

Caught up unjustly

I (Shamim Gulzar) as a Umeed trainer conducted training on providing ways and means of physical and Psychological mechanism for 25 illiterate Hindu girls/women survivors of faith forced conversion of district Bahawalpur. Towards the end of the training one of the participants a new wedded Hindu bride came up to me and said if I could spare a little time to listen to her privately. We both sat in an open straw shed and she begins to speak. She said I got married to a Hindu man a few weeks ago, he loves me very much, he is an innocent man but I feel guilty when I compare myself to him. My soul is wounded and I feel I am a sinner. I am not worthy of this man. I enquired why? What is the reason? Then she started narrating her story.

She said three years ago when I was 16 years of age I was kidnapped by a land lord's man who sexually abused me for a month. However I managed to escape from him and came to my parents' house. The man followed me and began pressurizing my parents that I should be returned back to him since he claimed that I was his legal wife and Hindus have no right to keep with them his legal wife My parents protected me from this man. He then filed a case against me and my parents in the civil court. An NGO (Umeed Partnership Pakistan) of the area assisted me to fight this case. During the case proceedings I appeared before the judge and explained the whole incident that how I was abducted and raped by this man and that now he falsely claims that I am his wife. I disown this man and I want to go back to my parents to live my life peacefully. The court dismissed the case and allowed me to go with my parents.

After getting justice from the court I was relieved but there was another huge problem pending before me if not solve could ruin my life. I discovered that I was pregnant. Becoming pregnant out of wedlock is not acceptable in Hindu as well as in Pakistani culture. I shared this problem with my mother who arranged a Christian Lady Health Visitor (LHV) to help in terminating this pregnancy. Getting illegal abortion done is another crime in Hindu and in Pakistani society. The Christian LHV was very cooperative and she saved my life. Today I am happy and living my married life due to the timely help and support given to me by the LHV. The issue of abortion is a top secret of my life, in my family only my mother knows about it. My husband knows that I was abducted but do not know that I became pregnant. If known to him he would have not married me. In fact no man would have married me. For this only I feel guilty and it is a continuous worry and fear for me that my husband loves me so much but I am concealing a crime which I committed.

She asked me whether she should disclose the secret to her husband or keep on living life with guilt, fear and worries. She thinks that if she discloses the secret her husband might divorce her. I felt her pain and all sufferings which she has had been going through. I counseled her by saying that it was not her fault and convinced her that dignity never lies in an organ. You are still as pure as your husband so there is no need of worrying that you will be divorced by your husband or punished by your community. Accept it that it all happened accidentally. The only solution to this problem is to release yourself from the guilt, fear and worries which are hurting and keeping you trapped. Set yourself free now. It was not your fault **because you were caught up unjustly in that evil trap.**