

Picking up the Pieces...to Make a Broken Image?

A Teacher

I have been teaching since 1993. The early years were a bit difficult as people in villages were opposed to girls' education. It took me a while to understand their perspective. They would marry off their daughters while they were still in class one or two.

This story is about such an incident. Fauzia Parveen was the brightest student of our school. She was then in class two. During the summer break she was married to her brother's wife's brother; in *watta satta*, she was given in exchange for that family giving their daughter to her brother.

Fauzia had been keen to study. A victim of *watta satta*, and of her in-laws ill-treatment, Fauzia now looked lost and forlorn, to such an extent that she became mentally stressed and nervous. Due to her mental illness she left school. This made me very sad. I would often go to her house to ask after her, to chat with her. When she would get a little better, I would encourage her to return to school. Together with her parents, I did everything possible to help her get treatment. After a prolonged treatment the child got a little better. But she had forgotten all her school work and was lagging behind the others. Encouraging her, I again started to teach her.

Fauzia's academic career came to an end as she secured the second position in her class fifth exams. I had managed to keep Fauzia in school this long after begging and pleading with her in-laws and by getting them an exemption from all expenses of her schooling.

Given her situation, I can only pray that May God always keep her in His protection.

The author is a teacher at a Government Girls School in Chiniot