

Reflections

As an Asian growing up in Manchester I have seen many changes in communities, but somehow as a close observer of the Asian women I cannot but notice that as the Asian women get older, the more culturally bound they become and imprisoned by their own rules and pressures put on them by other Asian women in the community and family.

For example when I came to England straight into High School, Year 7, there was only one other Pakistani girl in the school and she happened to be my age and in the same class. We soon made friends as I couldn't speak English she often translated for me. It wasn't long before I could fluently speak English and express myself to others. Anyway this Pakistani girl was well liked by other and never let anyone push her about.

Throughout school I noticed that she was very unhappy about the pressure being put on her by her parents. Specially by her mother. For example her mother would not allow her to wear skirts. She would come out of her house wearing trousers under her skirt and as soon as she turned the corner from her street she would take her trousers off, roll down her white sock and pull her skirt up, showing her legs. She desperately wanted to be like her friends but as she got older I know more and more pressures were being put on her and by the time we left school she was already engaged to her cousin in Pakistan.

We lost touch and I didn't see her until a few years ago. She recognised me first and she couldn't believe it.

We asked about each other's lives and how many children we had etc..

I was surprised to learn she had been married the year we left school and she was equally surprised I married at the age of 31. Her eldest daughter was 18.

My daughter was only 5.

To me she looked like a middle aged woman who has just come from some village in Pakistan. It's only when she starts to speak you realise she is from here. Her English-Salfordian accent tells you that she was born and brought up in England.

It was very sad for to see that bubbly young girl had all her dreams taken from her, married to some man her family pressured her into marrying.

She did what was expected of her.

I wish she had been stronger.

Now she seems depressed. She has blood pressure problems, kidney problems and family problems. You would think she would want to keep her daughters to be what she could not be, but no, she toes the cultural line and has married her daughters to men in Pakistan.

She is now a grandmother and I feel she changed nothing for her daughters. That I find hard to understand.