

We are Girls!

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Tears rolled down her cheek, yet her makeup remained intact. There was a thick layer of foundation or skin lightening cream on her face, all the way down her neck, her collar bone, up to the edge of her heavily decorated outfit, to avoid any skin contrast. Her eye lashes were thick and dense. They were artificial. There was color on her eyes to match her wedding attire. Her cheeks were brushed with red and golden glitter. Her wedding saree was red and golden. It was draped on her perfectly. The folds and pleats remained as is and didn't move otherwise. The crease on the made folds remained undisturbed. She sat on the over decorated cheap couch especially decorated for the two special couple of the evening. The yellow light made everything on her even shinier and she glowed like gold.

My little sister was a bride. She rebelled and fought for her love and what she believed. She was marrying the single most important person in her life, her love. Years had passed by, but she didn't succeed to gain an acceptance for him from my parents. Both parties had their priorities and neither was ready to compromise. Here she was, finally, after all the feuds and arguments, a few minutes from becoming a wife to her love, a daughter in law to his parents and a lost beloved to us. Just before she had left our home, forever, mom and she threw fire arrows at each other. Perhaps I would never understand all the emotions that drowned her at that moment.

I sat next to her in an effort to console her but failed. There was nothing I could tell her. I didn't know if I was supposed to tell her anything either. For a moment I thought I should just hold her hand in a gesture to comfort her and revive her confidence but again stopped myself. For the type of person she is, confidence was in abundance. Sometimes, I think I should loan some from her. She didn't need her confidence revived. She just needed someone to tell her it was all going to be alright. I tried to tell her it was all going to be alright but I wasn't sure. I wasn't sure what she wanted to be alright. I wasn't sure if we shared the same feelings about everything being alright or not. Once again, I stopped myself. At that moment, there were no words in the English language or for that matter any language that I spoke, to console her.

Mom and dad sat in the corner of the room and watched their daughter dressed as a bride. Mom silently wept but kept a straight face all along. There was neither happiness nor sadness. She is a very strong woman. Sometimes, she would tell us stories of all the kind of hurdles she had to overcome during her childhood, her youth and while we were growing up. She struggled to give me and my siblings a better life than hers. We have had a wonderful life and I sincerely thank my parents for it. When she spoke of such tales of her life, I wondered often what I would do if I were her. Would I be able to come out of it in victory? She was my ideal. She was the strongest person I had known in my life. Today, she was losing her daughter. She had no choice but let go of her flesh and blood. She could no longer protect her from vile surroundings. Her daughter, my sister, was an adult now. She

demanded her rights as an adult and to be heard. Mom, being a liberal woman, was left with no choice but accept her decision even though in her heart she knew it was a mistake.

For a long time, she hoped and she hoped real hard that my sister would change her mind as there was no support from our family. Mom and Dad did their best to loudly announce their lack of support and the family's intention of not being involved. They failed.

At times, while she sat and watched her little daughter, she regretted not being a part of it perhaps. She noticed the minute details now from the distance. She imagined her little one to be a perfect bride always. Now she searched for perfection.

The ceremony commenced. There were arguments about various unimportant issues that went right on top of my head. Mom sat still and just watched. I don't think she was in the room at all. Her mind was wandering around somewhere else. Perhaps, our childhood! I couldn't hear the arguments and the anger that filled the room of an auspicious occasion. I was lost, where I am not aware. I wasn't sure how I was to react to all this. There were other statements against me thrown in the room. "The older sister is not married? What is the matter with her? Is there something wrong? Oh! Perhaps because she isn't as pretty! She is on the bulky side. She seems older too. What a pity! The parents will have a problem marrying her off" I watched the women making these comments and smiled at them. They found it very pleasing to point at me to each other and criticize my situation. I was numb from all emotions. All I was worried about were my parents.

With a million rounds of arguments from both sides, the auspicious ceremony was concluded. It was time for us to go home. They had requested that they take away the bride that night. We weren't initially prepared for this. But now that she is married to the son of that family, we had no say. We simply agreed to their request and prepared to bid farewell to a sister and a daughter. Mom and Dad now broke down. They cried and cried. My sister perhaps now felt she wanted to return home like she always did. Back to her room, to her bed, to her kitchen, her bathroom, her life. It was too late for that now. She was to start her life all over again. A new beginning of a new life! We blessed her.

We walked with her towards the exit. We walked slow and even slower. We wanted time to come to a stand still. We wanted something to happen suddenly so we could change these pre set plans. We wanted to hold her back again. We wanted her to ask to stay back. The exit was a few steps away and a mini van waited for the bride. The van was filled with people from the groom's family. The faces were all unknown. My parents and I had to give away our flesh and blood, my sister and their daughter, to a bunch of people from mars? They pulled her away from us and sat her in the van. Her mother in law sat next to her and patted her on her back and then her head. Then she pretended to wipe away my sister's tears. She pretended as though my sister was her daughter. It was very clear she was being pretentious. She pulled away a daughter from my mother. She pulled away a sister from me. How could she? And we just stood there helpless. For a moment, I felt as though the mother in law and the rest of their family were enjoying our helplessness. They laughed out loud in their heads pointing at us.

What sort of law and traditions were these?

We came home, the three of us. We felt betrayed and cheated, like we lost a beloved in a war. A war that was fought for absolutely no reason, no goal, no kingdom, just nothing! Perhaps, for the groom and his family, the battle was a success. It was a known fact that after the vows are taken and the girl and boy are announced husband and wife, the husband and his family takes away the wife with them, to their home, her new home.

We couldn't accept our loss!