



Dear Zari: The Secret Lives of the Women of Afghanistan

Zarghuna Kargar

[Download now](#)

[Read Online](#) 

Dear Zari: The Secret Lives of the Women of Afghanistan

Zarghuna Kargar

Dear Zari: The Secret Lives of the Women of Afghanistan Zarghuna Kargar

Moving, enlightening, and heartbreaking, Dear Zari gives voice to the secret lives of Afghan women. For the first time, Dear Zari allows these women to tell their stories in their own words: from the child bride given as payment to end of a family feud, to a life spent in a dark, dusty room weaving carpets, from a young girl being brought up as a boy, to a woman living as a widow shunned by society.

Intimate, emotional, painful and uplifting, these stories uncover the suffering and strength of women in this deeply religious and intensely traditional society, and show how their courage is an inspiration to women everywhere.

Dear Zari: The Secret Lives of the Women of Afghanistan Details

Date : Published June 1st 2012 by Sourcebooks (first published May 1st 2011)

ISBN : 9781402268373

Author : Zarghuna Kargar

Format : Paperback 272 pages

Genre : Nonfiction, Biography, Feminism, Biography Memoir, Autobiography, Memoir, Short Stories, Politics, Cultural, Womens Studies, History

 [Download Dear Zari: The Secret Lives of the Women of Afghanistan ...pdf](#)

 [Read Online Dear Zari: The Secret Lives of the Women of Afghanist ...pdf](#)

Download and Read Free Online Dear Zari: The Secret Lives of the Women of Afghanistan Zarghuna Kargar

From Reader Review Dear Zari: The Secret Lives of the Women of Afghanistan for online ebook

Peggy Kelsey says

One thing I loved about this book is that some of these interviews were done by women Zari trained to do interviews. What this means is that the lives and stories of the women in the book are ones not usually covered by the Western press. Some of these stories are hard to read, but there are many similar stories that have yet to be told. Zari's own story woven throughout added great insights into the lives of Afghan expatriates who may live among us in the West. Highly recommended.

Taj says

I don't know how to properly rate a book that is so unpleasant in its honesty and its bleakness. The book itself is well-written, poignant, approachable and important. The subject matter is depressing, hopeless, infuriating and incomprehensible. It leaves the reader wondering is there a "normal" Afghan experience. Is there an Afghan family unit with ties of loyalty, fidelity and love? Because after reading these stories, you are left jaded and cynical to wonder if such familial ties exist or are even possible in such an environment. It is a bleak portrait of a world that is so foreign as to be incomprehensible. Foreign, not because it is a land far away or because women's rights are non-existent, but foreign in the sense that the most basic human bond, the love of parent and child, appear to be twisted and subverted. Fathers and mothers willingly cast their daughters into the bleakest of situations with little hesitation or regret. I can't understand this world.

Kristen says

I thought this book was going to be about women all over the Middle East and their different stories. Where this was present it was also A LOT about the author herself. I did not want to read a memoir but different stories. I actually got tired of the author interrupting the other women's stories to talk about her own life and the radio show she does. When I want to read only about the author, I will get her biography.

Other than the aforementioned complaint, I found these women to be braver than anything I could imagine for myself. I don't know how they do it. I am so proud and incredibly blessed to have been born a Christian in America where I am free to make all of my own decisions in life. I pray for these women and am truly amazed at their resolve!

Jennalyn says

I received a free copy of this book through Goodreads First Reads.

Knowing relatively little about modern Afghanistan other than what little I've heard on the news, I was interested to hear accounts of what life is really like for Afghan women. Kargar gathered the stories

presented in this book while working for the BBC and producing a radio program called the Afghan Woman's Hour. She spends a fair amount of the book discussing her own experiences as a journalist and reflecting on how the stories she's collected remind her of her own experiences as an Afghan refugee. She freely admits that she has many opportunities and privileges that these other women do not, but she feels a great deal of kinship with these women and their struggles. Although there are several occasions when her personal reflections interrupt the flow of otherwise compelling stories, I understand why she feels the need to emphasize this common bond.

She relates each story simply and clearly, sometimes paraphrasing or retelling a narrative in her own words, while other times she allows the women's voices to speak for themselves. Kargar's work is admirable and her desire to change the conditions in Afghanistan resonates throughout this book - even though she often expresses her helplessness when she is confronted with a tragic story that she knows she cannot change. I think what makes this book most effective is that Kargar shares a similar cultural background with these women, but also lives in London and understands western culture. She manages to serve as a bridge of understanding between the two, presenting Islamic values in a way that westerners can understand.

It's hard to say that I "enjoyed" the stories because they are overwhelmingly sad, even heartbreaking at times. But they are also fascinating and eye-opening. Many of these women have faced great hardship and their stories are deeply moving, even as they reveal just how far we have to go in promoting women's rights around the world.

Kelly says

This is an eye opening book of true stories of women living in Afghanistan based on a BBC series. Major themes include disappointment in having a girl child (a mother is not complete until she has a boy), the forced marriage to men they don't see until their wedding day, the near impossibility of a girl choosing who she will marry, girls not being able to attend school after a certain age...this amid the constant wars and leadership changes, each with their own imposing rules. It makes you very glad to live in a place where women are much more equal.

Laura says

This is a very powerful book. It gives great insight into the lives of women from Afghanistan and the many challenges they face just by being born a women. The stories are full of hope, despair, loneliness and courage. Throughout it all there is growth.

I would encourage people to read this and prepare to be stunned by what you are reading and ultimately feeling hopeful for the women of Afghanistan and the hurdles they have so far been able to overcome.

Sharon Bolton says

‘The son who was going to sleep with me was also very young; he was fifteen years old. He would also sometimes beat me while telling me that I was soon going to be his wife, but he didn’t beat me as much as the others did.’

Zarghuna Kargar was born in Kabul in 1982. When civil war erupted across Afghanistan, she and her family

escaped to Pakistan, where she trained as a journalist. She came to the UK in 2001 and started working for the BBC World Service. This book was born out of the research she did for Afghan Woman's Hour and comprises thirteen ordinary Afghan women telling their own, extraordinary stories.

Over the course of thirteen chapters we learn a great deal about what it is to be a woman in a country of which we've heard so much and yet know so little. We learn about the children given as brides in part-payment of debt, who are starved, raped and beaten. We learn about women demanding their rightful inheritance, only to find the law, police and male relatives conspiring against them. We learn about women who can only feed their children by begging for work in other women's households.

The picture the book paints is of a bleak, mediaeval society, in which masculinity has become synonymous with brutality, and in which the women are often as bad as the men. Mothers-in-law, favoured second wives and sisters endorse and participate in the cruel bullying of their younger sisters. How representative a picture it is, we don't know, because the author has chosen to show us thirteen stories of women who've suffered cruelty, neglect and injustice. There might be tens of thousands of others leading perfectly happy, fulfilled lives, but somehow, I doubt it.

I read Dear Zari as research for the book I'm currently writing, which features several female characters from Afghanistan. It's written in a rather clunky, laborious style, but in terms of content I found it intensely moving and thought provoking. One character in my own book says, 'Afghanistan is one of the worst places in the world to be a woman.' I wrote that before I read Dear Zari. My view certainly hasn't changed.

Justin says

A somewhat harrowing read, which at times reminded me of Holocaust narratives, this is definitely worth a read for understanding why Soviet and Western promotion of women's rights was so antagonistic in Afghanistan. It's also a fascinating insight into Afghan society and culture, as well as showing how valuable the BBC's various radio broadcasts around the world are - which made it all the more shocking and extremely poignant to read that Afghan Woman's Hour was axed in early 2010 due to funding cuts.

So Zarghuna weaves her own story in with 12 of the hundreds of women's life stories that were broadcast as part of Afghan Woman's Hour on the BBC's Pashtu and Dari service. They are a superb selection of lives, providing a diverse set of situations, though the early ones are universally depressing, illustrating how truly terrible a woman's lot can be in traditional Afghanistan. Lack of rights and constant brutality are pervasive, as are conditions of slavery. It is truly heart-rending. Practices such as feeding opium to babies so that women are not distracted from their long hours of carpet-weaving were particularly shocking, beyond a litany of beatings, imprisonment and starvation.

However, it is not all doom and gloom. The very fact that broadcasting these stories together with such things as discussions from experts made a positive difference to women's lives is very encouraging, and thankfully there were more positive stories towards the end (though by no means without their share of tragedy). I was particularly moved by the story of Bakhtawara, who was raised and lived as a man, and indeed was accepted by other men as such, though she was taunted by women as a eunuch. Sadly she longed to marry and be a mother, which she could never do as a "man". The love story of Ghutama was a perfect story to end on as well, in view of its fairly happy ending - I was moved by the extraordinary strength and character of this Kuchi woman. Zarghuna herself is an extraordinary woman too, and I'm grateful for the various work she has done for Afghan women.

Diane S ? says

My understanding of the political situation in Afghanistan is rudimentary at best , but after this book I feel I have a better grasp of what is going on that country. Kargar tells her own story and than as part of a radio show she tells the stories of various woman throughout the country. I actually liked the stories better when, instead of paraphrasing, she lets their own voices tell their own stories. I can't imagine living in a country that is constantly at war, I keep thinking of all the people who are just trying to live normal lives in trying conditions. Most of these women's stories were heartbreaking, but I am glad they have been shared..

Zahra says

I won this book from Goodreads first reads.

The extent of information I have of Afghanistan is from what I read in the Kite Runner and A Thousand Splendid Suns. Even in those books, it is hard to believe the amount of terror and hardship the people of Afghanistan have had to face over the last couple of decades.

Dear Zari is a compilation of stories of women's lives. Women from all over Afghanistan speak of their submission and oppression that has caused them to live a life that really cannot be considered a life at all.

Reading this book, it really surprised me how even in this modern world where freedom and democracy is being spread around the globe, Muslim women are forced to live with such few options. The stories in this book depict unbelievable hardships and tearful lives of poverty-stricken women who can communicate and tell their life story through this book.

This book was a good read and was packed with historic information. If you love reading books that inspire you to create change in the world and within yourself, this is definitely for you.

Carol says

An amazing book of women of Afghanistan. Portrayals of women who are locked in a world where they are neither valued nor respected. These women were treated as property and with suspicion, and having almost no freedom of movement. The book raised several questions for me, including: how typical are these portrayals? why are women so unfeeling towards other women? and what lasting impact has the Afghan Women's Hour had on the lives of women in the country.

Marie Craig says

This collection of stories of the lives of women in Afghanistan deserves to be read by a wider audience. Despite the traumatic lives that these women have lived, their stories carry a message of strength and

courage and we could all learn a lot from them.
Beautifully written, Dear Zari will touch the hearts of many.

Chris says

This book is disappointing because it could have been more.

And that is the heart of the issue.

Without a doubt, Zaraghunna Kargar deserves acclaim simply for her work on the BBC's Afghan's Woman's Hour.

Yet.

The central problem with this book, why it doesn't live up to the promise, is that it doesn't know what it wants to be. It can't decide if it wants to be a memoir or a collection of personal experiences. And because of this, it suffers.

The flaw shows up when Kargar interjects her personal story into the stories of the other women. Undoubtedly there are reasons for this, but I can't figure out what they are unless it is to try to relate or connect the woman's stories to those that live outside of Afghan. Kargar does this by relating how her life as an Afghan women whose family fled during the Taliban's regime as well as the pressure to keep to traditions when she lived in the West. This in of itself could be an interesting memoir, but forced and rammed into comparison with the stories of the other women, at worse it cheapens the books; at best it makes Kargar look at a whiner. It doesn't work; the only thing worse would be a Western woman trying to compare her parent's preference for a boy child. It would undoubtedly be true, but there is a difference between that, and your parents making you are a boy or your mother debating about suicide because of it.

Disappointing, sadly.

Sehar Moughal says

Another compelling account of women's struggle to fend for their rights, freedom and independence. I am no stranger to the hardships discussed in this book since I come from a place where men devalue women, and treat them as second class citizens. Yet, these women (even in the book) show great courage in the face of imminent danger - standing up to their abusers as their life hangs by a thread.

Wendy says

This is an incredible book! A must read. The women who bravely came forward and told their stories deserve all our admiration and support. Cudos to Dear Zari. She and her journalists provided a platform for

women who had been silenced to speak, and for thousands of silenced women to hear stories reminiscent of their own. We who live in a society in which women have rights and the freedom to live their lives productively and without fear, would do well to understand the plight of Afgan women and their children.
