) that the changes made were a positive step towards offering better protection from violence to the victims, but a lot will depend on how the police and the child protection services effectively use the new changes in law.

After examining the policy in detail, I noticed that there are clear guidelines in the law that Investigating Officers will need to be particularly aware of; that in some of the households where this offence has occurred, more widespread violence and abuse may be present, including harm to children ((DVMPA 1976).

In relation to the Asian community where the joint family system is a strong tradition, there may be more than one abuser or perpetrator. While investigating such crime it should bear in mind that domestic violence seriously undermines the confidence of the victim and creates an atmosphere of intimidation, shame and low self-esteem. Therefore, it's highly unlikely that victims will volunteer any information in fear of further abuse while living within the family.

### What legal remedies are there?

There are both civil and criminal remedies for victims of domestic violence. Section 76 of the Serious Crime Act 2015 came into force in December 2015 and criminalises patterns of coercive or controlling behaviour where they are perpetrated against an intimate partner or family member. The offence was created, following consultation, through section 76 of the Serious Crime Act 2015. The maximum penalty for someone found guilty is five years' imprisonment or a fine, or both.

A number of other criminal offences can apply to cases of domestic violence - these can range from murder, rape and manslaughter through to assault and threatening behaviour. (Home Office, Serious Crime Act 2015)

Civil measures include non-molestation orders, occupation orders and domestic violence protection orders (which can mean that suspected perpetrators have to leave their houses). The Protection from Harassment Act 1997 (as amended) provides both civil and criminal remedies. There are two important civil law remedies under the Family Law Act 1996 (as amended by Part 1 of the Domestic Violence Crime and Victims Act 2004) – occupation orders and non-molestation orders.

Occupation order is a court order which governs the occupation of a family home. It can be used to temporarily exclude an abuser from the home and surrounding area and give the victim the right to enter or remain. In certain circumstances, the court may attach a power of arrest to the occupation order. Non-molestation order is a court order which prohibits an abuser from molesting another person they are associated with. Molestation is not defined in the Act but has been interpreted to include violence, harassment and threatening behaviour. An order contains specific terms as to what conduct is prohibited and can last for however long is deemed appropriate by the court. Breach of a non-molestation order is a criminal offence carrying a maximum 5-year prison term.

Domestic violence protection orders (DVPOs) were rolled out across England and Wales from March 2014. Under the DVPO scheme. The police and magistrates can, in the immediate aftermath of a domestic violence incident, ban a perpetrator from returning to their home and from having contact with the victim for up to 28 days. DVPOs are designed to help victims who may otherwise have had to flee their home, giving them the space and time to access support and consider their options.

Domestic violence disclosure scheme, commonly known as Clare's law (2012), was rolled out across England and Wales from March 2014. The scheme means that an individual can ask the police to check whether a new or existing partner has a violent past ("right to ask"). If police checks show that a person may be at risk of domestic violence from their partner, the police will consider disclosing the information ("right to know").

Prior to starting my doctoral research, I conducted a pilot interview with one woman to test my intended method. I was not testing a hypothesis but trying to find out how policy impacts or is implemented in cases of domestic violence on Pakistani women. It was very clear from the beginning that policy did not hold much relevance in her view. In this case it was not that there was so much a weakness in policy but that it was felt by this particular community that they were exempt from support or state help. There was a feeling that the Law was a white British law for white British people and that their situation was a family and community matter.

The most celebrated change made by the DVCVA 2004 is that a breach of non-molestation orders is a criminal offence, meaning that the victim has less control in the matter. Previously, when a power of arrest was given, the victim had the choice of whether or not to call the police and the choice of whether to proceed in the criminal system or not This became a rather hindering factor in the case of the Pakistan community where marriages are inter-related.

A candidate in my pilot interview shared that: *"I didn't want him to get into trouble, losing his job or getting a criminal record, at the end of the day he is father of my children. He works very hard in not only providing for us but in looking after his parents as well."*

The purpose of mapping these above laws and legislations is to learn how much protection is offered through government support. The findings are that there are fairly well operated rules for those who seek support but concerns remain about those who are unable to. The Home Office is clearly determined to support victims in reporting these crimes, and to make sure perpetrators are brought to justice, but these are complex family matters where an arrest or imprisonment alone is not a solution. There are matters of children's custody, contact issues and impact of parental imprisonment on children and other family members.

In 1997, Mistery,T and Brown,A (Race and Groupwork) acknowledged that for Asian women, living in Britain creates a fundamental problem. On the one hand this is a land of opportunity, while on the other it is their battle against two communities, to stand up for their rights. Any changes in the accepted pattern of their behaviour or any serious question as to their shifting and changing roles within the context of their lives here will often be seen as disloyal to their culture, religion and identity.

Nearly 20 years later women are still facing the same struggles. If the problem lies within the culture then may be the solution can also be found there, but there is need for further exploration and devoted attention. BBC 1 Panorama (22/04/13) telecast "Secrets of Britain's Sharia Council" revealed how Sharia law courts are operating and discouraging women from accessing help unless there is "high risk."

Burman,E. Chantler,K and Smailes,S (2004) states that domestic violence emerges as something that can "be overlooked or even excused for 'cultural reasons', as a homogenized absence; or a pathologised presence. Such configurations inform discourses of service provision to marginalised women. They emphasised for the need of both culturally specific and mainstream provision of services to challenge notions of 'cultural privacy' and 'race anxiety' in work with minority communities."

Macey, M (1999) explored relationship between Religion, male violence, and the control of women by focusing on Pakistani Muslim men in Bradford. She learned that men use religion to justify violence and oppression against women while women by contrast, use Islam with genuine knowledge to negotiate peace, their rights and for spirituality. Pakistan is a country founded on Islam and so therefore much of its constitution has been influenced by Sharia law. When those laws of Islam are misrepresented by a patriarchal society, as they have been, the rights of women are certainly compromised.

In her research, Macey was mindful of the legitimacy (of her perspective as White Western Woman writing about misogynistic violence in Pakistani Muslim Bradford), being questioned but she refused to be a silent witness. Her sense of oppressed ethnic women is that they need some outside assistance; maybe a Western voice of concern.

It can be argued that as women are natural carriers of the next generation that the “protection of their modesty” is paramount and taken on by the Bradford male population as their duty, thus the patrolling of university areas with a Pakistani female presence. Similar was highlighted by Alibhai-Brown (1998) and Afsahr, H (1994).

#### An Overview of Coping Strategies; Pathological organisations

Conventionally, abused women are portrayed as helpless, hopeless, and psychologically paralyzed (Walker, 1979). However, several studies have demonstrated a number of coping and resistance strategies adopted by abused women (Campbell, Rose, Kub, & Nedd, 1998; Gondolf & Fisher, 1988; Goodman & Fallon, 1995; Shannon, Logan, Cole, & Medley, 2006).

Research has documented that women’s responses to violence are shaped largely by the circumstances of the abuse and their assessment of the available options (Ellsberg, Winkvist, Pena, & Stenlund, 2001).

Women carefully and strategically find a way, within the cultural and structural constraints, to confront the spousal abuse (Abraham, 2005). Therefore, the selection of coping strategies by

women is likely to reflect the prevailing cultural norms and status of women in any given society. Given the weaker and subordinate position of women in South Asia, they are more likely to employ emotion-focused coping strategies as these are covert and less confrontational compared with problem-focused strategies (Abraham, 2005; Ruhi, 2010). It can be argued that solution-focused approach is more suited or common in western society where there are more provisions for gender equality and a fair amount of external resources.

Zakar et al (2012) shared some findings from their research about women's' coping strategies by drawing on 21 in-depth interviews conducted in Lahore and Sialkot (Pakistan). This is a detailed and commendable contribution on how women endure such treatment and what some go through before reaching a decision in abusive marital situations.

They found that as most of the women could not overtly fight back or call the police because of social constraints, they carefully tailored strategies which provided them with some relief from the violence and its psychological consequences. They also noted that the women were mindful of the fact that their coping strategies should not provoke or further infuriate the violent husband. So the majority of the women used emotion-focused strategies, which included increased engagement in religious activities placating the husband, avoiding contact with the husband, self-blaming, denying, or downplaying the existence of violence.

Very few women used problem-focused strategies such as seeking help from formal institutions, as these strategies could lead to overt confrontation with their husbands and may result in divorce, the outcome least desired by most of the Pakistani women. Being mindful of the consequences of their actions, women carefully tailored a combination of strategies which could be helpful in resisting or reducing violence but, at the same time, should not be counterproductive.

Emotion-focused strategies try to manage the stressful situation by using techniques to overcome the distress by modifying emotions (Carver et al., 1989; Lazarus & Folkmann, 1984; Shannon et al., 2006; Tamres et al., 2002) rather than trying to alter the real causes of the stress (Lazarus,

1991). However, problem-focused coping strategies use observable techniques to address the real causes of the stress to solve the problem (Carver et al., 1989; Lazarus, 1991; Shannon et al., 2006; Tamres et al., 2002).

This is where the understanding of the fabrication of societal customs causes a difference in meaning. When external resources are absent, then emotion focused strategies become solution focused, as these are the only comforting tools to minimise the ill effect. Therefore, these women are usually determined and creative in designing coping strategies, despite the fact that they are economically and socially dependent on the perpetrator (Abraham, 2005). This was observed in one of the case studies presented in this research. While living in the Middle East Sabina took time to assess her approach to ensure safety of her own and her children prior to contacting the British embassy for help. It can be argued that emotional focused strategies are used as paving the way towards solution focused approach until the time is right.

The educated and relatively more skilful women used different strategies than less educated and socially excluded women. Some women adopt rather constructive distractions such as joining local NGOs and fundraising. It gives them strength to cope with stressful life situations. In the six case studies this will be shown to be a strategy used by Nusrat.

Devoting themselves to their children was another commonly used constructive move taken by many women, which offered them a natural reason to stay but at the same time to reduce contact with their husband, thereby minimizing the chances of conflict and consequential violence. Spending more time with the children and developing stronger bonds with them gave them strength and hope and perhaps future allies too.

One definition of poverty and social exclusion is the absence of social networks or a social support system (Cattell, 2001). In Pakistan, most women, with the exception of a minority of Westernized upper-class women, are supposed to remain within the four walls of their household, taking care of the family and performing household chores. As violence is committed within these four walls, women may try to escape this “confinement” to get some outside contact

and support. This may be the reason why, despite cultural restrictions, women try to establish relationships with other women living in their neighbourhood. These relationships and networks are important sources of information and also an opportunity for catharsis (Hamid, Johansson, & Rubenson, 2010). Women are very creative in finding excuses and it is sometimes difficult for their husbands to totally block such contacts.

Although short term relief and respite is often sought from parental family, in the long term it can become a burden. Due to lack of skills, education, lack of employment and social role constraints, women feel helpless and pin their hopes on their sons to grow up and support them. As is the Pakistani custom, girls are not encouraged to seek parental support after marriage. They are raised and indoctrinated into believing that their own worth will be measured in their ability to solve or tolerate matrimonial problems by themselves.

In many societies, including Pakistan, religion is also used as a coping strategy against stress and stressful life events (Banning, Hafeez, Faisal, Hassan, & Zafar, 2009; Watlington & Murphy, 2006). Using religion as a coping strategy is common across cultures. Shannon et al. (2006) found in their study that 12% of women in America used religion to seek support and psychological solace against violence. In their sample, Zakar et al (2012) found that almost all of the women (19 of 21) practiced some kind of religious activity as a coping strategy. Some prayers are offered as mandatory religious duty, whereas others are offered as petition, confession, communion, intercession, or thanksgiving (Clark, 1958). In Pakistan, using religion to reduce worldly suffering and solve day-to-day problems is common and is considered to be a part of the faith (Banning et al., 2009).

In Pakistan, there are thousands of spiritual personalities who offer specialized religious remedies, especially for solving “conjugal problems,” the treatment of infertility, nazar (evil eye), taming the husband or lover, or helping to solve other problems (Zakar, 1998).

Anthropological studies have shown that such help-seeking behaviour thrives when limited structural opportunities are available to women to address their day-to-day problems (Hegland,

1998). Where there is desperation there is scope for exploitation so in some cases it's a business. It can be said that it is the equivalent of Western Society's fortune teller.

Religion provides meaning to life events and occurrences, a sense of justice and comfort, and a justification for unfortunate events (Belavich, 1995). By using religion, women solicit support from supernatural forces to resist and confront unjust and oppressive situations and individuals (Watlington & Murphy, 2006). In some situations, religion also provides alternative arrangements to escape the physical and cognitive control of the oppressor and also gives motivation to liberate women from socially confined and structurally disadvantaged situations (Belavich, 1995; Khan & Hussain, 2008). This will be exhibited in this study, where one participant, Urooj, turned to a religious scholar for guidance and another, Tara, sought justification in the knowledge that her living with her husband after divorce was un-Islamic and a sinful act.

Hill and Hood (1999) offered 17 different categories of religious coping strategies, such as beliefs, prayers, involvement in congregational activities, visits to holy places and sacrifices.

Coping is a dynamic, rather than a static, process (Yoshihama, 2002), and various scholars have conceptualized it using different constructions. For example, Finn (1985) used the concept of "passive" and "active" coping strategies. Other dichotomization of coping mentioned in the literature are "disengagement" versus "engagement" (Kemp, Green, Hovanitz, & Rawlings, 1995); "avoidance" versus "approach" (Moos, 1995); "avoidant" versus "active" (Holahan & Moos, 1987); and "cognitive/emotional" versus "behavioral" (Holahan & Moos, 1987) coping strategies.

Variables like "class, ethnicity, socio-economic viability, accessibility of alternative support system, plays a major role in determining the women's use of strategies of resistance and their efficacy" (Abraham, 2005, p. 254). In short, coping choices are dependent on both the assessment of the threat and the assessment of one's resources to address the threat. The process of coping is not linear, it does not have easily identifiable stages (Campbell et al., 1998), and it

changes or transforms from one behaviour to another over time (Tamres et al., 2002). In short, each coping strategy, be it emotion-focused or problem-focused provides a unique learning opportunity for the abused women. Coping behaviours are a part of the empowerment process that helps many women to retain or regain a sense of self and individual autonomy (Lampert, 1996).

These classifications demonstrate the complexity and multidimensionality of coping behaviour and how a single behaviour is given multiple labels (Tamres, Janicki, & Helgeson, 2002).

Broadly, passive, disengagement, avoidance, and emotional strategies are all described as coping through avoiding or denying the unpleasant reality (Carver, Scheier, & Weintraub, 1989; Tamres et al., 2002), whereas active, engaged, and behavioural coping are considered to address the real causes of the problem. The most widely used coping categories are classified as “emotion focused” and “problem-focused” coping strategies (Carver et al., 1989; Lazarus, 1999; Lazarus & Folkmann, 1984; Shannon et al., 2006; Tamres et al., 2002).

### Domestic abuse and Mental Health

Violence against women has serious consequences for their physical and mental health. Abused women are more likely to suffer from depression, anxiety, psychosomatic symptoms, eating problems and sexual dysfunction. Violence may also affect their reproductive health (WHO 2005). Women who have been abused by someone who was close to them - for example, by partners or former partners - are likely to find that the process of recovery can take a long time. They may experience grief, pain and a deep sense of loss, very similar to bereavement; their trust will have been betrayed, and their self-esteem and confidence will be shattered.

Research (Golding 1999) now shows clear evidence of direct links between women’s experiences of domestic abuse and heightened rates of depression, trauma symptoms and self-harm. A research project based in Women’s Aid outreach services also provide evidence of women’s experiences of severe emotional distress and their negative experience of mental health services, where they felt that the medical model was not adequate to support their needs. On the other hand, they found the voluntary sector services more helpful.

Humphreys, C, and Thiara, R (2003) draws on research commissioned by the Women's Aid Federation, England (WAFE) and carried out by themselves in 2000/2001. They conducted a qualitative research survey by interviewing 20 women. All these women shared severe emotional distress. When talking about mental health, one survivor of abuse stated, "I don't call it mental health, I call it 'symptoms of abuse'." All twenty interviewees spoke of severe emotional distress that often fitted a pattern of symptoms associated with depression, post-traumatic stress, and/or self-harm. Findings in my own research study were similar.

### Impact of domestic abuse on Parenting

The impact of domestic abuse and its effect on parenting capacity was noted by The Framework for the Assessment of Children in Need and their Families (Department of Health, 2000). There is a complex reality that while a woman is suffering from domestic abuse, she remains responsible for protecting her child from the abuse or harm that she is helpless to protect herself from. For some victims of domestic abuse, help and support may come through Section 47 Child Protection enquiries. This offence should therefore be investigated and dealt with sensitively. Where there is a need to carry out a joint enquiry under Section 47 of the Children Act 1989 involving social services and the police, this should be undertaken in accordance with the guidance set out in "*working together*" to safeguard children. In households where there is domestic abuse, children can suffer serious long-term emotional effects. Even if they are not physically harmed, children may suffer lasting emotional and psychological damage as a result of witnessing the violence.

In 90% of reported domestic abuse incidents, children have been present in either the same or a nearby room, and according to the Department of Health, at least 750,000 children a year witness domestic abuse. Children who witness, intervene, or hear incidents, are affected in many ways, even after a short time.

Crucial need for multi-agency approach was identified since the understanding of inter-relationship between domestic abuse and neglect and abuse of children. The "Every Child

Matters Outcomes Framework” (Department for Children Schools and Families, 2003) set targets where children affected by domestic abuse are identified, protected and supported. The National Service Framework for Children, young people and Maternity Services (2004) also highlighted the serious effects on children who witness domestic abuse. (Matczak et al. 2011)

### Cultural psychology

This study is about a particular community, which possesses a strong sense of loyalty to its culture. To understand the core of this study we need to relate to basic ideas of cultural psychology which informs us that psychological and behavioural tendencies are rooted and embodied in culture. The main ideology of cultural psychology is that mind and culture are inseparable; people are shaped by their culture. Fiske, et al (1998). Cultural psychology research takes into account all aspects including social, developmental, cognitive and cultural-historical aspects of psychology.

There is a hint of ethnographic approach to this study in order to understand what really holds these victims back from reaching a decision. The central aim of ethnography is to provide rich, holistic insights into people’s views and actions, as well as the sights and sounds of the location they inhabit. Therefore, the aim is to ‘get inside’. Ethnography puts a strong emphasis on exploring the nature of a particular social phenomenon, rather than setting out to test hypotheses. So, to some extent, is this study also.

The Cultural Psychology researcher aims to have varied cultures contribute to basic psychological theories in order to correct those theories so they become more relevant to all human behaviours across cultures. Shweder, R (1991) claims that there has been repeated failure to replicate Western psychology laboratory findings in non-Western settings. The acronym W.E.I.R.D. describes Western, Educated, Industrialized, Rich and Democratic population which believe to be vastly overrepresented in psychological research (Arnett,J. 2008 and Henrich, J et al 2010). I would tend to agree that findings from psychology research utilizing primarily W.E.I.R.D. populations are often labelled as universal theories and are inaccurately applied to other cultures (Henrich,J 2010).

Recent research is showing (Henrich, J, et al 2010) that cultures differ in many areas , such as logical reasoning and social values, therefore cognitive and motivational processes vary across populations. Some studies (Jones, D. 2010 and Nisbett, R. Miyamoto, Y. 2005) have explored how Americans, Canadians and Western Europeans rely on analytical reasoning strategies. Social psychologists refer to the “fundamental attribution error,” while non-western populations tend to pay more attention to the context in which behaviour occurs; a more holistic approach. During my search for literature related to this study, I came across many long standing theories that rely on the prominence of analytical thought. My struggle to find any research on cultural based theories highlighted the gap in this field and strengthens the belief that findings from W.E.I.R.D populations to other populations can lead to a miscalculation of psychological theories and psychologists can fail to account for a substantial amount of diversity of the global population.

Doctors John and Beatrice Whiting along with their students developed the “Whiting Model” during the 1970s and 1980s, focusing on how culture influences child development ( Weisner, S, T. 2010) . They defined a child’s environmental context as being “characterized by an activity in progress, a physically defined space, a characteristic group of people and norms of behaviour.” These factors will help us to understand this study and how research participant’s lives were influenced by these factors.

Understanding two elements of cultural orientation as collectivistic and individualistic is the best way to put this study in perspective. In broad terms, to keep the discussion concise, people from an individualistic culture typically demonstrate an independent view of the self; the focus is usually on personal achievements (Prooijen, J. 2013). On the other hand, members of collectivistic society have more of a focus on the group (interdependent view of self), usually focusing on things that will benefit the group. (Hui, C.H 1988). Research has shown such differences of the self when comparing collectivistic and individualistic cultures: The Fundamental Attribution Error has been shown to be more common in America (individualistic) as compared to India (collectivistic) (Ross,1977). This is not to suggest that collectivism and

individualism are completely dichotomous, but these two cultural orientations are to be understood more as a spectrum.

One of the major barriers of empathy between cultures is people's tendency to operate from an ethnocentric point of view. Eysneck, M (2000) conceptualized ethnocentrism as using one's own culture to understand the rest of the world, while holding one's own values as correct. Sue, D. (1977) writes that many of the problems that contribute to therapy not being beneficial for people of colour include:

“therapy having an individual focus, an emphasis on expressiveness and an emphasis on openness.” Sue, D. (1977)

In relation to cultural awareness and gaining knowledge, there are some basic points to remember that insufficient knowledge can lead to stereotyping as well as need for realization that within each culture there are sub cultures. Within every same culture, differences of class, privilege, disadvantage, spirituality and gender can contradict people's experience of oppression. All cultures are in a constant state of flux, therefore experience of someone in their 60s can be different from someone in their 40s or 20s from the very same culture. Geographical boundaries as well as interaction with other cultures can also bring about different outcomes. For example, the Pakistan community living in UK may practice some cultural rituals with a hint of diversity or fusion influenced by other cultures around them as opposed to Asian community in Pakistan where they are the sole culture. Sometimes such practices can become more rigid for people living away from their own homeland, in an effort to protect the purity of those traditions.

Some behaviour can only be understood by admitting to cultural devotion and embedded values. It is difficult to comprehend how a woman can not only allow her husband to have more than one wife but in some cases has taken on the role of matchmaker.

Shankar, J et al (2013) explored cultural discourses in relation to domestic violence in the South Asian community and found that historically, women's vulnerability to abuse evolved from an

oppressive patriarchy that took hold of South Asia from the end of the pre-Christian era. The fears and insecurities about race extinction and loss of culture and tradition created barriers for women to gain education, as marrying them off at a young age was seen as keeping women tethered for their own good. They consider the following three main factors as preventing South Asian women from seeking help from outside formal agencies:

- Being raised in oppressive patriarchal family environments for generations and therefore they do not see themselves as oppressed.
- Strong patriarchal norms in South Asian families which led to perpetuation of beliefs that domestic violence is a private matter therefore must be managed with the help of family elders.
- Childhood beliefs that women are the protector of the family honour (izzat) therefore they must refrain from publicising the abuse by seeking help (Shankar, J et al 2013).

Hamid et al (2010) in Pakistan conducted a qualitative survey of 20 participants and three focus groups to understand how young women were prepared for marriage and how they understood and perceived their situation. The overall findings aid insight into the complexities and barriers created by the conditions they were raised under. This study will be discussed in detail in further chapters.

In similar research Bott et al (2003) also found that strong societal, cultural and religious expectations are attached to the sexual innocence of women. Zakar et al (2012) shared some findings from their research about the coping strategies of women by drawing on 21 in-depth interviews conducted in Lahore and Sialkot (Pakistan). This study will also be explored further in later chapters.

Although society as a whole is becoming more aware of human rights and gender equality, in some communities 'Shame and honour' are still seen as important entities, depending on how women 'behave' or carry themselves. As reported by the BBC Asian Network (cited on 01/04/13) <http://www.bbc.co.uk/hittinghome/> within the Asian community, women are subject to powerful traditional practices such as izzat (honour) and sharam (shame). Women are expected

to uphold the honour of the family by conforming to certain prescribed roles, such as the dutiful wife and obedient daughter, who accepts or tolerates domestic violence rather than leave home. Failure to do so results in being treated as a social outcast by their extended family and wider community. They are accused of having brought shame on their family honour and are ostracised, harassed and even subjected to acts of violence.

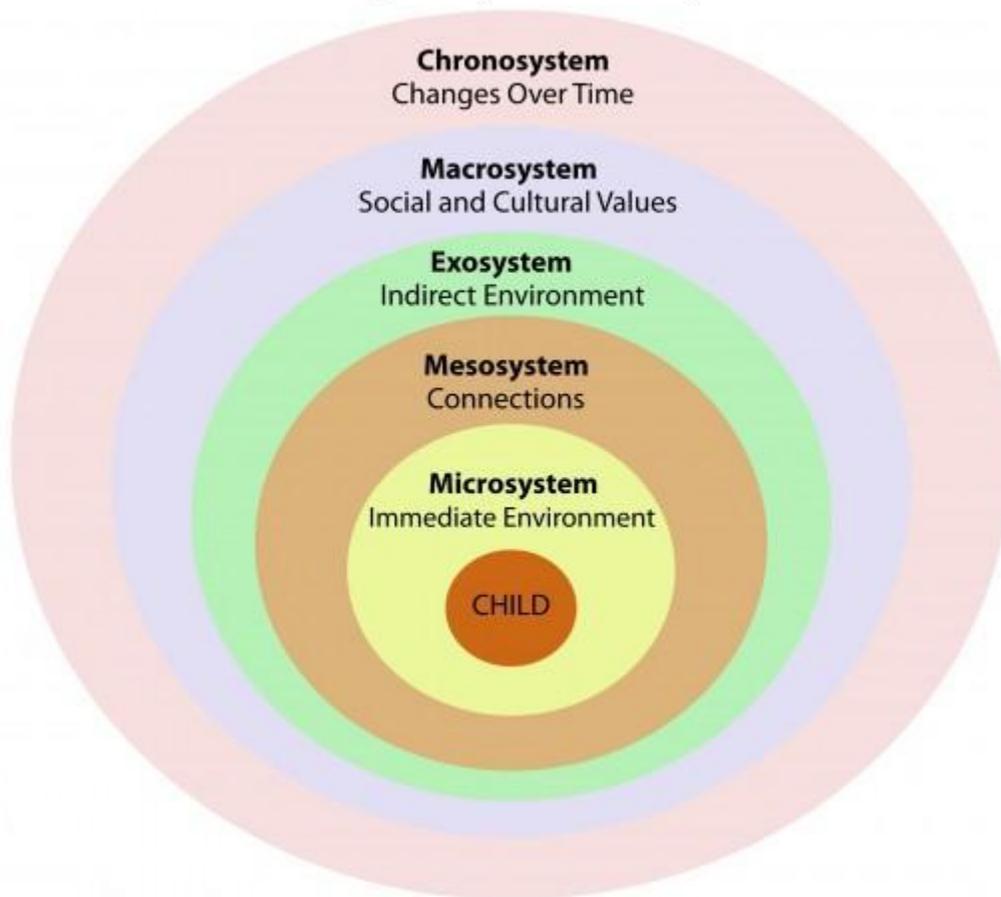
Gill, A. (2004), conducted a similar study based on interviews of 18 South Asian women in the UK. The study reflected how some women continue to play down the levels of violence they experience. The article offers an analysis of the ways in which notions of honour and shame are used both as tools to constrain women's self-determination and independence and as catalysts for domestic violence when these notions of family and community are challenged by women.

In Pakistan, Fikree et al (2005) discussed male attitude of Pakistani men towards domestic violence where they interviewed 176 married men. Nearly all men (94.9%) reported being perpetrators of some type of abuse during their marital life; abusive language being the most common (90%). According to the estimates made by international NGOs and the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, domestic violence is one of the greatest threats to Pakistani women's security, health and well-being ( Khan, A., & Hussain, R. 2008).

#### Application of theory

No single theory would fully explain violence against women, since women abuse is multifactorial. Ali, P.A. and Gavino, M.I.B., (2008) attempted to analyze the issue of violence against women using several theories applicable within the Pakistani context. The nested ecological framework is one of the most commonly used frameworks to study this issue.

## Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory



### Nested ecological framework

Bronfenbrenner (1986, 1979 & 1977) is one of the most widely read and cited authors concerning this framework. The framework suggests that behaviour is shaped through interaction between individual human beings and their social environment. Bronfenbrenner's theory defines complex "layers" of environment, each having an effect on a child's development. The framework proposes five levels including microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macro system and chronosystem. This theory focuses on the quality and context of the child's environment. He states that as a child develops, the interaction within these environments becomes more complex. This complexity can arise as the child's physical and cognitive structures grow and mature. Bronfenbrenner's theory has been renamed "bio ecological systems theory" to emphasize that a child's own biology is a primary environment fueling her development. The interaction between factors in the child's maturing biology, his immediate family/community environment, and the

societal landscape fuels and steers his development. Changes or conflict in any one layer will ripple throughout other layers. Bronfenbrenner's microsystem is the first domain of emotions; those that are found within the family are central to a child's development. As the child matures, the range of emotion grows to include the influences of the expanding environment. Here, culture and other external forces can influence the development of emotions such as fear of strangers, shame, and romantic love. This would explain how these women become hugely concerned with taboo and the stigma of divorce. The individual level caters for the biological and personal factors, which influence individual behaviour.

Cultural beliefs have real power in affecting all Bronfenbrenner's systems. These beliefs are deeply held and become a basis for a child's sense of self (Seifert, 1999). Children are affected by their culture through the communication of beliefs and customs parents receive from other structures in the mesosystem and exosystem. Our culture dictates beliefs concerning religion, school, family, and community life. Generations pass on cultural values via these structures, and the developing child receives them in turn. Because of the role culture plays in identity, there is a potential for conflict. We may come together to form one society, yet we maintain different cultures – ethnic, religious, and national. The force of the dominant culture in communicating conflicting messages to families of other cultures can create crises of identity in children (Seifert, 1999). The cultural message of ideological support that is available for families in the dominant culture can be one of cultural disapproval for families of minority cultures. This is relevant to this research where women tied to arranged or forced marriages are waking up to their surrounding cultures and realising that they are living lives chosen by their parents, with partners they share nothing in common with.

The microsystem levels encompass the family, and workplace situations. The mesosystem level involves the interaction between a person's microsystems. The exosystem level relates to the structures and systems of the society where the person lives. Finally, the macro system level considers the role of culture and larger background.

The macro system layer may be considered the outermost layer in the child's environment. While not being a specific framework, this layer is comprised of cultural values, customs, and laws (Berk, 2000). The effects of larger principles defined by the macro system have a cascading influence throughout the interactions of all other layers. For example, if divorce is frowned upon and expectation is on a woman to tolerate and make marriage work under all circumstances in order to prevent family breakdown, then men feel permitted to exploit that. Consequently, women will feel powerless and controlled.

Even Sigmund Freud acknowledged that he did not fully understand the psychology of women. There is a passage in his *New Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis*:

“We must beware in this of underestimating the influence of social customs, which similarly force women into passive situations. All this is still far from being cleared up.”  
(Freud, S. 1933/1965 pgs. 143-144)

This indicates that Freud did suggest the possibility that cultural factors and social customs play a role in the development of girls and women.

In the 1970s, the Stone Center was established, as a group of pioneering women began the work that led to a theory on the personality development and psychology of women based on a combination of seeking and forming relationships within a cultural context.

### Social learning theory

Social learning theory concentrates on the power of example. The major premise of the theory is that one can learn by observing others. The Bandura's social learning theory is based on the principle that both perpetration and acceptance of physical and psychological abuse is a conditioned and learned behaviour. Bandura, A (1977) believes that the social situation is most important in determining the frequency, form, circumstances and target of aggressive actions. This phenomenon is known as modelling which has as much impact as direct experience. The majority of the families, especially in Pakistani cultures, are close knit and tribal, where parents

and elders are the role models. Therefore, if the father beats his wife then his son is likely to do the same to his own spouse and if mother puts up with lifelong abuse and control then the daughter is also learning to do so too.

Because divorce is discouraged in Islam, such attitudes make it very difficult for a woman to end even a violent relationship. Women tend to believe that they are committing a sin by dissolving even an abusive marriage. Studies suggest that perpetrators are more likely to suffer with personality problems such as schizophrenia, borderline personality, antisocial or narcissistic behaviours, dependency and attachment problems (Bandura's 1977). The proposed framework is a conglomeration of the factors identified.

Economically empowered women are thought to be less likely to become the victims of violence. However, it is quite apparent from this study, that economic independence does not necessarily empower these women to leave. In some places, especially urban areas, women have been encouraged to work outside the house and contribute to the economy of the family. However, it is considered as a privilege granted by men. It is given as "permission" and not as a right. When women try to be economically independent, the men try to regain the control through violent acts.

Marriage at an early age is another factor, which predisposes women to violence from an intimate partner. Early marriages are a very common practice in the Southeast Asian countries, particularly in Pakistan, as the girls are considered a social, economic and religious liability on the families, who need to be disposed of as soon as possible.

In summary, it is the interplay of the identified determinants that violence against women may be analysed. Factors which are found in persons makes them either vulnerable to abuse or to have the tendency to be violent and abusive. The conditions which set the stage for violence against women are found in the extrinsic factors which are heavily present in the culture of Pakistan.

### Object Relations Theory

When it comes to the study of mother and infant relationship, Melanie Klein's work (1963) may provide some guideline to make sense of this basic survival dependency and later life templates with her object relation theory in her account of Early Infantile Development. These concepts were explored but the theory is more to do with psychological attachment than the social constructs that this thesis attempts to address and so was therefore felt to be irrelevant.

### Feminist theory

Feminist theory views social phenomena as determined by the patriarchal structure of most societies. The feminist view also holds that until women are seen as other than subservient compliant victims, little will change. It is a deeply embedded social problem that has to be addressed by social change. As Marilyn French (Women, 2010), a prominent American feminist author said of the feminist movement of the sixties and seventies; "*Women were not against raising children but being restricted to it.*"

### Intersectional perspective

Intersectional feminism is a definition coined by Kimberle Williams Crenshaw, which she explains in her TED lecture (2016); The urgency of intersectionality, as what she sees as the Afro American Woman's struggle with "the collision of two overlapping dynamics of oppression." She points out how the 1870 patriarchal Government through the 15th Amendment in the American constitution, granted the Afro American man the right to vote. The Afro American women had to wait until 1920 to win the vote through the Women's suffrage movement. However, the argument that the Suffragettes had used, Crenshaw claims, is that the vote for women would "shore up white supremacy," a strategy that has slipped from American consciousness.

Therefore, what illustrates the Intersectionalist dilemma quite well is that the *Black suffrage* (after the Civil war) actually means the Black Male Suffrage, at the exclusion of black women who had to wait for the Women's suffrage to get the right to vote. And by then, Crenshaw

reminds us, “the blacks had been so thoroughly disenfranchised that black women were nothing by the time it came to winning the right to vote.”

What this paper aims to keep in mind throughout and certainly as a part of its conclusion and recommendations is that “Without frames to allow us to see how social problems impact ALL the members of a targeted group, many will fall through the cracks of our movement, left to suffer in virtual isolation.” (Crenshaw, 2016)

### **Chapter Three**

### **Methodology**

Holistically this is an empirical study of the British Pakistani women’s experience of domestic abuse. This chapter describes the approach taken to explore the complex issue of domestic violence in the community where cultural values are central to the choices made and decisions taken in everyday life. The main aim of this research was to understand the dominant psycho-social factors which influence women’s decisions when it comes to leaving or staying in an abusive relationship. This was achieved by engaging a small sample of Women who experienced abusive relationships to explore what factors determined their decisions to leave or to stay, focusing on their childhood, upbringing, social and cultural influences. The intentions were:

- To identify if it is an abusive partner that women can’t escape from or the childhood messages and cultural pressures she had received?
- To examine if external social support can make up for internal battles and fears?
- To identify the enabling characteristic of those who managed to flee domestic abuse?

The nature of this research required total trust, openness and a free flowing narrative, which I believe was more likely to come with women who I was already acquainted with; (1), In order to understand the dominant psycho social factors which influence women’s decisions in an abusive relationship, I decided a qualitative heuristic approach, was more favourable. As Gangoli et al (2006) observes, this method;

“can elicit a discussion about an issue in such a way that is removed from personal experience, but allows for the input of personal experience if desired.”

Gangoli et al (2006)

For recruitment of participants, I chose the option of word of mouth and to my surprise found a number of women willing to volunteer to share their experiences.

My initial thought was how these women might feel afterwards, as now there was a social link between us and prior to the research I had not been aware of their personal histories. I dealt with this issue through the formal approach of sharing an information letter with requirements of participant's written consent as well as their right to withdraw at any stage. I intentionally allowed four weeks period for them to make an informed and thoughtful decision. Although there was some familiarity and commonalities between the subjects and the researcher, it was not of the nature to hinder this study. To ascertain absolute free will, participants were reassured that there were more than enough volunteers to carry this study and any withdrawal or hesitation to take part would not jeopardise the research.

However, what became apparent from the beginning were the level of passion all the women exhibited and the common motivation of sharing their experiences in order to help other women in similar situations, although it is also quite conceivable that some of them were seeking to find their own answers for themselves.

Given the very sensitive nature of the issue, such an approach was needed which could offer participants freedom, confidence and sense of choice to express their experiences. Before settling for one particular method, some groundwork was done to make a careful choice to select the most appropriate method for this research which aimed at a particular community group.

In order to make the most justified choice, I tested different methods, including observing a support group for Asian Women. This group was known as “meet and greet” which was offering a platform for many isolated women to join comfortably without fear of labelling. However, I

noticed that group members were led and influenced by each other's experiences rather than expressing their own. After this observation, I conducted a pilot interview with one of the group members. This interview was non-structured with an element of therapeutic approach where audio recording was purposely avoided. In both above approaches, the element of in-depth psychosocial factors and emotional individuality was not reached to a level of the quality of research intended for this topic.

Inter-view is a method where knowledge is constructed in the interaction between the interviewer and the interviewee. As Kvale, S (2007) describes, interview research is a "craft", which is learned through practising interviewing. Qualitative interviews have been used in semi-structured or informal form by anthropologists and sociologists to gain knowledge from their informants, particularly in the field of social science.

Being a therapeutic practitioner, I am at all times mindful of the researcher's interaction with an interviewee who may still be in the process of recovering from such trauma. Therefore, they can be hyper vigilant, defensive and suspicious. With this in mind, for my experimental interview, I avoided audio recording of the interview and instead relied upon my shorthand and observational skills. The notes were taken very sporadically and discretely to keep the rhythm going. This was helpful to keep the environment genuine, human and natural. I was assured by my own therapeutic knowledge that this research method can be rather healing and empowering where the subject would have an opportunity to tell her "story" to an empathetic, attentive listener. This use of open ended questions offered an opportunity for the subject to tell her story "how it was" rather than restricting or moulding to fit a question.

I noticed that in face to face non audio taped, semi structured interview, interruption of the question could determine the direction of her story and was forcing an order to her narrative. Although absence of a recorder was aiding a more natural ambience, absence was felt at the time of reflexivity on the researcher's part. Not being able to listen to recorded material was also posing a risk of misunderstanding, misrepresenting and the temptation to simply fill in the gaps by assumption where there might be lack of clarity, therefore compromising the quality of data

and subsequent analysis. So both above methods were deemed unsatisfactory for the depth I wanted to reach in my research.

I have the added benefit of being a Pakistani Muslim female, speaking the family's first language (although language was not an issue for any of the participants). However, there are nonverbal cultural symbols and encryptions; the subtle nuances that hold a crucial meaning which can be lost in translation.

To research and explore this question I am applying psycho-social research methods which are a natural choice for such a topic where the researcher wants to go beneath the surface and find out what is happening at the unconscious level. As I am fully aware and conscious of my close interest in the topic, I am mindful of the power of the unconscious in construction of the research environment and interpretation of the data. This will help me to keep a continuous check on my approach and keep any chance of bias to a minimum.

Like Sue Jervis "The use of self as a research tool" (2009), I am aware that individuals are complex and their relationships always involve ideas and processes outside of their own awareness. Therefore, I was looking to apply a research method that would allow me to address unconscious dynamics, and potentially reach a deeper level of understanding than would be possible otherwise. After two experiments of group observation and non-recorded semi structured interview methods, my dissatisfaction steered me to "Free Association Narrative Interview" (FANI) as developed by Holloway and Jefferson (2000). This method is common with reflexive psychoanalytic research methodology (Clarke,S and Hoggett, P 2009), which not only considers the manifest content of research data, but also what might underlie it. This method is based on their theory of the "defended subject." It is based on a psychoanalytic understanding that threats to the self creates anxiety, which in turn evokes defences that operate unconsciously.

#### Free Association Narrative Interview (FANI)

The free association narrative interviewing method often consists of two interviews. The first interview aims to interrogate, pick up contradictions, inconsistencies, avoidances and changes of emotional tone. While the second interview allows follow up, search for further evidence and it offers interviewees a chance to reflect. In this type of interview, the quality of relationship between researcher and subject is paramount in creating a trusting environment where the subject feels safe to explore and express their thoughts and feelings fully and freely. However, in my research, the need for a second interview didn't arise as first interviews were very detailed and comprehensive. Having some familiarity with the participants also enhanced the quality as that trusting relationship subsequently boosted the authenticity of their narratives and accounts of experiences. All six participants were presented with their interview script. None of them made any comments or changes apart from a minor change to the date of one event by Sabina. Rani did take the opportunity of commenting and repeated most of the same as in her first interview. Her unprompted account yet again indicated the scale of her trauma and consequent need of being heard or acknowledged.

According to Webber, (2008) qualitative research principally explores the meaning of a phenomenon from a variety of perspectives. The richness of such a method is that it begins with the notion that each individual's experience is unique. He also believes that it is frequently guided by the participants more than by the researchers, as data collection is working as an interactive process. Being a student of social research over the last few years, I agree with Webber's view that qualitative research is generally held in high regard within social work as its ethos seems to fit more easily within the social work value base.

I also support the feminist researcher's challenge which was later acknowledged by others, that the researcher was some neutral and dispassionate seeker of truth. The Researcher's autobiography is one way to offer transparency of the motives, identities and preconceptions the researcher brought to their work (Stanley & Wise, 1983). I could not agree more that for the psycho-social researcher, awareness of his or her own values, prejudices, identifications and object relations is a crucial aspect to understanding their countertransference. Without this conscious self-awareness, it is impossible for the researcher to know whether the feelings that a

research subject has evoked in them belong exclusively to the subject, are co-produced, or belong entirely to the researcher. Therefore, I have from time to time, offered snapshots of my personal journey, in order to clarify my passion and interest in this research and its findings.

By using the Free Association Narrative approach, I am offering the interviewee the choice of telling me her story in whatever order, and length or words she would prefer, without restricting her options by giving closed questions. I am allowing her to use her conscious and unconscious selection to share her account of life events, which are important to her. There is freedom to choose to start from “now and then” or “then and now” without a restricted order of questions. It was only when I had moved onto the process of writing the case studies did I consider recounting each story in chronological order of events. Another key principle for such interview methods is for the researcher to keep intervention to a minimum. Wengraf (2001, p. 113) suggests that what is required is giving up control, and maintenance of maximum “power-asymmetry against yourself.” The experience of the struggle for keeping the practitioner selves at bay for the sake of the role of researcher was shared by other fellow research students.

The psycho-social approaches to biographical narrative interviews, developed by Hollway and Jefferson (2000), and Wengraf (2001), and (Wengraf & chamberlayne, 2006), brought about some ground breaking changes, especially in relation to data gathering and presentation. Hollway and Jefferson claims that using a psycho social perspective in research practice necessarily involves conceptualizing both researcher and respondent as co-producers of meanings. They emphasise the unconscious dynamics between the researcher and the researched and the use of free association through narrative interviews.

“The particular story told, the manner and detail of its telling, the points emphasised, the morals drawn, all represent choices made by the storyteller. Such choices are revealing, often more so than the teller suspects. (Hollway & Jefferson, 2000,p.35)

Narratives interviews focus on the stories told, the emerging plot and so too, the formulation of their accounts. These stories can come up spontaneously, or be elicited by the interviewer; based

on the condition that the interviewer is an attentive listener. Mishler (1986) points out that in everyday conversations, answers to questions often display the features of narratives when stories appear so often. It supports the view that narratives are one of the natural cognitive and linguistic forms to organise and express meaning.

The historical use of qualitative interviews has played a vital part in the field of psychology, including Freud's psychoanalytical theory, (based on therapeutic interviews with patients) free association, and therapist's "free –hovering attention." Piaget's (1930) theory of child development was based on his interviews with children in natural settings, and took notice of the manner in which their thoughts unfolded. Freud's and Piaget's main empirical evidence came from interviews which are widely quoted in literature, and their interpretation of those interviews informs our knowledge of personality and childhood. It is with this understanding in mind that given the very personal nature of my subject's journeys, I decided that interviews were the best method.

Marcus Redley (2003) created a good example by conducting interviews with people who had self-harmed. Redley wanted to explore how living in a deprived locality was associated with self-harming behaviour. Brown and Kandirikirira's (2007) work is another good example which demonstrates how qualitative interviews play a vital part in informing social work practice. The Scottish Recovery Network ( Brown, W., & Kandirikirira, N. 2007) conducted a series of qualitative interviews in 2005 to develop narratives of the individual's recovery from severe mental health problems. Sixty four people from across Scotland participated in semi-structured interviews to reflect upon factors which helped or hindered their journey towards recovery. My epistemological research position is based on my journey towards understanding the lives of others through their own accounts, and how I can best make sense of their experiences, while remaining mindful of subjectivity and without ignoring the process of countertransference and defendant position against anxiety. This study is about a particular community which possesses a strong sense of loyalty to their culture.

The interactionist sociologist George Herbert Mead (1933) has argued that empathy is a valuable human ability that the researcher should exploit in order to understand how people experience the social world.

Like any other qualitative methods, a major critique is the small numbers and freedom of interpretation and bias. The use of self in research means the biggest tool is the researcher themselves. Researchers need to be conscious of their unconscious processes. Previously, countertransference was not seen as a useful psychoanalytic tool, instead as Freud warns us; it derived from the analysts' unresolved unconscious conflicts, which could hinder psychoanalysis unless overcome ( Sandler, Dare & Holder, 1992). Freud advised analysts to remain as emotionally detached as surgeons. On the other hand, in 1950, Heimann described countertransference as an important instrument of research into the patient's unconscious (ibid., p.81). Despite this usefulness of countertransference, there is to date this fear in the research profession that analysts might misunderstand or misuse the feelings aroused in them, to the detriment of their work.

### Selection Criteria

Given the sensitivity of the topic and limited number of participants aimed at, I approached these women through personal networks, word of mouth and friends. Although the main focus was on the Asian community in general, however, I finally accrued all six women from a Pakistani background with the exception of one who was from Bangladesh, which considering it was originally East Pakistan prior to 1971, shares the same culture, and religious values. These women were at different stages of their journeys, five of them had experienced abusive relationships in the past and had left, of which two have re-married in the past 5 years. Two were in their third marriages; one is single and one still remains in the same relationship. They were chosen for their passion about the subject, willingness to participate, and because they were notable for being vocal, for strength of character and honesty. Having some familiarity with their researcher enhanced the quality of trust and therefore openness of sharing their experiences in depth. This in return puts a great responsibility on the researcher to utilise this authentic information, feelings and emotions to best use.

Table of Participant's demographic

Note: Where subject has been married more than once, only the longest term marriage is referenced.

<b>Name</b>	<b>Rani</b>	<b>Tara</b>	<b>Sabina</b>	<b>Nusrat</b>	<b>Munza</b>	<b>Urooj</b>
<b>Current age</b>	46	48	48	56	55	48
<b>Born or raised in UK</b>	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
<b>Arranged marriage</b>	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
<b>Age at time of first marriage</b>	15	18	20	20	16	19
<b>Duration of marriage</b>	13 yrs	25 years	8 yrs	28 yrs	35 yrs still married	11 yrs
<b>Employed/financially independent during marriage</b>	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	yes
<b>Mental health during marital period.</b>	Suicidal attempt	Suicidal	Suicidal thoughts	Suicidal thoughts	Ongoing Chronic Depression	Not mentioned
<b>Family support Needed?</b>	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No
<b>Family support available?</b>	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
<b>Self- perception of current emotional state</b>	Content	Content	Content	Lonely sometimes	Ambiguous	Content

<b>After thoughts on divorce</b>	No regrets	No regrets	No regrets	No regrets	N/A	No regrets
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### Interview Schedule

Anticipated time for interview was between 60 to 90 minutes.

Main question:

Tell me about your experience of married life?

Prompting questions:

- How was your childhood family environment? Was there any gender preference between male and female children?
- What was your parents' relationship like with each other?
- How did you meet your husband? Did you consent to this marriage?
- When did things start to go wrong? What was your Family's response?
- How did you reach a decision to stay or to leave?

**Note:** Participants were given this schedule prior to interview so they were aware of what areas to cover, therefore the need for prompting questions didn't arise.

### Transcription

Each interview was transcribed within 48 hours by the researcher herself in order to capture the feelings of self and emotional tones of the subjects while fresh in the memory.

Sporadically taken notes helped to confirm the tones, pauses and nonverbal cues noted during the interviews. Interviews were conducted at least two weeks apart from one another to keep that purity of individual without mixing one's feeling with the other.

Copies of transcript were offered to all participants; only 3 out of 6 thought it necessary to take up that offer and no one made any corrections or comment. Given the sensitive nature of the issue and their current positions in their lives, reluctance to revisit was admissible.

### Data Analysis:

The process of data analysis actually begins with the time of interview. As I was listening to these women sharing their ordeals, my mind was processing that information. My feelings and thoughts started to build up some pictures of their lives.

**1). Script reading, re-reading, annotating.** A few hours after the participants' interview, I sat down to listen and transcribe. Listening to their recorded voices in their absence heightened my reflective process and sensitivity towards their experiences. Where I was in any doubt or needed clarity or confirmation, I turned to the notes taken during the interviews. I kept note taking to a discrete minimum with the view not to interrupt or distract them from their flow of thought. These notes were more about my reflection than their presentation.

**2). Highlighting words and phrases/coding.** As I read the interview transcript from beginning to the end I noticed there were different feelings, emotions and events happening. For ease of understanding, I started highlighting and colour coding different themes such as *pressures, hopes* and *struggles*.

**3). Organising meaning into categories/ Eliciting themes.** After reading all six interviews, I grouped similarities among all stories told. I noticed there were common themes emerging from each case study.

**4). Overarching or common themes; comparing and contrasting.** At this stage it started to emerge that these women shared similar struggles and challenges, so it made sense to gather each struggle as it appeared under one common theme. This stage was reached through the combination of narratives, personal reflection and meaning established.

**5). Common themes/Findings.** Emerging themes were then narrowed down to sub-categories such as pleasing parents: struggles in marriage; realisation of being trapped; community pressures; taboo and fears. These findings were then presented to fellow students in facilitated group study sessions. Supervision sessions were used for further discussions

and exploration. These platforms afforded opportunities for being guided, challenged, alerted, diverted and tracked.

	<b>Script reading, re-reading, annotating</b>	<b>Highlighting words and phrases/coding</b>	<b>Organising meaning into categories/ Eliciting Themes</b>	<b>Overarching or common themes Comparing and contrasting</b>	<b>Common themes/Findings</b>
<b>1 Rani</b>	Realising scale of her suffering and struggles. Emotionally charged and challenging.	Childhood. Unloved. Never really happy. Took an overdose. Pregnant at 16. Homeless. Got to make it work. Have to make it work.	Unloved childhood. Felt misfit. Gender subordination. Ambitious. Pressures and expectations. Isolated. Exploited. Rejected. Failed. Pressures. Expectations. Divorce. Taboo. Misfit. Worthless.	Childhood abuse. Attachment issues. First forced marriage, second love (Or respite) marriage. Taboo of divorce, community fear. Desperate to make it work. Rebellious.	Childhood abuse/ Attachment issues. Low self-esteem. Patriarchy/Lack of family support. Fear of community.
<b>2 Tara</b>	Remembering her emotional detachment	I was emotionally blackmailed to marry my first	Controlling/suspicious and jealous man. Kept isolated from	Exploited. Isolation/lack of family support. Vulnerability.	Submissive Mother. Childhood abuse. Attachment issues.

	throughout the interview	<p>husband. He starts hitting me. She (mother) didn't believe me. I moved in with T.</p> <p>Voluntarily marry his brother to help out with visa to please him. We were perfect couple to others</p> <p>Can't have second marriage breakdown.</p>	<p>friends and family.</p> <p>Landlord forced to leave and return.</p> <p>Mother disbelieved her.</p>	<p>Pressure to make second marriage work.</p> <p>Stigma of divorce.</p>	<p>Low self-esteem.</p> <p>Patriarchal/ misogyny.</p>
<b>3 Sabina</b>	Her devotion to protect her parents from viewing her pain	<p>Saying yes to an engagement was seen as good as being married. I felt trapped. No going</p>	<p>Extended family pressure to accept his proposal. Unspoken expectation to agree</p>	<p>Arranged Marriage.</p> <p>Obedience.</p> <p>Extended family interference/pressure.</p> <p>Protecting her parents.</p>	<p>Female obedience.</p> <p>Social norms.</p> <p>Arranged/forced marriage. Isolation.</p> <p>Family approval and</p>

	<p>and determination to gain her independence.</p>	<p>back. He didn't let me speak to my parents for 8 years. I was quite anorexic I cried every single day. I didn't want to marry him. I wasn't strong enough to say no this is not for me. I just carried on and on hoping it will be ok. Pressure through maternal extended family. Parents started to look for potential suiters. I won't blame my parents.</p>	<p>with your parents Started mistreating from beginning/humiliation Isolated no communication to family controlling financially Weight loss, loss of self-esteem, walking on egg shells Anger as form of control</p>	<p>Importance of family approval and support. Extended family pressure to accept his proposal. Unspoken expectation to agree with your parents. Started mistreating from beginning/humiliation/Isolated /controlling financially. Weight loss, loss of self-esteem, walking on egg shells Anger as form of control Feeling guilty about taking father away from boys Living in constant fear, feeling paralysed, self-doubt Importance of family approval and support</p>	<p>support.</p>
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<p><b>4. Nusrat</b></p>	<p>Her story was of a typical Pakistani woman of modern age trying to accomplish all by being a good wife, mother and when needed breadwinner</p>	<p>I had a golden childhood. I didn't want to get married, wanted to become a lecturer but my father died. Biggest dilemma for her was to move out and move out with two grown up young women. He was a man with no decision power. I wanted to kill myself. We carried on/ nobody knew, that things were not right/ my link with my family opened</p>	<p>Process of proposals/her wish and plan to study/age gap/initial checks by family male presence or absence/female alone; in law's interference; his lack of independent thinking or backbone, ambition/patriarchal society/ taboo of divorce female isolation/ arranged marriages/ traditional expectations community pressures</p>	<p>Arranged Marriage/unsuited match. Liberal upbringing. Positive self-image. Freedom to decide/choose. Unsuitable match. Male insecurity. Ambitious. Financial independence</p>	<p>Female obedience. Cultural norms. Patriarchal society Taboo of divorce Female isolation Arranged Marriages Traditional expectations Community pressures Male dominating financial, legal, religious systems</p>
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			male dominating financial, legal, religious systems		
<b>5 Munza</b>	Munza's insight of her being coward adds to the question of tipping point, timing and personal aspiration and standards.	Accepted my parent's decision. Brother refused to marry my sister in law. I can't even get a credit card because of his debts. He gives me money. He borrowed money and I pay it back. I don't think I have self-respect any more. I don't want to hurt my mum. I think I should have	Obedient daughter/dutiful wife.  Constant state of despair and depression, given in. Self-blame for being a coward. Suicidal attempts. Didn't tell anyone. Thought to leave but nowhere to go. Stigma, taboo, hurting or disappointing parents. Certain freedom.	Arranged Marriage. Struggles to come to UK Role of extended family Sister at 13 was left behind as fear of westernised culture. Self-blame, frustrated, feeling coward not being able to stand up to him I didn't tell anyone	Female obedience. Cultural norms. Gender subordination. Male privilege. Patriarchal society Taboo of divorce  Female isolation Arranged Marriages Traditional expectations Community pressures  Male dominating financial, legal, religious systems

		stood up right in the beginning. I teach my daughters now, if they hit you once tell them; ‘out,’ don’t look back.			
<b>6 Urooj</b>	Liberal upbringing, love marriage and realisation when things started to go wrong. Self-reliant. Mindful of cultural and traditional expectations. A rather aspiring account of personal strength,	Married for love. Permission by father for seeing each other. Don’t remember when things started to go wrong. Never told anyone. It didn’t work, so the right thing was to leave but was not easy. ‘People make up stories , let them.’	Pretence/keeping the face. Thoughts of leaving but fearful of stigma of divorce. Not wanting to burden anyone. Hoping for change.	Love Marriage. Financial independence. Cultural norms, taboo of divorce. Dilemma. Seeking marital counselling. Never told anyone Thought of leaving but fear of bringing shame on family	Love marriage. Liberal Upbringing. Self-worth. Resources. Permission and experiencing of making decision and choices.

	community and family pressures and inner strength.				
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I must confess that during the above process I was unaware of my approach being systematic; to me it was a very natural and step by step process to extract the information needed. This is a way we are taught at Schools to read and re read to make sure we get the correct information, then summarise large text to find the essence and declare the findings.

It was only when I turned to academic guidance in order to theorise my established method that I realised that this was a well-known approach established by constructivist grounded theory suggested by others. (Charmaz and Bryant 2011 and O'Connor, H. and Gibson, N., 2003 and Strauss, A.L., 1987)

Each audio-recorded interview was listened to on the same day, just a few hours after the participant had left, in order to check the emotions and tones and to match it against the sporadically taken reflective notes. These interviews were then transcribed verbatim by researcher/interviewer herself within 48 hours. This immediate time scale offered further strength in preserving all raw emotions which added to reflection process and enhanced the quality of analysis. Each interview was listened to several times to gauge the tone of emotions, while it was fresh in the memory. The transcribed material was then read repeatedly line by line. The constant comparison method of qualitative data analysis was carried out by systematic examination of similarities between the women's views to identify emergent themes within and across in-depth interviews (Strauss, 1987).

At first, transcript coding was performed and then this was presented in joint sessions, and supervision meetings to verify authenticity. After multiple readings of the transcript, I first identified the initial units of meaning (categories) that emerged from the data (e.g. conforming to parents' wishes, fear and taboo of divorce, community pressure) which was manually colour coded by using different highlighters for each category (see appendix). This resulted in a list of words and phrases representing the broad areas of the thought processes of each case study. (Strauss, 1987)

I categorised them as individual themes emerging from each case study. Secondly, I discovered relationships between categories and subcategories by context and content (e.g., Taboo was the main concern which then leads to parental disappointment, community alienation and failure as subcategories). This involved more abstract analysis, including identifying the properties and dimensions of categories and articulating relationship between the categories.

Webber (2008) warns that as qualitative data analysis is prone to bias, if the researcher does not take a systematic approach to it, the writing-up process must ensure that the phenomenon being studied is accurately and fairly portrayed. To prevent such bias, there is a practice whereby preliminary findings are shown to study participants so as to ascertain whether or not it represents what they actually said. For this purpose, the transcripts were shared with participants after the first interview. The second interview would serve the purpose of clarification of interpretation as well as fill in any gaps from the previous interview, if necessary. Only Rani took up the opportunity to repeat her whole story again. This helps to improve the accuracy of the results and will enhance researcher's confidence and reassure them about the quality of their interpretation of data. The full description of the setting, target population, participant's characteristics and a detailed account of the methods used are vital for the meaningful presentation and reporting of the research.

As researcher's awareness of their countertransference holds a significant position, it is important to take note of any projective, non- verbal communication and to acknowledge the presence of such painful emotions which are beyond words. As I am fully aware and conscious of my close interest in the topic, I am mindful of the power of the unconscious in construction of the research environment and interpretation of the data. This enabled me to keep a continuous check on my approach and reduced any chance of bias to a minimum.

Psycho-social research seeks to go beyond discourse, although free association narrative interviewing (Holloway and Jefferson 2000) is based on the biographical-interpretive. What makes it distinctive is the idea of the defended subject. While analysing data it was not just the coherence of the narrative alone, I was also focused on the unconscious dynamics used to avoid

or master anxiety. The interpretation of the narrative of such a sensitive subject requires sensitivity to emotional experience, and to transference and countertransference issues. This is what Bion (1970), refers to as analysts becoming “containers” for the analysed; a dumping ground for their disturbing ideas and feelings. Once this psychic material is “contained”, it may be transformed into something more meaningful.

I learnt through my practice that there is a very fine line between being objective and empathetic. Given the very sensitive and emotional nature of the subject, I needed to be mindful of my own emotions, feelings and projection to minimise chances of bias. As emphasised by (Stanley & Wise, 1983), greater transparency is needed in terms of the motives, identities and preconceptions that researchers bring to their work. For the psycho-social researcher, awareness of what the researcher brings to the research process, their values, prejudices, identifications and object relations- is a crucial aspect to understanding their countertransference. The researcher’s capacity for self-awareness, especially in autobiographical research, is central.

### Limitations

Like any qualitative study of this empirical nature, the limited number of participants can be seen as a limitation. Robert K Yin, a foundational writer in the area of case study research argues in its favour; that case studies can provide both descriptive richness and analytic insight into people, events, and passions as played out in real-life environments. He maintains that;

“case studies can be conducted and written with many different motives, including the simple presentation of individual cases or the desire to arrive at broad generalisations based on case study evidence”  
Yin (1994) (p. 15).

He acknowledges the long-standing critique of case study as having “insufficient precision (that is, quantification), objectivity, and rigour” (1984, p. 10). He emphasises quality of analysis to overcome quantitative shortfalls, which can be achieved by contrasting and comparing the findings of each case study.

There are places where certain issues were not explored thoroughly, such as Munza's depression or the impact that Urooj's new circumstances may have had on her personal response. It was difficult to establish how different the narratives and their quality would have been if the subjects were still stuck in the past as opposed to being in more fulfilling relationships. However this is a debate for the Relativists and does not belong in this paper. Their feelings toward their own individual experiences may have altered but the narrative will always remain the same. That is to say, six women suffered for varying lengths of time, varying depths of domestic abuse at the hands of a sexual partner. That is the constant in this study. The motives, the insights, the varying degrees of new circumstances that now inform their own personal feelings toward their own narratives are sometimes explored, sometimes hypothesized. However, the aim of the heuristic approach, is to "elicit is own discussion" (Gangoli, 2006).

Rani for example, was able to offer quite a valid insight into her own reasons for staying so long with Peter, informed by her own academic knowledge of psychology and experience in Social Care work; an insight she would have been incapable of offering at the time of suffering. Therefore, she would often use phrases such as; "at the time I believed that... but now I realize..." More important to the heuristic nature of the study is to note the emotive language used, suggesting for example, that the trauma of their respected experiences was a lot more prevalent in Rani than in Urooj. Individual insight into their own personal narratives is useful and adds depth to the discussion that an empirical study would hope to generate.

It would be invaluable to further research the views of predators to see if they are aware of consequences of their behaviour. What if any, lessons were learnt from these relationship tragedies? Were mothers aware of their parts in their daughters' future decisions? Were men aware of its long term impact on their children? Certain issues such as children's safeguarding and maternal mental health have not been discussed fully here, as the focus is primarily on the domestic abuse towards the female spouse.

### Ethical issues

All prospective participants were provided with written information about the research project, use of data, confidentiality and their right to withdraw. Written consent was gained prior to any engagement. Interviews were audio recorded and anonymised to safeguard and protect identity of individual subjects. Identity of participants is not known to anyone apart from the researcher, who holds the responsibility for the safe storage of the material elicited.

Interviews were offered to be conducted at a place of choice of the participants, a community centre, researcher's office or another appropriate venue. It was anticipated that given the very private nature of the topic and the cultural practices of women of not meeting in public places, participants may choose to be interviewed within the comfort and privacy of their own home (if they were no longer living with the abuser). In such a case, any risk would have been considered as by that stage there was enough information about the participant's current situation of risk.

As the subject of research was highly sensitive and could cause distress for the participant during or after the interviews, the researcher being a therapeutic practitioner, was highly alert to any signs of discomfort or distress and constantly checked the willingness of the participant to continue or to take a break while boundaries were maintained so as not to confuse the researcher's role with that of a counsellor.

The majority of the prospective participants have belonged to a committed, loyal, social group of close friends for many years. This group itself is supportive enough in case of any distress that may have arisen from the interview. However, the researcher also offered signposts to any formal support agencies, if needed, for counselling or therapeutic support.

Transcripts of interviews were offered to participants and further discussion opportunities were provided for any areas that may have needed more clarity.

At first it was my intention to arrange the order of the case studies chronologically. However, as I became more and more familiar with each case study, I began to make cross comparisons and similarities, focusing on length of marriage (suffering) that each case study had tolerated;

childhood experiences and then other factors such as age at time of marriage and whether the marriage was arranged or not.

Original order of interviews

<b>Name</b>	<b>Age at marriage</b>	<b>Length of marriage</b>	<b>Family support</b>
Tara	18	25 years	No
Sabina	20	8 years	Yes
Rani	15	18 years	No
Munza	20	36 years still married	Yes
Nusrat	16	28 years	Yes
Urooj	19	11years	Yes

**Chapter Four**

**Introduction to the case studies**

As discussed in the methodology chapter, a case study design was eventually chosen as I felt that it would enable me both to present the participants’ narratives in depth, and also to speculate on the possibilities that the narratives presented. It is intended that the following case studies offer some insight into the women's experience of abusive marital relationships. This study is unique in its nature that physical abuse was rare and therefore not the main focus of physical harm or danger. It focuses on the emotional and psychological control through instigating constant fear and consequent damage to self-esteem, to a state where these women felt too paralysed to take any action for years.

All six women volunteered and welcomed the opportunity of such participation from very early on when the idea was first proposed to them. All six interviews are presented here in case study form but not in the same order as the interviews were carried. Interviews were conducted in the

order of availability of participants, initially there was no preferential order as each case study is unique in its own right and therefore of equal importance but as I reached the end of this study, it felt much more appropriate to change the order. Current order of case studies is based on the length and severity of trauma suffered. I have used some direct quotes from interviews (with consent) to describe verbatim; "as it was."

In order to provide a coherent sense of inter-related themes and comparisons and similarities between each case study, I have manipulated the order of presentation of the interviews. I have been mindful of presenting each personal experience as it was related, given these were autobiographical free association narrative interviews. However, for the sake of coherence, it was necessary to make minor arrangements in the chronology of events to make this reader friendly.

The case studies will also reflect my own process of interpretation and conscious and unconscious subjective exposition of what was said and how I heard it. As given the nature of these highly emotionally charged interviews, the narrator's thoughts at times could be confusing and fragmented. All direct quotations are verbatim where the grammar of second language users would allow. Of all these women, four are re married and now claim to feel happy and content. Four out of six interviews took place at my home, a peaceful country location, surrounded by woodland. I was alone at home without any interruption. This venue was preferred by participants themselves who were known to me prior to these interviews.

While working on my research proposal and listening to fellow students struggle to recruit participants, I was unsure and a little apprehensive of the response I may get. Given the very private and sensitive nature of the topic, it left me wondering what approach or channels to use to recruit study subjects. To my pleasant surprise a very warm welcoming response by the participants reminded me of the experience of Eichenbaum, L and Orbach, S 1982 on opening of the Women's Therapy Centre. Women's enthusiasm and passion declared and affirmed the necessity to explore such deep rooted issues.

To understand the complex nature of this study, it is important to be familiar with the fabric of that society and systems that operate within it. The intentions of this research is to explore what processes Indo-Pakistani women go through when it comes to making a decision to leave abusive husbands in complex communities where paradoxical forces of globalization and the “old country” patriarchal conservative legal structures collide. These Indo-Pakistani women in my case studies are living in the UK, a broadly emancipated landscape, and yet have found themselves pushed to the patriarchal margins amongst the community which still practices the inherited norms of male dominance. The overall theme, based on wider literature, proposes that gender inequality and subordination status of women leads to domestic violence. Those who try to escape such oppression go through heart rending scenarios of being alienated and isolated by harsh judgements of the community. They are labelled as failures, home breakers and face life long hostility and character assassination; hence the reason for decade long weighing up of the pros and cons of divorce before reaching a decision.

**Case Study 1 Rani**

Interview 2 hours 10 minutes ..... Transcript 19 pages

Number of Marriages	Age	Type of marriage	Time to divorce	Family support	Childhood	Current Status
3						
1 <sup>st</sup> marriage	15	Forced	2 year	No	Abusive	
2nd	24	Love	15 years	No		
3rd	42	Love				Happily married
Emerging Themes	Unloved childhood	Forced Marriage	Co-dependency	Taboo of Divorce	Exploitation	Determination Resilience

## Summary

“Love and understanding are expressed through the mother’s handling of her baby, and lead to a certain unconscious oneness..... the first and fundamental relation in his life- the relation to the mother” (Klein, 1963, p. 3)

It appears that childhood rejection and lifelong envy from her mother left Rani very hurt and confused. It took her several decades to make a move from “Paranoid schizoid” to “depressive position” where she learned that the only person who could rescue her was herself. Her projection of unmet infancy needs left her vulnerable to a state perhaps that led her to “mothering” a dependent alcoholic for a good part of her life. She was unable to reach a state of ambivalence due to lack of a secure attachment to either parent in her early childhood.

This interview was the lengthiest of all (almost double) indicating the scale and period of suffering. I found this to be the most difficult and emotionally challenging interview. This is not only a story of a woman in a very perplexing relationship but also about a little girl looking for love, belonging and attachment. In the presence of both parents she grew up without a significant caregiver or attachment figure. Neglect from her mother and physical abuse from the father were contributing factors to a disaffected youth and acute alienation culminating in a codependent relationship with an alcoholic. Rani’s story highlights the lifelong impact of childhood neglect and how it sets a stage for adult life relationships.

On reflection, I was left wondering if it was the maternal side of me who found it heart breaking and difficult to walk away from, or was it that I was so touched by the level of resilience and determination in this woman, whose Motto is “*what doesn’t kill you makes you stronger.*” This interview also offers an understanding of the complexity of divorce, taboo and efforts it takes to devise coping strategies until reaching a tipping point to exit.

## Context of interview

I met Rani through work. We were both employed by the same organisation but in different teams. I used to see Rani sometimes in the staff kitchen or by the photocopier. During one

conversation, I informed her of my research and asked her if she knew anyone who would like to participate. To my surprise, she told me that she would like to do so herself.

The Interview took place in Rani's home on one Sunday afternoon. I didn't know much about Rani's life history, apart from her being a single mother of 3 children. Rani was born in the UK to Bangladeshi parents and had two younger brothers. However, she said; *"Dad sent us to Bangladesh after my brother was born because I think he wanted us to grow up there."*

As was the common custom of that time, her dad was the one who had been elected to come to the UK to make money. With the rest of the family back in Bangladesh, he would be able to save more money to send to them. She described her dad's side of the family as quite intelligent and educated. Her paternal grandfather was a high school head teacher. As for her mother; *"she does not talk a lot about her family but there are no boys,"* Rani revealed. *"My mum is a Hindu and my dad is a Muslim."*

Anyone with the knowledge of India and Pakistan will know that Pakistan evolved through a struggle between the two main religious groups; a struggle that still exists today. So any union from these two strongly faith based communities was not going to be without challenges. According to Rani, her mother claimed that her parents had even filed a court case to get her back. If such was the history, then quite possibly resentment of sorts had manifested itself in her mother. Rani stated,

*"I never had a good relationship with my mum, I don't know why? But all I remember is that my mum singled me out, she never liked me. My dad did, but the more my dad liked me, the less my mum did. it was just that, I don't think I ever did anything right. I was always a problem. I can't remember any good times; I was just never really happy. Hearing; "dad is coming, your dad is coming;" I remember standing by a tree, my dad had come back to Bangladesh and he had bought everyone something but not me. I was really upset. That's the only thing I can remember. A lot of my childhood is just a blur, to be honest i don't remember it. I don't know why I don't remember."*

By the age of nine or ten, Rani's family had all been settled in Britain. Her description of her household is a portrait like many households of newly immigrant families of that era, where there were financial struggles, overcrowding and cultural traditions were tested. To this day dual culture children continue to live the double lives, torn between the contrasting values of east and western cultures.

Rani continues; *“they moved us; we moved school. I really never settled in, never made friendships very well. I wasn't even given the opportunity. At home, we didn't even have an iron or washing machine, so school uniform became a problem with white shirts becoming grey. I think because of all this we never fitted in. You were not allowed to have a bath every day; the culture was you have a bath once a week. And I had bed wetting issue so a bath once a week, it was not good was it?”*

Rani has now been living in the same house and working in the same office for 20 years, perhaps trying to fulfill a need for stability that her upbringing had deprived her of.

I was becoming aware that this interview was drifting into a therapeutic session with a child in front of me. This awareness alerted me to the boundaries of my role as researcher. Compared to the other case studies, it was as if Rani was acknowledging her own suffering for the first time. Her account of her childhood was detailed because she was looking for answers. Maybe this was her first opportunity (arriving some 40 years too late) to get herself heard from an empathetic listener.

Her school grades had proved that she was intelligent. *“I wasn't stupid or unintelligent? I did have good marks when I put my mind to it.”* This suggests that perhaps she had been used to being told the contrary. When she talked of her brothers, however, there did seem to be a sense of solidarity, saying *“there were 3 of us.”* Rani consistently used the pronoun *us* to indicate her and her brothers whilst referring to her parents as *them*, indicating a division.

Rani is an intelligent, well - educated professional but her start to life was different. Her routine, according to Rani, was to go to school, come home and to do the housework. *“That was my priority in life, education for girls was not important.”* This is how early in life she was aware of her gender subordination.

*“Maybe I was a bit rebellious,”* she continued, quite tearfully. *“I didn’t know how to find myself. I remember one of the memories I have is one time I got drunk. I took an overdose, I must have been 15. I was so unhappy and my mum, you know; life was all about her or how hard she was done by because she said my dad kidnapped her.”*

Rani’s struggle can be understood through Klein (1963) in her book “our Adult world” in which she explains the process of introjection and projection which starts in infancy but continues throughout adult life. This process contributes to the interaction between an infant’s internal and external sense of reality. Introjection helps to mould the infant’s impression of her surroundings and build her internal world which is partly a reflection of the external one. Mother is introjected and if she is taken into a child’s inner world as a good and dependable object, then it helps to further positive identifications. It later widens to other relationships, such as with her father, friends and a wider network in adult life. All this contributes to a stable personality. In Rani’s case, her dysfunctional, often times vitriolic relationship with her mother has been the most destabilising force in her life.

Rani recalls her role in raising her brothers. Her mother used to run an Asian shop with meat and groceries while her youngest brother was still a baby. Rani used to come home from School at lunch time to offer her mother a break from the shop. Rani commented; *“the shop was all about her. She didn’t give us what kids need; love.”*

Rani now being a social worker herself can see that her brother was very much neglected. Going back to her own treatment, she remembers always being made to feel like she didn’t belong to that family. It wasn’t just coming from her mother but from other relatives as well because she was the darker skinned one.

“People used to call me “kalapuri; the black girl,” she told me both with tears and laughter.

*“That’s how people referred to me. That because I was dark skinned. Dark is not considered to be beautiful in Bengali culture. Light skinned people, whether you are pretty or not, are still pretty because you are light skin. I am not supposed to be anything. I am a girl. She didn’t want a girl. I am dark skin, so even if they pay someone, no one was going to marry me. That’s how I grew up.”*

### First marriage

*“I remember I was about 15 when they brought this bloke to come and see me. I didn’t want to get married. How did I know what bloody married life is? I didn’t know. So I was unhappy and I thought like what do I do?”*

The problem now facing Rani was that she really had no one to support her and she was scared, very scared. She had a large collection of painful memories and wounds which were still raw.

*“I remember this; my dad made me so miserable on one occasion. I never had a boyfriend but he accused me on a regular basis that I was doing this, that and the other. I took an overdose and discharged myself from Hospital because they would have gone to prison.”*

*“I’d been beaten up by my dad, occasionally. I remember my dad even included my brother who is 11 months younger than me to participate in one beating. I remember being beaten quite badly. I don’t remember what I did but I couldn’t get out of bed for 2 days and the shame of it that my brother was involved in it as well. So I thought; you know how unhappy I can be if I say no. What will my punishment be for saying no?”*

At this point, Rani was crying. “So I agreed,” she continued. “Maybe part of it thinking it will be escape from this unhappy life, maybe something better.”

Rani seemed like a woman seeking refuge. I felt an enormity of helplessness both on her part and mine. I was not in a position to comfort her and didn't want to stop her either as I could see the cathartic relief through her tears.

The wedding was just a formality. They invited an Imam to declare the marriage who didn't even ask her if she was happy with this marriage to a man more than double her age. She didn't even give her verbal consent which is a basic requirement in Islamic Nikah. She didn't feel she had a choice as there was no one to support her. She was young, feeling down and depressed and had no one for guidance, so she took what she thought was the only option, as there was abuse on both sides.

*“All this guy wanted was just fucking having sex with me. It was horrible. It was just like; I don't want this. He worked in a restaurant and he came down on his days off, fucking basically to have sex with me isn't it? I hated it. It was vile and disgusting.”*

Rani returned with him to Bangladesh and within a week he had started to neglect her.

*“I grew up in this country and I talk to male and female. I didn't know back there it was different. I was 15. I stayed there for a year. I was 16 when I came back and I was bloody pregnant. He beat me couple of times. I was unhappy; I think I took an overdose at one occasion. I remember going to one of his relative's house, locking myself in the room and calling my parents. My mum said, 'we don't care, do what you want; you are dead whatever.' I thought; how you can be like this? I was always treated differently.”*

At this point, I felt as if Rani was asking me to help her to understand how a mother can say that to her child.

Rani continued; *“I came back. I was pregnant. I was sick. My own parents didn't come to collect me from the airport. I went to his (husband's) brother who lived in east London in this dirty manky flat. Their daughter is older than me by a few months, so I got a 16 year old calling me*

*auntie. I am thinking to myself; their daughter is going to college and here is me. She is 16, Bengali, and lives in London. Look at me! Fucking pregnant; my family don't care. She had short hair and wore skirts and everything. Her family don't say anything. They encouraged it and there is me; my parents even didn't come and get me. So then you start identifying yourself with your abuser, even if they abuse you at least you have a bit of love. I thought to myself; maybe I should stay where I am. After all, my family dumped me. He only wants me for my passport. You try to attach yourself to something because where are you going to go? Who is going to look after you? You got no money, no education, nowhere to live."*

Rani's account of her internal world, theorised through her own professional knowledge of social work, highlights her longing for love and attachment; the basic human needs.

Rani did go back to her parents. She was 16 and pregnant and her husband was in Bangladesh waiting on Rani to be able to sponsor his emigration to the UK? Her options were next to none, so she carried on looking after her little brother - cooking, cleaning two sets of clothes which she washed and wore throughout her pregnancy.

### Birth of first child

At 16, Rani went to Hospital on her own to give birth to her baby. She returned to her parents' house but her mother was back at work, so she continued looking after her young brother as well as her own newborn. She was taking her brother to speech therapy, cleaning the house and cooking. At that time there was no state benefit if you lived with your family, so Rani looked for work.

I felt mixed emotions at the bravery and strength of this 16 years old, full of maternal instinct, looking after her brother and being mother to both him and her newborn baby. She was being the kind of mother to them which she had longed for and needed for herself; a nurturing, caring, loving mother. She was fulfilling the responsibility which she had never signed up to willingly.

*“So I managed to negotiate with my next door neighbour to look after my son so I can get back to work. I went and started work in a sewing factory but I had to give my money to my dad, it wasn’t mine. You get paid by piece made; more pieces you made, more you get paid. I have to like speed it up so I could keep some money for myself. I paid rent; I paid rent to my dad! I paid half the bills! I was allowed to keep a little bit of money.”*

I was struggling to stay with the fact that this was not done to Rani by an abusing husband or her in laws but by her own family. Her opinion of her husband was that;

*“All this man who they got me married to was interested in, was coming here and me sending him money. He never worked a fucking day in his life. I had to send him money and then I thought I got this child, I can’t do this to him, he has a right to see his dad. I thought; let me go back because this life is not better here. So I went back for two weeks. You know what? Did that man give a shit about his son? He wasn’t interested. I realised then, all he was interested in was a British passport.”*

The scale of this little girl’s sadness was too much to bear. She had been running between her parents and her little boy’s father, seeking love, affection and belonging both for herself and her baby. And despite being so unfairly treated, was so mindful of her child’s right to see his father; a father who didn’t appear much different from her own parents.

She remembered how she was made homeless: *“My mum gave me an ultimatum, saying; either I left or she was going to leave. I had two younger brothers. There are 3 years between my younger brother and my son and then my other brother. I thought; I can’t do this, so she arranged for someone to take me in a van and dump me in London. I wanted to take my son. I said I am not going without my son and she forced me by calling the police. I remember six or seven police officer coming to escort me from my family home. She wouldn’t give me my son, wouldn’t give me my belongings, I left in the clothes I was wearing. I had five pound in my pocket. Then I was in London, I had hard knocks you know. There were Bengali people, they wanted to use you, and they wanted to exploit you.”*

Her story of deprivation, hardship and loneliness continued. Now she was out in the big bad world where there were more opportunists to prey on her.

*“The men are like leaches you know. You can see that they want you in a sexual way. They don’t see women as anything more than sexual objects and because I left my marriage, I was worse than,” Rani became very tearful as she continued. “I was worse than a prostitute. Everybody thought they can have a piece of me...then I turned eighteen.”*

Her words shook me. She had had all that misery even before she turned 18.

### Death of Father

When her father died, Rani’s mother was prepared to let her have her son back but this would mean she couldn’t work. She agreed that she would give her mother a certain amount of money every week; not just for her son but for the whole family. She was ambitious and determined to make a life for herself and her son and not to live on the mercy of others.

*“I worked two or three jobs to buy my first place. I was not going to live on someone else’s mercy, and the council wasn’t going to house me. I didn’t want to live on benefit, then I would have been like her and everybody else. I had to pull myself up, if I didn’t, no one was going to take care of me. And because I did not go back to him, I couldn’t go home if someone else was visiting , I was the outcast. I am still the outcast.”*

Thirty years later and that pain was still raw in Rani’s voice reiterating how much childhood matters. Rani’s above account is a clear explanation for those who wonder why women don’t leave their abusers. It is because they are not just committed to the one they marry but there is an expectation from the community. The image of divorced women is such that they would rather put up with it.

She was called by the High Commission for the interview regarding her husband's entry to live in the UK. Her family made her go. When she was asked all the questions regarding granting her husband a spouse visa, she thought this was the moment to make the right decision.

*"I thought to myself; if they give him his status, I will never be free. I turned to him and said "what part of I don't love him you don't understand. If he was here I can never be free. You know then I will be 4, 5, 6,7 kids, fucking on benefit living in a council dump."*

She didn't want to go back to the impoverished standard of living she had experienced in her childhood.

She had never fully understood why they had lived that way when her father had had money.

*"He was intelligent, He had a shop he had restaurants, all his money was invested in business. He could speak English, he filled everyone's forms. He was part of the mosque committee. He fundraised for the mosque, even went to the Queen's jubilee dinner. He was not the average economical migrant of the sixties, unable to speak English and fill in forms."*

Rani worked around the clock, working three jobs to pay rent, and her mother. However, within 2 years she was able to save for a deposit on her own flat.

*"When nobody cares about you, you stop caring about yourself. It's a selfish dog eat dog world. You don't think about whom you are hurting, nobody thinks whether they hurt you or not, so grab what you can, and life was a bit like that for a while, for a long time. I was a bit crazy. What did I have, you know? No life, no nothing, no one to call my own, nobody cared, I didn't care. What am I going to care about? I went out to places. I let people wine and dine me but that was it. It doesn't mean I am a free time girl. I didn't do any of that."*

### Second marriage

Then she met Peter. *"I met Peter when I was about 24 or 25. I had lived on my own for a long time, for good 7 years."*

She now believes that it was just two lonely people getting together. *“He was suited, he looked the part, I just thought it’s a different life.”*

He was here in the UK from Sweden. He was 8 years older than her, charming, polite and had a good job. She wanted to be looked after and he needed company. He asked her to move in with him just after a month, so she did so and rented her flat out. At long last, she felt she was valued, loved and welcomed. She was not going to throw away something she had been looking for all her life.

What Rani didn’t realise at the time, was that he had alcohol issues.

*“The weekends he drank so much he would be lying on the floor like an idiot. He would have one drink and not know when to stop.”*

She ignored it thinking it was just a weekend thing because she wanted to believe it; she wanted to hold on to that hope she saw in him; the potential of someone loving and taking care of her. So within ten months they got married. His mother paid for the wedding, a big party in Sweden. *“It was £10,000. I told my family; I am going to marry him. They met him and then it dawned on me; ‘it’s not right. It’s not going to work out. He got issues, he got problems.’ But I couldn’t walk away. It was one way of my family acknowledging me after all those years.”*

Reflecting on her relationship with her mother, she felt that her mother had only accepted her second marriage to Peter because he was intelligent and he had a good job.

*“My mum and my brothers were going to come to this registry office. I couldn’t bailout. I knew it was not going to work, I knew then. Initially your head is in the clouds isn’t it? I knew then but marriage is so damn final isn’t it?”*

She wanted to make it work and thought the same that many women think; that having a child would cement the relationship or sort him out. She got pregnant and saw a different side to him.

He turned aggressive within a few months. It was all about him, that control side of him started to come out. He told her he was going to leave her. Another rejection for Rani.

*“I thought what am I doing? I am not even thirty and will be divorced twice. You know what I mean? In English society it’s ok; you can have fifty boyfriends and people wouldn’t care but as soon as you got a piece of paper, it’s like taboo. You think having a kid will save you. Now I can see you are just putting on a sticky plaster on something which is not meant to be but at the time you don’t see it that way. He put me down emotionally, verbally; it was a sort of different person. You understand what I am trying to say?”*

Rani had been susceptible for so long to falling for just a hint of a promise of being loved and looked after by a man that she risked all for acceptance.

His drinking was getting in the way of his work. She was still working and providing for herself. After all it was not money or material goods she was looking for. He never really gave her anything. They never had a joint account. He was so extravagant. He would just rake up credit cards and she was paying his debts. What Rani said next, gave me an insight into the heart of her own fundamental insecurities that allowed her to tolerate so much from a man who was predominantly an alcoholic with all its negative traits of selfish deceit,

*“He was my second chance to may be fitting in with this family. I wanted to belong. I didn’t want my family to reject me again.”*

Is this the extent she felt she had to go to prove her love for him? Or was it to prove to herself and her family that she was not a failure? The dark skinned “kalapuri” who marries the white man. Was she running away from her own shadow? I wondered if she was given an opportunity to create herself all over again, what would she be?

Here is a list of marital grievances that she tolerated.

- 1). At weekends he would drink and say I want to go to France, so she was driving him in the middle of the night to France for a few hours and driving back.
- 2). He was also having affairs even when she was pregnant. She was working different shifts. Once she came home and found a used condom.
- 3). Every time after an argument he used to splash out on the credit card. Then one time he decided to take a private plane to France while they already had tickets booked for the family holiday. When she followed with her daughter, he refused to see her. He said he didn't want to be with her anymore because he had met someone else.

And yet she continued to try to make this marriage work for a further 15 years.

Klein (1963), explains that an infant (without being able to grasp it intellectually), feels unconsciously every discomfort. When comforted through feeding, love and warmth, the infant feels happy emotions. This begins the first loving relationship to an object; the mother. In all likelihood, Rani may have been deprived of this stage, resulting in the traumatic experience of rejection at birth. This missing infant stage; Rani's first attachment, may have been formed with her second husband and so therefore she was not prepared to lose it.

Explaining the Oedipus complex difference between girls and boys, Klein describes concepts of rivalry where boys as babies rooted in their brains the suspicion of father taking their mother's love away from them but girls by contrast turn away from mother and finds the object of their desire in their father and later in other men.

What can occur as a result, is an ongoing cycle of abuse. Sharie Stines (2015) from the Recovery Expert blog site explains further in a short description of trauma bonding called "What is trauma bonding?" In this article, she points out many of the symptoms that I recognised in Rani's narrative.

- There is a constant pattern of non-performance, yet you continue to believe promises to the contrary.
- Others seem disturbed by something that has happened to you or was said to you,

and you are not.

- You feel stuck because the other person keeps doing destructive things, but you believe there is nothing you can do about it.
- You try to change the person into becoming less destructive by trying to get them to stop an addiction or become a non-abuser.
- You keep having repetitive, damaging fights with this person that nobody wins.
- You seem unable to detach from someone even though you can't trust them or really don't even like them.
- When you try to leave this person you find yourself missing them to the point of longing that is so awful that you believe it is going to destroy you.

These characteristics can be found in all the case studies to a greater or lesser degree. Rani was able to articulate it herself when she surmised that; *“you know when you are in an abusive relationship but they keep you hooked on like you are the only person to save them. Although you don't have any emotions left for them, you feel sorry for them.”*

Luckily, when her daughter was born, she did not give up her job but went on maternity leave and took a career break. However, she couldn't afford to pay the mortgage and child care by herself. Rani could see history repeating itself. Now she had a second child and was going through the same thing. Her family didn't want to know her. She had a newborn and had no one to turn to.

*“So that week was so miserable I was so upset, when you have just had a baby you are so emotional. Then he was charming again and wanted me to come to Sweden.”*

Their daughter was just a month old, when he had a managing directorship offer from a Middle Eastern company. Rani thought that if they go abroad he would be different; a fresh start. So she agreed.

*“He can claim x, y and z. They gave him £40,000 in allowances and he wanted that. The time I didn’t see him, he ran up £5000 on credit cards on private jets and things like that. He had £40,000 to pay all his credit cards but remember when he went to the Middle East; he told me that he still had a debt. I always saved knowing I need rainy days fund.”*

They went to the Middle East. She was in a new country with a baby. He was working and she remembered some days feeling so depressed and not wanting to leave the house.

*“I was so down at one stage, I remember lying in the middle of the road. I wanted someone to run me over. I was just so unhappy. My mum wouldn’t support me. I didn’t want her to do anything. I just wanted her to be emotionally available. I made a mistake, it’s only a mistake. Why is divorce such a taboo? You get divorced, it’s such a stigma. I didn’t understand why? Nobody looked after me, I looked after myself. She didn’t look after me. He didn’t look after me.”*

Rani found herself once again, at the mercy of a man and with the responsibility of a young child. He was really not interested in her. For him, having a wife and kid was just a status thing in that working environment. She remembered the times when he was so drunk he would say such things, like tell her that he had picked her up from the gutter. This verbal torture chipped away at her already fragile self-esteem. She recalls one incident when he pushed her away so hard she had a big black eye for days.

She made a few friends. They helped her to find her way around, going shopping and sometimes meeting up for coffee. This one friend who knew about her circumstances and who used to come around and take her out, had asked her the obvious; “why don’t you leave?”

*“I can’t! I have already had one failed marriage I can’t do it again; two children growing up without a dad. I got to make it work. How? I don’t know.”*

This raises the question of whether there is some direct correlation between how much abuse and neglect that women suffer as children and the extent to which they tolerate an abusive

relationship. It could certainly be argued that the more abuse a child is subjected to, the more susceptible they are to abusive relationships as an adult. Note that Rani tells us that she “got to make it work,” suggests that she feels a heavy burden of expectation to succeed as a homemaker and a sense of dread for having got herself into another abusive relationship.

Rani’s case study also raises the question of whether women who have been abused in childhood attract the type of egocentric but insecure male, who will inevitably exploit their vulnerability? Perhaps, if we were to consider the extent to which she continually ‘*turned the blind eye*’ to her circumstances, then perhaps she did bring some of this on herself. However, like most of the other case studies you will read about here, that extent of toleration will have its tipping point. However, for Rani, there would be a few false starts.

#### The false Tipping Point

Her husband continued creating more and more credit cards debts, sending in private jets, call girls and gambling. He left her in the Middle East with an 18 months old child and went on holiday. He went on expensive holidays and blocked her calls. She knew that his work contract was coming to an end and with it the company accommodation. She needed to get back to the UK. She thought about her rainy day savings of £3000 but she didn’t want to waste that. So they went their separate ways. He went to France and she returned to the UK with her child. She still had her small flat which she had been renting out.

*“I thought I can’t carry on like this I have to separate. Don’t care what family think. I got my home, I still got my job, let’s go back to the UK.”*

Had Rani been nurtured by loving and caring parents to begin with then perhaps she would never have allowed her misfortunes to escalate. What is worse in Rani’s case was that not only was she not able to find the necessary support from her family, she was also made to feel the threat of being the pariah of the community if she divorced again.

However, even though they had separated, she was still emotionally tied. And when the money ran out, he wanted to return to her again because he needed her to remortgage the house. He even agreed to go to rehab. *“That’s how he wormed his way back in.”* She re-mortgaged the house and gave him seventy-five thousand pound.. Now looking back she thinks; *“how stupid was I? I must have been damn crazy.”*

So he returned to England to live with Rani and even though he was living there and not working at that time, she still had a child minder and au pair to look after her daughter. In her heart, she knew that he couldn’t change. She would come home early some days to find him in the pub with the money she had left for her daughter.

Rani’s kindness and sensitivity toward others is apparent in her treatment of the au pair, who she could no longer hire and allowed her to stay for 4 months because she had nowhere to go. Rani knew what it felt like to have nowhere to go.

*“Then the shit started when he heard I was pregnant. He started to drink more, racking up debt and one of my friends said you can’t be doing that. I did get a solicitor and I did wish to God I’d followed it through because my life would have been so different but I didn’t. While he was in France, I applied for an emergency court proceeding and within 48 hrs I served an injunction on him because I thought If I am going to get divorced I need to get divorced now because he is going to ask for half of my house again. But I felt sorry again and I lifted the injunction and divorce. I think I don’t fare very well when I am pregnant. I can’t think. I am not very logical.”*

Rani echoed the regrets of other women who could not leave sooner than they did. After the birth of their second child, he behaved well for a while. *“He wasn’t drinking but he became emotionally pathetic, playing games, this that and the other.”*

Around this time, Rani started university alongside her work to gain a social work qualification. She knew her career was her life saver. She managed by being very regimental. She would get the children ready, take them to nursery, go to university, come back, fetch them, feed them, put

them to bed and do her study. She remembers not having much of a physical relationship with him but still managing to get pregnant for a third time. She found out while on a holiday in France.

Once again, her pregnancy brought the worst out in him. He started drinking twenty-four-seven. Then he told his family that the baby wasn't his and accused her of sleeping around.

She remembers that Christmas. After paying bills, mortgage and child care, she had very little money left. She bought a few presents for children for Christmas. These presents were in the boot of his car, as he drove off to France a week before Christmas. She remembers sitting at home with some roast chicken. She had gone to the pound shop and bought some presents for her children while he was having a fancy Christmas in France.

Two months later, on Valentine's Day, he came home with a present for her. A digital camera.

She suggested that perhaps she didn't need a digital camera when struggling to pay the bills and feed the children.

*"That's all I said and he ran out the house. He bought himself this posh £30,000 jaguar."*

She later got a phone call from his brother in law in France saying that her husband had an accident in France. *"He didn't tell me anymore like where he is."* She had to get on the phone to the French police to find out.

So off she went again; emotionally attached to this man, two kids and a third on the way. She couldn't do it all! She took a flight to France to see him at the hospital. Even then he told her that he didn't want to be with her. He was in hospital for a few months because he had cracked his ribs. She remembers going into labour at about two in the morning. She called her child minder, an old lady, to come and sit with her two children and once again she went to hospital on her own.

*“After giving birth, my strength came back. It was just like a light being switched on. I had to get on with it. I was not going to put up with this anymore!”*

But she did. In fact she gave him another £50,000 out of her house, an implication that this woman was still emotionally bound to her man. Surely if she could afford to do this, then it meant that she had the financial independency to break free.

*“He promised to pay back. I thought; Okay, it’s coming out of the house; if he helps me with child care then I can manage just to get myself through.”*

At this point I noticed that Rani seemed quite unaware of the contradiction here; her real motive quite transparent. All the evidence would indicate that Rani is very astute when it comes to money, always making sure that she had financial security and independence. *“I was not going to live on someone else’s mercy.”* It suggests that she had always been aware that she could not depend on Peter for financial security and in fact did not need to. I would suggest therefore that this is indicative of her own desperate need for emotional attachment and not an economic dependency.

Rani recalls how child care tax credit was a God send. There was help with eighty percent of child care, so with that she could manage without his help. She believes that this was the point where she emotionally separated herself from him. He dragged a charging order on her house. By that time he had sold his flat in France and spent all the money. So he would not go. She lived in fear because her dad had died bankrupt.

*She thought: “oh shit, they are going to take the whole house. On his name or not, we are married. My motto was where there is a will there is way. I will find a way. His family started on me. They thought I was the one who was crazy. His mum phoned a psychologist to council me. Okay, it’s my bed, I have to lie in it; my mum is not going to be supportive. My mum knew what*

*he was doing to me. My son was two weeks old when I phoned her to say I had him. She hadn't phoned to see how I was."*

Once again she was on her own and desperately looking for some emotional support; particularly from her mother. This was the gap that she had been trying to fill all along; a sense of belonging; the irreparable damage of her childhood. Perhaps because of that absence of an attachment figure, she could not let go of this man. Perhaps because of her own past experience, she could not just throw him out and make him homeless too. Apparently, his family didn't want to deal with him or his issues and there was nowhere for him to go.

However, when she felt that her children's safety was at risk because of him, she had no choice but to take action. This then was to be her tipping point.

#### The tipping point

She was getting calls at work when the children returned from school. Sometimes he wouldn't let them in or had strangers in the house. Once, her 12 years old daughter returned from school and noticed her dad was passed out on the settee but she couldn't get in because he had locked the door from the inside. She had called her mum, terrified, thinking her father was dead.

Every week, once or twice a week, she was getting such calls at work, which were disruptive and she couldn't afford to lose her job. Her reputation in the community also became at risk when he went to the local corner shop and stole a bottle of vodka from an Asian shop owner.

Then one night she returned home from work to find he had left the children at home with the front door wide open, because he needed to go to the pub. *"After that I never left my kids with him even for 5 minutes."*

On the day of her daughter's Holy Communion, he was arrested by police in front of the children for a drink-driving offence. Rani had to bail him out so as not to cancel her daughter's special day. She was so scared that one day he would kill himself and she would end up with his debts. *"So I asked for a clean break settlement. I asked for no maintenance, no nothing," She told me. "He agreed with his family to go in to rehab and then he got sick."*

He had left England saying he was going to rehab in France but according to Rani, he probably never got there.

*“I am stuck in the same situation because he managed to get a promise out of me that I will look after him and would never see him homeless. He has been sick since July 2011; nearly 4 years. Soon after he left here, he felt ill, so he probably had always had this illness.”*

Rani suggests (or perhaps would like to believe), that his behaviour may have been because of some illness not previously detected.

*“That’s why he was so delusional. He was in a comatose state for two and half years. Somehow I think God was looking after me because he went to France and it happened. It could have happened here. Then it would have been my issue. It gave me time to kind of emotionally detach.”*

Rani’s conclusion is that when you are in an abusive relationship, you know it's abusive but your abuser convinces you that you are the only person to save them, making you feel that you have to. Although she claims that she didn’t have any feelings left for him, she continued to feel sorry for him; afraid that he was going to be homeless or die. His family didn’t care about him and hers did not care about her, according to Rani.

*“How can you be another one who doesn’t care? Leave him to become another child you didn’t want? He didn’t want a wife, he wanted a mother.”*

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Now her knowledge of social work theories was coming to the fore as she continued; *“you know all that multitude layers of guilt and taboo and what people think? It's not just your family, it’s the community, the wider society, it keeps you entrenched. They say there is all that support there? There is no damn support there. It's just lip service.”*

And perhaps nobody would be more aware than Rani, being a professional herself and so therefore experiencing both sides of the fence of the lack of services out there for victims of this kind of trap.

Rani recently got married for a third time. She is happy and confident that she was experienced enough to make the right choice but the old fears are still there. She is determined not to replicate her childhood on her children and her motto is; ‘what doesn't kill you, makes you stronger.’ Rani was to come to the realization that no man was going to save her

*“I had to rescue myself. I left my family, married this first guy. I was expecting him to be my rescuer. I left that to marry someone else, thinking he was going to rescue me and give me this ideal life. It was not there, so the only person, who could rescue me, was myself. I didn't have a great upbringing emotionally. If I look at the family I was growing up in, I would say it was classic neglect and emotional abuse.”*

It made Rani susceptible to abusive relationships, *“because I was very very needy. If I had met A (her current husband) soon after Peter, I would have ruined it because I was not ready. You need to heal in between relationships.”* She very much considers the church to be her family now. It is her anchor and in some way it has been the church that has met those needs of belonging.

Finally, she contemplates; *“as soon as I started telling people that Peter is an alcoholic, I started to release all the shame. But whose shame was I carrying?”*

### Reflective analysis

Rani obviously perceived herself as an unloved misfit as a child. Therefore I would consider the extent and duration of mental and physical abuse suffered at the hands of her subsequent partners to be in direct correlation with her damaged self-esteem; such low self-worth that even when forced into an arranged marriage with a stranger 20 years her senior, Rani confided that she viewed the arrangement as an opportunity for a better way of life. Before she was 18, Rani was already a mother having to fight the deep seated misogyny of her culture and yet we may want

to consider that her tenacity in finally fighting back against this man and preventing him from being able to re-enter the UK, was a matter of survival. Even for someone with such low self-esteem as Rani, there has to be a tipping point. The fear of being reunited with this man and his abusiveness far outweighed her fear of living alone. It was then in her continued misconception that happiness and self-worth were solely dependent on the love of a man that compelled Rani to tolerate such high levels of abuse from the subsequent second husband

One might easily conclude that had Rani been loved and treated with equal respect by her first husband, she would not have had a story to tell. Or if she had had a loving childhood her story would have been different.

### **Case Study Two Tara**

Interview 53 minutes..... Transcript 9 pages

Number of Marriages	Age	Type of marriage	Time to divorce	Family support	Childhood	Current Status
3						
1st	18	Forced	2 years	No	Abusive (sexual/emotional)	
2nd	20	Love	25 Years	No		
3rd	45	Love	?	No		?
Emerging Themes	Unloved childhood	Forced Marriage	Codependency	Taboo of Divorce	Exploitation	male Possessiveness, jealousy

### **Summary**

A story of male oppression in all its forms. Suffering sexual abuse in her childhood, left her feeling so worthless that all she craved for was a little admiration from a man. Tara, a 46 year old Pakistani woman confined by the patriarchal norms of her community in England, tells the

all too familiar story of a woman's struggle against misogyny, starting with the sexual abuse from her father and her subsequent dependence on a man in order to be secure and happy. More significantly, Tara's story shows how such misogynistic practices in the Pakistani community have been accepted as the norm. The pressure from family to stand by her man, even when the evidence of emotional and physical abuse is prevalent, has left Tara to pay the ultimate price, ostracised by the people she loved and cared for.

I first met Tara about 25 years ago through a friend; we both lived in the same neighbourhood. I had never met Tara one to one to know enough about her circumstances apart from seeing her in a few community group gatherings. I remember Tara as polite and social; a very bubbly girl. We were both newly married at the time and expectant mothers.

Tara was the first child of 5 siblings; four girls and a boy. She came to England at the age of 8 with her mother to join her father. She was raised in a fairly liberal family, although many of the cultural traditions were adhered to, there were none of the strict religious practices, such as praying five times a day, reading the Quran or going to Mosque.

A few years had elapsed before I saw Tara again at a small community gathering. As we spent time catching up on each other's lives, I happened to mention the study I was doing and Tara volunteered to take part.

#### Context of interview

After collecting Tara from where she was residing with a friend, she agreed to be interviewed at my residence. There was no one else at home or expected. Tara was briefed about the process, she was given the participant information sheet, signing her consent prior to the interview. The interview was recorded by Dictaphone. Tara was very fluent, collected and almost robotic in her interview as if she had already rehearsed it. This reminded me that she was actually a public speaker and had just started to train as a preacher. Tara came across as very detached and in control of her feelings, taking me by surprise given the nature of the topic. I had been preparing myself to witness some upset or emotional pain. However, given that this was the first

interview, I didn't know what to expect. Overall Tara's account was factual and detached from the emotional impact that it must have had originally, a result perhaps of a learned coping strategy.

Tara had left her marital home of 23 years about a year before this interview. She had moved away with her new husband to another country in Europe. While she was back in England visiting her estranged children, she agreed to meet. One of the consequences of her broken marriage was prevalent from her circumstances of having to meet her children away from her old community.

### First marriage

Tara's started the interview, telling me,;

*"Ok when I was 18 I was emotionally blackmailed to marry my first husband. I made it very clear to my parents that I do not want to marry this man; firstly because he was not a right match for me, secondly he was 12 years older than me. My mother emotionally blackmailed me into it saying; 'oh family's reputation is at stake'"*

Tara proposed that it was due to this pressure that she reluctantly married him and tried to make the marriage work. Tara's husband started to pressurise her into going to Pakistan to live with his parents while he remained in the UK. He promised her a lavish lifestyle in Pakistan with a car and regular income. Tara was not happy about this proposition and discussed this with her uncle in America. Tara's uncle came over to England and advised her not to agree to go to Pakistan, suspecting that Tara's husband's intention could be to send her there and keep her passport, therefore not allowing her to return back to the UK.

After Tara's clear refusal to go to Pakistan, her husband turned very abusive and started hitting her. Tara shared this with her mother who didn't believe her, saying that Tara had made it up because she hadn't been happy to marry him in the first place. Tara then turned to her aunt for support who saw the bruises on Tara's back and reported this to Tara's mother. Tara's uncle then paid for her rented accommodation which was no more than a bed sit, as Tara didn't want to go

back to her husband. However, after just two days of living in this new rented place, the landlord told her she would have to return to her husband or leave his house. The landlord, it turned out, was a friend of her husband.

*"So I had to go back because there was no other way."*

Tara didn't want to go back to her parent's house; she said there was *"a very crucial reason for that;"* a reason Tara was to reveal much later in the interview.

So Tara returned to her husband and the abuse continued, *"He would hit me here and there, not too much."*

While still married and unhappy in this abusive and controlling relationship, Tara met Tamoor. He was looking for a room to rent for his friend. Tara recognised him as they had been at college together. Tara became friendly with Tamoor and shared her troubles with him. One day, Tamoor offered Tara accommodation at his place.

#### End of first marriage

*"So I left. The day I left my husband, he beat me up so much. He said; 'I spent £20,000 on you within the past year on house deposit, your food, this that and the other.' I had £10 in my pocket, so I threw that at him and said this is what I got. Here you go! Take it."*

A year later Tara and Tamoor were married and Tara claims she was happy. However, there was one nagging suspicion on her mind. Tamoor didn't want their marriage to be publically known. One day, soon after getting married, Tamoor told Tara that he was already married in Pakistan. Tara was furious and when Tamoor saw Tara's reaction, he turned it around saying he was only joking. Later, one of Tamoor's closest friends also told Tara that Tamoor was married but she didn't believe him. Or she chose not to believe, just as Rani had wanted to deny all evidence of her husband being an alcoholic.

*"When I moved in to Tamoor's house I was not allowed to go to my parent's house. I was not allowed to go to high street; I was not allowed to go out anywhere, the only place I was allowed to go to was the shop across the road to buy food whatever I was going to cook. And this situation stayed for a year until Tamoor met my parents and we got married."*

All for the sake of a little attention from her man, she ignored this significant sign of controlling behaviour where he was isolating her from any support network of friends and family.

### Second marriage problems

*"After getting married I was allowed to go to my parent's house and go to certain places. However I was not allowed to meet a lot of people, I was not allowed to meet my friends. He started abusing before I got pregnant; he was quite abusive in a sense if I go out he will come home and say why did you go out. He got really abusive, I could have left at that time but everyone knew I was living with Tamoor. I couldn't leave, people will think this is what she does. It must be her fault. So I stayed in the relationship because I was so scared. There was no phone in the house, he used to lock the phone and kept the key with him. When he realised I was going out behind his back he used to lock the house and take the key with him."*

It is worth noting here that the thought of leaving him did cross her mind after just a year after getting married but may be it was the lack of options which held her back. Due to Tara's sexual abuse suffered at the hands of her own father, all she could do was to turn to other men for that elusive sense of belonging and attachment.

Abuse stopped when Tara got pregnant. In her words he became the nicest man ever. As if pregnancy was another trap he felt she won't be able to break and run away. As if that baby was his key to lock her in from now on. He kept her happy throughout her pregnancy but by the time the baby was about six or seven months old, Tara explained;

*"He said; 'when I look at her I don't think she is mine, maybe she is your previous boyfriend's and you take her to high street to meet her dad.' I just could not take it and I burst into tears."*

An indication of how the physical abuse changed to emotional and psychological control, where she was belittled by character assassination,

After the birth of their second child, he didn't deny being father of the baby but his suspicions continued. He accused her of looking at other men, of having affairs with any male, any neighbour or friend she spoke to. Occasional physical and constant emotional abuse continued until her fourth child was born. This was a man she had confided in about her ex abusive husband and what she had mistaken for a romantic gesture by him, asking her to move in with him, was actually the start of another exploitation by another opportunist. His long term goal, though Tara would not admit this possibility, was the visa for the UK residency.

It can also be speculated here that given the patriarchal social system of sexual repression, Tamoor was likely to have been mesmerized by Tara's perceived promiscuity of the married woman who agreed to move in with him at the beginning of their relationship. However, when the initial lust had worn off, he found himself left with the burden of her reputation and that initial desire soon turned to resentment as Tara would no longer fit that Muslim ideal of the obedient virgin girl. This contempt that he must have always felt rose to the surface when fifteen years later, he asked Tara to marry his brother (albeit a paper exercise), in order to allow his brother entry to the UK.

#### A desperate act to please

His brother needed a visa to stay in the country and the only way was to marry a British citizen. Tara explained; *"We talked about it that I can be that person. He did ask me if that was ok with me. He did not force me. I said; 'I will do anything to help you.' Because he started to be nice to me and I thought if I do something out of ordinary for him he will look at that and he will appreciate me, value me, so I did that. After that all kind of abuse stopped and I was so happy that I did it, now I was treated like a normal person. We were very happy for many years until 4 years ago when his brother told me that he was actually married in Pakistan and he is also having an affair now. I believed his brother and started to see signs how his family never*

*included me in any discussions. Once visiting his friend, his friend's elderly poor sighted mother asked if I was first or second wife. When I confronted him he denied being married but admitted having an affair. So when it was all confirmed, I thought I will still try to make a go of it, people do make mistakes, so I kind of put it to the back of my mind and thought I am going to make a go of it."*

Tara tried for two years but it became too much and she told her husband she could no longer live with him. She turned to religion, met another man and became friends with him.

During this time she confronted her husband about his affair. She told him; *"you always said to me that you like good reputation and I got very bad reputation yet you never proved that I ever had any relationship with anyone, you never proved I did anything bad, yet the girl you chose knows you are married, you got 4 children and you chose her. Is this the kind of reputation you want?"* He replied that, *"She got a better reputation than you."*

#### Second marriage tipping point

This was the tipping point, for Tara could no longer contain the illusion of her husband within the mythological confines of her surrogate father figure and she finally let go of the relationship after 23 years. She had married this man for love while it seems that he had only ever married her for convenience. When it suited purpose, it did not matter how much she had done for him, her past reputation would be the insurmountable object, as it had always been once the initial allure of the promiscuous fantasy had also worn off.

Still confused to this day about what happened, Tara seems resentful still about how someone she had loved and had been so sincere and faithful to, had treated her so badly and had cheated on her. In a way they were both guilty of the same; she needed love and his was a convenience. When his needs were met he stopped pretending to love and when her needs were no longer met, she left. .

In her search to find answers to what went wrong in her life, Tara reflected on her childhood. This is when she revealed the sexual abuse done to her by her father, which as far as she could remember had started at the age of 8, the moment she arrived in England with her mother from Pakistan. It was also the first time she had met her father and over the next six years, she was to suffer this abuse until at the age of 14 when she took an overdose, told a neighbour about the abuse, who in turn, convinced her mother to send her to Pakistan. When she returned two years later, the abuse started again and she took another overdose. This time social services were involved but she retracted her accusations.

Tara was hurt and confused that her mother had never tried to get to the bottom of it and find out what had been happening. She did not protect her. They never spoke about it but sometimes her mother would comment that “some wrongdoing was happening in this family.” Maybe Tara’s mother was just another woman doing anything she could to keep her own husband happy, by turning a blind eye. It’s difficult to surmise if Tara’s mother was simply powerless or collusive. Johnson, T (1992) offers an account of six incest-family mothers who shared their experiences of discovering, responding and interpreting the consequences of such abuse for the family. Their secrecy to some extent was bound to their role. As women they were conditioned to keep the family together. Caring, vigilant mothers are supposed to know what is happening to their child and protect them. Protective, powerless and collusive are three categories these mothers are placed under. However, if the mother is overwhelmed with stress or depression, she may not know everything going on around her. Johnson challenges past clinical hypotheses which place fundamental responsibility of incest upon mothers. His research suggests that the common denominator is not the characteristic of mothers but the offenders alongside patriarchal social systems. These mothers didn’t quite understand how incest could have happened in their families. Tara’s account of her mother’s suspicions; “some wrongdoing is happening in this family,” implies her mother’s own confusion and ignorance of the events.

Tara Stated: *“I think now my life is what happened in the past. I think you know what? Nobody cares. If your parents don’t care, your brothers and sisters don’t care, basically you are on your own, alone. Although I might appear a very social person, this only comes along because I do*

*feel very alone because I don't have family as such, so if I had good relationship with my parents, with my siblings, perhaps I would not be so trusting with people outside the family."*

Tara believed that her reason for having four children was that she knew she had to make her marriage work as it was her second. There was no question of leaving. She thought that having children may convince her husband of her loyalty; that she was not interested in anyone else and thirdly her children will have each other. So like many women, she thought children would cement her relationship and fill in the cracks.

#### Religion as a coping strategy

Tara talked about the thought process behind her decision to leave her husband after 23 years of marriage. First of all she felt that with the youngest of her children being fourteen that they were old enough to understand. By this time, Tara had turned to religion which had instructed her that her paper marriage to Tamoor's brother, had meant she was no longer Tamoor's wife and should not, under Islamic law, have continued in the relationship. Finally, Tara considered that if she stayed she might attempt another suicide. She also had to consider the likelihood of being outcast by the community, which for her being a very active social being, was a hurtful thought but she prepared herself for all that.

*"I was always fearful of him. The only time I felt that I can walk away from him was when he did something wrong himself, which he was accusing me of. I don't have anything to lose anymore. The one hope I was clinging on to was that one day he will sincerely love me. It actually made me stronger in deciding that it was not for me anymore. I was clear about it then."*

Now reflecting back on how she managed for 23 years, Tara surmises that she had been blocking out her feelings, and was living in denial. She had all the financial comforts and had surrounded herself in the trust and friendship of neighbours and people outside of the family.

Coker et al (2002) finds that social support reduces by almost one half the risk of adverse mental health outcomes among abused women. Those who receive support from friends, family, or

their current (non - abusive) partner, are less likely to experience a range of adverse mental health consequences. This explains the reason of Tara being so social outside of her family. It has helped her to remain sane and physically healthy. She relies heavily on support from friends and has been fortunate and resourceful in this sense.

She was convinced that her children had not been affected by the abuse as it had always been subtle. They never argued in front of the children and Tamoor was the kind of person who remembered all special occasions and bought her flowers and presents. They had always managed to portray a picture of a happy couple.

The repercussions of being known as such a happy couple was that when she declared to her friends and family about the breakup, it came as such a shock. Because she had been so successful in hiding her marital problems, confounded by her husband's charming personality, some of her closest relatives found it hard to believe that Tamoor was not the victim in all this. She found her daughters and friends to be supportive while her mother and siblings were on her husband's side. They were adding pressure on her not to leave him despite being told how she had been treated over the years.

She recalls two frightening incidents that made her fear for her own safety. She woke up to find him looking over her and reaching for a pillow.

*“This time I saw his hand reach towards me. I screamed really loud and he said; ‘what’s wrong?’ I said; ‘what were you doing?’ and he said; ‘I was propping the pillows up.’*

### Tipping point

One day, her husband noticed phone calls on her mobile which were coming in the early hours of morning or late at night. Tara now had an opportunity to tell him that she was seeing someone else and was going to leave him soon. To her surprise his response was very calm. *“He said; ‘ok if you have made up your mind.’ ”*

In Tara's interpretation, this was just another strategy he would use to undermine and patronise her, not ever believing that she could pluck up the courage to walk away from him. However, once again, Tara's decision to leave an abusive relationship has been supported by emotional support from another man.

*"The next day everyone knew I was going to leave because I packed my little suitcase. I had put it into the children's room. Although I didn't tell my husband he kind of knew."*

As he realised she was serious about leaving, Timoor tried one last trick to manipulate her by playing on her religious interest. He sat on a prayer mat and started wailing and crying and begging her not to leave. She asked him to remember the times when she used to sit at his feet begging him not to accuse her of having affairs and swearing of her sincerity and devotion to him. The children were also to witness this final scene. It was eight in the morning and they were getting ready for school and college. Their 17 year old son chose to ignore his father, while the girls comforted him. Tara left knowing that the longer she stayed, the longer he would continue with the "drama" and it would only serve to upset the children further.

*"So I grabbed my keys, I had my bag, and I left. I went to the police station. They put me in a hotel until they could find a refuge for me. I didn't have any money on me."*

However, it is a tradition in the Asian community that any savings a woman may have from their monthly budget is invested in gold jewellery. It is also a tradition for parents to give daughters gold as a departing gift when they are going to be wed. The meaning behind this is that the gold is an investment in the case of hardship.

*"So I had that bangle in my bag as well. So the hotel said they won't provide any food for me. You know when you scrape through your bag thinking I must have one or two pounds? I was doing that and I found the gold bangle. Luckily the jewellers were open and he gave me £900 for it. That's how I survived. Which I think was such a blessing in disguise, had I not had my passport and that in my bag, I don't know what I would have done at all."*

She had thought about leaving, had packed her bags and chosen the timing but the scene Tamoor had created meant that he had managed to have that control and power over her, right up until the last minute of her departure.

*“Whether people think that I left for another man or whether I did leave for a man, whatever the reason was, the point is that I got out of that. I got out of that relationship and I stopped doing the wrong thing. In my personal experience when I look back, I think for last couple of years I was happy until I found out some truths which I had put in the back of my head. You know when you know something; you don’t want someone to say it because if they say it, it’s confirmed? So I knew it in the back of my head. When it was confirmed the penny dropped.”*

Tara was seeking justification for leaving Tamoor, which she believes she found in her Faith. Her husband had divorced her for her to marry his brother for the visa. To continue living as husband and wife is “zina,” a major sin under Islamic faith. Her mind was made up but she needed more convincing evidence. This evidence came through her believing in her husband’s first marriage in Pakistan which she had been made aware of soon after getting married but had not wanted to believe. The other evidence was that of her husband’s affair. He was no longer holding power of the higher moral ground over her. These facts which in her own admission she chose to ignore in the past were now her supporting factors to validate her decision. However, who was she trying to convince? Herself ... Or her community?

*“The biggest challenge is not the comfort you leave behind but wanting people to respect you for what you did. Getting people to realise that you are still that person and the step you took, you took it for your own well-being, your own dignity. People don’t realise that and that is my biggest challenge because I have to stay in the community and therefore I don’t want to be looked down upon.”*

From this account I sensed that loss. Regardless of being set free from abuse, betrayal and emotional degradation, she was feeling the loss of her place and status in the community which

was linked with being a successful housewife, a “happily married woman” and a homemaker. Instead of being supported and admired for the courageous step she took, she had been made to feel the outcast; her actions looked down upon. She has managed to change her own thinking, removing the blindfold from her own eyes but she is once again fighting to gain deserving respect. This time, however, it is not from an undeserving husband but from her community who she would like to remain close to and be part of. In spite of her current struggles in a male dominated community her message to women is:

*“I would advise any woman if she is in that situation to actually take that step because the longer you stay, the longer you linger on certain things. You will just lead yourself to depression and in the end you won’t be able to make a decision. Consequences will be an early grave. I consider myself not a strong person. I cannot live alone. At that time I thought, I never paid the bills in my whole life, I wouldn’t have known. For me I had to have someone to lean on. I had to have somebody in my life to support me because if I was alone, I knew that I wouldn’t be able to stand Tamoor’s pressure. Islam has given you the right to marry and also it encourages you to marry rather than live alone. So I decided, I knew I was not doing anything wrong. I wanted to leave the marriage and if I found someone, that would be better for me to go and have that support, rather than live alone. It was just by sheer luck that I did find someone.”*

Ratcliffe, G (2003) writes that the effects of sexual abuse continue long after the abuse stops: anxiety, stress, lack of confidence and emotional fragility. (P 73). The feelings of anger and frustration after being sexually abused arise from the powerlessness of being a victim, from having had no control over something that is not only frightening or terrifying but often painful, revolting and humiliating to you. As childhood sexual abuse is more often done by someone known to the person therefore difficulty in later adult relationships arise around trust and insecurity.

After two abusive marriages, for Tara to be able to trust and marry a third in such a short space of time, raises a concern. Being raised in such a male dominated society, can she no longer survive without a male partner? Or is it the strength of her positive thinking; her hope and faith

that has enabled her to love again. Is Tara a woman seeking to fulfil the unmet needs of childhood secure attachment; to be loved and respected by a man as her own father never did? Tara's childhood sufferings are likely to have been contributing factors of her vulnerability to further abuse in her adult intimate relationships. It would seem that the abuse one man started, she allowed others to continue. In similar circumstances to Rani, Tara not only suffered abuse at the hands of her father but received no support from her own mother or community.

### Reflective analysis

In her own words Tara was emotionally blackmailed into her first marriage which she ended within a year when it became abusive. She admits to having already met her second husband, before ending the first marriage and immediately moved in with him. However, although the same pattern of abuse had well established itself within the first year, Tara did not leave until 23 years later, and only after meeting the man who was to become her third husband. There does seem to be a definite pattern here that ostensibly points toward her emotional dependency on male protection. Many of her close friends were also concerned at the time that she was about to marry a third man; a man she had only just met.

Similarly to Rani, there is a correlation between childhood abuse leading to low self-esteem, leading to high tolerance of male abuse. However, Rani's tolerance was tested to tipping point when to stay in the abusive relationship was worse than living alone, whilst Tara was able to take the courage to leave only when she had the promise of another relationship to step into.

Mellody, P (1992) author of Facing Love Addiction, coined the terms "love addict" and "love avoidant" and detected the cyclic dance between the two. Both of these conditions are considered attachment disorders that are borne out of childhood pain. They do not receive appropriate bonding, and therefore, have a disproportionate fear of abandonment in their adult relationships. They enter a relationship in a fantasy with an expectation that this person will make them feel whole, offering unconditional love they did not receive as children. Love addicts are searching for the proverbial "knight in shining armor." However, they attract what is familiar to them; the unattainable someone.

### **Case Study 3 Sabina**

Length of interview 57 Minutes.....Transcript 11 pages

Number of Marriages	Age	Type of marriage	Time to divorce	Family support	Childhood	Current Status
2						
1st	20	Arranged	8 years	Yes	Happy	
2nd	45	Love				Happily married
Emerging Themes	Happy childhood	Arranged Marriage	Obedience	Isolated abroad	Male possessiveness	Resilience

#### **Summary**

Sabina, a 43 year old Pakistani woman, was born and raised in the UK, within the strong and loving surroundings of good family ties. Then at eighteen and against her wishes, her parents give into extended family pressure, giving their consent for their daughter to marry her cousin. This is an account of a woman's struggle against the misogyny of one man, who, after inadvertently overhearing Sabina's protests of her contempt for him as a husband, spent eight years mentally abusing her, reducing her to an anorexic shadow of the confident and well-loved girl, she had once been. Kept in isolation, in the Middle East and in Pakistan, Sabina was to be subjected to a life of the unwilling hostage, condoned and supported by her husband's family, until finally, returning to the UK and being reunited with her parents, Sabina was able to find the courage to leave her tormentor.

#### **Context of interview**

I first met Sabina about 6 years ago in a community gathering. Sabina appeared a lot younger than her age and it was difficult to believe that she was the mother of 3 grown up children.

When I first mentioned my intentions of this research study, Sabina was the first to volunteer to participate. She was very passionate that women should share their stories of struggles in order to encourage and support other women who may be suffering similar circumstances. This is an account of Sabina's first abusive marriage which lasted about 8 years and ended about 15 years ago. Up until a year ago, Sabina had remained a single parent, only considering re- marriage, once her children had been old enough to leave home for university.

Sabina chose to meet me at my home. I offered this opportunity being mindful of Sabina's current happy marriage. As she was being called upon to revisit her past traumatic memories for purpose of this interview, I felt it might not be appropriate and rather insensitive for me to meet at her own home. The interview was held during the week at 1pm and there was no one else at home or expected.

### Background to Marriage

Sabina was born in the UK, and has one older brother and 3 younger sisters. She was brought up in a very traditional cultural setting. Sabina describes her parents as a very loving, caring and strong couple; parents she could look up to.

Sabina had known her husband, Kerim, long before they were married because they were cousins on her mother's side. In the Pakistani Muslim community, it is a common custom, legal and preferred, to marry someone within the family, as parents feel there will be less chance of any betrayal and shared values would help to enhance and strengthen relationships.

She knew Kerim well as he was often visiting from Pakistan to study in the UK. He used to spend a lot of time in her home during the holidays. Sabina had always viewed him as a brother, never considering the possibility of marrying him. However, Kerim was very keen on Sabina and when, at eighteen, she had visited Pakistan, Sabina heard rumours about her name being linked with this cousin of hers and was not happy about it. On her return, Kerim continued to visit her family home, so she began to distance herself from him as she didn't want to encourage him any further.

*“My relationship with him went a little bit down. We used to get on really well, laugh and joke. I backed off slightly because he was still studying in the UK, so when he used to come over for the weekend I used to be little reserved. I was not so talkative, I thought I didn’t want to give the impression that I like him more than what it was.”*

As was the common custom, Sabina’s family started to hint at potential proposals for her. Her mother had been approached by people in her social circle, saying that they knew of families where there could be found potential suitors for her daughter. When the matter was discussed within the family, Kerim came forward and said he wanted to marry Sabina. When Sabina’s mother asked her, Sabina’s response was that she thought of him as a brother as they had almost grown up together and that she couldn’t think of him in any other way. Sabina was surprised and annoyed that he had even made this suggestion as prior to talking to her mother, he had already spoken to Sabina in which she had made her views quite clear to him and had thought the matter to be closed. After Sabina’s refusal, Kerim had approached her grandparents, who, also being his grandparents too, had decided to put added pressure on Sabina’s family.

*“I said to my mum and dad that I am not comfortable with this marriage, I don’t want to, I don’t see him like that. My dad said they are all like that in the beginning and it will be ok afterwards.”*

### Family pressure

This was the first generation of immigrant parents who had come to the UK in the 60s and they were experiencing a big test in getting their daughters married in this country. Also, due to the attraction of British citizenship, girls of Sabina’s generation were drawing extra attention from male members of extended families back home in Pakistan. Anyone who was already living and studying in the UK at that time would have had that extra edge, according to Sabina’s parents. Sabina reluctantly gave in to the pressure of marrying a man she clearly had no interest in.

*“I won’t blame my parents because ultimately we hold the choice, whether we believe we have a choice or not. It’s a choice I made even though I was really reluctant. I suppose - you know- things were different at that time.”*

Sabina approached her older brother for support, who reassured her saying; “he is really respectful to our mum and dad,” demonstrating how these marriages are not just between two individuals but between two families. Her potential husband’s “*respectful*” attitude towards her parents was seen almost as a guarantee that Kerim would never mistreat Sabina.

Because of the tradition of multigenerational involvement in the process of matchmaking, it is not just a love affair between two people but a base for past and future links and generations. Sabina continue:

*“So really hesitantly, I agreed to get married to him but as soon as I said it, I felt I was trapped. Saying yes to engagement was seen as good as being married at that time and I felt now I have no get out. I just wanted somebody to say to me ‘is this what you really want?’ And help me to get out of it but nobody was looking at me like that.”*

There is an element of lack of choices; of not having the opportunity for making even the smallest decisions from a young age and then suddenly having to face the consequences of a life decision that has been made by others. Even before getting married, Sabina was wishing desperately to get out of it. This is typical of a mind -set of some Pakistani parents who with all sincerity believe that what they do for their daughters is for the best; that their daughter will grow in love with their chosen partner, once married. Sabina describes her relationship with her parents as close and very loving but she still felt the pressure. She was trying to conform to the cultural norm that children should obey their parents no matter what. It is therefore, maybe worth considering that her very closeness to her parents added pressure of not wanting to let them down; not wanting to see them hurt or disappointed. There were other suitable matches for Sabina but her parents felt that her cousin would be the best for her. This is what Sabina experienced from that fateful day she had given her own consent to marry him:

*“I cried every single day; I lost a bit of weight. He used to phone regularly, we used to chat. I can’t explain the feeling; the cringe, I think that is the most suitable word to describe. I used to cringe the way he was. I didn’t want all that attention from him; I didn’t want to marry him. I just didn’t want to do it, because I wasn’t strong enough to say no this is not for me, I just carried on and on, hoping it will be ok.”*

### Misogyny

Sabina got married and she recalls that on their very first night together, she had argued with her new husband. Kerim had accused her dad of taking her money, which Sabina became very incensed about as her dad would never take a single penny from her but on the contrary, was always supporting her. Two days later, she spoke to her brother again, saying; *“I can’t continue this marriage because I don’t feel for him, I just hate him, I don’t like him touching me.”*

All that Sabina’s brother could do was try to reassure her that all would be fine. She had only been married for two days, no way she could think about a break up already. To Sabina’s horror, when she turned around, she realised that her husband had been standing behind her and had probably overheard everything. And Sabina was due to leave for the Middle East with Kerim, very shortly.

Such is the way of this male dominated community that from the fear of one man, Sabina was seeking protection from another one, asking her brother not to send her to the Middle East. This is how Sabina remembers the beginning of her married life:

*“As soon as we landed in the Middle East, hell was unleashed on me. Kerim sat me down in front of all his family and told them that I was this slag and whore who slept around before she got married. He said I was not a virgin before I got married. He humiliated me in front of the whole family.”*

In all probability this forced issue would have led to Sabina's frigidity in bed. Kerim would have been forced to a realization that actually she will never truly be his. Hence the jealous accusations, the vicious cycle of enforcing his will in order to own her..

Sabina remembers how, soon after being married, she had received presents for her 21<sup>st</sup> birthday from her family but was not allowed to open them. Ten days later, Kerim opened them, tore up the cards in front of her and sent the presents back.

### Trapped

Over the next eight years abroad, Sabina was held hostage by Kerim. He didn't let her speak to her parents. For four years she didn't see them at all. They didn't know when her children were born. Four years later she came to England because they were all going to go to America. They came to England and stayed in a hotel near where her parents lived, even passing near the house. Sabina was able to point out to her offspring the school she had attended. *"My ex-husband didn't bat an eyelid or anything,"* Sabina recalls.

Sabina gives accounts of just a few of the ordeals she was put through. When she was eight months pregnant with her third child, she remembers going to the hospital accompanied by her husband. She wanted to let her parents know about the pregnancy but was not allowed to call them. Kerim had also deprived her of any money, except the barest of small change. She went to one of the booths in the hospital where men were not allowed. She rang her mother just for a few minutes, while shaking with the fear of her husband discovering her short deception. She had even worked out that should her husband ask about the money spent, she would say that she had bought a sandwich at the hospital canteen.

Sabina recalled the time when she stayed in Pakistan for 10 months with her in-laws and her mother had managed to come to visit her. Sabina's routine had been to get up at 5.30 in the morning and not to go to bed until 11 at night; all domestic chores were her responsibility even though they were able to hire domestic help. Sabina claims that she was anorexic, severely

underweight with low blood pressure and used to faint regularly. She didn't want her mother to see her like that and asked her not to visit again.

### Tipping point

Eight years into the marriage and Sabina's husband decided that he wanted to settle in the UK. According to Sabina, at this point, Kerim's mother warned him not to take Sabina to her parents. When they came to England, they stayed at her parent's but it was a very stressful experience for Sabina. She felt that he was constantly picking on her, criticising her each and every move and she didn't want her parents to witness this. Sabina described this time as "*walking on eggshells.*"

He stayed in the UK for five days and went back to the Middle East to wrap up his business while Sabina and her three children stayed at her parents. He used to call and speak to the children on a regular basis. Sabina remembers that one day as soon as the phone rang, she realised that it was half-term and he would be very angry to know that she had not told him. Sabina was right. He started to shout and swear on the phone. Sabina tried to explain that it was their first half-term and she hadn't been aware of the dates in advance.

Sabina broke down in front of her parents and told them that she could not take the abuse anymore. By this time, they had also seen how badly he had been treating her.

Just a few days later, Sabina's father-in-law rang her to say that she should call her husband. He also spoke to Sabina's father to try to pressure him into speaking to Sabina about the situation. However, this time Sabina's father stood up for her and said he could not see his daughter being mistreated like this anymore and whatever decision she was to take he would support her. One of the characteristics of arranged marriages is that the extended family members are often involved in trying to resolve the issues and in doing so, the female spouse will try her hardest to protect what dignity she has left and not be exposed. They feel that such exposure can cause further pain and humiliation for themselves and their families.

During these months, Kerim, still in the Middle East, rang several times a day just to shout and swear, even making threats to kill her brother. Sabina told her father that she would never go back to him and that if she didn't receive her parents' support, she would leave with her children and they would never see her again. Sabina's father promised to support her and he did. Sabina had wanted her children to have a relationship with their father but he used to upset them and force them to swear at their grandparents. The children, who by this stage were around the age of one, three and five, used to be very upset after each call with their father, so Sabina decided to put a stop to that. Her husband wrote a very abusive letter to Sabina's father, calling him names and saying "you can keep my children and pimp them." Reading such words written by a father for his own children, Sabina applied for divorce. A year later, Kerim was remarried and Sabina was relieved that she would no longer have to deal with his abuse.

*"He was threatening my brother saying I am going to come down there and I am going to stab him with a knife. I am going to do this and that. I used to come to the house and double lock all the doors. Never let the children go anywhere, always looking over my shoulder. I told the school they are not allowed to give kids to anyone else apart from myself or my sisters."*

Sabina believes it was mainly because of immigration issues that he never entered this country again.

Sabina recalled how she felt guilty to begin with as if she had been unfair to the children but now looking back, she believes it was the best decision as they have grown up to be polite and very respectful young adults, believing that if they had remained under his influence, they may not have been the young people they are today.

*"They are such wonderful boys that I could not imagine them any better than what they are. I never ever bad mouth their dad in front of them. I never told them stuff that he has said. I would never do that, they have been hurt enough. They don't need that baggage. I am big enough to deal with that baggage myself; I won't put that on them. They just need to know that they got a parent who will be there no matter what and that's me. I think they have missed out the fact that*

*they do not have a father but they also know that their father is someone who is a coward which is horrible. He won't admit defeat that he was the one in the wrong; he is still adamant to this day that he was right."*

Sabina's father and her brother were great support and role models to her children. They are still a close family unit. Looking back at her journey Sabina remembers those 8 years as being the hardest of her life. She is adamant that she doesn't regret her life with Kerim as that would mean regretting the existence of her kids, her biggest and proudest achievement and treasure in her life. Sabina also believes that her experience has made her the person she is today. She has been made to suffer humiliation in public and the emotional abuse where constant criticism starts to take root with feelings of self-doubt that can fester into a much more damaging and deeper sense of self-worthlessness.

*"Stuff like that, it's really funny because when you look back now you just think how did I fall for it, there wasn't even shouting. I mean he was, he always use to threaten me to say I am going to kill myself and that put pressure on your head. He hit me a couple of time. but he was more emotionally and mentally abusive, that's the way they work on you. I was not allowed to cry but I lost an extreme amount of weight."*

Sabina stated that the worst thing was that his parents; *"knew what their son was doing was wrong but they did not correct him. I think they were scared of him. I remember one time, just a few days after delivering my little one, his sister turns up. I had nobody to help me. I remember standing there in the kitchen with a knife in my hand and the baby in my arms, thinking if I cut myself and die it will end all the pain I am going through. My son started crying and I thought, I can't, I can't do it because my kids need me."*

### Accessing support

Recollecting her attempts to seek support, Sabina remembers calling the British embassy. First she made sure that the calls were not itemised on the bill, because she was worried he would see it. She checked previous bills to make sure. She called the embassy pleading; *"Could you please*

*call my mum and dad, this is my number, I am being held here, I want to leave and go back to England. I am a British national. I got two children. They said she could leave but not the children. They said make your way to the British embassy and we will protect you from there. My dad called and said leave the kids and we will get them afterwards. "I said, "I can't dad. I can't leave my children."*

Sabina stated that her mother is actually very distressed by it and feels very guilty. However, Sabina always tells her not to feel guilty because it was meant to be what we go through; otherwise we wouldn't appreciate what we have today.

However, Sabina also revealed; *"there are some days when I feel; "why didn't you listen to me?" But I don't want to go down that route. I don't want to blame anybody any more, it was just meant to be."*

I am not clear if it is part of Sabina's positive outlook to life, very forgiving nature or learnt helplessness but what is prevalent is that innate part of the female Pakistani psyche that you don't want to disrespect or hurt your parents.

*"You know it's so easy, people say I will never let myself be treated like this. It's so easy to get into that place when some body works on you constantly; they pray on your weaknesses and they do it in such a way that they make it sound believable. The good inside you, tells you 'oh no they love me, they won't treat me like this,'*

Also, Sabina explained that Kerim was able to manipulate her into feeling each time that she was in the wrong and therefore probably deserved this abuse.

*"So it was an awful, awful time. He used to use his anger as a way of control. I can see now what he would do. It's incredible what people do to gain control over you. I will never ever let myself get pulled in like that again. I was quite a strong person before I got married; use to*

*speaking my mind, not use to worry about what I have to say. I am the eldest of four sisters and my brother is older than me. I felt like I was a scapegoat to see if it works or not.”*

Reflecting upon new beginnings, Sabina stated: *“Financially it was really difficult because I had savings before about £2000 in my account. I stayed with my parents. All of that did not seem impossible; it was the fact that I was out of this situation which made anything possible. Even being in the poorest situation was the easiest to deal with because I was not living in fear,”*

I have only ever known Sabina as a strong, lively and energetic woman. This is what Sabina was before getting married, and after breaking out of his spell. Sabina’s conversation below, with her father, identifies that turning point where she was returning to her original self and once again tapping into that confidence that she had had; being a guide to her three younger sisters.

*“I said to my dad I was going to apply for a council house. He said you can stay with us. I said ‘dad no, I need to do this to prove that I can live independently for myself. I need to gain confidence to raise my kids myself. I will count on you whenever I need the help.’ ”*

Within a year, Sabina got the property. Her mother came to stay with her for a couple of nights but she told her parents; *“you don’t need to. Just please let me do this on my own.”* Could it be possible that Sabina was refusing their help out of some sort of protest which maybe not even Sabina herself was aware of? Or was it simply, her grasping that first opportunity of taking back full control of her own life?

Sabina describes her parents as wonderful. Her father supported her financially as she was on benefit. *“I could easily have left my children with my parents and gone to work but I never wanted to do that because I wanted my children to know that even though one parent was not there, I would always be there no matter what. I was not going to leave them with my parents and go to earn some money. It was more important for me to be there for them emotionally at the times they needed, not just coming home when they were ready for bed. So I took that decision myself to do that.”*

When her youngest was starting nursery, she did a diploma in Pre-school Practise and started working. There was no compensation for the hurt caused to Sabina and her children and no child maintenance. Sabina's father, who Kerim had once accused of taking Sabina's money, was supporting her and her three children. Sabina's parents have since become a pillar to not just Sabina but all of her siblings. This is a household where all their children and grandchildren get together every weekend. This is one of the reasons Sabina felt guilty or sad about her decision to leave Kerim, taken her boys from a father. Kerim had never been the kind of father Sabina had grown up with.

Sabina reflects back at her time abroad, trying to make sense of how someone like her, raised in a strong and fairly liberal atmosphere in the UK, had allowed herself to move abroad, surely knowing that she was going to suffer in a way that her generation and UK upbringing should never have allowed.

However, it should be worth considering that Sabina was isolated from the beginning. Although she does not attach any blame to her parents, surely they and her older brother, who she desperately relied on for the moral and emotional support, did not listen to her concerns initially. Not only were her pleas and her wishes not to marry Kerim ignored, but it seems that family ties must be so intimidating that her own family gave in to them. Her parents do not seem to be closed and conservative or indeed uncaring, but they allowed their daughter to suffer helplessly for eight years. Were they more afraid of being ostracised by the extended family? Or maybe they were just respecting a daughter's wish to be left alone and not to interfere in the life she was living. In all probability, there was a level of subconscious protection happening here, whereby Sabina felt the need to hide it all from them, having no desire to cause grief on their part.

Her conclusion is that isolation leaves women with no options. The lack of support from family left her feeling helpless. She stopped fighting. *"The only person who gets upset is yourself, so you just learn to give in. It's not even called living. It's existing. There is no purpose."*

Sabina's message to other women who might still be in this situation, is to pluck up courage, but support is a must. Sabina found the courage, but only when she was back amongst her family and her parents. Timing is also crucial and pressure from others, including friends, family or sometimes child protection agencies, to leave, is not going to work if women are not feeling that inner strength. That is the reason why some women, even after spending sometime in refuge centres, will return back to their abusers.

### Reflective analysis

Brought up by very loving parents who she very much saw as role models of successful marital life, Sabina very reluctantly agreed to marry a cousin she had no interest in at all. Although she was pressured into marriage by the extended family, Sabina was determined not to blame her parents who were quite as likely to have been pressured as much as Sabina into this arranged marriage. No doubt, she would have had much trust in parental wisdom, particularly as her parents were exemplars of the arranged married couple who found love in their partnership. Sabina's future husband had been known to Sabina as a childhood friend. Perhaps to him, marriage was a natural progression – he had every right to assume so and ask for Sabina's hand.

Sabina also had every right to refuse and the fact that she had made it quite clear to this man that she did not want to marry him and yet he still went ahead and asked her parents for their permission, suggests that he did not consider Sabina's feelings as relevant. Also, in arranged marriages, love is secondary to financial protection and reputation, which is why so often marriages are kept in the family. The reason why arranged marriages work is that from this mutually accepted plutonic platform, love can grow. However, too often still, we see in a patriarchal society that arranged marriages are not mutually consented. Even having such loving and caring parents as Sabina had, her feelings when voiced to her parents that she did not want to marry him, were not taken seriously.

When Sabina rejected him, she didn't realize how much she had gambled and how much it would cost. Had she not let it be known to him that she was not attracted to him 'in that way,' she may have a have had (at the very least), a compatible arrangement on a more equal footing.

Instead it seems that having been rejected, her husband had used his hierarchical position to first bully her into marriage and then continue to make her suffer for that initial rejection. Is this another symptom of the patriarchal value system and how it puts pressure on its male members to be the “man” which creates a fragile male ego, not able to cope with female rejection?

**Case Study 4 Nusrat**

Length of interview 1 hour 4 minutes.....Transcript 10 pages

<b>Number of Marriages</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Type of marriage</b>	<b>Time to divorce</b>	<b>Family support</b>	<b>Childhood</b>	<b>Current Status</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>Arrange</b>	<b>28 years</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Happy</b>	<b>Single</b>
Emerging Themes	Happy childhood	Arranged Marriage	Absolute devotion to concept of family	Taboo of Divorce	Male insecurity	Determination Resilience

Summary

“Women live with painful feelings of deprivation; with longing for care, love, acceptance and emotional contact.” (Orbach,S and Eichenbaum,L. 1983,p.55)

A story of loyalty, reparation and devotion that mirrors the childhood indoctrination of women carrying the responsibility of home makers. Being the obedient daughter, was for Nusrat a priority to take precedent over her own happiness and dreams. Another conservative aspect of the traditional Pakistani up-bringing is that parents are strictly parents; no matter how loving and caring, they are authoritarian and there is a line of privacy and respect never to be crossed. Therefore, certain topics are not openly discussed; marriage is likely to be one of them. Nusrat is another Pakistani woman who had her mate (a much older mate) chosen for her, was packed off

to England and expected to just get on with marital life with a complete stranger; a bitter and insecure man who seemed to despise all around him.

### Context of interview

When I met Nusrat, it was in the work environment as she was a team manager in another department. One lunch time we were talking and the topic of my research came up to which Nusrat showed an interest in being a participant. She was well respected at work, down to earth and a genuinely caring person. The interview took place at my home with no one else present or expected.

### The Matchmaker

*"I had a golden childhood and teenage years," Nusrat recalls. "From a fairly established family in Karachi. ."*

Nusrat is the first born of five children, raised as part of an extended family, all living under the roof of her maternal Grandfather's mansion. However, early in her life, Nusrat's father had died. Her mother was worried about moving out of her parents' home, as a woman living on her own or with grown up daughters did not feel safe. In such situations, often male protection is sought through procuring marriage for the girls.

According to tradition, there had been a few proposals for Nusrat; being from an affluent family is always a big advantage, particularly in a country where there is no welfare system, no safety net for those in poverty. Nusrat was also a graduate student and wanted to study to a Masters level and become a lecturer. She really had no interest in getting married, at least not at that time and besides, when she did marry, she had told herself, it would be for love, and love only. However, one day, Nusrat's family was approached by a woman saying that her nephew was often over from England and was looking to get married.

Nusrat explains; *"My uncle lived in Dubai. He was in the shipping business like my dad had been and was well off and used to come to England for business. He said to my mum that he would meet this man to 'check things out before you make any decisions.'* "

So her uncle met him and reported to Nusrat's mother that this suitor came across as quite nice and humble and therefore seemed suitable. However, this uncle did warn Nusrat's mother that they were not being truthful about his age. Her mother's response had been; *"older men are loving men."*

So the following year this suitor came to Pakistan and Nusrat's brother informed Nusrat that she was to be wed in 15 days. Another marriage arranged without the consultation of the bride and on this particular occasion, no consideration of the fact that Nusrat was due to take her exams on that day. However, clearly this act of arranging Nusrat's marriage was not committed out of any cruelty but parental duty towards a daughter and due to her tender age, this decision would have been made on behalf of the family's elders. Generally, young brides to be are not heavy hearted over this unless they have a clear antipathy towards their suitor (as was the case for Sabina), or that they are romantically involved with someone else, (which as a taboo would be unusual and in any case unlikely to be declared by a woman).

It has been mentioned in other case studies here that it is not uncommon to marry within the family. It is legal and to a certain degree, it is often preferred for very practical reasons. Families know each other and would have done for generations, so there would be no such risk of being lied to about certain things. Talking about her husband's background, Nusrat explained; *"I got married at 20, and celebrated my 21<sup>st</sup> with my husband. My husband's family were no relations; he was 17 years older than me. His parents lied about his age and lied about his education; saying he was a degree holder."*

Her husband had been living in England for 25 years prior to getting married. He had been over to Pakistan to seek out a bride for himself on quite a few occasions. This was not uncommon as most men at that time were not comfortable or confident enough to propose to the more

outgoing, westernised Asian girls from the UK. The girls from back home, however, were thought to be more traditional, homely and therefore more likely to be "accommodating." And even if they weren't, the chances were that the parents would be.

### Move to the UK.

Nusrat was afforded no face to face meeting with her husband as tradition would have it, unless she was able to take a little peek from behind the curtain with some assistance from a sister or a friend. In fact, Nusrat was shown some photographs of him but she made no comment. She was not interested. All she wanted was to continue with her education. Her silence was simply taken as tacit agreement and before long, Nusrat found herself married to a total stranger, living in a strange country of perpetual grey skies and living with his sisters for three months, while her husband was working in London and staying away.

*She recalls; "Those three months, some funny things happened. He used to come once a month or twice a month. He used to post me his wage packet. I never handled money or anything, so I was very naïve. My sisters- in- law didn't like that; obviously whatever money he used to earn; he used to spend on them."*

This was a surprise to me as in my personal experience and knowledge of some other perpetrators of controlling relationships, financial accessibility would be the first thing women were deprived of. Nusrat's next account explained that.

### Nusrat's husband

*Subsequently she found out that he was not a confident man and was easily led by others. "He never handled money; he didn't like to keep money. He was a man with no decision power. He used to listen a lot and whatever someone said, you know he would turn that way. He didn't really do much in life for himself and yes we did have a house in Bradford; a terraced house but he didn't have a career or anything really."*

So maybe it was a mismatch marriage for both of them where he needed a much older rather than younger wife who could lead him and take charge. The only difference in their situation was that he had a choice whereas she did not. A girl who wanted to marry for love and had romantic ideas, started her newly wedded life by moving in with his two sisters while he was working away. However, in spite of the alien surroundings, Nusrat adapted; she was resourceful and took the role he wanted her to. However, he did not provide love in return: her only demand in this blind marriage.

Compared to this young woman who was determined to better herself with a higher education and a career, her husband not only lacked the ambition and drive but also the confidence to take responsibility for the day to day running of things. He shifted that responsibility from his sisters to his wife by sending the wage packet to her. This in turn, according to Nusrat , evoked some jealousy toward her.

#### His family

Nusrat suffered extreme interference in all areas of life by her sisters in- law. One of their brothers was already childless and fearing the same for Nusrat's husband, within months had started to ask her to see a gynaecologist.

*"My first child was born in 1980. Unfortunately the day he was born my husband was told that his company was closing and he was going to be redundant."*

By this time, she had gone to live with him in London but now that her husband had lost his job, they moved back to Bradford. Her son was just two months old. In that first year, her maternal uncle came over to England and was suspected of being involved in some sort of distribution of drugs. In Nusrat's mind this was the beginning of a prejudice against her family, started by her husband's sisters.

*“My husband only met my family for 10 days, but his sisters created a very negative picture of my family to him and that’s what he believed to this day; that they are not a good family. He used to taunt me.”*

Nusrat’s next account again exposes the disadvantage of marrying outside of close family.

*“Unfortunately, at age 6 months my son was diagnosed as deaf. His (husband’s) mother was living with us at the time and blame came on me for not looking after him well or that something was wrong with my genetics.”*

This was a very difficult time for a young woman; a first time mother living in a foreign land, away from the support of her own family and then having to put up with such enmity from his. She continued to tell the details of her struggles and suffering from a man, who was supposed to look after her, protect her and cherish her. *“He never allowed me to go back to Pakistan. He never allowed me to take the children to Pakistan. He never got my passport made, I got citizenship straightaway when I came over but he never got my passport made. So eight years I didn’t see my family and for two to three years I didn’t communicate with my family.”*

This was when she first realised that she would need to make sacrifices to make her marriage work. Thirty five years ago, the world wide website was not even part of our vocabulary. In Pakistan, a telephone was considered a luxury, not a necessity. There was a long process in Pakistan where you had to make an application and then wait for years. So Nusrat would have to either call the neighbours of her parents or send letters or telegrams. So after a long struggle, Nusrat decided; *“...ditch my family at least get my house sorted out. That didn’t make any difference either.”*

### From homemaker to breadwinner

After her husband had lost his job, Nusrat had utilised her academic abilities in order to find gainful employment. She turned this misfortune to an opportunity to fulfill her pre-marital dream of becoming a professional.

*“I did some O levels and A- level to get used to the study routine and language. After I finished that, there was a training scheme for residential officers because courses were not producing Black and Asian social workers and residential officers. So I did that training.”*

Nusrat should have been a wife to be proud of; intelligent; motivated, ambitious and devoted to her man. However, he had gone to Pakistan looking for a “house wife” and now having lost his own job, Nusrat was to become the breadwinner. This could be seen as a threat to any man’s status but to a Pakistani male, it led to bitterness and accusations.

Orbach, S and Eichenbaum, L (1983) acknowledge that women and men both suffer within a patriarchal culture. Both are restricted from birth in many areas of expression. Men are seen to be the providers, protectors, masculine and supposed not to be dependent. Women collude in the perpetuation of the myth of the strong male, so she can imagine she is safe, cared for and looked after. However, women are attracted to men’s openness too and one may need to see his vulnerability, in order for there to be a bond, a feminine side to him she can relate to.

So overall, lifting these patriarchal conditions will not only emancipate women but men also. Being permitted to show vulnerability and even ask for support from the woman would relieve that pressure of macho expectancy from the male, instead of having to feel the need to suppress which often manifests itself in aggression and misogyny.

*“He just started getting worse; he never considered me for who I am. He always looked at me in context of other people. What other people were saying or he linked me to my uncle, (The supposed Drug Smuggler). So there was no trust, there was no love in this relationship and we carried on and then I had two more children.”*

She was teased and taunted for not getting pregnant soon enough as there was a natural gap of 5 years in each pregnancy. He used to call her infertile. Nusrat recalled an incident of violence from him. During an argument she replied back to him and; *“he slapped me; started hitting me. I had to run out of the house with my child to the neighbour’s.”*

She remembers being in labour with their second child. She had asked him to come back home quickly after dropping their son to nursery. He didn't. Instead, he went to town. She had to call the hospital because the pains were getting bad and they sent an ambulance.

*"I put a note on the door and I went. That was in the morning, elevenish. He stayed at home; his sister came. Nobody else bothered because they were worried another disabled child will be born sort of thing. I saw him and his father standing there. He was asking 'is the baby normal, is the baby normal' you know? That sort of thing..."*

All these years and like most women in such situations, Nusrat carried on as normal, pretending to be living a happy married life. If there was a wedding invitation and he wouldn't allow her to go, she used to make some excuses for not being able to come. Nobody knew that things were not right. Yet she continued with her passion and motivation for education and progress, or maybe that was her outlet, an area where she was able to be someone. She took the opportunity to do social work qualification through secondment.

It was eight years before Nusrat was to see any members of her family again. Her mother visited from Pakistan. Her younger brother who she had left as a 10 years old boy would now be a young adult of 19 years. I wondered if it had ever occurred to Nusrat that for eight years she had been a prisoner with no visitors, no advocates and no court hearings.

Her mother had asked Nusrat's husband what the issue was and he couldn't reply because there was no real issue. Nusrat's prognosis had been that he was a man easily influenced by others, particularly his sisters who had turned him against her. Frustrated and jealous that Nusrat had usurped their influential position over him, they were not happy at her decision to study and progress herself. They had beguiled their brother that Nusrat was not only young but becoming ambitious which could lead to her own independence. This had fuelled his insecurities.

*“He didn’t even think that I am having children with him. I didn’t even go anywhere without him. So emotionally and relationship wise, the gap started to grow. Then he started on the children.... He had never accepted my son’s deafness. He could not communicate with him; he didn’t want to learn sign language. When my son asks him something he will ask the younger child what he is saying. That would make my son very very angry. My son used to hit the wall, so I had holes in the walls everywhere.”*

I noticed that Nusrat used the phrase “my son” as opposed to “our”; an indication that even on a deeper level she never felt that union with the father. As she had mentioned many times, that bond of a loving relationship of a couple was never created.

*“He was good with children until they were 5-6 years old, when they started exerting themselves and their personality, he couldn’t handle them.”*

Thinking about what pushed her over the edge, she thought about her son and how her husband used to treat him so badly. Some days she would be driving back from work and see her son standing on the road side saying his dad had kicked him out of the house. He was about 10 or 11 years old at the time.

Despite the instability of their relationship, she managed to establish herself. She gained a social work qualification and was financially more stable. She felt that they were settled in that environment where she had a house.

*“The children were used to seeing their mum get up early in the morning, go to work, come back home 6-7 clock, cook, clean, work with the children you know that sort of things. I did management studies; I maintained my career development as well. So I did that sort of work. Also, because of my son’s deafness I was involved with national children deafness society and was chair for that. I also started a group for the young Muslim deaf, that sort of thing. I was very very active in the community; don’t know where I got the energy from, bringing up three children.”*

Zakar et al (2012) found that the educated and relatively more skilful women in abusive relationships use different coping strategies than less educated and socially excluded women. These women adopt rather constructive distractions such as joining local NGOs and raising funds. It gives them strength and courage to cope with stressful life situations. Nusrat was clearly a woman from that category who managed to keep her self-respect intact through her skills and talent, despite the humiliation and psychological, emotional torture she was receiving at home.

### Move to London

*“He had fallen out with his sisters; he never worked and now wanted to move to London.”*

She was the only one working and knew that living in London was expensive and she would struggle to afford it. When she said that she didn't want to unsettle the children, he threatened to divorce her. Another misuse of Muslim law, the rules again stacked up in favour of the male as he holds the right to divorce, just by declaring the word divorce three times. It is often used as a threat causing many an abused wife to acquiesce for fear their man might do this in a fit of rage. He would often threaten her with divorce in order to get his own way. Consequently, they continued to live separate lives together in the same house.

*“The children were all on my side and started developing a very negative view of their father, believing he was lazy, didn't do much; mum had to do all the things. He was losing respect in the children's eyes. I carried on and then the time came when he really, really pushed for us to leave Bradford and move to London.”*

Because of his pressure, in 2002, she moved the whole family to London. He promised that he would work and everyone would do their share but these were again false promises. He carried on as usual doing nothing, leaving her with the sole responsibility as breadwinner for a family of six. She used to get job opportunities or applications for him and he used to throw it in her face.

*“He became very very depressed here, because over there in Bradford there had been quite a big Asian community. Everybody all the time came to his home, saying ‘assalam alekum’. Here, he couldn’t find anybody. So we all became busy in our lives and routines because we all had things to do. He didn’t. He lost all his friends and so he became more taunting and blaming and that type.”*

All those earlier suspicions in his mind which he had fabricated, that she was from a smuggler family, came to the fore as he started to believe that she was financially supporting her family while they didn’t need her support. They were from a well-known business family. He also believed that she was sponsoring her brother’s education here in UK.

No one is in a better position than Nusrat herself to analyse her situation and draw some conclusion as to the increasingly debilitating factors of her household. Her intuition about her husband’s lack of ability to make his own decisions was reflected in his struggle to cope with his own children beyond the age of 5 or 6, once they started to develop their own personalities. Maybe this incompatibility between the couple was the issue. She was a woman with vision and aptitude, able to adapt and he couldn’t cope or compete with that.

He had started to take his frustration out on the children as another way to hurt her. He used to constantly pick on their second daughter like ‘why are you studying, you are good for nothing.’ He was trying to exert some power and control on whoever he could. He knew he could not stop his wife from studying and working, so he directed his disdain towards their daughter. He became very aggressive and started throwing things at the children for little reason. She was by then under so much pressure to make ends meet. The mortgage was so high. She finally asked him to take the responsibility. She had also wanted him to get busy in the hope that he would have a healthier mind but he never did.

This situation explains how patriarchal values embedded in the local traditions predetermine the social value of gender. An artificial divide between production and reproduction, created by the ideology of sexual division of labour, has placed women in reproductive roles as mothers and

wives within the private arena of home and men in a productive role as breadwinners in the public arena. Whenever there is an imbalance or shift in this anticipated role it increases male insecurity; their fear of losing power and control creates more misery for women. Rather than being appreciated, admired and respected, these mothers and wives will often become bullied.

#### False tipping point

Years later, with the children grown and married, one day, he started an argument with their son in law. She tried to keep things calm. When her son in law left and she went to bed, he came in the room and he started hitting her, blaming her for the argument. Their youngest daughter was sleeping in the next room and woke up.

*“I said to him just leave. Just go, Anyway so he left, then my son in law started pushing for us not to split up because it will bring stigma, and divorce . We were quite popular in the community. Now in London with all the relatives and friends, we were a very well-liked family. My son in law believed that it would stigmatize us and every one will not like us.”*

Listening to her son in law's view as another Pakistani man from a much younger generation was very worrying, diminishing my hope for the future; the thought that in certain parts of the community we have not progressed. You can take a man out of the misogynistic society but how to remove the misogynist from the man?

Nusrat was a social worker, forced to live a double life. She recalled the day at work when she was hearing a case conference regarding child protection and domestic violence and its impact on children. At the end of the conference she stayed behind and when a colleague asked her for her thoughts, Nusrat declared; *“I have been an abusive parent all my life.”*

*“No,” he replied, “you have been a protective parent.”*

She thought her children had seen far worse than this. Maybe this is where her professional self, told her personal self that she needed to take action. After the most recent episode of physical abuse from her husband and his leaving home, her son, unaware of the incident, was worried

about his father becoming homeless or sleeping rough. So for her son's peace of mind she called around and found out that he was staying with a friend.

*“Ten days later I came back from work and he was stood in the middle of the room, saying I need my passport and I need my medical card, because he was applying for a house or whatever in Blackburn and they needed his documents. I said “ok, I will go upstairs and get those documents for you,” but then he took his things upstairs again and started living. Then my son in law spoke to him and he made all these promises that he was going to change but nothing would change.”*

So again promises were made but things still remained the same. Nusrat became very ill. By her account, things were getting worse, more frequent and more aggressive. One of her daughters was asthmatic and on this particular day she was not very well. Nusrat had a meeting but told her daughter to take some paracetamol and she would be back by three.. About two pm she got a call from her younger daughter saying her sister was not very well, shivering and had a high temperature. Her husband was at home, watching TV and refused to take Nusrat's call regarding their daughter. He said there was nothing wrong with her, that she was just acting. Nusrat was stuck in the traffic, an hour away from home and her younger daughter was crying over the phone. So Nusrat called an ambulance. They suspected meningitis, although luckily that proved not to be the case.

#### Final tipping point

*“He took my daughter to school, and then he came back and started having a go at me, argument after argument and blaming. Blaming me, my mum, blaming me for everything in his life, blaming my son in law, blaming my daughters, was blaming everybody. He then started to have a go at me and I pushed him away. At that time, I picked up my bags and I decided that's it. I am going to my daughter's.”*

Here then is the Patriarchal dilemma; that Asian women from that era would not even think of asking a man to leave, having been genetically wired into accepting that the man is the king of the castle and it's a battle too big for her to fight over.

Her work had been her refuge in the past but now things were happening at work as well. She was off sick, so she didn't have that refuge anymore. Once again he was having a go at her, so she left and said to her children that she was going for shopping.

*“I actually left to kill myself, I sat in the car and then I thought no, I am not going to kill myself; it's a big sin.”*

Eventually she called her brother and told him everything. Everyone knew what type of person he had been and had actually encouraged her to leave him, knowing that they couldn't decide for her. Nusrat had to make that decision for herself and finally, after twenty - eight years, she did. At first, he didn't stop harassing her, refusing to leave their home, threatening to call the police. So Nusrat moved to her son's one bedroom flat, with her two daughters, her son and her mother. She had to go to court to get an occupational order on her house. Her husband demanded not only half of the house but also half of her pension and so it was he who filed for divorce while living with their son; the son he never accepted. He lived there for a few years.

Eventually, through the courts, he was granted a third of the property value and Nusrat had to negotiate to pay this settlement after her youngest daughter reached twenty one and had finished her university. His name remained on her mortgage. When her daughter finally reached twenty one, she had the house valued to pay him off, living with the very real concern that after giving him his share and clearing the mortgage, there wouldn't even be enough money left for her to buy a decent one bedroom flat within the area. Luckily, after speaking with him, he had a change of heart and told her he didn't want anything from the property.

Nusrat had got a last minute reprieve. However, at seventy-five years old, her ex - husband became terminally ill, and is now very well looked after by their children. She had always

encouraged her children to keep respecting him, and maintain links with him. When he is ill, she sends food for him from the home. She has allowed him to come to her home whilst she is not there, in order to maintain a relationship with the children at birthdays and other special occasions. On Eid, their son always takes him to the mosque. Then he comes home and he eats with them.

It was quite apparent that as well as relief there was also a deep sense of sadness and loss. She sounded so full of regret for not having left sooner; for allowing herself to struggle for so long. Nusrat tried to sum it all up for me why she thought that she had carried on living with him for so long. One reason she put forward was the loss of her own father when she was seventeen. She didn't want her children to lose their father. Like many in this situation, she had hoped that he would change and - most of all - that he would accept her for who she was.

So Nusrat has no regret about the decision of leaving her husband; in fact she regrets now that she had never been afforded the life she had once dreamt off as a young successful academic in Pakistan. She is angry for not leaving him earlier and for this reason has not forgiven him.

*"I don't have any feelings for him, I see him more or less every day. He eats from my home you know, and I have no feelings for him whatsoever. I just feel angry with Allah that why he chose this type of life for me. When I was a teenager with a group of my friends; my cousins; you know when girls talk I marry such and such type of person? I used to say; I will marry someone who loves me, I don't want anything else. So I fight with Allah a lot that I only asked for love from you, I didn't ask for a person with a car or money or looks. So why did you deprive me of that?"*

Nusrat was exactly the kind of the woman her ex - husband had gone looking for in Pakistan; devoted, loyal, a homemaker, kind and loving. Nusrat's regret that all she wanted was a loving man would, I'm sure, resonate with a lot of women, it certainly did with me. It's such a shame that the kind of male insecurities that Nusrat describes of her husband, which seems so prevalent amongst our Pakistani men, prohibited him from cherishing his young wife and enjoying a happy and prosperous life with her. The tragedy is not just hers but also her husband's, as I can't help

but believe that this archaic value system has made victims of many of our men too, in their misguided notions to be “The Man; The boss and The Provider, rather than their spouse’s equal.

### Reflective analysis

I was startled by the similarities between Nusrat’s life story and my own to a point where often during the interview. I was able to predict what was to come. Marrying a man several years older has always been a common factor in Pakistani society. Many couples live happily as it was the custom for a man to provide the much needed financial stability and security. It was the male insecurity which was causing the problems. These men travelled to Pakistan and chose the best, academic, beautiful and intelligent but when these women attracted admiration from others, instead of delight, quite often it is fear that will arise in men due to their own lack of confidence and insecurity. The more frightened they become, the more threatened they feel, the stronger is the urge to bully and exert control.

Born and raised in Karachi in Pakistan, the daughter of an affluent family, Nusrat describes her formative years as a ‘golden childhood’ nurtured within the extended family. What we need to consider here is that in Pakistani cultural terms, where there is no welfare state, economic necessities are likely to be placed above the emotional needs when choosing a suitable partner for their daughters. Nusrat had always dreamed of having a romantic relationship rather than her family’s preference for financial stability. Therefore, ordinarily Nusrat would never have made the choice of marrying a man 17 years her senior, living in the UK. And yet, because of Nusrat’s sense of loyalty and her being raised on the patriarchal values of making the marriage work, she tolerated twenty-eight years of marital abuse. Therefore even her own financial independence did not make it any easier for her to walk out of the marriage.

### **Case Study 5 (Munza)**

Length of interview 1 hour 12 minute.....Transcript 8 pages

Number of Marriages	Married age	Type of marriage	Time to divorce	Family support	Childhood	Current Status
1	18	Arrange	Still married 35 years	Unknown	Happy	Unhappily Married

<b>Emerging Themes</b>	Happy childhood	Arranged Marriage	Absolute devotion to concept of family	Taboo of Divorce	Obedience and servitude	Depression
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### Summary

Munza is a Pakistani Muslim woman who was uprooted from her happy childhood in Pakistan to the UK and later married off to a cousin by her parents. Her story highlights a common plight of Pakistani women of Munza’s generation, encouraged from childhood to leave all the decision making and responsibility to the man. Now suffering from chronic depression, a symptom perhaps of learnt helplessness and fierce disappointment, Munza seems trapped in a state of mental paralysis.

### Context of interview

I had met Munza a few times in similar social gatherings, starting about five years ago but had never spoken to her much. I just noticed that she was soft spoken, friendly and always dressed in a sophisticated manner; classy, stylish, a rather aloof demeanour that complemented a comfortable and affluent existence. Therefore, when she approached me with an interest in taking part, I was somewhat surprised. The interview took place at Munza's luxurious town house, beautifully decorated with rich velvety curtains and lots of traditional woodwork, all of which belied the real traumas of her 32 year marriage. She has two boys and two girls. Apart from her youngest, a 20 year old daughter, the remainder of her children are married and live away. She is also a grandmother of two.

### Family ties

Munza began by telling me; *“I was born in Pakistan. It wasn’t a bad childhood, six, seven years which I spent there. I got on well with older people, so I used to help them. That’s how they remember me and tell me when I go back.”*

Even from the outset of the interview, it was obvious that her life was heavily influenced by extended family. It wasn’t just a case of a household with parents and children. Like Rani, Munza's life in Britain also started by her father coming to England first, later followed by his wife and children. Having the whole family in the UK would mean bigger expenditure. It was common practice for these men to come to England alone to work, saving on money that they could send back home.

*“Our maternal uncle helped to get the passport. My dad was already in England, so one day my brothers, my older sister and I left the village on our own and walked to my aunt’s village where my maternal uncle took our passport photos and got our passports done.”*

Talking about her struggle to come to England, Munza gives an insight into the parent’s thoughts about raising their children, girls in particular, in Western society, *“My older sister was left behind, as it was not considered a suitable environment for a girl of thirteen to grow up in England.”* Therefore, she stayed with the extended family.

At fifteen, Munza returned to Pakistan with her parents and whilst there, they arranged an engagement to a boy. Such engagements are common practice and are an initial promise between two families for their children to wed each other in the future. However, she explains; *“when we came back, my mum didn’t get on well with the boy’s sister, so the engagement broke down. Then I got engaged to my husband. Again, mum and dad arranged it. I didn’t know anything about it. I was 16. He was in Pakistan. We didn’t meet until we got married at 18.”*

## Sponsor

Not only an arranged marriage that Munza was not particularly enthralled with but she was made to work from the age of sixteen to eighteen, in order to show that she had the income to sponsor her fiancé, the son of Munza's maternal uncle. Then after two years when he obtained the visa, they were married.

*"I just accepted my parent's decision. Yes, I accepted it; it was alright, it was a done thing wasn't it?"*

At 19, she had a little boy while still living at her parent's house. By the time the couple had had 3 children, they owned their own house and a shop. However, Munza suffered acute post-natal depression. She explains; *"We don't recognise this post -natal depression but I had it BAD! I had it really bad. I didn't know, I was tearful, couldn't manage things, I was thinking I am lazy, I am not good enough, but it wasn't that. Usually I am quite an active person, so when we left the shop, I was in a really bad state, really bad depression. Then we moved here and my husband started his own business of a travel agency."*

Once again Munza's family life was affected by wider family dynamics. Her father in law was very dominant; her husband's two sisters were engaged with her two brothers.

Munza can now look back at her childhood and see that her Uncle had an ulterior motive, helping them to come to England. He wanted all his daughters to marry her brothers; his son was already married to her. So in a way he was paving the way to send all of his children to the UK through Munza's family. The passports he had helped them with many years before was a planned strategy that would allow his own children to enter and live in the UK on a permanent basis.

In the meantime, her husband also had his own insecurities. Munza looked back at times when they were living at her parents. She remembered that when he didn't get his own way, he would become moody. *"If I was watching TV with my family, he would get uptight about it."*

### Male privilege

But the real problem started for her in her marriage when her brother refused to marry her sister in law. *“Then it was all my fault. My brother had found someone here; he married her and someone told my husband. I said I knew about it and we were trying to sort it out. We got my brother’s new bride deported.”*

Once again the male was able to refuse and make his own choice, despite his family's wishes. Munza had been given no such opportunity. She revealed her husband's reaction after finding out that her brother had refused to marry his sister. She remembers him getting her and the children into car and shouting madly. *“I thought he wanted to kill us or something,”* she recalled.

All the external problems from her in- laws added pressures to her married life. Munza explained that as long as she did what they wanted, they were happy. However, *“if we send them money and it was not enough, they would send the check back so we’d send some more.”*

Munza continued her narrative in a surprisingly calm manner as this had long ago become the norm to her. Her husband had apparently gone into the catering business without consulting Munza. This is a woman who worked from the age of 16 to sponsor him to come to England and continued to run a family business with him while raising three young children. Now that he was established enough, he didn’t even inform her that he was starting a new business in partnership with another female; a female who Munza suspected her husband of having an affair with.

*“I think a few times my husband had affairs. You know when you have an intuition; something is wrong? You are not certain unless you see it with your own eyes because they deny it.”*

Munza then heard it from a colleague. She confronted her husband and he admitted having a coffee with someone but nothing else. It would be hard to believe that he would have been as calm if his wife was having a coffee with another man and yet he felt as if it was his entitlement.

Munza told her husband; *"I am not leaving my home or children because of some stupid woman."*

Munza continues to fulfil her duties as an obedient wife and a homemaker, cooking, ironing his shirts for him; with a deep rooted sense of commitment to fulfilling the expectations, regardless of whether the person is deserving of such treatment or not.

*"He wants to be in charge, likes to have power. It's not his fault, I am a coward; I don't stand up to him,"* is Munza's defence of this man. Self-blame, regret and helplessness was loaded in her voice. .

Akhtar (2014) describes cowardice as a habitual response to threat and danger in fear of actual harm. He further explains this in physical, intellectual and moral terms. Moral cowardice is one where the individual adopts the "silence of the complicit." Freud (1926d) explains this as a spontaneous reaction of helpless dread which is partly due to projection of the coward's own anger. Being unable to express his resentment directly, the coward postpones the debate and flees the situation. Being aware of his own timidity fills him with shame and self-disgust. Some drown these feelings in drink while Munza is on permanent anti-depressants.

Munza's admission that she feels that she has no self-respect is explained by Balint, (1968) in terms that the coward clings to his objects and is willing to sacrifice his self-respect for fear of being disliked and being alone. Such fear can be exploited by egocentric or self-serving partners. Meltzer (1973) illuminates that where dependence on good internal objects is rendered and dependence on a good external object is unavailable, an addictive relationship to a bad part of self takes place.

Her depression has become severe. Munza takes anti- depressants regularly to help control the symptoms she has suffered for 30 years and often wonders how much of this is due to her

circumstances; the subtle control, the humiliation that can erode a woman's self-esteem little by little.

Trying to make sense of how she got into this trap, Munza is convinced that because she was young, naïve and brought up in a non- confrontational environment, she has never learnt how to deal with such behaviour.

### Impact of violence

Munza is continuing with this relationship as she sees no other options. She is clearly unhappy and does not wish to be with him while he is treating her this way. She believes that; *"Walls came up when my brother refused to marry his sister. Violence started when I was pregnant, not even two years after married. I didn't tell anyone. I had a black eye and told my mum I fell. When it's cold it still hurts on that side of my face."*

This injury inflicted on her nearly thirty years ago has left her with more than just the physical pain. Munza's account of her husband's behaviour is very similar to Tara's husband. They bully and coerce but never forget to celebrate the special events like birthdays, wedding anniversary and Valentine's Day; mere lip – service that feeds into these women's feelings of self- doubt; rare and random acts of kindness that make these women believe that they are the perpetrators who must be bringing out the worst in these poor men. This echoes Tara's dilemma. She also had similar "freedoms," which made the control over her more subtle yet just as debilitating.

When asked if she had ever attempted to leave him, Munza revealed that once she left and went to her parents in Pakistan but missed her children too much and came back after three weeks. The situation of her parents now living in Pakistan has left Munza without that trusted strong pillar of support she had been used to as a child. Torn between her needs and the needs of her children, Munza admits that she would have probably moved back to live with her parents' by now. However, she is adamant that England is her children's homeland and their education and future needs come first.

This is another complex reality that under such circumstances, women living back home will sometimes seek respite in a short term stay with their parents. It can serve the purpose of both a cooling down period after an unpleasant event, as well as a reality check for the perpetrator that if they continue to behave in that way they may lose their spouse and children as well as risk public exposure to their violent tendencies. Pakistani women living in the U.K are at a disadvantage whereby they cannot often seek such refuge due to cost and the disruption to their children's lives and education. Taking into account that their children are more likely to value their friends and the UK above Pakistan, respite for these women is unlikely to come until much later in life when their children grown.

Having children will obviously influence a parent's decision to remain or end a long term relationship. No one wants to be a home breaker. However, Munza's children have all flown the nest and made their own homes. Munza remembers that once her husband hit her in front of their grown up daughter and her daughter wanted to call the police and wanted him to leave. That was about 6 years ago. Munza's married son wanted her to move in with him. That was the last incident and since then, according to Munza, he has got the message that the children are on her side and very likely to take action, even if Munza does not.

#### Low self-esteem

*"So many times I attempted suicide," Munza revealed. I waited for her to continue. Eventually she said; "you know what he does? 'oh it's all in your mind, you bring it on yourself.' He is very clever."*

To my surprise and increased frustration, Munza continued to tell me in his defence, that he gives her money whenever she needs and never stops her from seeing her friends and parents. However, should we not be thinking of these freedoms as basic human rights? Perhaps, by comparison to the other case studies, some of which are known to Munza, she feels that her husband is quite liberal. When she says that "he gives me money," she is referring to the money from the business partnership, which Munza had helped set her husband up with when she first sponsored him to come to the UK. She says that she was never the one wanting to have financial

control or responsibilities and was rather happier for him to take charge of these matters. Like a lot of women from this patriarchal upbringing, Munza has been genetically wired to willingly pass on all financial control and decision making to the significant male in their lives. Despite the obvious resentments that Munza feels toward her husband, it seems that she has imprisoned herself in this marriage through a deep rooted mind -set that the Man is the boss and sole provider, even if it is only for the sake of appearances.

She has left herself bereft of financial security. She had once helped him to run the business as a partnership and now it's his territory. However, Munza is a sharp and intelligent woman and as mentioned before, the higher the intelligence, the more sophisticated the coping strategy against the misogynist. By her own self disenfranchisement she has curbed his insecurity, healed his injured ego and boosted his male pride by letting him rule. Perhaps, by comparison to the other case studies, Munza's husband has also been just as skilful in managing his own manipulation of Munza. In all the other cases, the women have tolerated the same, if not worse abuse from their partners. However, in every other case, their husbands have pushed them to the point of total despair, cutting them off from family, friends and money. Munza's husband has not pushed her to the point where she feels totally helpless. It is unlikely that he ever will.

Wishfully thinking, Munza stated that: *"my choice would be to live away from him; I prefer companionship to a big house and all that."* To explain the extent of his liberties, Munza revealed that; *"He pawned my jewellery worth £10,000 without my knowledge. We used to have it in the house but then kept it in the shop locker for security reasons. When it was in the house I never hid it, it was always in the cupboard. One day, I needed something and asked him; 'can you bring my jewellery home?' and he asked; 'which one?' I said; 'all of it.' he said; 'I haven't got all of it.' That's how I found out. I said; 'why didn't you ask me?' and he said; 'what is there to ask? I have done it; I have given it and that's it. That's all there is to it.' No remorse, no guilt, nothing whatsoever. He is on top of me, even then. He said he will get it back in December. Let's see now. I can't even get a credit card because of his debts. He borrows money and I pay it back. He borrowed money from his brother and I paid it back. I am still clearing through my jewellery,*

*first with my credit. I told him, 'you must clear your debts before you die. He doesn't spend on expensive things or bad habits. He's just not making it in business.'*

Another element of these marriages is that these men will never leave because they are not suffering. It's not their problem and they are often first to say; "if you are not happy, you go." This is the mentality of men who have been raised to believe in their own gender superiority. No love or respect for women as their spouse, just control, power and ruling.

Munza revealed that they no longer even greet each other and have been sleeping in separate bedrooms now for nearly six years. *"He will never leave, he won't even leave the comfort of his bed."* She explained that when they separated their beds, she ended up taking the top floor bedroom as he refused to leave the comfort of their marital bed. This has meant that she has had to struggle at night, as due to her medication, she has always needed to make frequent use of the toilet, *"and that means coming down to the lower floor as he won't move to another bedroom."*

#### Empty shell marriage

They are separated but not legally. Theirs is an empty shell of a marriage. And yet, her willingness to make things work and continue to support him comes across from her proposition to him that, *"We can downsize, pay debts, go for hajj."*

I struggled to empathise and almost felt frustration towards her that if she is unable to leave, surely she should at least stop cooking and cleaning for him? Whose expectations is she trying to meet? And why? Is she not sending a confusing message through her acts of service that all is well between them?

Would the skies really fall in for Munza, if she wasn't to fulfil these expectations? Is she limited and controlled by his acts or by her own thoughts and fears?

The timing in such decision making is crucial as the longer one remains in these relationships; the more likely one is to give up on the thought of leaving. Munza suggests that she is protecting

her mother's feelings by not seeking a divorce from her husband. *“She would be hurt that her daughter has suffered. So in front of her I say nothing.”*

She is clear that it's not that her mother wouldn't be supportive; it is that Munza feels that she needs to protect her parents from the stigma of divorce in the family, which is a deep-rooted cultural custom in some rural parts of Pakistan. Such a blemish can sabotage a family's reputation. Some of these rural families are proud to claim that no one has ever divorced in their family for generations. Laden with such expectation, it's a big step for any woman to take unless there is immense support or if that decision can be made on their behalf. There is "jirga" system in some areas to this day, where elders and the Respected of the villages get together to make such decisions.

However, it begs the question of whether her divorce in England would have such an effect when her parents live so far away. It could be suggested that, as unhappy as she is, Munza would rather live with her husband in that comfort of familiarity. She may indeed feel that it would be deeply upsetting for her parents, but there could be a suggestion that she is subconsciously justifying remaining in the status quo. When we discuss the limitations that each of the case studies have had to reach, before being galvanized into making that break away from their husband's, Munza's tipping point has simply not come. She is not at the point of where she considers leaving him to be her best option.

Munza's regrets appear every now and then when she wonders how things could have been different if she had been stronger. If she had stood up for herself, he may have listened. *“I think I should have stood up right in the beginning; ‘how can you dare hit me?’ Get out, and don't come back!’ That's what I teach my daughters now. ‘If they hit you once tell them out, don't look back.’ “*

Munza has been living among this community for over 50 years and acknowledges that: *“A lot of us Asian women go through a lot in our marriages but still stay because we are such cowards, because of our beliefs; our religion.”*

However, she swings between self-pity, and attempts to minimise her lot. It is not clear why Munza should think it's too late for her. For a woman of her status, (living in an expensive area, in a big house and driving top cars), it would be very difficult to walk away from the lavish lifestyle she has been accustomed to. Munza doesn't think that she would be able to cope with such a difference in lifestyle. But no sooner is she complaining, than she is justifying her decision to stay, by saying that it is not all bad as she has certain levels of independence.

*“As soon as he comes in, I show my face, warm up his food and that's it, it's a duty that's all, because I still live here so if I don't do this I feel I am failing as a wife. He put a roof over our heads, although I helped him on the way.”*

Munza did indeed help her husband “on the way,” so much so that without that initial help, he would never have been able to come to England, let alone establish any business. And yet, this very real fact is more of an afterthought to Munza; the sub clause to the main statement that *“he put a roof over our heads.”* It suggests that Munza is still influenced by those old patriarchal platitudes of male the provider and protector. Does she really believe that her lot in life is as the dutiful housewife? Why can't she refuse to serve the man who is not treating her with love, care and respect? As for the so called lavish lifestyle, Munza has already hinted that unless her husband pays his debts and they downsize, that existence may soon vanish.

She then told me; *“sometimes I get so tired that last week I was coming home from work on the motorway and I was falling asleep. I was lucky I made the journey safely. All that work is housekeeping money, buying food, trying to save some money for daughter's wedding Sometime I get up at 5am and cook before I go to work, do Ironing when I have the energy. I feel so so tired. With all that's going on, I don't think I have self-respect any more, no I don't.”*

#### Her thoughts and advice

Despite advocating to her daughters not to put up with the physical and mental abuse she has had to suffer, Munza is not convinced that this common practice will stop at our generation. She

believes it's different from household to household, family to family. There will remain mothers who will continue to condone male dominance.

Rose (2014,) while talking about the honour killing of a British born Pakistani girl Shafilia Ahmed which gained huge media attention, highlights the involvement of mothers, not only policing their daughters but at times participating in their murders. Even if we attribute such actions to domination of a violent husband, should they be agents to such brutality against their own daughters? Maybe women are not fighting against men but against significant other women, particularly their own mothers: mothers who terminate their pregnancy for fear of giving birth to a daughter. Mothers who reject their newborn for being of female gender and mothers who advice their daughters to serve their brothers and to obey their fathers even when it comes to the choice of life long partners.

Munza's message to her own daughters has been not to put up with it, this is quite contrary to the message previous generations of mothers would have given. Even though Munza has not found the courage to leave him, at least she doesn't condone her husband's behaviour, as generations of mothers and wives before would have done.

#### Hopes for her own future

Munza has not quite given up on her own independence, revealing to me that she is still hoping that once her youngest daughter gets married, she can move on. She plans to leave her husband to go and live with her mother in Pakistan (Although not as a divorcee).

*"First I used to think I will build a house on my land in Pakistan. Then I said to my mum, no my children are here (in the UK). If I sell my land, I will get something and I will be alright. I am just waiting for A (her youngest) to get married. That's it."*

However, waiting for her youngest to finally leave the nest is another example of how selfless and dedicated these mothers feel they have to be. They make a home and then have nowhere to go when these relationships break up? Again, I turn to reflections of my own personal

circumstances, desperately wanting to move out and yet, despite my children giving me their blessing and encouragement, feeling that while they are still at university and living under the roof of the family home, moving out would be tantamount to abandoning them.

Munza's message to other women out there in her situation is:

*"I would say don't be scared, try to stand up for yourself; do what is right, by taking what your partner is doing to you, you are adding to the sin or whatever. You are not helping but only making matters worse for yourself. If we say 'how dare you' or 'get out,' they will be stunned but because we keep quiet, cover it up, they think that's ok."*

I wished that Munza could listen to herself and talk to that scared woman inside; convey this message to herself that it's never too late.

However, it does appear as if her passivity all these years has not all been the effect of her conditioning. Munza was loved and raised in a non- conflictive household. She didn't seem to be a woman too concerned about becoming a pariah in the community, if she were to leave. It is quite possible from what has been revealed in this interview, that she lacks the self - confidence to leave him. Her self – esteem may well have been corroded over the years by her husband and his presumed infidelities and bullying. The trauma of being moved to the UK when she was so happy in Pakistan should also not be ruled out as having had a long term effect on her confidence.

The beacon of hope here is that Munza has not passed on her own acceptance of her circumstances to her daughters. She has in fact broken the mould by advising them not to accept the same. In the final interview we will meet another of Munza's peers; a woman who, because of a more liberal upbringing, not only chose her own husband, but also chose when to leave him. Case study six is the very antithesis of Munza.

Reflective Analysis

Munza’s story is a common one within the Asian community; her young life already mapped out for her by her parents. At sixteen, she was given away to her Uncle’s son, and then was made to work the next two years in order to sponsor him on a Spouse visa. In her interview, much of what she revealed about her present marital condition is a series of one off complaints, such as his pawning her jewelry without her permission and her suspicions of his once having an affair. His violent outbursts, although one such incident she claims to still feel the effects of today, were isolated incidences. However, she obviously sees herself as a victim of domestic abuse as she asked to be included as a case study and indeed her advice to her daughters and even her own son’s wife has always been never to put up with a man’s violence. Munza continues to do all the domestic chores, cooking and ironing for her husband, as well as work full time because she says, of her sense of duty. Munza’s circumstances has not reached a tipping point and neither is it ever likely too.

As a child, she was raised to obey and respect first, her parents’ wishes and then her husband’s. It was clear in our interview that Munza has always considered it quite natural to relinquish all power of decision making to her husband. Yet, if we were to examine Monza's personal achievements in life, her education, her fierce determination to live independently of her parents by setting up her own marital home and later, her own business, Munza does not lack self-esteem. It is therefore difficult to measure how much of her submissive acceptance of circumstances is due to her upbringing or her ongoing depression which is a condition often defined as helplessness.

**Case Study 6 Urooj**

Length of interview 32 minutes .....Transcript pages 6

<b>Number</b>	<b>Married</b>	<b>Type of</b>	<b>Time to</b>	<b>Family</b>	<b>Childhood</b>	<b>Current Status</b>
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<b>of Marriages</b> <b>2</b>	<b>age</b>	<b>marriage</b>	<b>divorce</b>	<b>support</b>		
<b>1<sup>st</sup></b>	<b>19 Years</b>	<b>Love</b>	<b>13 Years</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Happy</b>	
<b>2<sup>nd</sup></b>	<b>45</b>	<b>Love</b>				<b>Happily Married</b>

<b>Emerging Themes</b>	upbringing	Love Marriage	Loyalty to traditions	Taboo of Divorce	Faith as coping strategy	self-worth
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### Summary

This final case study tells the story of a Pakistani woman who was raised without the cow towing to the communities expectations of how a normal married Muslim Pakistani woman should behave. Urooj is a very private woman with an inner strength and sense of well- being, who bears no malice or grudge toward her ex -husband, no matter how much she may have felt she suffered. What is clear though is that Urooj did suffer, she struggled for thirteen years to keep a marriage together when in truth she had stopped loving the man well before the children came along. Urooj is a woman who had acquired a high sense of self-worth from an early age, with a clear idea of what a marriage should be. So when it finally failed to live up to her own expectations, she moved on, putting her own dignity; her own salvation before the moral judgments of the Community.

### Context of interview

I met Urooj about 6 years ago through a friend. I was instantly taken by her genuinely caring nature. Urooj was born and brought up in England. She is the first born in a family of four. She has three sisters and one brother. Like most Asian families, family ties are very strong and culture and traditions are the templates for daily life. Urooj works for the hospitality industry

and travels abroad on a frequent basis. When we first met, all I knew was that Urooj was a single mother of two children, aged fifteen and seventeen. During this interview period of my research, Urooj married after 13 years of being single. At first, I was reluctant to approach her. I had never heard her say anything about her ex - husband and because she had just started life with her new partner, I felt it may be intrusive to ask her to revisit her past at this time. During an informal gathering, I gave her a choice to opt out if she so wished as there were already enough participants to make the numbers. Urooj chose to take part and I felt comfortable that she was able to make a decision on her own free will. The interview took place at my home, no one else was at home or expected.

### Love match

Urooj started by stating; *"it wasn't an arranged marriage. Once my mum came back from Pakistan after attending a wedding of my cousin, I saw his pictures and thought 'oh he is really nice looking.'* “

Urooj was a friend of his sister who had told her that he liked Urooj as well. This is very traditional; a common way for many romances to start in that part of community; subtle, careful, while being mindful of the families' relationships with each other on generational levels. It's not just a union between two people but their two respective families are also coming together. This is how their relationship began. *"His older sister instigated it; they asked my hand in marriage. I think they always thought my father would say no, but my dad asked me and I said yes, absolutely, I like him."*

Urooj is one of the few lucky girls from that generation with parents who were very well aware of the environment they were living in, that they were embracing the new culture without losing their own. Her father allowed her to date her fiancée, which again surprised the family. He also gave permission for them to go out a couple of times without a chaperone, and then he asked her again; "are you sure this is the person you want to marry?"

*“I said; ‘absolutely, no problem’ and we got engaged. The engagement was about two years. Because he had come over (from Pakistan) and stayed in our house here, obviously with cultural background and neighbours, it just didn’t seem right, so dad suggested that ‘I think you guys should get married’ and we said ‘no problem.’ So the wedding took place. I was 19.”*

At this point in the interview, Urooj reflected on how this decision, made at such a young age, can be influenced by looks, appearances and fantasies.

*“I thought it was all about love, oh I love you and you love me. All those idealist fairy-tale stories you hear about, so and I think during our courtship there wasn’t any argument or possessiveness or anything that would concern me.”*

Urooj’s experiences were quite unique, positive and a contrast to the other case study participants. In such family reunions, in-laws have a bigger role to play. As discussed earlier, it’s not just a marriage between two individuals but two families. Urooj describes both her father and sisters-in-law to be *“lovely, lovely people.”* She didn’t have any issues with them.

Urooj remembers having an argument with her husband on their wedding night.

*“I don’t remember what caused the argument or disagreement about something, but I remember not sleeping on the bed. I slept on the floor. I burnt my nightie. I heard it somewhere that burning a cloth is not a good sign and that bit stuck with me.”*

At this juncture I am reminded of Ian McEwan’s (2007) romantic novel, *Chesil Beach* about a young English couple on their wedding night in the pre sexual revolution of the early 1960’s in Western culture. Two, young virgins under immense pressure due to sexual mores of the time have a massive row, leading to a break up on their wedding night. The novel is a social commentary on early 1960s morality in UK, whereby sex was still quite taboo, resulting in the sort of pressure and the fall out between young married couples that was brought to bear on Urooj and her man.

Is it possible then, that the sexual tension between the young couple caused such rows? Often subconsciously, both partners could find themselves under enormous pressure, particularly as they are still relative strangers as well as inexperienced virgins. An argument can therefore be a distraction, an easier, albeit temporary way out of their collective embarrassment.

In a culture that still considers sex before marriage as taboo and yet has open public ceremonies to celebrate the consummation of the marriage, it is little wonder that the expectation can be overwhelming for a young innocent couple.

However, although this initial conflict may be common and would have been overcome, as many are, Urooj struggled to recall how the trouble started between two people who were absolutely in love and got married because they wanted to, not because they were forced to. She captures the usual pattern of such struggles very well by saying:

*"I can't really remember when things started to go wrong, ah the arguments, the foul language. I was more outgoing and more outwardly, so people would think I was the more dominating one in the relationship but I wasn't. Every time it happened there would be apologies, it won't happen again kind of things. Yes I was in love with him that's why it was easier to stay in the marriage."*

Urooj being a very private person, tried to keep these arguments from her extended family. Her ideal of marriage were like any nineteen year old newlywed but she soon started to notice the differences in their personalities and discrepancies in their social upbringing. She wanted him to socialise but he wouldn't come out with her.

According to Urooj: *"Sometimes arguments will become a little bit public but only with immediate family. For example, when his father came to stay with us or cousins to stay with me, it happened in front of them."*

Had these two been raised under Western norms, where the 1969 Divorce Reform Act allows either couple to divorce on grounds of irretrievable break down, it is likely that this would have been a much shorter lived relationship between these two young adults. The 1969 Act had seen an initial increase in the divorce rate in Britain, with mostly women being allowed to come out of empty shell marriages. For Urooj, once the initial stages of being 'in love' had worn off, such a course of action was not open to her under Islamic Law. Like many Western marriages based on love, Urooj eventually discovered that her partnership had more differences than commonalities. Generally, under such circumstances, Pakistani women try to avoid courts and can only depend on their husband's mercy to declare the divorce.

### Feeling the pressure

Much of Urooj's reasons for not leaving her husband, she believes, were to do with the family pressure. At the core of all six studies is the part played by extended family and then, outside of that the wider Asian community. Urooj admitted that although there was a thought that she was going to leave him, she couldn't find the courage to do so immediately because of possible repercussions on the family and the usual stigma from the community. Once again pregnancy added to it and things started to get worse when she was pregnant with her first child but:

*"He was very hands on father; I couldn't fault him as a dad. He would change nappies, look after the kids, had never stopped me from wearing what I wanted to, or going to see my friends."*

So Urooj's husband was the antithesis of the Pakistani male we have come across so far, where the men are used to ruling the households. In Pakistan in particular, they would have observed their fathers and grandfathers doing so. Therefore, the handing over of any power, either decision making or budgeting, to the female would have to be considered a liberal act. For men from that background, in that generation, parental responsibility would have ended with providing; it certainly would not have extended to nappy changing, or putting the kids to bed while the wife goes out with friends. Surely, considering the patriarchal norms that Pakistani Women were expected to abide by, Urooj must have thought she'd struck gold.

### A reluctance to go too deep

Urooj was very brief with the details of specific incidents, which confirmed my initial thought that she was not comfortable revisiting that part of her life which she has now firmly put behind her. Her brief accounts raised the question of her participation in this interview. Initially motivated by Sabina to take part, I wondered how much of her enthusiasm had waned in light of her getting married in the interim. She was reminded at the start of the interview that she was under no obligation to take part and was made aware that I had other candidates to step in; that the research would not be in jeopardy should she have decided to opt out. However she continued; *"while I was carrying my second child there was an incident which was quite serious but you carried on living thinking what will the community say? That's when I turned to religion."*

However, she was reluctant to divulge any further information as to what the incident was. Urooj was a little more specific about the events that led to the moment she made the decision to take action. She recalls that after having their second child, things didn't get any better but on the contrary, deteriorated rapidly. It had got to the point where arguments were so loud that it started to affect their second child.

Urooj clearly remembers how not being able to go to the bank on time to pay the bill as he had instructed her, while he was at work, instead of allowing her to explain, he started shouting. *"I remember at that moment, making this conscious decision that I am going to tell my father. So as soon as I had read 'namaz,' I said 'I want to get a divorce and I am going to tell my parents.' He didn't believe me because these threats were made before but not carried out. I told my father, my parents; they didn't believe it, saying 'how it could be, how this is happening all of sudden.' I said 'I didn't tell you before.' So everybody started; is there somebody else? Is this why are you doing this? I said 'no there isn't,' but I was prepared for all that kind of accusations, because for them this was coming out of nowhere. He said again he will behave and we will work it out. For me it was too late."*

### Family Matters

Urooj felt she had tried her best to resolve the issues and had proposed couple counselling prior to all this, but he hadn't wanted to go to counselling. Urooj had even gone alone for a couple of sessions herself but it wasn't any good if he wasn't going to take part in it. As soon as he realized that she was seriously going to leave, he agreed to go for counselling but it was far too late. For Urooj, turning to religion and seeking counselling had all been desperate attempts to make her marriage work. As discussed in the literature review, turning to religion is one of the most commonly used coping strategies. There were clearly issues in their marriage that for Urooj had made it untenable but while she had always been ready to conceive this truth and seek counselling, her husband had simply carried on, refusing to accept that they were not happy. The rub here is that the concept of counselling is alien to this community, especially for an issue of such private nature. These are Family Matters believed best to be sorted within the family and in most cases, involving the family elders.

Urooj had been keeping her matters private from her family, to protect her own dignity and for fear of hurting her parents. *"The family wouldn't believe me, emotional blackmailing came in to it. 'Give it a go, we will help you through it,' and I tried. I said; 'ok I will give it a go,' but it got to the point where we were living in the same house but I didn't want to be with him because my mind was all made up now. I just didn't want to be with him, I started initiating divorce proceedings myself, paying for that."*

### Tipping point

Urooj's father had advised her to hold on and give it a go and if her husband still wouldn't listen then he would pay for the divorce cost. But it wasn't working. *"I said to dad this is what happens, he agrees on something and then he goes back on it."*

The Islamic divorce, called talaq, is another matter where men exercise their power. Under Islam, typically only the man can declare divorce and this is done simply by repeating the word "talaq" three times and the marriage ends. But if it is the woman who wants a divorce, she has to

apply for it which is a lengthy process, time consuming and costly. This is where some Muslim women turn to Sharia court to apply for Islamic divorce which is called "Khullah."

In relation to her Islamic divorce Urooj explained that: *"I spoke to him; I wrote to him. I said listen, I can get it but it will cost me a lot of money and time, where all you have to do is write it down three times and that will be it."*

This must have been where her husband realised that his marriage was all about to fall apart. Urooj would receive phone calls from his sister in the middle of night, pleading with her to change her mind. A couple of his friends tried to persuade her too. Eventually, and with unexpected amiability, he let her keep the family home and he moved into the spare property they had.

*"So he took all his clothes really and left me with everything in the house. He had a bad time; he had a nervous breakdown during that process."*

It was a heart breaking time for both of them as Urooj had never wanted this to happen. She had loved him and wanted to have a life of peace and happiness with him but his behaviour cost them their marriage. However, without any examples of his bad behaviour, it would seem that the only real sympathy may be with her husband. There is no evidence here of any of the type of misogyny that is so apparent in all the other case studies. This reads like a typical marital breakdown where Urooj simply fell out of love. And as heartbreaking as that can be, it is quite common. In public, she had always presented his good nature and even now throughout this account, she was loath to be scathing.

### Moving on

The aftermath of this struggle, is reflected on by Urooj. *"I have forgiven him, I always have forgiven him, I never held anything against him. I just felt sad that this person I once loved very much had come to a point that I don't even like him but I respect him because he is the father of my children; we were married for about 13 years."*

It is worth noting that her reluctance to give evidence of any ill treatment at the hands of her ex-husband is indicative of her own strength and present well-being. Yes, it was a struggle but she has never allowed herself to become a victim. There was a crisis that she found herself in and she took action and got out of it.

Her husband married again, very soon after and Urooj knew he would; she had no problem with that. *"His wife turned out to be quite nice; she is alright with the kids."* Traditionally, it's very unlikely for Asian men to be single for long at any age, whether as a widower or divorcee. I think it's mainly that a woman is needed to run the household.

Even these subsequent marriages are assisted by female relatives, mothers and sisters, who are trusted to choose a new wife on the basis of domestic ability rather than emotional compatibility. There was an initial period where Urooj felt really vulnerable. She made some mistakes; other short term relationships but she has survived to where she is now. Maybe it was the process she needed to get through.

*"I had a couple of relationships if that's what you can call them. Now looking back, no they were not relationships. People I knew or thought I cared for they did the same. I wasn't in the right place myself; for a good 5 years I was on my own. After I had gone through that stage, then I concentrated on me being me and being happy. And I found that place."*

What Urooj learned, which can be so difficult for Muslim women in a patriarchal setting, was self-reliance. She did what she needed to do to move forward with her life: According to Urooj, her inspiration of support at that time was religion and her children. *"The children were very young. I had to be much focused to make sure that they were ok; they were stable. They were only 4 and 8. I was content; I was never worried; I had so much going on with dad and the children. They went to boarding school; they agreed to go to Northern Ireland together. I was happier for them to go there. They were very pleased they had stability. Whatever I was going through; bad patches; they were not privy to that. So yes, religion. Absolutely. I couldn't turn to*

*my mum; my mum is not very strong when it comes to supporting emotionally or otherwise. She never has been I don't think she ever will be. I suppose work kept me busy as well."*

Urooj was mindful that she did have some of the material advantages which perhaps some of the other women in her situation may not have had. They had two properties, allowing her husband to move out of their marital house, thus sparing her the added trauma and heartache of leaving her own home with the children.

*"I think he didn't make it difficult for me. First he said he is not going to leave but after considerable pressure he did move out. Then he had a place to go to as well. It's not as if he was abandoned. He had another house. So that made it easy. I think emotional and financial support, I didn't rely on anybody, I had work, I had a good job, it was difficult at times but I managed it."*

Urooj is happy and confident about the decision she made after a long struggle in which she tried very hard to make her marriage work. *"Now I believe he is a lot happier he found the right person for himself and I certainly have."*

#### Reflective analysis

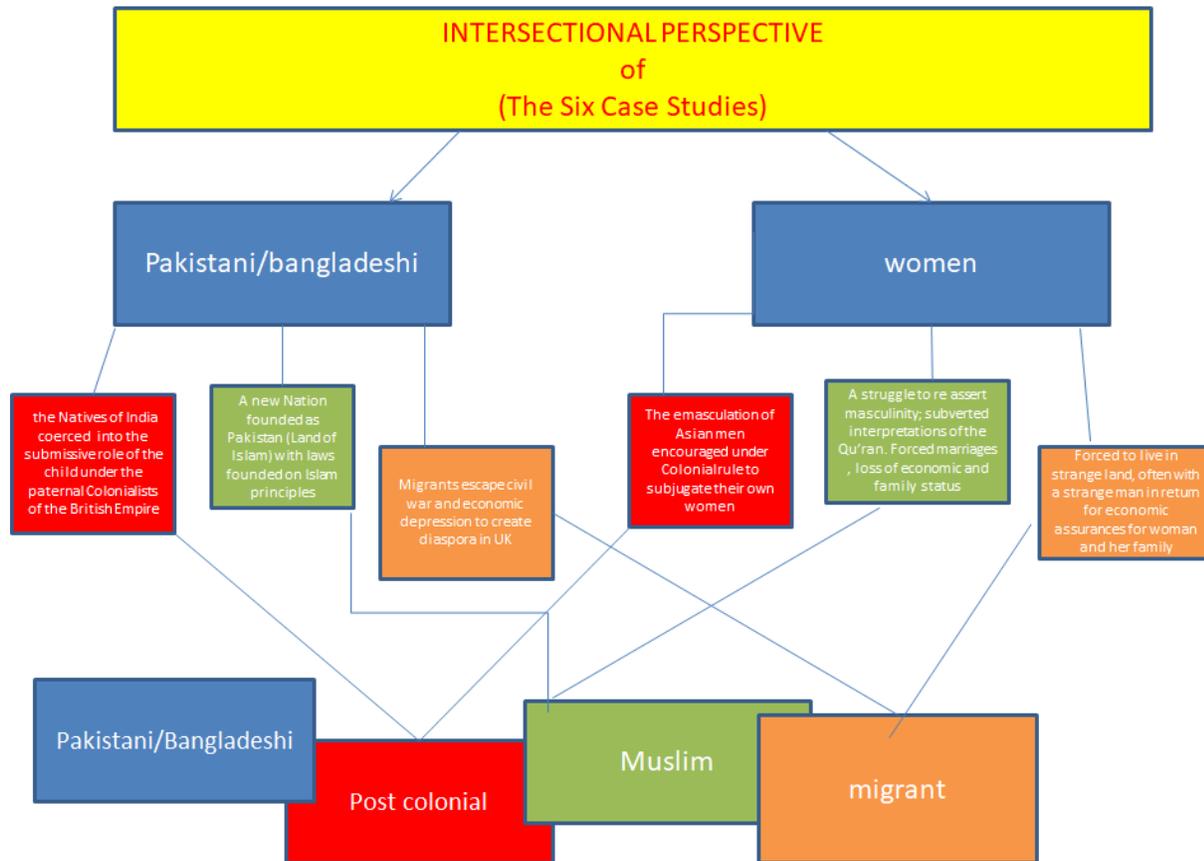
After talking to someone as outgoing, confident and liberal as Urooj, it confirms my belief that the pressure of the patriarchal Asian community to oppress its women will only be as strong as those women within that community allow it to be.

Urooj's story was very much in contrast to all of the others; the support of her parents went beyond the traditional too. Her liberal upbringing allowed her to choose her own partner and subsequently, as she says in her own words, she "chose for love." In short, Urooj was free to make *her own mistakes*; all the mistakes that every young romantic western couple are free to make. However, she admits to being mindful of the stigma attached to divorce and so when she fell out of love, she quickly sought outside help at first, which was unconventional for a Pakistani woman. Only when this avenue of help had been exhausted, did Urooj leave the

marriage after 13 years. Urooj is a practicing Muslim, but it would be fair to say that her beliefs and her strong sense of morality are on her own terms. I recognised her narrative as being the only one free of any of the traditional Patriarchal influences that had subjugated the others. Urooj's story is the light at the end of the tunnel for all Pakistani women that societal pressures can be beaten once you set your mind to it.

To return to the intentions outlined in Methodology Chapter 3, this chapter aims to discuss whether it is the abusive partners that the case studies found difficult to escape from or the childhood indoctrination and cultural pressures.

Below is an illustration which looks at the six case studies through the intersectionalist lens.



All six women faced physical violence at least once but none of them brought that up as the debilitating factor. It was the torment of mental abuse which made a negative impact on self-

esteem. However, each individual's endurance of periods where they struggled to see beyond the barriers of fear of exclusion and damaged reputation in the community, suggests that cultural pressures play a large part in lowering self-esteem which for some of the case studies; (Rani and Tara), this may have led them to become emotional dependents. Such is the complexities of an inherent fear of going against a value system that is predominantly patriarchal.

The root problem of the misogyny in these cases partly stems from individual characteristics such as male pride, insecurity, egocentrism and any personality traits such as narcissism, anti-social personalities and paranoia. Misogyny is defined in the Oxford Dictionary as being the "Dislike of, contempt for, or ingrained prejudice against women." To expand upon this definition as applied to the misogynist described between the pages of this thesis; would be that the "ingrained prejudice" is that of women perceived as inferior to their male counterparts, confounded by many women themselves being indoctrinated with this perception.

Keeping silent was a part of being a grown-up woman. Even in their first menstruation, the Study Participants (Hamid et al 2010) report of being shocked by the experience because their mothers were told not to talk about it. Young women felt severely inhibited in their ability to ask questions. As has already been examined when discussing the paradigms of the Criminal Reform Act, 2015 and the Forced Marriage Protection Act 2007, external social support is unlikely to make up for internal battles and fears.

For example, Nusrat was not consulted about her wedding date and Tara was told to obey her father's decision to marry to a man who she clearly didn't want. Silence was taught as a sign of modesty. Clearly this would be seen by any FMPO as a clear violation of the 2007 Act and yet would never have been reported as it is unlikely that either parent or child would have been aware of any such violation and neither would have wanted to criminalise their own parents.

Family is an important source of informal support for women and can reduce the risk of isolation (Kasturirangan, Krishnan, & Riger, 2004). Close ties with extended family members can reduce financial problems, provide child care during times of women's absence, and provide emotional

support (Fernandez, 2006; Kasturirangan et al., 2004). In one study, Zakar et al (2012), discovered that almost all of the women (20 of 21) sought emotional as well as financial support from in-laws or parental family and/or friends and other relatives. In the Pakistani cultural setting, elders, especially parents, are highly respected and are expected to be prudent and wise family monitors of behaviour within younger family members. Women usually feel secure in their presence.

Bott et al (2003) also found that Strong societal, cultural and religious expectations are attached to the sexual innocence and ignorance of women as a sign of purity and virginity, with marriage marking the beginning of sexual relations and childbearing.

They claimed to love and trust their parents, listen to their opinions and to feeling secure in following their rules as they were older and more knowledgeable. A "good daughter" was defined as one who abided by the rules. The young women believed that continued family support would ensure security in future life.

"If one decides for oneself on whom to marry, then one does not have the support of the parents. You are bound to like the husband chosen for you by your parents. If one decides for oneself and does not like the husband later... parents say it was your choice and you lose... You are alone...have no one to turn to and no support from the family and no security anywhere." (ibid)

Such then is that blurred boundary; that slippage (Gangoli, 2006) that negates the available external support. In relation to the third intention highlighted in the Methodology, Sabina married out of family loyalty and obedience but it took eight years of terror before she was able to make her family sit up and listen to her plea for their support.

Although they had been unaware of their daughter's suffering abroad, Sabina's parents witnessed first-hand, their son in law's public humiliation of their daughter. This was the tipping point for Sabina. At this point, after this one incident, she stood up to her husband and to her parents,

announcing to them that she would leave him with or without their support. It is quite likely that Sabina would have left her husband much sooner, if she had not been isolated abroad. Ironically, the parents who had contrived (albeit unwittingly) in Sabina's forced marriage, became the enabling characteristic for their daughter to flee domestic abuse?

Her story is like that of the hostage and a similar situation is described by Sandra Horley, in her book *Power and Control* (2002).

“It is easy to be sceptical when you are not trapped in such a position - but think about it. When a woman has been relentlessly criticised, made to feel worthless and cut off from her friends and outside support, is it any wonder that she is unable to challenge her abuser, any more than a hostage is likely to defy a captor who has a gun pointed at his or her head?” (Horley, page 103; 2002).

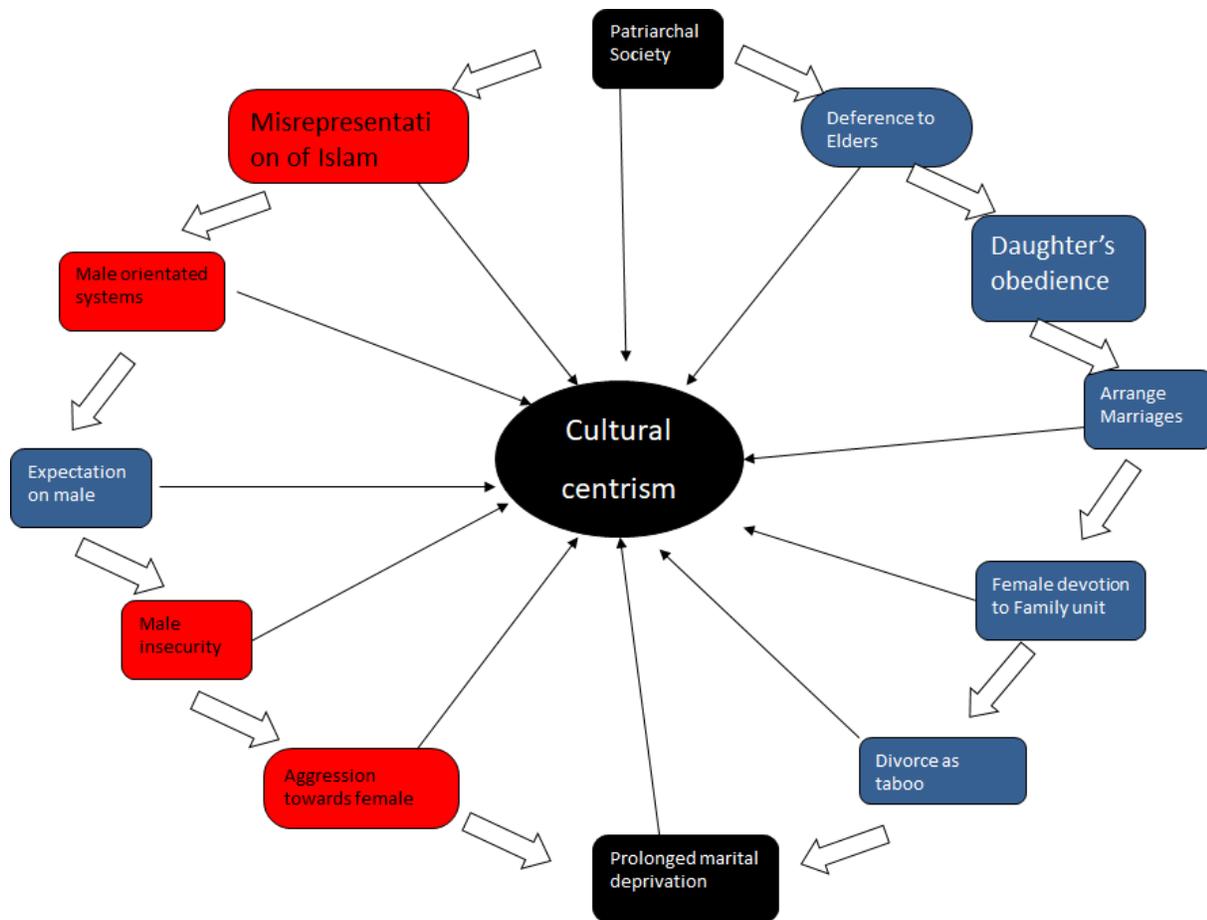
Horley further explains that by appearing submissive and going along with their abusers, is often the way that these women can finally plan their escape. And this was the tactic that Sabina eventually used in order to escape from her husband. Had she not lulled him into a false sense of security, he probably would not have felt confident enough to bring her back to the UK, against his own mother's warning. Once in the UK and back with the support of her own family network, Sabina was finally able to initiate her escape.

However, there has to be a parallel tragedy here that cannot be overlooked either. Maybe Karim had always considered Sabina, his childhood sweetheart. It is very likely he was actually in love with her and had been for a long time. What takes the bond of childhood friendship onto the next level of soulmates is physical intimacy. Which, quite clearly and heart achingly so for Karim, Sabina did not want. The laws of patriarchal society had aided Karim into attaining Sabina by force, only for its “neat morality” to let him down in the consummation of marriage. Therefore, in corroboration with the pious zealots that says he has the right, Karim becomes the jealous despot, never once realizing (or if he did, by then it was far too late to undo the

resentment in her) that without love, there is no devotion; nobody can ever truly be yours through coercion.

### Culturalcentrism

In 1989 when Kimberle Crenshaw was discussing the overlapping of social identities, in particular gender and race and how they combine to create systems of oppression, she coined the phrase intersectionality. This paper is very much concerned with the intersectionality of the six case studies (see diagram “intersectional perspective” at the end of Chapter 2). Below is an attempt to identify all the systems of oppression that intersect the Pakistani Muslim migrant women and what seems apparent in this research is that culture is the central agitator that have spawned these systems, therefore the neologism “culturalcentrism” is offered as the phrase to define this phenomenon.



Patriarchal Society

Patriarchy is defined in the Oxford dictionary as “A system of society or government in which men hold the power and women are largely excluded from it.”

As discussed in Chapter one regarding the history of Pakistan, only women from the educated elite were invited to help forge the identity of the “Land of Islam,” and then only within the role as symbols of the Muslim nation. Gender economic and political equality was exclusive to the upper class women and it has remained so ever since.

Pagden (1995) argues that;

“Classic Patriarchy and then later, Modern patriarchy played a key role in the history of European colonialism and in solidifying the theories of racial hierarchy that informed colonial discourses. In the classic form, colonialists legitimated colonial rule with notions of absolute authority and absolute right to rule derived from traditional patriarchal models of family.”

Paula Gunn Allen (1992) lays the blame for Pakistan’s patriarchal entrenchment on its colonial experience, arguing that it “completely destroyed the gender symmetry and balance that existed in pre contact indigenous societies.”

Although there is no evidence that suggests pre- colonial Muslim tribes treated women equal, prominent Islamist Feminist, Fatema Mernissi (1991) has argued that much of the suppression of women's rights in Islamic societies is the result of political motivation and its consequent manipulative interpretation of hadith, which runs counter to the egalitarian Islamic community of men and women envisioned by prophet Muhammed.

The Prophet (PBUH) states that among the Muslims the most perfect, as regards his faith, is the one whose character is excellent, and the best among you are those who treat their wives well. (Al-Tirmidhi Hadith 628).

To elaborate further; the hadith teaches that men look after the business outside of the family but that women run the household and make the decisions regarding all family matters; and that family will always take precedence over business.

Women of low economic rural and urban areas have never been afforded the same access to the social and political equality of the pioneering women from the educational elite. Historically, in Pakistani tribal and rural cultures, women were treated as the property of men. The submissive

role of woman has been to serve as a sacrificing commodity for the sake of values determined by man. When there were disputes between tribes - goats, sheep and women were traded for reconciliation. Marriages, for political and tribal peace were common. Similar practices are still ongoing in some rural areas and many families do not allow their women to marry in case someone from outside of the family should share their ancestral lands.

Pakistan has long been a Patriarchal society since the country was founded on the principles of Islam. Therefore the political systems and laws are male orientated and the family unit is based on deference to your elders; children must obey their parents. In villages, disputes are deferred to the 'Elder' tribesmen. Perhaps a recurring theme in all six cases is that it has long been established under the cultural norms that a daughter's obedience is a virtue; a selling point for arranged marriages. On the other side, however, having a system that is exclusively controlled by the male population is not only open to misogynistic practices but it produces a tremendous demand of the male to be in control. Under such conditions any male with insecurity issues is likely to have a higher tendency toward exercising aggression in order to remain in control and maintain the patriarchal order of things. In such a country as Pakistan, where religion is central, a male misrepresentation of Islam is destined to evolve. This has led to divorce being such a taboo for Muslim women, which as we have also witnessed, has led to a prolonged period of marital deprivation for the female spouse. Finally, in four of the six cases, these women showed a devotion to the family unit, which has compounded that prolonged engagement in suffering. Pakistan has a dual system of civil and sharia law. The Constitution of Pakistan recognizes equality between men and women. Article 25(2) states "There shall be no discrimination on the basis of sex" but also validates Shari'a law (Chapter 3A. – Federal Shariat Court). The Federal Shariat Court (FSC) of Pakistan is a court which has the power to examine and determine whether the laws of the country comply with Shari'a law. It consists of 8 Muslim judges appointed by the President of Pakistan. Three out of eight judges are required to be Ulema who are well versed in Islamic law.

In relation to cultural pressures in Pakistan, seeking help from formal institutions is very rare. Research showed ( Zakar et al 2012) that only one woman (out of 21) talked to a lawyer and only

two consulted doctors. Not a single woman even thought to go to a women's shelter or any other such institution. Almost all the women (19 of 21) stated that seeking help from formal institutions was not feasible within the Pakistani cultural context, and they feared that this option could be counterproductive. They thought that it would increase their difficulties instead of decreasing them. Pakistani women here in UK were no different.

These cultural pressures will therefore often negate external support as one woman said; "If I get help from the police or courts against my husband, I will be divorced next morning. Then where will I go? Back to my parents' home? No: My parents will never accept this. Society will not accept this. Such a scenario will be far more tragic and traumatic for me than violence from my husband." (Zakar et al 2012).

Another case study, while explaining her distrust and reservations about the formal institutions, said, "usually the police and lawyers are not a kind and helpful source for us [abused women]. You read stories of ziadti [rape] and tashdat [torture] by the police; they are not friendly people. Lawyers generally make things more complicated than solving the problem. Such options are not workable for Pakistani women."(Zakar et al 2012)

Sadly this characteristic of managing domestic abuse is not to escape but to work out strategies of how to survive within it. One victim, who had experienced violence for the past 11 years, said; "I am trying to cope with this violence by using many strategies. But I don't want to file for a divorce. I don't want to go back to my parental family. The reason is that I have five brothers. Here I am under the control of one male [referring to her husband]. In the case of divorce, I would have to go to my parents' home. There I would have to live under the subordination of five males." (Zakar et al 2012).

The six case studies in my research see their own dilemma as not dissimilar from these women in Pakistan. Although they would have more protection from UK law, the fear of retribution, usually in the form of being ostracized from the community, was still very prevalent and real for all.

### Taboo and stigma of Divorce and Community's judgement

Underpinning the three interrogative aspects of the research is the taboo and stigma that is often attached to divorce. It is a disabling factor for women in their struggle to flee domestic abuse; and a culturalcentric factor that negates external help.

In Pakistani culture, a divorced woman may still be looked upon as damaged goods. For example, Rani's experience (*Case Study One*), of moving to London after her first divorce, was that she felt as if her position in the community was "worse than a prostitute." She was seen as an "easy target" for sexual predators from her own community; men who believed that they had the right to exploit her situation. Even Urooj, the most liberal minded and self-assured woman of the six case studies, admitted to having some trepidation about divorce and fear of being stigmatised. Munza also hinted at the distress a divorce from her husband may cause her parents who live in Pakistan; a concern that emphasizes the strong ties with the community in the UK with those back in the homeland.

The influence of those homeland ties and its Patriarchal laws that subjugate women, exists in Pakistani law. For example, the male can divorce his wife at any time by declaration of the word 'talaq' three times. However, should a woman want divorce, she has to go through the courts. This practice implies that the woman is more likely to face repudiation for divorce than the man. Nusrat, whose reputation in the workplace and community has been highly respected for many years, who is financially independent and the pillar of her family, was advised by her own son in law, who she had helped settle in the UK, not to divorce her husband.

On the one hand, being isolated from their families was a major contributing factor hindering these women from escaping from these marriages. On the other hand, isolation from such a highly judgemental community may relieve that pressure, allowing a lot more freedom to make that choice without fear of being judged.

Perhaps more culturally mixed communities are better settings in the UK for the female, away from their own judgemental ethnic backgrounds, providing more emotional and moral support. Patriarchal doctrine is rigid and pious. It has a simplistic ideal of love and marriage. If one were to live by these ideals, as indeed many do, then they will inevitably become disappointed and unable to cope with the real life ambivalences. On the one hand, the larger communities are exposed to the romantic ideal; the fairytale life portrayed by Asian media and Bollywood movies which don't often match with reality. With dating or any kind of romantic excursions outside of marriage being strictly forbidden, all aspirations of this ideal are pinned to married life. Compounded by the stigma of divorce, women are often desperate to make it work.

#### Female exploitation /gender subordination

Where a woman fears the taboo of divorce and the ostracism by her community, this will inevitably lead to exploitation by men. For example, Tara's second marriage was her own choice but she also chose to stay through the bullying and mind manipulations of her husband for many years, due to this fear which was time and again reinforced by her partner. On one occasion he told her that the woman involved in an extra-marital affair that he was having, had a "better reputation" than Tara, referring to her having previously been divorced. Nusrat's husband, who she had been married to for 28 years, would continually threaten to divorce her as if this would be worse than the treatment she was receiving from him under the marital roof. My mother's generation of wives would always advise their daughters not to say anything in an argument with their husbands for fear that it will cause an impulsive 'talaq,'

Is it any wonder then, that under such restrictions for women, that some men in the Asian community will exploit this with the use of violence? The *Hudood Ordinances (1979)* still upholds its strict maintenance of the honour code. The *zina* provisions of the law are particularly controversial, whereby a woman who reports rape can be incarcerated for "zina," (extra marital sex). This is compounded by the *Qanoon-e-Shahadat Order 1984* that undermines a woman's evidence in courts of law, giving that it is only considered as only half that of the status of her male counterpart.

These laws have helped turn Pakistan into the third most dangerous country in the world for women, according to a 2011 poll of experts by the Thomson Reuters Foundation poll. Over 10,000 cases of Violence against Women were reported in 2014 with an average of 4 women a day being raped. (*Home Office 2016*).

In a society where a gathering of old men can decide a woman's fate, a reported rape can often be re-interpreted as zina, which carries the death penalty. Such decisions are made in Jirga, where there are no female representatives. Jirga can still be found practiced in many villages around the region of Pakistan. It is an assembly of elders who make laws by consensus according to their own interpretation of Islam. Therefore Female members of society are going to be aware from an early age of their own lack of rights and being disenfranchised of any protection by law will surely lead to low self-esteem and low expectations of their own quality of life.

Rani was badly let down by her mother, who turned a blind eye to the beatings she received at the hands of her father and brother. Perhaps part of the problem is that too many women within the community condone domestic violence, or at least see it as the norm within the family unit. Without the aid of statistics on this matter, it is hard to gauge. However, we can still understand the level of acceptance through the actions and words of the women themselves. For example, daughters being advised not to answer their husbands back in any argument. In Tara's case, she was not believed by her mother when she reported that her husband was violent.

Rani seemed to have been made aware by her own parents that her education was not a priority. Likewise, Nusrat's wedding was arranged without giving any consideration for her exam dates, which she subsequently had to forego in order to marry. This reflects statistics which according to 2013 figures, showed that Pakistan had the world's second-highest number of children -- more than 5 million not attending school. More than 3 million of those are girls. As Malala Yousafzai's shooting in October 2012 demonstrated, some patriarchal mind-sets are fearful of girls being educated.

### Childhood Matters

Childhood abuse, neglect and unmet emotional needs leave women vulnerable to further abuse in adult relationships. Welldon, E (2012) writes that the long-term consequences of childhood abuse and neglect for a girl can result in further abuse and neglect of her own body and can lead to acts of self-harm such as eating disorder. These attacks are explained as revenge against their mothers at realisations of similarities in their bodies. Having a baby provides a unique reassurance that their reproductive functioning is still intact and also having a baby may be the only way for some to communicate and express their own emotional needs, which have never been properly addressed nor recognised.

Self-efficacy is one's personal judgement about one's own ability to cope, which is related to self-esteem. Sabina was confident that she can do it with or without her parents support whereas Tara never had that confidence; she continued moving on from one abusive relationship to another and turned blind eye to her exploitation.

The type of physical, emotional and in Tara's case, sexual abuse suffered as children has led to "devalued identities," according to Crocker, Major, & Steele, (1998); when one's identity is stigmatized or devalued in a particular context; concerns about self-worth are likely to be activated. This in turn can lead to "traumatic bonding," a term developed by Carnes, P. (1997). In a society with gender hierarchy and obedience to elders, how possible would it be for a ten year old to disclose that she is being sexually abused by her father? Or for a fifteen year old to stand up to her parents when it comes to the choice of a life partner.

### Female obedience/conformity/conditioning

Hamid et al (2010) in Pakistan conducted a qualitative survey of 20 participants and three focus groups to understand how young women living in a slum in Islamabad were prepared for marriage and how they understood and perceived this transition. This study relates to the significance of childhood indoctrination.

The main theme identified by Hamid et al was “*security lies in obedience.*” It is not limited to parents only but includes the obedience toward the husband, the community and its predominantly male value system. This obedience was ensured through socialization into submissiveness and transition into adulthood in silence. Such socialization of young women then laid the foundation for their own lack of control over their future. Lack of self-efficacy or learned helplessness may be a participant factor in Munza’s depression and inability to make a decision. Although the above study was in relation to women’s reproductive health, the overall findings give an insight into the complexities and barriers created by childhood conditioning. This conditioning is prevalent in the decision making of all six case studies. Out of all literature reviewed, this study offered the most defined base and support to understand the phenomenon explored.

Their Study found that to be selfless, loyal and possess empathy for the family were important characteristics valued in their upbringing. All decisions regarding their marriage were entrusted to the family and it should be the family's opinions which mattered most. The female spouse had no opinion on any matter. Disobedience would result in displeasure on the part of their parents, especially mothers, who stressed that their behaviour was a reflection on their upbringing and thus disobedience would reflect badly on the parents. This explains why all six women in this research study remain determined not to upset or disappoint their parents. They learnt that the sole path to being looked after and feeling secure was to abide by the rules. Obedience and patience were to be the main competencies for a successful future married life. The Study Participants voiced the importance of obeying their future husbands to avoid the consequences of divorce and being abandoned for another wife. They understood their own fragile state within the marriage and the ease of remarriage for a man in society, bringing the second wife in, even in the presence of the first. The young women stated that their mobility both inside and outside the home was closely monitored by the elders in the family.

Such restrictions continue after marriage; even in the UK. Rani, for example, was not allowed to talk to men when she visited Bangladesh. Tara’s husband used to lock her in the house. Sabina in Middle East hid in a hospital phone booth to call her parents while Nusrat was not allowed to go

back to Pakistan for ten years. No wonder then that Munza viewed it as a privilege and benevolence on the part of her husband, to allow her to visit whoever and whenever she wanted. In short, lives of mature, well-educated Pakistani women living in U.K were not any different from uneducated lower socioeconomic young girls living in the Pakistan as both groups of women were functioning under the same culturalcentric mindset.

#### Women's absolute devotion and loyalty

Four confident self - sufficient women of the six case studies have been through prolonged suffering, in part, due to their commitment to "home matters." Women's long -term pretense of being in successful marriages made it harder for them to convince others that they were suffering long before the breakup.

Orbach,S and Eichenbaum,L (1983) explained that women are fearful of being independent. It is not because they are raised to be dependent but to be depended upon. They are raised to place their own emotional needs second to those around them. This further explains the element of guilt felt by women. Rani's continual rescuing of her alcoholic husband from being homeless over and over again is an example of an abused woman unable to escape her abuser. Munza continues with her wifely duties despite receiving nothing in return. Dependency here is debated in emotional terms; boys grow up learning to depend on women, first on their mothers and then their wives, while girls are raised learning to give up on their mother's closeness without it being satisfactorily replaced.

However, all six of the women chosen for this research have reached a high level of education. Nusrat came from Karachi, perhaps the most liberal city of Pakistan and yet in spite of her affluent and liberal background, she came to England, a university graduate, to fulfil the expected role of chosen bride for a man 17 years her senior. Her prospective husband had made frequent trips back to Pakistan in order to find a wife, rather than look within the Asian community in the UK. It has long been considered common knowledge that girls raised in Pakistan were likely to be more "compromising" than those girls who were raised in the UK.

Nusrat's situation is a common example of where the Forced Marriage Protection Act would not be able to protect her. If, for example, her husband had turned out to be equally as compromising in their relationship, Nusrat would be another successful arranged marriage statistic. However, supposing that once she had arrived in the UK, she had been able to harness the protection of FM organisations, she would have been criminalising her husband and her mother back in Karachi. In fact, it is so highly unlikely that Nusrat's situation would have been eligible for prosecution or that she would have ever considered her situation as a criminal act.

Nusrat was clearly a strong single minded woman who once in the UK, carved out her own career path, raising children and re-educating herself to a high level. She stayed married to her abusive husband for twenty eight years, not because of low self-esteem and the fear of living alone but because of her sense of loyalty and commitment to her vows. This characteristic trait can be found in many Asian women; their absolute devotion and loyalty to the marriage, which in turn has been a result of conditioning. Nusrat's childhood was a happy and secure one. No doubt what she saw with her parents, she wanted to emulate for herself. To not be able to maintain her marriage would be to fail herself and her children. Even the most successful of the six women, Urooj, stated that she tried many times to make her first marriage work by suggesting to her partner on a few occasions that they seek outside marital guidance. All six women were from Muslim families, with a good knowledge of Islam. Even though divorce is permitted, at the same time, it is suggested that without exhausting all options first, such a decision would be frowned upon.

### Arranged marriages

*"A condition of falling for someone was to misperceive them - through a trance of imagining."* –  
( Faulks, S. 2015; p 33)

It is often perceived by western communities that arranged marriages are forced, whereby young brides are made to marry cousins or old men against their will. Although there are many incidences of these practices, it is important to point out here that all things considered, the arranged marriage as a cultural practice has been reasonably successful over the centuries. There

are many examples of loving couples from past and present generations, couples which most civilised cultures would extol as paragons of virtue. Five of the six case studies would admit to being coerced into “arranged marriages.” However they would never come to the realization that their marriages were “forced;” such is that blurred boundary or “slippage” between forced and arranged, therefore negating protection from both the FMPO 2007 and the Serious Crime Act 2015. Three of those five, Sabina, Nusrat and Munza all claim to have been raised by caring and loving parents and were as far as the evidence in their narratives suggests, confident and smart young women. All three had husbands chosen for them which turned out to be disastrous choices.

Both Rani and Tara were coerced into arranged first marriages by their respective parents. However, it is unlikely that their subsequent sufferings were confounded by these arranged marriages. Rani rebelled and made sure when the opportunity was presented that her husband would be denied entry to the UK on a spouse visa. Tara walked away from her arranged first marriage but only with the aid of the man who was to become her second chosen husband and subsequent tormentor. In the cases of these two women, the parents are culpable. The enabling characteristics for both these women were to detach themselves from the cultural centralism of their respective communities.

Sabina states quite clearly in her story that she did not want to marry her cousin and that quite definitely she did not love him. Despite the care she had always received from her parents, her objections were ignored. Her own brother advised her to go ahead and seemed not to comprehend why Sabina should find it so important that she should be in love with the man she marries. As is often the case with arranged marriages, the logic is that at the most liberal, the parents will select from suitable candidates based on their economic and social status and from within the family as this offers better assurances for both families. The idea that Sabina did not want to marry her cousin because she knew that she could never love him would have been dismissed as romantic naivety.

However, a combination of her resentment towards a cousin who, knowing full well her feelings towards the marriage, and perhaps his resentment of being physically rejected, is possibly what led to her eight years of marital abuse.

Nusrat's father had died when she was young and in such circumstances it is common for the mother to find suitable husbands for fatherless daughters. Although Nusrat is not explicit in her feelings toward the choice of husband, it is unlikely that this 20 year old academic, living in Pakistan would have chosen to marry a man, seventeen years her senior and then uproot herself to live in the North of England.

Munza was born in a small and very traditional village in the North of Pakistan, bordering Afghanistan. When her parents chose Munza's husband, it was a parental obligation that was in line with centuries of tradition. Her parents would have chosen with the utmost consideration for the daughter's future happiness and Munza would not have thought twice to go against their choice. Even today, many young Asian women will trust in their parents' judgment to find a suitable partner, as will be further discussed in the conclusion.

## **Chapter six**

## **Conclusion and Recommendations**

*"I oppose male privilege. I oppose the idea that men are superior to women. I don't think that men should have privilege of any kind over women. In my life as I have lived it, as I have seen it around me, it is the women who worry about the children. It is the women who keep the family going. It is the women who have kept the world going while men are off killing each other and a lot of us on the way. I'm sick of it. I've always been sick of it." - Marilyn French (BBC 2010).*

By examining the literature on the dynamics of violence against women, it appears that factors like ideology of patriarchy, culture and society, religion and individual characteristics come together to explain violence against women; that these phenomenon can be understood under the term "culturalcentrism."

The aim of this research was to dig deeper to reveal complex factors which make coercive control and emotional abuse in marital relationships a problem which individual, communities, agencies and institutes seem helpless to find a solution to. This research attempts to go beyond collecting statistics of victims of domestic violence and to get a step closer to finding out if it is the authority of the abuser, the avoidance of society, any pre-existing vulnerability factors or characteristics of victims which make it so complex. The main focus of the study was not so much the incidents of *physical* abuse but the subtle emotional and psychological control which is so difficult to identify in order to seek support.

This is also about the length of suffering, and the misconception of love hate relationships; about control, intimidation, the deprivation of affection, and debilitating fear which freezes the victim from taking any action. This was also an attempt to search for the answer to the commonly asked question; why is it not that simple that when one is hurt, they still choose to stay? Why is the risk of leaving so high that staying is a comparatively safer option? The answer to some extent was that cultural norms and expectations are that a woman must stay and “make it work”, otherwise she will be the one seen as a failure and quite likely ostracized from her community. This form of control or abuse is not one on one but a subtle, invisible multilayered net of collective mindset as revealed in the above case studies.

The core purpose of this research was to define what enabling characteristics were in those cases where women did manage to flee their abusers. Can those qualities of character be imbedded in every young woman in order to pre-empt future abuse? The following table demonstrates the complexity of sophisticated marital coercive control and abuse with added cultural and psychological factors.

	Childhood abuse	Loving parents	Repetition of abusive relationship	Severity of marital abuse	Duration of marriage	self - esteem rating	Family support	Born or raised in U.K.	Current age
Rani	Yes	No	Yes	6	18 years	2	No	Born	45
Tara	Yes	No	Yes	6	23 years	2	No	Age 8	47
Sabina	No	Yes	No	6	8 years	5	Yes	Born	47
Nusrat	No	Yes	No	6	28 years	4	Yes	Age 20	56
Munza	No	Yes	No	5	36+ still married	2	Yes	Age 6	55
Urooj	No	Yes	No	4?	13 years	6	Yes	Born	47

Note: Scale of 0 to 6 was used based on self-reported impacts.

Tara and Rani who suffered neglected and abusive childhoods, tended toward cognitive dissonance in order to continue their relationships with abusive husbands.

Munza who reported that she was raised by loving parents, seems to have tolerated marital abuse for a surprisingly long period, suggesting that her expectations are low, normally equated with low self-esteem. However her sense of helplessness is confounded by chronic depression. By her own admission, she continues in an empty shell marriage, despite her confidence in the support of her family. Nusrat, also stated that she came from a caring and supportive family in Pakistan and yet remained for 28 years in an abusive relationship, despite being a financially independent breadwinner. Both of these women are quite a few years senior of the other four and this could be a telling factor in their toleration of patriarchal rule. However both have strongly advocated to their respective offspring, not to tolerate misogyny of any form. A hope that the next generation will be able to break the cycle of culturalcentrism.

This data is therefore beginning to suggest that even women who have been raised in a loving protective environment are just as likely to be subjected to abusive marriages for long periods of time. The influential power of the culture is immense. Even women such as Sabina and Urooj both with high self-esteem and confidence, remained entrenched years after reaching the decision to leave. In Nusrat's case, it was due to natural loyalty and learnt devotion rather than low self-esteem. In the case of Munza, it was purely due to submission to the patriarchal value systems and obedience. The influential power of these culturalcentric forces is exhibited in the case of Urooj where her fear of the stigma of divorce was a delaying factor. Divorce is not a welcoming event in any culture but in the West, at least the decision lies exclusively with the married couple and not the extended family. Urooj's self-confidence and self-belief were the enabling factors that she used to override the fear and stigma.

Being born in the UK or Pakistan does not make a difference to the coercive factors involved, either, particularly as first generation parents would have been more likely to cling to the traditions of their homeland. Both Rani and Nusrat, born and raised in the UK and Pakistan respectively were forced to marry strangers.

The findings of the research clearly indicate that there is a direct correlation between childhood abuse and subsequent attachment issues in adult relationships. For this reason, Rani's story, the

longest and most abusive followed by Tara's narrative were placed first, as they were the only two of the six to have suffered actual child abuse, the effects of which were chronic low self-esteem.

Orbach, S and Eichenbaum, L. (1983) concluded that in order to make sense of women's vulnerability, if a woman has not received enough nurturing in her life and had felt that there was not someone there for her, she is likely to feel an insecure sense of self which will result in her constantly looking for the person who can give her security and fill up the emptiness.

Unfortunately, the men she will turn to are not skilled in nurturing. She will then try to cover this disappointment by having children. A child would be someone of her own who she can attach to and form that longed for "understanding without words." (Klein, 1963)

*"God I wanted to leave on and off for a very long time, I suppose; when I was pregnant with my first child. That was 3 years after we got married. I think if you are in love with the person, you think they will change; we can work it out; these are only little arguments. Then you get conditioned to it, you feel so weak and vulnerable and insecure that you can't survive, you can't do anything."* (Urooj).

This conditioning then starts to eat up the confidence and self-esteem. It plants the seeds of fear that you won't be able to survive without this person. In any woman who has already been "conditioned" to the patriarchal doctrine of the Pakistani culture, self-esteem is already going to be low, leading to a feeling of helplessness, paralysing fear and debilitation.

*"You know all that multitude layers of guilt and taboo and what people think; not just your family, it's the community, the wider society that keeps you entrenched."* – Rani

Four of the women featured had a turning point when they finally did wake up to their conditions and walk away but that moment seems to have been when there really was nothing else left for them; a point when all seemed hopeless and only when any other option would have been better than the one they were in.

However, Urooj's experience by contrast to the other five case studies, offers an insight into a woman who may not have experienced the deeply disturbing physical and mental brutality because she was a woman who would not succumb to patriarchal indoctrination. As a young girl, she had already established her own sense of self-worth through the autonomy afforded her by liberal parents. She was raised and encouraged to be a decision maker. Therefore, it is not surprising that she should choose a mate, based on the more primeval instincts than have a partner chosen for her. Equally not surprising then, is that along with this highly confident sense of self-worth, her expectations in marriage were high and when these expectations were not met, she opted out.

Four out of the remaining five case studies were also able to free themselves of domestic violence but it was at a cost. And one still remains in an empty shell marriage, to some extent paralysed by fear of retribution.

*"I think there is always that critical point when you make those decisions. I think something happens in your life when you think that's it, you get your strengths to do what you need to do. I don't think you can say to someone you should get out, something triggers that when it happens."* (Urooj).

The root problem appears to be a complex combination of the collective mindset and longstanding cultural and traditional norms; minimising the chances of escape from marital abuse.

As shown in the discussion, certain cultural elements of the Pakistani cultural value system can be held culpable to a greater or lesser degree for the sufferings caused to the six case studies. Both Sabina and Nusrat's suffering were a direct result of badly arranged marriages; while the

type of abuse that Rani, Tara and Munza suffered has been condoned under the Patriarchal system that dominates Pakistan's political and social orders.

This can be prevented if one's "micro system" is strong enough and can resist the influence of their "macro system." Urooj's view on breaking away is as follows.

*"I think you cannot force anybody to take that step. They got to be ready. When it's their time they will know. Then they will have the strength and the resources to go and do what they need to do. Once you start doing that, doors start opening up. It won't be easy, I don't think it's ever easy but it does happen. It will happen if you allow it to happen."* (Urooj)

#### Agency Support and Domestic Violence Procedure

Often in cases of domestic violence, mothers as protective carers are expected to leave the offending partner. Although outside supporting agencies are available to these women, time and again they are not being used. Social Workers need to be aware of the sophisticated and delicate nature of the mindset. It is simply not in the Pakistani cultural make up to seek help from outside. Domestic issues are used to being kept in the family. It is first and foremost important to acknowledge that simply running support networks chaired by women of the same ethnic background alone is not going to encourage these women, as the one common factor to overcome is their initial sense of shame and guilt. This can be a long process in itself, only achieved on a personal one to one basis by a highly trained practitioner with good psychological insight. Therefore the usual time constrained Child Protection or Child in Need plan is unlikely to tackle an issue of this nature and complexity.

We have a multicultural agency trained workforce in the UK but without the enhanced insight into understanding the pressure of cultural and custom ties. Representatives from similar backgrounds with professional training are needed to support such victims without losing the sight of cultural barriers and their complexities.

### Eliminate the sense of shame and failure

Four confident self-sufficient women of the six case studies have been through prolonged suffering, in part, due to their commitment to “home matters.” Women’s long-term pretence of being in successful marriages made it harder for them to convince others that they were suffering long before the breakup.

On the one hand, being isolated from their families was a major contributing factor hindering these women from escaping from these marriages. However, living amongst a highly judgemental community hindered these women from making the choices that would have been right for their own wellbeing.

### Consciousness-raising Groups

Susan BrownMiller, a leading 1970’s Women’s Lib activist in America talks about how the type of Women’s rights and equality we see today in Western Civilization started in small conscious raising groups. *“We started with the small stuff like why do we smile so much? Why do we try to be so appealing? Why are we so afraid to show our anger? Is anger considered not feminine?”*

(BrownMiller BBC 2010).

A safe space for women to discuss and uncover their stories of common experiences of fear, powerlessness and imposed limitations is one way for them to listen, talk, empathise and strengthen each other through emotional support and trust. The six case studies demonstrates quite clearly how these women felt the need to tell their stories as a part of cathartic healing process, but only to someone they knew and trusted. None had previously sought outside agency intervention.

It is not all that long ago that women felt the same oppression in the West, discriminated against in the home and at work and yet just a few were able to galvanize the many. Most women of this era and before speak of the same acquiescence to a male favoured capitalist society; that women

were “insecure embittered and extremely neurotic because they couldn’t fulfill themselves” (BrownMiller BBC 2010)

At the same time in Britain, Anne Oakley, a leading activist also talks of the conscious raising groups she attended in 1971. “We talked about our lives and our experiences as women and the central element in this; discovering that all these feeling and thoughts that you had were just your own individual thoughts and experiences and there is something wrong with you but everybody else in the group had them too.” (Oakley BBC 2010)

Therefore, as Susan BrownMiller also reiterated, conscious raising is about women learning from each other what the collective women’s experience is and then doing something about it. However, the doing something about it maybe the easy part now that we do have women in positions of power in Pakistan but it can only happen if women understand that they are being violated.

One way forward may be such groups of Asian women led by the women like the participants of this study, not to alert just each other but the wider society. What kind of liberation women are after also depends on their geographical, political, legal and cultural environment. For example, women in Saudi Arabia are still hoping that one day they will be allowed to drive; western women are hoping to shatter that glass ceiling in the workplace, while Pakistani descended women are dreaming of a life free from the taboo of divorce.

### Mothers as role models

Freud,C,H (2011) highlights the significance of mother and daughter relationship:

“A girl needs to be able to shape her own identity but, continues to need her mother throughout her life as model and counsellor. For a woman, the inner bond with the mother can be a source both of strength and of frustration. Child’s first relationship is decisive for its identity and sense of self-worth, particularly among women.” Freud,C,H (2011)

Mothers need to understand that due to their similar gender they are the first role models for their daughters. A daughter is likely to absorb some of her mother's values, characteristics and behaviours both at conscious and subconscious level. An oppressed, fearful mother who accepts her own gender as subordinate is less likely to raise a confident daughter.

Women need to raise their own level of dignity and expectations in marital relationships. For example, in Afghanistan, a whopping 94 percent of women condoned being beaten by their husbands. Within the demographic of educated and affluent women, this figure only drops to 85 per cent. (Population Reference Bureau 2012)

A woman can fulfil the mother's role in teaching her offspring, son and daughter, the value of that equality and respect. Tara claims her mother was emotionally unavailable during her years of sexual abuse. To what extent, if at all, her mother was aware of her suffering as a child, we cannot ascertain. What is clearer is that for Tara the lack of protection set a precedent on her self- esteem from a very early age.

Writer Orbach,S and Eichenbaum,L (1983) admits that mothering is a complex process, particularly when it comes to raising daughters. Mothers who themselves are in subordinate positions have to prepare their own daughters to take their place. This can create antagonism between the mother and daughter.

First, due to social norms and expectations, mothers need to prepare their daughters to become givers.

Secondly, if the mother is not receiving the necessary intimate bonding in her own marriage, then the observing daughter will absorb that subordinate nature of the female, where they complain or comply.

Thirdly, the mother with unmet emotional needs may seek that from the daughter which can burden the daughter with the responsibility of the giver.

Finally, this becomes a congenital chain of unsatisfactory nurturing passed down the maternal line. If mothers themselves lack autonomy and see themselves as oppressed and the lesser gender, so too will their female offspring be condemned to the same fate.

Rani's relationship with her mother is very complex and would need a lot of unravelling to understand the deep rooted cause of her mother's part in the abuse of Rani as a child. However what does seem clear is that Rani's resilience and fierce independence has time and again been condemned and punished by her mother. She has seen it as a threat to her own authority. It shows that it is not only the mindset of male members of the Asian community that needs to change but more important perhaps, the mindset of mothers who have not only condoned the misogynistic laws made by men but have also upheld them. Mothers need to play a bigger part in creating this change. It was heartening to see, for example, that Munza, who may not have had the courage to leave her husband, teach her own daughter never to tolerate the same misogyny from her partner. Such laws are also reinforced through the cultural factor of obedience and respect for parental authority; an assertion in the mindset of children that the elders always "know what is best."

#### Enfranchise younger generation

*"Disobedience is the true foundation of liberty. The obedient must be slaves." – (Henry David Thoreau).*

Sabina did not suffer childhood abuse. In fact, on the contrary, she came from a very loving and secure family home. The relationship was thus that Sabina never felt inhibited about telling her parents how she felt. She was able to speak her mind and tell them that she did not want the relationship. She would never have blamed them for her predicament and insists that had she been more adamant, her parents would have stopped the marriage. So why did she go ahead and marry the man she didn't love? The short answer is her sense of obedience towards her parents.

Had Sabina strongly refused, perhaps her parents would have taken notice but because of her own sense of loyalty and devotion to family, Sabina was never likely to do this. It suggests that the mentality instilled in children of “parents know best” has to change, giving more trust and autonomy to their children, particularly daughters. This change again depends upon shift at “macro system” level.

Nusrat’s courage and tenacity to come to England and pave her own career path to a high level, would suggest a woman of considerable substance. And yet at twenty, she is told by her mother (who she considers to have been loving and supportive) that she should marry a stranger nearly twice her age. Such is the power of the patriarchal traditions and laws that neither Nusrat nor her consenting mother would have considered this as anything other than normal.

Decision making and choices from a young age gives confidence. Urooj was able to decide from early on that she was going to leave her husband. It was the process which took her longer, not the time to decide as she had been allowed that autonomy to make her own decisions early in her life. Therefore, parents need to be encouraged to give up the reins and allow their children to become part of the decision making within the family unit. This creates confident young adults with a high sense of self – worth. For too long, parents have been in the authoritarian role with obedience seen as the highest of virtues in their daughters.

### Reclaiming the Quran

If teaching of Quran is followed properly there is clear guidance, "*And live with them with kindness and equity*" (Quran, Chapter An-Nisa, Verse No:19).

Prophet Mohammad (PBUH),<sup>6</sup> had also reminded Muslims in a Hadith<sup>7</sup> that, "*The best among you is one who is best towards his wife.*" (Al-Tirmidhi, Hadith 62).

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<sup>6</sup> PBUH; The Arabic phrase ‘*alayhi as-salām* (عليه السلام), which translates as "peace be upon him" is a conventionally complimentary phrase or *durood* attached to the names of the prophets in Islam. The English phrase is also given the abbreviation *pbuh* in writing. An extended variant of the phrase reads *ṣallā Allāhu ‘alayhi wa- ala ālihi wa-sallam* (Arabic: صلى الله عليه وعلى آله وسلم) [lit.] "blessings of God be upon him and his family and peace",

Similar text is cited by Elizabeth Cady Stanton from the book of Genesis.

“If language has any meaning, we have in these texts a plain declaration of the existence of the feminine element in the Godhead, equal in power and glory with the masculine. The Heavenly Mother and Father! "God created man in his own image, male and female." (The book of Genesis).

The existence of Patriarchy has existed long before the creation of Pakistan. Originally Patriarchy was a male interpretation of the Christian scripture. However, with the dawn of enlightenment in Europe and the industrial revolution, women were also having their say. One of the foremost of feminist critics was Sabinah Moore Grimké, an American abolitionist, writer, and member of the women's suffrage movement. who voiced scepticism about the ability of men to translate and interpret passages relating to the roles of the sexes without bias. In 1895, Elizabeth Cady Stanton (1895) and the committee of 25 women used Grimké's criticism of biblical sources to establish a basis for feminist thought and the Women's Bible was published, which proposed a feminist reading of the Old and New Testament.

Nearly one hundred years later, Fatima Mernissi became a prominent Islamic Feminist, arguing that the “science” of hadith interpretation has been misrepresented by the Patriarchs in order to subjugate women.

In the same way that Stanton and her Committee of twenty five set out to de construct the Bible of its male slant, over one hundred years ago, many like Mernissi (1991) are setting out to do the same with the Quran. Mernissi and her followers highlight that discriminatory acts supposedly set up by God, have always in fact been male interpretations that have become sacred with time.

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<sup>7</sup> Hadith; a collection of traditions containing sayings of the prophet Muhammad which, with accounts of his daily practice (the Sunna), constitute the major source of guidance for Muslims apart from the Quran any of the sayings from the Hadith.

The struggle of the Muslim feminist is not against the Quran but against the patriarchs that would sit in judgment of women, allowing misogyny and all other kinds of injustices on its women to continue.

Although some cultures and social systems consider women as their sign of honour and respect, at the same time they restrict women from any type of external activities. The rationale behind practices like the veil is to provide security to the women, which has been advised by Islam. However, Islam never restricted women's education or empowerment or their freedom.

The work of Mernissi and other Islamic feminists in reclaiming the Quran for women should be continued and made available, not just to women but to the whole population of the Muslim world.

#### Male role models

Pakistan needs more liberal, educated and broadminded male politicians like Imran Khan. He was once the Nation's hero in the field of cricket and now has established his political party under the name of Pakistan Tehreek Insaf (Movement for Justice). The country's most conservative province, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, is planning to increase the percentage of women in the police force under the governance of Imran Khan.

This has begun to change with the issuance of government policy, by Imran Khan's PTI, in which 70% of new schools are built for girls and it also plans to increase the size of girls' schools so that the infrastructure matches those of boys' schools. More female colleges have also been established in order to provide women with higher education.

In 1988, Benazir Bhutto became the first female Prime Minister of Pakistan. During her election campaigns, she voiced concerns over social issues, including discrimination against women. She also announced plans to set up women's police stations, courts and women's development banks. After her assassination in 2008, her husband Asif Ali Zardari took over the reins of power and appointed several female members of parliament to prominent political positions, including first

female speaker in South Asia. During his tenure, Pakistan saw its first female foreign minister, first secretary of defence, deputy speaker of a province and numerous female ministers, ambassadors, and secretaries including the Media Advisor to former President of Pakistan. Pakistani women alone cannot effectively resist violence while living under a harshly patriarchal regime, where viciousness against women is embedded in the social, political, and legal structures of society. There are no quick fixes to change the status quo. The Pakistani government, civil society, and formal institutions must proactively support women in reducing their vulnerabilities and facilitate them in expanding their capabilities to address the real causes of violence against them. Luckily, Pakistan has an outstanding male role model within the Government. Imran Khan is a very strong beacon of hope. He has been a National Hero long since his retirement from the world of cricket. What better way than, to change the patriarchal mindset of Men, than through a man who has been a role model for every other Pakistani male expanding over three generations?

#### Role of new generation

*“Women do not know what it is like to be really female and really human and in control of all their potential.” (Greer, BBC 2010)*

It is also heartening to see that around Britain’s young Muslim population, there is an enlightenment that suggests that women, while still holding Islam at the centre of their lives and allowing parents to arrange suitable suitors, are not prepared to be coerced. The following is an extract from an article with the title; “The problem with Arranged marriages” written by Aisha, a young British Muslim.

“Many of us out there that don’t date before marriage are content to wait for Allah to find us our life partner. We choose not to date or engage in intimate relations before marriage, because we believe that the only relationship between a man and a woman can be that of husband and wife. And so we’re content to wait.”(themuslimgirl.com, 2017)

*Muslim Girl* is just one of many online magazines run by and for the next generation. Educating and raising our Muslim children to be self -sufficient, confident young adults will raise their

expectations of how they want to be treated in a relationship and if that has to start in the UK or any other western country, then that can only be good for the world. In the early 1970's, Women's Lib organisers raised women's consciousness in small groups and then used literature publications and rallies to spread the word. With the advent of the World Wide Web, these forums are a lot easier to construct but it needs to include the male population too and in particular the young Asian male population.

Recently, young Asian Muslims in Glasgow raised awareness in a campaign to push for minorities, including women, to be allowed on the all Pakistani middle aged male committee. Whilst voting on just *one* male member from a minority community onto the committee is hardly going to make walls come tumbling down, it does mean that a crack has appeared. And with a vibrant youth of both female and male behind it, surely it will not be long before more of those cracks appear.

#### Economic power

*"I think he didn't make it difficult for me. First he said he is not going to leave but after considerable pressure he did move out. Then he had a place to go to as well, it's not as if he was abandoned he had another house. So that made it easy. I think emotional and financial support I didn't rely on anybody, I had work, I had a good job, it was difficult at times but I managed it."*  
(Urooj)

Economic power and a sense of self-worth will help women to break free. Urooj was mindful that she did have some of the material advantages which perhaps some of the other case studies may not have had. Urooj and her partner had two properties, allowing her husband to move out of their marital house, thus sparing her the added trauma and heartache of leaving her own home with the children.

However economic empowerment of women alone cannot ensure greater safety unless the societal makeup and collective mindset changes in Pakistan also, where both men and women have not been as exposed to Western influence of Feminism.

### Institutional progress

On 24 February 2016, the elected assembly of Pakistan's Punjab province passed a new law called "Punjab Protection of Women Against Violence Bill 2015" which provides women with protection against a multitude of crimes including: cybercrime, domestic violence, emotional, economic and psychological abuse. Hopefully this will be a much needed first step towards acceptance of women as being equal to their male counterparts. However, as reiterated above, laws are the first step but changing the male mindset is paramount too. I happened to be visiting Pakistan a week after this law was passed and witnessed some of the chauvinist jokes being bandied around in male circles. They were making a mockery of law by saying to each other, "oh make sure you enter the house quietly, there is a law now not to upset your wife", "make sure there is nothing missing from the shopping list in case she gets upset."

Another much needed improvement has been The All Pakistan Ulema Council recently issued fatwas denouncing "honour killings." However, whether this decree will be seen as law by those village cultures that practice this ritual remains to be seen.

Other improvements are also being made as Lahore has inaugurated its first service of lady traffic wardens to manage the traffic. In the country of over 99 percent male drivers this is a courageous step.

### Recommendations

A recommendation has been made for further in-depth psycho- social research with women from younger age groups and similar cultural background in order to understand if they too feel the same pressures to adhere to the same value.

There is a need for clear definition between Arranged and Forced marriage for both Asian and Western communities with more Asian women in the frontline of the FM Government Agency as many Asians see the 2007 legislation as racist and an attack on Islam.

The findings of this research also agree with the following suggestions for change made by Gangoli's Respondents, when asked what could be done to help combat forced marriages.

“The education of key figures, such as community and religious leaders, enhanced relevant services, and improved communication between parents and children. Regarding the proposed legislation on forced marriage,” (Gangoli et al 2006)

At Community level events can be arranged through local Social Services and education settings, family therapy and relationship sessions that focuses on identifying and discussing the effects of coercion while at the same time promoting properly arranged marriages to continue the tradition where elderly can offer help and guidance through safe networks.

There needs to be opportunity for vulnerable young people to seek help through a supportive school environment where they can disclose any potential risk of forced marriage, .referring them to specialist support services. Providing potential victims of Forced Marriages with the important contact details including the number of the helplines and British Embassy in the country they may be sent to. It is crucial for Professionals to recognise that any disclosure of forced marriage is likely to have been made as a ‘last resort;’ thus the individual concerned is likely to be at high risk and must be taken seriously and act immediately.

It is equally important to recognise that young males should also be educated to say no to forced marriages so that they do not become victims themselves or complicit in coercion strategies.

Finally, further research that focuses on male perpetrators of Domestic Abuse and their motives would be useful as this research recognises that these men are also subjected to the cultural norms of practiced misogyny.

### **Final reflection**

My journey towards this research started after I had only recently come out of what I now understand was a forced marriage. I was interested in understanding the social and psychological influences that had combined to coerce me into a forced marriage arrangement. Through being allowed access to the journeys of these six women, along with the further research and wider reading, I have come to understand my own position.

I had already formulated my research proposal when by chance I was invited to a social gathering of my female peers. Of the six women who eventually became my case studies, four were present; two of them knew each other as childhood friends; however, the rest of us knew very little about each other's private lives. As a new arrival to this group, I was not aware of anyone's personal situation. It was here that Sabina divulged during a conversation, her past experience of domestic abuse; the full account of which is recorded within this thesis. It was at this meeting, during my brief introduction that I shared my plans for the research. Their interest in the subject was piqued and it was Sabina herself who became the first volunteer.

I would like to continue to explore this subject deeper. I intend to publish a paper in community care to suggest culturally informed practices in social work with heightened sensitivity, empathy and insight on the practitioner's part. It's often suggested, advised or imposed by social workers to leave abusive partners or otherwise face child protection and safeguarding enquiries. This creates another layer of oppression upon subjects already facing tough dilemmas with very little choice and difficult options.

As a researcher I am hoping that publication of the stories told by these subjects can empower other women, both here and in Pakistan. Only through understanding the barriers of culturalcentrism can these women hope to break them up and smooth the path for coming generations to live free from gender restrictions.

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## Appendices

### **Participant Information Sheet**

Dear Reader,

I am a qualified social worker and a research student at Tavistock and Portman NHS Trust. My current research topic is abuse in marital relationship or domestic violence. My thesis entitles, an in-depth qualitative study to understand the dominant psycho-social factors which influence women's decision when it comes to leaving or staying in an abusive relationship?

I am specifically interested in my own cultural background of south Asian community where cultural pressures and practices may be an extra factor. You are invited to take part in this study as you shared interest based on your past experience. The study will take place in place of your preference; it could be your home or our office at a time that is convenient to you. First interview will take about an hour and half or longer if you wish and will be audio recorded. There will be a second interview to cover any gaps in information. There could be four to six weeks between first and second interview to process the information shared and for you to have enough time to reflect upon any issues may surfaced from first interview. You will be asked to share your experience of marital relationship with as much detail as possible including your childhood upbringing, circumstances under which you get married and issues you faced in that relationship and decision you made to end or continue with the relationship.

Your interview will be anonymised to preserve the confidentiality according to the Data Protection Act 1998. There is no apparent risk apart from some emotional distress it may cause by surfacing any past memories. If there are questions that you find distressing or intrusive, you are free not to answer or to withdraw from participating. Hopefully your participation will help agencies and professional to act accordingly and hope that some of these accounts will be inspirational for those who struggle to see the light at the end of the tunnel. At the conclusion of the project, we will send you a newsletter describing the major findings and alerting you to any research publications we have generated from the project.

I enclose a consent form for you to sign should you decide to participate after considering all the relevant information.

Thank you for your interest.

Navida Khanum

## Participant Consent Form

**Title of Project:** ‘

Name of Researcher:

I confirm that I :

1. have read and understand the information sheet for the above study. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these questions answered satisfactorily.
  
2. understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason
  
3. understand that I will be
  - . i. Interviewed
  - ii. The Interview to be on tape
  
4. understand that data collected from me will be confidential and stored anonymously during analysis in line with the Data Protection Act 1998
  
5. understand that some quotes from my interviews may be publicised anonymously in the final report
  
6. understand that the findings will be presented to me during analysis and that the final report will be published in professional journals

7. agree to take part in the above study.

**Name of Participant Date Signature**

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Researcher Date Signature

**Vimala Uttarkar**

When completed: copy 1 for participant; 1 for researcher file:



**Interview Schedule**

The interview will take between 60 to 90 minutes.

**Main question:**

Could you tell me about your experience of married life?

### Prompting questions:

- How was your childhood family environment? Was there any gender preference between male and female children?
- What was your parents' relationship like with each other?
- How did you meet your husband? Did you consent to this marriage?
- When did things start to go wrong? What was your family's response?
- How did you reach a decision to stay or to leave?

## Analysis Process

### WRITING IN RED CODE PARTICIPANTS

### GREEN THEME

### QUOTES FROM

leaving or just there just finishing his meal. GOT DIVORCED/ENCOURAGED CHILDREN TO STAY INTOUCH WITH HIM/HE IS INVITED TO MEALS/HE IS AN OLD ILL MAN

So that's the scenario, it took me 28 years to separate from him. (I sensed such a loss and sadness as if to say I lost 28 years) to realise that it is the quality not quantity which the children need. I shouldn't have my children through what they witnessed. My first daughter became mature too early, so yes.

Navida, at what stage you start thinking let's leave him?

N, when he started throwing my children out, at that time I thought of leaving him but then he would always apologise. He will promise to change.

**I think what made me carried on living with him is that I lost my father when I was 17 and I didn't want my children to loose their father. That was the thinking behind it, hope that he is going to change, he will improve.** He will realise, he will accept me as me. he was a double personality person. So sometimes he would be very good, he was good father but like in front of somebody he would praise, he would respect but as soon

as that person turned around he would backstab. So he had personality disorder, double personality you know. GUILT FOR CHILDREN SUFFERING/THOUGHT , REFLECTION ABOUT STAYING/LOSING HER OWN FATHER/HOPE HE WILL CHANGE/HE WAS DOUBLE PERSONALITY

Yes, yes so you know (deep sigh and long pause)

after I left him I felt very relaxed, mmm now I got mixed, I got, I pity myself, you know I feel I didn't have had a life, I feel angry that why I didn't leave him earlier, I never regret, I have never forgiven him, I have this view that if he die and his funeral is in front of me, I wont forgive him. I had an argument with very close friend of mine when I said this. She said you cant say that when Allah forgive who are you not to forgive. I don't have any feelings for him, I see him more or less every day, he eats from my home you know, and I have no felings for him whatsoever. I just feel angry with Allah that why chose this type of life for me. when I was a teenager, group of my friends, my cousins you know when girls talk I marry such and such type of person, I used to say I will marry someone who loves me, I don't want anything else. So I fight with Allah a lot that I only asked for love from you, I didn t ask for a person with a car or money or looks. So why you deprived me of that? One thing htat I asked you. So yes. INTIALLY FELT RELAXED AFTER LEAVING/FEELING SORRY FOR HERSELF FOR NOT HAVING A LIFE/ANGER FOR NOT LEAVING SOONER/I WILL NEVER FORGIVE HIM/COMPLAIN TO GOD FOR NOT GIVING KIND OF PARTNER SHE WANTED LOVING

Thank you.

### **Rani INITIAL THEMES (16/11/2015)**

dad send us to Bangladesh after my brother was born because I think he wanted us to grow up there his family has not seen us and he will make more money that way. My dad was the one who was elected to come to the uk to make money. My dad's side of the family was quite intelligent. My dad's father was a high school head teacher.

### **CHILDHOOD/GRANDPARENTS**

She does not talk a lot about her family but you know there are no boys. my mum is a Hindu and my dad is a Muslim.

my dad has come to Bangladesh and he had bought everyone something but not me. A lot of my childhood is just a blur, to be honest I don't remember it. I don't know why I don't remember that I never had a good relationship with my mum. **FELT UNLOVED AS A CHILD**

, we had our own house I don't know why my dad sold it. We moved to a room in a shared house. there are 3 of us altogether. there is me and then my brother who is 11 months younger than me and There is my younger brother who is just 2 years younger than me.

I had a bed wetting issue, I don't know why? my mum singled me out, more my dad like me, less my mum like me. , I don't think I ever did anything right, was always a problem. I can't remember any good times **I just was never really happy.**

They moved us, we moved school ,we never fit in. I wasn't stupid or unintelligent. I did have good marks when I put my mind to it. education for girls was not important. maybe I was a bit rebellious, I don't know how to find myself. I remember one of the memories I have one time **I got drunk on lambuska (laughter) I took an overdose, I must be 15.**

**life was all about her** or how hard she was done by, if a Hindu person is seen with a Muslim even if something happened or not their family don't want them back.. It does not add up because if they made a court case to get her back why would they mistreat her?

I remember I **was about 15** when they brought this bloke to come and see me. I didn't want to get married, I been beaten up by my dad occasionally, I remember my dad even included my brother who is 11 months younger than me To participate in that beating.

**I agreed may be part of it thinking it will be escape from this unhappy life,**

All this guy wanted was just fucking having sex with me, it was horrible (crying). he was in his 30s I didn't have a choice, just agreeing to it that was your life isn't it. You don't have anything, no friends no family, nothing what you do. couple of Asian girls did, nobody cared, I wasn't close to anyone. When you are like down and you are depressed, you are young and you don't know which way to think.

I remember **going to Bangladesh** and within week he was horrible. He beat me couple of times, I was unhappy, I think I took an overdose at one occasion. one of his relative's house, locking myself in the room and calling my parents.

, I was always treated differently. I used to come home at lunch time to give her a break because my little brother was little. Now that I am a social worker I can see that he was very much neglected.

The shop was all about her. she didn't give us what kids need is love. I was always made to feel like I don't belong in my family because I was dark skin. Dark is not considered to be beautiful in Bengali culture. used to hated to go to mosque because at mosque they had Quran on this table and he used to **touch you up. I hated it I told my family, they didn't believe me.**

I came back, **I was pregnant**, I was sick, my own parent didn't come to collect me from the airport. I am thinking to myself their daughter is going to college and here is me. she is 16, Bengali lives in London look at me. fucking pregnant my family don't care. so then you start identifying yourself with abuser, even if they abuse you at least you have a bit of love.

I came back to my parents' house and they don't want me. I was looking after my little brother, cooking, cleaning, I was pregnant, I had two sets of clothes which I washed and wore throughout my pregnancy. started work in a sewing factory but I have to give my money to my dad, wasn't mine. I paid rent to my dad! I paid half the bills! I was allowed to keep little bit of money.

All this man who they got me married to was interested in **coming here** and me sending him money.

he has a right to see his dad.

I remember this MY dad made me so miserable on one occasion I never had a boyfriend but he accused me on regular basis that I was doing this that and the other. **I took an overdose**, discharge myself because they would have gone to prison, that man give a shit about his son, he wasn't interested, I realised then all he was interested in was **British passport**.

And my mum gave me an ultimatum saying either I left or she is going to leave. to bring me in a van and dump me in London. I wanted to take my son, I said no I am not going without my son and she fought me by the police.

**I left home with what I was wearing; I had £5 in my pocket.**

Bengali people, they wanted to use you, they wanted to exploit you. The men are like leaches you know they, you can see that they want you in sexual way. I was worse than (tearful laughter) I was worse than a prostitute. Everybody thought they can have a piece of me.

## **I turned 18**

my dad died around that time. My mum did let me have my son back but couldn't live and work I couldn't do it. my dad died and then she wanted k back. (sigh) so I Gave him back. I agreed that i would give her certain amount of money every week. Not just for him, for the whole family. I worked two three jobs to buy my first place. I was not going to live on someone else mercy, council want going to house me. **I didn't want to live on benefit, then I will be like her and everybody else.**

I was called all sorts, I cant go home if someone else is visiting , I am the outcast. he never asked about his son, he was only interested in British passport. high commissioned called me up for the interview, the family member made me. I turned to the man who asked me all the questions, towards the end I thought to myself, **if they give him his status I will never be free.** I turned to him and said **“what part of I don't love him you don't understand**

if he was here I can never be free. you know then I will be 4, 5, 6,7 kids fucking on benefit living in a council dump. we didn have any heating, we didn't even had duvets we had those brown army blankets to keep us warm. my dad had money, my dad was intelligent. He had a shop he had restaurants, all his money was invested there. My dad could speak English, he filled everyone's forms. He was part of the mosque committee. He fundraise for mosque , even went to queen's jubilee dinner. Its only after my dad died and over the last few years my mum turned around and said “oh my dad was about to leave her and marry this other woman. she told me that when she came back from Bangladesh with us in 1975 our dad didn't want us to come back I feel sorry for him because he is 35 years old, doesn't hold on a job. He wanted to leave home at 16, very intelligent but she didn't want him so we all kind of gang up on him may be threatened him you cant do that he sists in his room on his computer. She calls him all these nasty names.

## **WHY ARE YOU SO BITTER”? why**

she said to me am I jealous? I said no I got daughters as well, I don't want to hear this. I gave her 4 or 5000 pounds at that time that was a lot of money. Its hurtful when I had my eldest y my brother's son was born two days after, his wife gave birth to his youngest son, **she is talking about taking curry to the hospital for my sister in law what about me,**

and I had a job and couldn't, I had no where to live. So k went to live with my mum (I felt irritation or defense or could be guilt)I worked just around the clock. Within two years I did had enough to buy myself a little flat.

**I was a bit crazy, what did I have you know, no life, no nothing, no one to call my own, no body cared, I didn't care. what I am going to care about?**

I went out places it was like I let the people wine and dine me but that's it it wasn't, yes you take me out but it doesn't mean I am free time girl, I didn't do any of that. I met p, I think its **just two lonely people**, just meeting someone he looked the part, I just thought it's a different life. he left Belgium He was charming, polite, he had a good job. **He looked after me and I thought ok.** he was 8 years older than me, he was 32 I wanted to be taken care off and he wanted company, he was lonely moved in with him a month and married him in 10 months. his mum paid for the wedding, big party in Belgium. It was £10,000 in them days I told my family I am going to marry him. They met him and then it daunt on me its not right. Its not going to work out. He got issues, he got problem, but I couldn't walk away **It was one way of my family to acknowledge me after all those years.** I knew its not going to work, I knew then. Initially your head is in the clouds isn't ? the weekends he drink so much he would be lying on the floor like an idiot. Then I thought may be its just weekend thing, I knew then but marriage is so damn final isn't

**, may be a child will like calm him down.** I went through all that painful stuff of having ivf. Then managed to get pregnant and h turned. I just saw another side to p. he turned aggressive within few months. It was all about him, I saw that control side coming out.

was he not violent or aggressive in those four years?

no, just **his drinking carried on and I got fed up and in said I am leaving you. (1)**

I thought what am I doing, **I am not even 30 and will be divorced twice.** You know what I mean in English society its ok you can have 50 boyfriends people wouldn't see but as soon as you got a piece of paper its like taboo. Now I can see you are just putting on a sticky plaster on something which is not meant to be You understand what I am trying to say? It was just a different person I thought I don't recognise you.

I still worked, I provided for myself. He never really gave me anything. We never had a joint account, no nothing. He was so extravagant. He would just rake up credit cards. so I was been paying his credit cards, paying bills and things.. I f I had a week end off he will be drunk and say

I want to go Belgium, so I was driving him in the middle of the night to Belgium for few hours and driving back.

**I look back and I think what did I do because I didn't want my family to reject me**

**again.**(tearful laughter). litterly put up with his crap. He was my second chance to may be fitting in with this family. I wanted to belong.

y was just a month old he had this managing director job **in Israel,**

When my daughter was born most sensible thing I did was **not giving up my work.** I went on maternity leave and took a career break.

must have had an affair, even before that when I was pregnant, I was still doing my shifts, one time I came home I found a used condom

He decided he was taking a private plane I ended up going to France on my own with y and then he didn't wanted to see me. **he said he don't want to be with me anymore he has met someone else**

**Now I got second child and I am going through the same thing.** I thought my family don't want to know me. I am on maternity leave, I cant afford to pay my mortgage and child care. I still had my flat and it was too small so I rented it out. So that week was so miserable I was so upset, when you had a baby you are so emotional.

then he was charming and wanted me to come to israil so he can claim x, y and z. they gave him £40.000 in allowances and he wanted that. . He had £40,000 to pay all his credit card but remember when went to Israel he told me that he still got debt. **I always saved knowing I need rainy days fund.** I have to make friends up there, I made few friends, find my way around to do my shopping and keep myself company because it was a lonely life In Israel Even on the days when I feel so depressed and wont come out she would be knocking on my doors and making me go out to have lunch and stuff like that.

**, I was so down on one stage I remember lying in the middle of the road I wanted somene to run me over. I was just so unhappy.**

My mum wont support me. I didn't want her to do anything. I just wanted her to be emotionally available. I made a mistake, its only a mistake. why divorce is such taboo? I had a child with another person who was really not interested in me. for him having a wife and kid was just a status At times when he was drunk he said, horrible, horrible things, like he picked me up from

the gutter, none of them look after me, **I looked after myself**. She didn't look after me you didn't look after me. you all used me.

**When you got a young child and you are in a foreign country, someone can chip you away bit by bit.** he pushed me so hard I had big black eye for days. No one was there. friend with n but she was like you have to leave but for me it was like I cant! **I have already had one failed marriage I cant do it again.** two children growing up without a dad. **I got to make it work.** How? I don't know.

**He picked £25000 cash** and instead of bringing it to client he bought these bloody painitings replica which were not even worth £50. He took **another private plane and he hired a call girl gave her £5000 and went on holiday south of france.** There was me in Israel, he left me with no money, lucky I had my own, he didn't give me any money, 18 month old child, Instead of coming home he booked himself in a hotel. Because he still got his credit cards £20,000 on each Barclay credit card access, I cant be stranded here, the house is going to go how I am going to get back to the uk. I had like £3000 I wasn't going to waste that knowing I am going to need it. I let him take all the furniture and everything to Belgium. **I thought I cant carry on like this I have to separate. Don't care what family think, I got my home, I still got my job, lets go back to the uk.**

, I was still emotionally tied. first two three months he didn't speak to me and then he agreed to go to rehab. **That's how he wormed his way back in.** In reality he didn't want to change, he wanted money out of me. I remortgage my house and **gave him £75000.** I remortgagt my house in 2000 and gave him £75000, **how stupid was i? I must been damn crazy.**

I had a child minder and an au pair kind of supporting me to care for my daughter. I leave money to buy bits and pieces for my daughter and he would be at the pub. I was looking after her, she couldn't cook, iron, she was still in my house until 4 months afterwards she didn't want to go. I give her bits of money because **I felt sorry for her.** I found out that I was pregnant with f. that was a nightmare. Because then the shit started when he heard I am pregnant, started drink, racking up debt, my friends said you cant be doing that. I did get a solicitor and I did wish to god I followed it through because my life would been so different **but I didn't.**

within 48 hrs I served injunction on him because I thought If I am going to get divorce, I need to get divorce now because he is going to ask for half of my house again. you got a house in

Belgium, this is mine that is yours. Around that time I sold my house and gave my mum proceed, I had f (second daughter) he behaved well for a while. He wasn't drinking but he became emotionally pathetic, playing games, this that and the other.

I was very regimental the way I operated. My kids I woke them up I took them to nursery, went to uni came back, bring them, fed them, put them to bed, did my study.

We went on holiday to France and I found out I am pregnant (third time). I thought how can i? I am on the pill, hardly sleep with him, how could I get pregnant? he started the worst episode ever. Then he was drinking 24/7. Then he told his family it wasn't his. I have been sleeping around.

After paying bills, mortgage and child care I had very little money left. I bought few presents for my children for **Christmas**, they were in the boot of his car, he pissed off to Belgium, on his own, a week before Christmas with their toys. I remember sitting at home with some roast chicken, went to pound shop and bought some presents for my children while he was having a fancy Christmas in Belgium.

**I weigh two stones less,**

**. Valentine's day he came with this digital camera,** I said to him I don't want a digital camera, when I am struggling to pay the bills and feed my children. That's all I said and he ran out the house, he bought himself this posh £30,000 jaguar

He said he had an accident but he wont tell me anymore where he is. I got on the phone to Belgium police. They told me yes he hAd an accident, and this is where he is. yes I am emotionally linked to him whether its in a good way or bad way. Two kids, third on the way, child care, no I couldn't do it all. I took a flight to Belgium to go and see him at the hospital. Even then he was well **I don't want to be with you,** he was in hospital for few months because he cracked his ribs

remember going to labour like 2 in the morning, I had to call my child minder, an old lady to come and sit with my two kids, went to hospital myself. After giving birth my strength came back, it was just like a switched light I have to get on with it. I am not going to put up with this anymore; I still did, even though I thought like that. **I still put up with it** because I still had one more year to uni to go before I qualified. Si I gave him **another £50,000** out of my house, I will

pay you back, I will pay you back. I thought ok its coming out of the house,if he helped me with child care then I can manage just to get myself through.

God must been looking after me because the very same year child tax credit was put in place.

They would help you with 80%of your child care. N was about 8/9 months old, so I could claim that and I could manage.. I separated myself emotionally, because he dragged charging order on my house, he won't go, I couldn't chuck him out, by that time **he sold his flat in Belgium and spent all the money. So he would not go.**

I lived in fear because my dad died bankrupt, I thought to myself, oh shit, they going to take the whole house. On his name or not, we are married

**My motto was where there is a will there is way. I will find a way,**

His family started on me they think I was the one who was crazy. His mum phones a psychologist to council me.

He had good jobs, he would earn like £4000 a month. You know how much he would give me, 5/6 or 800 a month.

ok its my bed, I have to lie in it, my mum is not going to be supportive. My mum knew what he was doning to me, my son was two weeks old when I phoned her to say I had him, she didn't phoned to see how I was.

. I cant chuck somebody out and make them homeless because I been there I know what it is like. Cant do it. They didn t care about him, and he didn't care about them either.

Every door I knocked it did nt open He charged me £1500 to get divorce. he is gone now for 4 years. He stayed here for 7 years after n was born . loan the faster I paid the more he took I don't want my kids to see all that. **I used to barricade the door with chest of draws. I was scared of him, kids were scared of him.**

I filed for divorce. I did some of it myself and then rest done through solicitor. Oh I am going to change I am so sorry, I said no. **I promised I will look after him that I will always make sure that he is not homeless.** He is been sick since july 2011. Nearly 4 years, soon after he left here although you don't have any emotions left for them you feel sorry for them , **you know all that multitude layers of guilt and taboo and what people think, its not just your family it's the community, the wider society, it keeps you entrenched.**

. Its like you wont turn your back on your child, they are an adult but they become that. I wasn't his wife I was more like his surrogate mother. (MEN BECOMING VIOLENT DURING PREGNANCY, IS JEALOUSY ANOTHER CHILD TAKING THEIR MOTHER?)

there is no damn support there, its just lip service support

There was always that fear that if I try to enforce something he will go he is an intelligent man.

It only takes on section 47 to be open and I will lose my career. (I can relate to that fear when u dealing with someone so smart, clever and intelligent that they will find a way to destroy u)

I had resided myself to be on my own. I was calm I was going to work, my house was at peace.

After all those years I found myself in a peaceful place not looking for a relationship at all. I

wasn't unhappy, I didn't feel that there was anything missing in my life at all. . He is genuinely

nice but you know the old fears are there.he likes to have a drink but not like p and I always

think oh my god is he going to end up like that?

**its finding some inner strength**, I was not going to replicate my childhood on my children and

there was that motto I kept sayin gto myself, what doesn kill you make you stronger

so the only person could rescue me was myself. I have to stop playing the victim

### **Reduced themes**

Unloved childhood/ felt misfit/

At 15 forced to marry a 35 yrs old

Gave birth at 16, abusive husband

Homeless at 18

Ambitious

Second marriage wanted to be loved

Have to make it work second time/Taboo of divorce second time

Paid his debts

### **COMMON THEMES**

1. Childhood Experiences/Role of extended family
2. Age and process of proposal/Girl's views and wishes were not asked, considered or respected apart from one case
3. Feeling obliged to agree to marry/Emotional blackmailing
4. Role/interference of In laws
5. Pregnancy, Birth, Isolation and control
6. Husband as a father
7. Significance of financial situations
8. Importance of connection and support from birth family
9. Emotional torture, belittling, taunting, name calling to her family
10. Number of attempts to leave
11. Apologies and promises to change
12. Stigma, reputation of family and community pressure
13. Guilt of separating children from their father
14. Dilemma as a parent and professional (in two cases)
15. Last straw/trigger/fight or flight
16. Work as safe heaven or support
17. Period of depression in all suicidal thoughts and attempts in all apart from one case
18. Financial struggles and court matters
19. Never told anyone
20. Impact on children
21. Certain level of freedom and independence in all apart from one case
22. Years spent in marriage
23. Sources of strength and support, faith, children, family
24. Main Hindrance, community, fear of losing family reputation, stigma, taboo
25. After thoughts, relief, sadness, shock
26. Asylum status/British nationality/spouse visas
27. Where would I go? Fear of unknown
28. Just carried on, hope to change, minimisation
29. Some were living in foreign land away from family and friends or support network

30. Men using anger as a way of control
31. To people we were perfect couple/pretence/keeping the face
32. Pressure of second marriage to make work/your last chance
33. Two women felt unloved by parents and both ended up marrying 3 times

### **Elected Themes**

- Misogyny/Patriarchal society
- Insecure, bullying male Possessiveness, jealousy
- Taboo of divorce
- Never told anyone
- Apologies , love and promises
- Thought of leaving but fear of bringing shame on family
  - Feeling guilty about taking father away from children
    - Thought to leave but nowhere to go