

16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence

25th November to 10th December 2020



#notallviolenceisphysicalorvisible

The relationship started through an arranged marriage with my cousin, he lived in England, I was in Pakistan, and then we got engaged in 2018. We got married in 2019, before we were married we used to talk on the phone and he was fine, he made promises to me that he would treat me like a princess, but they were false promises.

His mum had mental health issues and he blamed his behaviour on the pressure from that. Sometimes he would get angry, but I ignored it, because I knew about the pressures with his mum; this was before we got married. He used to sometimes say strange things to me on the phone. Then we got married, he came to Pakistan and stayed for one month, he seemed fine at first but when we met with cousins and other people, his behaviour was odd. An example of this was that he was rude and aggressive and he ignored me. I also noticed that he was a little possessive with me, e.g. if we were invited to my relatives' house for dinner, he would not be happy if I spoke with anyone; nor if anyone came to visit me.

After one month he returned to the UK. I was asking him to sort out my visa and asking him to be as quick as possible with it and this made him depressed. He wasn't used to mixing with my family but when I went anywhere when I was still in Pakistan, he already knew about it because I told him. Also, during this time, he would sometimes make video calls and demand that I performed sexual acts for him. He also sent money to me each month. The sexual abuse continued after we were married.

When I came to the UK, his behaviour was fine for two months but then it changed: he became aggressive and very ignorant. There were other problems too as his mother was smoking and using alcohol and her mental health was unstable.

I started working and was also doing all the housework, cooking, washing etc but his mother told my husband that I did nothing to help in the house which caused further problems between me and my husband. My husband used to often try and get me to take a day off work – I told him this wasn't possible. He wasn't happy that I was happy at work, and he used to say negative things about it.

Not all violence is physical or visible; control and manipulation is abuse too.



There was an occasion when he wanted me to get my payslips, I asked my workplace, but they said because of Coronavirus they couldn't get them. My husband then called my workplace himself and started arguing with them about it and when he got off the phone he was very angry and took it all out on me. He broke a cup on my hand which made it bleed and was throwing things at me. I told him that I would go and try and get the payslip but he then locked me in a cupboard for ten minutes, I tried to get out but he wouldn't let me; he was also punching me at this time. So I told him I needed to get out as I needed my asthma inhaler. I think he wanted the payslips as he was gathering paperwork so we could try and rent a house.

Generally, he would get very angry, whenever he wanted to do something, he just needed to do it - he wanted his own way all the time. It was like this all the time, he was constantly angry and aggressive, he showed no respect; he was torturing me mentally and physically.

We then moved to a new house. There was one occasion when his friend came round, which was the incident that caused me to leave him. He tried to force me to eat a sandwich against my will, and when I refused he became volatile and forced the sandwich into my mouth in front of his friend. He sent me flying towards the stairs with a punch and then forced me to go upstairs, where he then hit me with a stick. He had a gas lighter in his hand and shouted that he would burn my face. He was constantly shouting that he would kill me.

I was extremely frightened and screaming out of fear for my life; he also kicked and punched me hard.

When I decided to leave, I had been giving him chances up until this time. He had thrown hot noodles on my face, he wouldn't let me have my own bank account and he used to take all my wages, so I left him in August of this year. My manager at work helped me leave, she gave me money for a taxi and helped me get support from Ashiana and then I got a place in the refuge where I am now.

After I left him, he kept messaging me and swearing at me. He and his mum were abusing me saying that I could not stay in the UK and that they would send me back to Pakistan. He was sending private pictures of me to my family and he was blackmailing me by threatening to put these pictures on social media, so then I reported him to the Police and he was arrested. He was also harassing my cousin who was looking after my paperwork, going to her house to try and get my papers.

The Police have been very helpful, checking that I am safe. He has told my cousin that if he ever sees me with someone, I will be in trouble.



When I look back the warning signs (red flags) were:

- He used to try and be the boss and give me orders – I did wonder why I married him, but I tried to make it work
- Everything happened very quick and we did not get more time to get to know each other before the marriage

If I met someone now who was in my situation, on a spousal visa and experiencing domestic abuse, the advice I would give them is:

- If you think he is very controlling or the first time he tries to hit you, don't be quiet, take action
- A girl should have self-respect and follow her dreams
- She should keep her own career as well
- Parents should not arrange a marriage so quickly, especially if the proposal is from abroad



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