

I'm Glad I Was Born in America

by Suzy Hopkins

In Afghanistan the fathers are the proprietors of their daughters and can marry them off as shown in Sharia Law also known as Islamic Law. Girls from two families can be exchanged for marriage to save dowry costs. If the father has committed a crime against a family he can give his daughter to them to resolve the conflict. Young girls are also placed into marriages in order to repay large amounts of debt.

It is against Afghan Law to marry off a daughter under the age of 15 however it is rarely enforced. When the father decides it is time, she can be married to an older man as young as 12. This is often dangerous for her health since having a baby at such a young age is difficult and there is little health care. 60-80% of the total marriages, even today, are forced, without the bride's consent. Some girls resort to suicide to avoid marrying a much older man.

70% of the girls are illiterate. Even if their father has let them attend school they can no longer participate after they marry.

So, there is no future for these young women or their daughters until parenting by Afghan fathers changes, which is unlikely.