

A Sad Situation

by Suzy Hopkins

New Deli, India January 14th

Dear Diary:

I turn 31 years old today and am still unmarried although not for long. My mother has arranged a marriage to a farmers' son in a rural area far from here. The amount of my dowry is the only hold up. My father has offered 5 goats but the man's parents want more.

January 28th

Dear Diary:

My father included two solid gold candlesticks in my dowry and I was finally married today.

In a rural area far from New Deli February 10th

Dear Diary:

I live with my husband in my in-laws' house. His mother cooks all the meals. She locks up the food so I can only eat something when she makes a meal. I am expected to clean up after my in-laws as well as my husband. I have to clean the bathroom, sweep the dirt floors, wash the dishes and the windows which you can tell have not been washed for years by my in-laws.

March 1st

Dear Diary:

Now I am told I have to work in the fields as well as doing my other chores.

May21st

Dear Diary:

Today the in-laws and my husband ate diner without calling me to come in from the fields. There was nothing left for me to eat except what I could scrape from the pots when I washed them. This happened before and will probably happen again.

June 1st

Dear Diary:

I overheard the in-laws talking to my husband. They want more dowry from my father. He has refused to give them anything else. Now they want my husband to kill me, like he did his former wives, so he can marry again and get another dowry. I'm going home to my parents' house tonight. I will start after everyone has gone to bed.

New Delhi newspaper headline June 2nd

"A 31 year old woman was found dead. Her husband said he caught her on a rural road running away from him and his house so he killed her." Killing of your wife in India is rarely prosecuted.

The wife's family wants to protect their other daughters from the shame of a dowry death. The in-laws are never reprimanded.