

Background notes for Beyond Borders series, Part 1

Rosanne Hawke

A. Author's Response

A reader asked me how long it took to write *Dear Pakistan*. I usually say it takes about a year to write a book because I count the research, planning and the time I let the book settle after I've written a few drafts (maybe a few months). When I think about *Dear Pakistan* and the whole series, I have to say it took almost ten years, for I lived in Pakistan for seven years (and in the United Arab Emirates for a few years too) and without those experiences I couldn't have written the novels in *Beyond Borders*.

Living in Pakistan

We lived in a town in the foothills of the Himalayas called Abbottabad. I worked at a R-12 Urdu medium Boarding School set up for Christian girls by an American mission (TEAM). Boys could attend as day students up to Grade 4. I taught English, trained teachers in teaching English, and one year was acting Head Mistress (a difficult job in a language other than your own).

The experiences of living in a country like Pakistan have found their way into *Beyond Borders* in varying ways. Learning the language of Urdu also gave me an insight into culture and knowing people. Many customs make sense when you know their background. A man will always go through a door before a woman, but this is embedded in the old idea of keeping women safe – there may be an enemy with a gun on the other side.

Certain incidents gave me ideas: being snowed-in in the Chitral Valley during election time and having to be flown out; my husband being arrested for letting off firecrackers for the students near election time; a friend being captured by freedom fighters and living to tell a tale of good treatment; my visit to a Kalasha valley; my husband being detained by police while escorting a friend in a burqa to her home – they thought he was an Afghan kidnapping her; finding out that secluded women weren't as weak and colourless as they seemed; meeting a person with two mothers; being treated as a 'sister' of a Pakistani family; being packed ready to evacuate; living through an earthquake; being house-detained throughout the Gulf War.

Our children went to an international boarding school in the mountains, three and a half hours away. This was the school attacked by terrorists on August 5th in 2002. During trips over the mountains, my children loved playing a story game: They would think up characters, a setting, a problem or catalyst for a plot, and I would have the job of telling the story and ironing out the problem. I would get told very quickly if the story wasn't going the way it should.

Story telling

One night the kids were home for the Christmas holidays and my fourteen year-old-daughter, Lenore, wanted a story. They never grew out of that. We had recently heard of an aid worker who had been captured by mujahadeen (freedom fighters) from Afghanistan and we wondered if he was still alive – maybe he was in a fort. Lenore thought Afghanistan must be the most exciting place on earth – she wanted the story set there with all the things that were part of her world: weddings, visiting in local homes, carpets, beautiful clothes, teashops, kalashnikovs, and especially kidnapping. Another friend of ours was kidnapped by mujahadeen too and he survived to tell the tale. The first man didn't.

When I finished telling the story, Lenore wanted it written up for her birthday. On her birthday she wanted it typed up as a book for Christmas. At Christmas, she told me to send it to a publisher. And that is how *Jihad*, now *The War Within*, was born and how my daughter made me become a writer. This story had been rewritten and published for a third time by Rhiza Press as the book, *The War Within*.

The War Within

Of course it wasn't easy to get published, and *The War Within* (I called it *Woven Secrets* originally) was rejected. It wasn't written well enough. When I look back at it now it was still a draft. Also the publisher I sent it to said no one would want to read about Afghanistan. This was before September 11th. I thought that was a great pity because a lot of people (especially women) in Afghanistan were hoping someone in the West would want to know about them.

Dear Pakistan

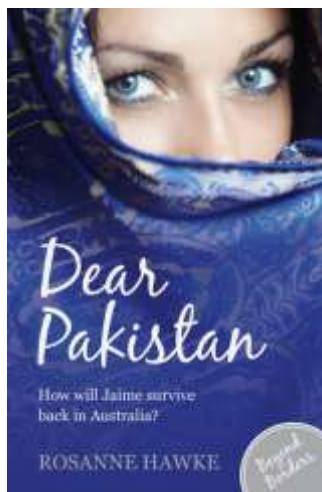
A publisher said they'd like to see a novel that I'd set in Australia so I started writing another one – a story about a girl who has been brought up in Pakistan and is returning to Adelaide to attend senior high school. How on earth would she cope? This idea came from watching my kids wrestling with culture shock as they tried to settle in Adelaide after being brought up in Pakistan. My daughter asked what could compare with the magic and excitement of a place like Pakistan. My husband stopped taking photos.

Coming back to live in Adelaide after so many years in Pakistan also reminded me of what it was like when I returned to live in SA after being brought up in Queensland. Fran Knight in *Magpies* said that I am able to write movingly about re-location. I wonder if that's because I was born in Penola in the SE and then at six years of age went to Central Queensland to live, and at fourteen, came back to South Australia. Just like Blake in *Dear Pakistan* I was a 'real rookie'. I'd say g'day to kids in an Adelaide high school and wonder why they'd curl up on the floor laughing. I finished my high school in Gawler, which was still country then. I noticed the difference going from the city school to the country high school too. I got very depressed. And coming from Pakistan to Adelaide gave us all those same feelings of displacement and feeling dumb because we'd forgotten social cues. Some days it felt as if we were going crazy – we became depressed and lost confidence in ourselves. It gave me a new insight into how people feel when they arrive from other countries to live in Australia.

After I finished *Dear Pakistan* I rewrote *The War Within* yet again and put Jaime Richards in the story (it originally had twins) and altered it to her point of view. She is such a strong character that she changed it – *The War Within* became a stronger story.

B. Cultural background and other notes of interest

1. *Dear Pakistan*



Pakistan – means Holy Land

This is a country of great diversity. There are still horse drawn vehicles on the road along with buses and modern cars. Living standards are rising though possibly 75% of the people are non-literate and rural. Some people live in white stone houses with many rooms and servants, other families live in one room with no bathroom facilities. It is a land of contrasts, with a history of ancient civilisations and heritage, old mosques and forts, gardens where jasmine grows, beautiful mountainous scenery, and yet there are many poor who sell shoelaces for a living and beggars sit on the streets. A hundred million people give an ethnic and economic diversity. The national language is Urdu but there are many

regional languages e.g. Punjabi and Pukhtu.

The people of Pakistan have a high sense of hospitality and extended-family values. They are not individualistic as people in the West are. If a young man finds a job he brings the money home – it may support not only his parents but his widowed aunt and his cousins as well. After marriage the couple usually live with the boy's parents. The family becomes the supportive unit in life, in birth, marriage, sickness, and in old age. The eldest son looks after his aging parents.

Religion: Islam – approx 98% are Muslims.

There are five pillars (or principles) of Islam:

1. Statement of belief – There is no God but Allah and Muhammad is his Prophet.
2. Muslims must pray five times a day at correct times: dawn, noon, afternoon, sunset and late evening.
3. Alms: Muslims must give to the poor.
4. Fasting: Muslim fast from dawn to sunset during the month of Ramadan (9th month of the Muslim calendar).
5. Haj: Muslims are to make a pilgrimage to Mecca at least once in their lifetime.

Islam is a total way of life. Due to the religion, there are moral laws to observe. Pork is not to be eaten, nor alcohol consumed. (There are no pubs in Pakistan). Romantic love is not prized as it is in the West as marriages are arranged. Therefore there is no dating. When asked about it most people say romantic love is not an issue. Some come to love their spouses after marriage. As marriages are arranged, the sexes are usually kept separate, and some women wear a veil or an all-covering burqa. In Pakistan this is a choice. Some women feel closer to God by wearing the veil; though I suspect most other women wear it only because their mother does or their husband or father wants them to.

Punishments can be strict – if rape can be proved it is a whipping or death sentence. Unfortunately there has to be enough male witnesses for the rape to be proved. In some remote areas women are still stoned for adultery (which was possibly rape) and a man's hand

may be cut off for thieving. People can be imprisoned for blasphemy since Pakistan is a Muslim state. So minority groups such as Christians and Hindus are often victimised, even attacked.

See more on culture in the *The War Within* section.

History

Pakistan became a nation on 14th August 1947 as a result of the division of the British Indian Empire (the Raj). Pakistanis say that the country is historically one of the most ancient lands known in the world. Its cities flourished before Babylon was built, its people had a civilisation before the celebrated Greeks did. Excavations in the Indus Valley area have shown evidence of civilisations from over 2,500 years BC.

About 1,500 BC the Aryans overwhelmed the region. Later the Persians occupied the northern areas. The Greeks came in 327 BC under Alexander the Great. In 712 AD the Arabs landed near Karachi and ruled the southern area. In the 10th century AD the conquest of Indo-Pakistan by the Muslims began. They ruled until the British came. The British ruled for 200 years.

Dr Mohammed Iqbal was the first 'modern' person to have the idea of a separate Muslim state in 1930. It is said Emperor Aurangzeb also had this idea in the seventeenth century. In 1940 the All-India Muslim League was born demanding an independent homeland for Muslims. After seven years under the leadership of Quaid-e-Azam Mohammed Ali Jinnah, Pakistan emerged on 14th August 1947. December 25th is celebrated as Jinnah's birthday. This is the history that Pakistani students learn.

Some information on culture stress

Jaime is a third culture kid (TCK) as she is Australian, has been brought up in Pakistan, and has become something between the two, i.e. she doesn't fit in her parents' own culture. Young people who cross cultures experience a second culture shock when they return home:

- Disorientation with a setting that is supposed to be familiar
- Loss of identity – who am I now?
- Uncertainty, lack of confidence with social interactions, self-esteem plummets, loneliness, restlessness, feeling that no one understands, tired, loss of identity, inability to communicate, retreat, confusion, even superiority.
- It's the unexpected that gets people down the most – not expecting to feel grief at leaving a country and friends behind, to feel let down, to not recognise your neighbourhood, or how to get around, strange new technology, ATMs, EFTpos, bus ticket machines; it feels like stepping on another planet. PANIC.
- There can even be physical reactions e.g. stomach pains & headaches. In the middle of this, Jaime is asked 'to take out her nose pin' –No wonder she's upset.

One 3rd culture kid put it like this: *if you came back, you wanted to leave again; if you went away, you longed to come back. Wherever you were, you would hear the call of the homeland, like the note of the herdsman's horn far away in the hills. You had one home out there and one over here, and yet you were an alien in both places. Your true abiding place*

was the vision of something very far off, and your soul was like the waves, always restless, forever in motion. Alex Graham.

Suneel hopes for Jaime that she will not always be like this, tossed like the treetops in a storm (p. 131).

A definition of TCKs: “*A Third-Culture Kid (TCK, also known as Trans-Culture Kid) is "an individual who, having spent a significant part of the developmental years in a culture other than the parents' culture, develops a sense of relationship to all of the cultures while not having full ownership in any. Elements from each culture are incorporated into the life experience, but the sense of belonging is in relationship to others of similar experience."* -- David Pollock, Interaction Director” (<http://www.tckinteract.net/TCKschools.html>)

Other sources:

- <http://voices-blackbeyondborders.com/passing-the-torch/>
- <https://audreycourty.files.wordpress.com/2014/12/focus-intl-schools-v2-dragged-1.pdf>
- <https://thirdculturekidlife.com/tag/cultural-identity/>

Jaime's Journal

Jaime did meet a guy called Suneel in his family home in Chitral, but because social laws between the sexes are strict in Pakistan, she was never left alone with him. They would barely have spoken. Jaime started writing about him in her journal/story because she wanted something exciting to write about, something to take her away from the confused feelings she was having. It turned into an allegory of her feelings for the country of Pakistan. Pakistan tends to be a male dominated culture and Jaime would never have dreamt of thinking of Pakistan as anything other than male. In the story, Suneel *was* Pakistan, and in saying goodbye to Suneel, Jaime suddenly realised she had never said goodbye to Pakistan. There had been no closure for she had rebelled against leaving. This is one of the reasons she felt it necessary to go back and visit in *The War Within* – to settle the ghosts from the past and to say goodbye.



The Kalasha

The **Kalasha** people live in three valleys in Chitral of Khyber Pukhtunkhwa, Pakistan, in the eastern Hindu Kush Range, part of the Himalayas. Today there are only 3000 Kalasha left who keep their traditional culture. The Kalasha are the only tribe in the region who never converted to Islam. Chaomos, which takes place around 21st December in winter, is the year's most important festival. It honours Balomain, a legendary demigod, who once lived among the Kalasha and did heroic deeds. Every year during Chaomos Balomain's spirit passes through the valleys counting the Kalasha and collecting their prayers on behalf of Dezao, the creator God. He then carries them back to Tsiam, the mythical land of origin of the Kalasha.

1. Some believe the Kalasha are the tribe who Alexander the Great encountered in 327 B.C.

2. The word kalash means 'black' and some say this is why the people are so named because the women wear black dresses, which are called cheo. Not everyone agrees.
3. The women all have five braids and are never seen without their shell headdress on.
4. The sheep's wool hat that Chitrali men wear is called a pakol. Afghans also wear it.
5. The Kalasha people are the tribe featured in Kipling's *The Man who would be King*.

Sources

- Information can be found in the National Geographic October 1981
- *Kalash: the descendants of Alexander*. Discovery Video, written & directed by David O'Brien.
- <http://www.geocities.com/pakipicture/valley/chitral.html>

Related topics to Dear Pakistan:

Cultural identity.

Culture Shock.

Third Culture Kids (TCK).

Detention centres. Racism.

Religion.

Refugees and asylum seekers.

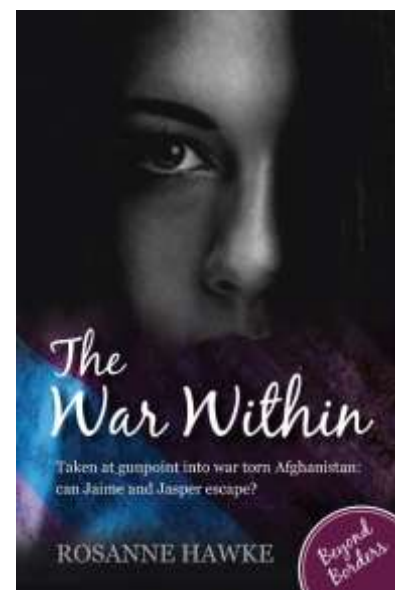
What does it mean to be Australian?

Worldview.

2. The War Within

Afghanistan

Children growing up under the shadow of the gun, not the tree.



Once upon a time Afghanistan was called the orchard of the many fruit trees. Pomegranates, grapes, apricots, mulberry, walnuts grew. Forests of hazel, walnut, oak, larch, ash, juniper, turpentine pine, and deodar grew and before the war there was a rule not to fell trees. Older people can remember a Kabul, which was beautiful with gardens of roses, honeysuckle, and white narcissi; old buildings, museums, libraries, picnics on the river or in parks.

Now Kabul is destroyed; many people live without glass in their windows, if they have a house at all. Because of the extremist government of the Taliban forbidding schools, children have lost five years of education. Women have the choice now to not wear the burqa but many still do as the men are not used to seeing women without it and they stare. Men can now shave off their beards if they wish. People may dance and watch TV, children may sing and fly kites again. Little girls can have a doll. Many people were pleased that the US bombed the Taliban and their regime has gone. But others say the trouble is not finished. They remember what the fundamental mujahadeen government before the Taliban was like – women weren't safe then either and they still don't feel safe now – another reason to keep wearing the burqa. And the fighting away from the capital in places like Kandahar has resumed.

Religion – see *Dear Pakistan*. Many Afghans know they are Muslims, but don't know what they believe. Years of Soviet rule couldn't wipe out their identity with Islam but it robbed them of knowledge about their religion. When some governments, especially the Taliban tried to make the country more fundamental many disagreed and many fled.

People

It is thought that due to the past 35 plus years of war:

1. 70% of Afghans are malnourished
2. Only 13% have access to clean water
3. Millions (some estimate 6) are displaced from their homes. In the 1990's over 3 million refugees were living in Pakistani refugee camps alone.
4. Estimated 7-10 million landmines. Afghanistan is one of the heaviest mined countries in the world. Each day 10 Afghans are killed or maimed. 90% of mined areas are in agricultural areas. Estimated 400,000 children are amputees.
5. Every one in three children is an orphan – estimated one million.
6. One in four will not make it to their fifth birthday.
7. 62% of the population are women.
8. Over 500,000 have disabilities.
9. Over one million children are suffering from post-traumatic stress syndrome.
10. Five million girls (90.9 %) and 4.3 million boys (74.1%) below the age of 15 cannot read or write a simple sentence.

(Some of this information is from Afghanistan online.)

No wonder parents will borrow money and smuggle their families out of the country to come to a 'free' land like Australia.

Although Afghans are a proud and independent people and normally would never leave their country, many have wanted to escape these difficult times. Boys have been conscripted by the Taliban. Under Taliban rule women were not allowed to leave the house without a male escort and not allowed to show any of their body. They were made to wear a burqa. Girls were not allowed to go to school and women not allowed to work or go to the doctor since he was male. Some women set up illegal schools from their home partly to ensure children still got educated and partly to pay for food.

One gruesome way of making money during hard times was collecting human bones. These were sold for about \$2.00 and made into soap, cooking oil and chicken feed.

Language

The Afghan national language is Dari (Persian or Farsi).

The language of the Pukhtuns in *The War Within* is Pukhtu. There are thirty regional languages. Educated people speak Urdu too.

The 4 major ethnic groups are: Pukhtuns, Hazaras, Tajik, Uzbeks.

History A chronological history helps to understand the background of *The War Within*
See Afghanistan Online <http://www.afghan-web.com/history/chron/index4.html>
for history of the war from 1978 to the present

1747 creation of the Afghan State
1919 3rd Anglo-Afghan war – Afghanistan has independence
1933 –73 Reign of King Mohammed Zaher Shah
1959 veil is optional
1964 women given the right to vote
1965 First Parliamentary elections
1973 Monarchy overthrown by Mohammed Daoud – First Republic of Afghanistan.
1978 Communist coup – Second republic. Cultural reforms cause instability.
1979 Soviet Military Intervention. Mujahadeen begin guerilla war against Soviet – lasts
for ten years.
1979 – 86 Babrak Karmal is president
1986 - 92 Najibullah is president
1989 Soviet withdrawal. Mujahadeen begin civil war between ethnic groups (mainly
between the Tajik, Ahmed Shah Massoud and Pukhtun, Gulbuddin Hekmatyar
1992 Massoud's Mujahadeen take Kabul and liberate Afghanistan – a Muslim state. War
begins again between Massoud and extremist Islamic fighters supported by
Pakistan (Taliban)
1994 Taliban rise and take Kandahar.
1996 Taliban take Kabul and execute Najibullah. Oppression of women begins in earnest
1998 Taliban take Mazar-i-Sharif and massacre thousands; earthquake; US strikes to
destroy Osama bin Laden's facilities.
1999 Earthquake – 30,000 die
2001 Massoud assassinated, worse drought in several decades
2001 September 11th Islamic forces attack NY; Oct 7th US attack on Afghanistan;
Nov: Taliban fall from Kabul. Dec: Hamid Karzai interim administrator.
2002 June: Hamid Karzai, President of Afghanistan. Elected to a 2-year term by the loya jirga
("grand council"); September - survives assassination attempt.
2003 KABUL (Reuters) - For the first time in his young life, Afghan Zabiollah, a one-
time refugee, washer boy and carpet maker, is going to school.
<http://asia.news.yahoo.com/030401/3/uzop.html>

The war on Terror 2001 – to present day. Wiki also has a fairly clear history of the war in
Afghanistan at [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/War_in_Afghanistan_\(2001%E2%80%932014\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/War_in_Afghanistan_(2001%E2%80%932014))

The word 'Jihad'

'Jihad' means effort or struggle of which war is the most extreme. Islamic scholars take the
meaning of internal struggle i.e. a struggle against one's base instincts, or the war inside, but
it also means defending Islam if it is suppressed. Some see jihad as the 6th pillar of Islam.

I previously called this book *Jihad* not only because the mujahadeen think they were raging a
holy war and it is the setting of the book, but because of Jasper's internal struggle to accept
his father's disappearance and the working out of his grief. The title *The War Within* gives a
similar meaning.

Here are some other definitions of 'jihad'

1. Urdu dictionary: Jihad – holy war
2. Egypt's Said Ashmawi has researched the Qur'an and says the following: 'The militant's doctrine is not a faith – it is a political ideology. They say jihad is a religious duty to impose Islam on other people. In fact, it really means to purify yourself (Reader's Digest, Jan 95, p24).
3. Doris Lessing went to Afghanistan to 'see for myself the mujahadeen, the holy warriors of the Afghan resistance.' She writes: 'The word 'jihad' is used in every sentence. This is their word for resistance and it does not mean simply “holy war”; it is like the Resistance in France during the occupation.'

(Doris Lessing, 'The Afghan Resistance', *Ourselves among others* by Verburg, St Martins' Press, USA, 1988).

Question: which of the above meanings do you think the book *The War Within* conveys?

Puhktunwali – the code of honour of Pukhtun tribes, mentioned in *The War Within*.

Folktales often featured themes in the Puhtunwali

Here is the Puhktunwali code as collected by L Dupree who wrote about Afghanistan:

1. To avenge blood
2. To fight to the death for a person who has taken refuge with me
3. To defend my property
4. To be hospitable and provide for the safety of guests
5. To give the right of asylum
6. To refrain from killing a woman, a Hindu, a minstrel, or a boy not yet circumcised
7. To defend the honour of women
8. To punish all adulterers with death
9. To not kill a man in a mosque.
10. To spare a man in battle who begs mercy.

Also to be brave, chivalrous, persistent, steadfast and righteous.

Afghan Culture — Compiled by Ruth Harbinson-Gresham

THE MOST OFFENSIVE GESTURES

1. Pointing the soles of your feet at someone.
2. Standing with your hands on your hips (indicates pride).
3. To not sit with your knees together or your long shirt flap down. Men should remember this when in the presence of women.
4. To slouch / lounge in the presence of someone more respected or older than yourself. Women must never slouch in the presence of a man.
5. Walking inside or on mats / carpets with your shoes on. The host is always obligated to insist that the removal of shoes is not necessary, the guest is obligated to remove his / her shoes regardless.
6. Blowing your nose in public or putting the snotty hanky back in your pocket.
7. To use your left hand, especially to pass an item to someone.
8. To treat something respected with contempt i.e. putting a religious book or bread on the ground, throwing or playing with it etc.

9. To have an uncovered head (women) in the presence of an older man, a stranger or a religious person.

IMPORTANT THINGS TO DO

In Afghan culture different actions, things and ideas have different priorities. The following are considered important and basic.

1. Always *greet* people and ask them how they are. This means more than just a nod or a quick salaam in Afghan culture, it means the whole ritual of asking about families, health etc.
2. Always *give* chai or a cold drink. Never offer. To offer, is to indicate unwillingness or implies there is no chai available, in which case the guest would always say no.
3. Always rise to greet people. Generally you rise to greet older or more respected guests. Be aware that a man might not rise to greet his own wife but the guests, even the male guests, should still rise. Don't rise to greet children.
4. To eat in the presence of others and not offer (with some insistence) what you're eating is rude. Always offer what you've got.
5. Your host is always obliged to offer you a meal and a bed for the night. This does not mean that the food is available and ready, or that a bed and bedding are available.
6. Believe it or not, 'Ladies first' is a value, but because of the cultural restrictions on men and women mixing, the onus is on the male who is the closest family member to ensure that this happens. That is, the host is honour bound to ignore the women who are guests, so he will offer the food & drinks to the men first; these men ideally should then offer the food to the women with them before eating themselves!
7. There are many opportunities to be gentlemen.
8. Never put naan (bread) on the floor, nor religious books.

'Guests are the darlings of God.' Most of these customs apply in Pakistan too.

Peshawar, a city of legend, is mentioned in all four books of Beyond Borders.

The City of Peshawar (shor e Peshawar) Ruth Gresham from Afghanistan

Peshawar, the capital of Khyber Pukhtunkhwa in Pakistan and close to the Afghanistan border, is about 2000 years old. It has seen the rise and fall of the Buddhist era, the Moguls, Sikhs and finally the British before Pakistan's Independence in 1947. The typically eastern bazaars are crowded and colourful with cloth, fruit, spices and lots and lots of people. The houses in the city are usually clay brick, often with clay mortar. The suburbs have more stone houses with mud ones becoming mud 'hovels' in the many refugee camps that circle the city. Newer suburbs have quite modern looking houses, though mostly with flat rooves. All the



houses however have towering walls around them (often over 12 feet) and a man's house really is his fortress.

When you drive through the suburbs all you can see is walls, no gardens, few children and no women. It is a restrictive place for women. In public women must wear a *chaddar*, a tablecloth sized shawl around the head and upper body. [Later a burqa was necessary]. Women must also wear large baggy trousers under a large long sleeved dress. Most women are touched and pinched in the bazaar. Islamabad, three hours away is freer. Women don't have to cover their heads there and a few even wear jeans!

Peshawar is dry and dusty; in summer it is hot and humid with temperatures between 38 and 48 degrees C, which is tough when you have to wear trousers, long sleeved shirts and a tablecloth. The mountains of the Khyber are very close and on a low pollution day or after rain they are beautifully clear. Jalalabad is inside Afghanistan and is about three hours' drive if there are no problems at the border. A dusty and bumpy three hours.

Ordinance on the Women's veil

Issued by a nine-member professional committee of the High Court of the Islamic State of Afghanistan.

Conditions of wearing the veil

1. The veil must cover the whole body
2. Women's clothes must not be thin.
3. Women's clothes must not be decorative or colourful.
4. Women's clothes must not be narrow and tight to prevent the seditious limbs from being noticed.
5. The veil must not be thin.
6. Women's [sic] must not perfume themselves. If a perfumed woman passes by a crowd of men, she is considered to be an adulteress.
7. Women's clothes must not resemble men's clothes.

In addition:

1. They must not perfume themselves.
2. They must not wear adorning clothes.
3. They must not wear thin clothes.
4. They must not wear narrow and tight clothes.
5. They must cover their entire bodies.
6. Their clothes must not resemble men's clothes.
7. Muslim clothes must not resemble non-Muslim's clothes.
8. Their foot ornaments must not produce sound.
9. They must not wear sound-producing garments.
10. They must not walk in the middle of the streets.
11. They must not go out of the houses without their husband's permission.
12. They must not talk to strange men.
13. If it is necessary to talk, they must talk in a low voice and without laughter.
14. They must not look at strangers.
15. They must not mix with strangers.

Under Taliban rule women were beaten for accidentally showing any part of their body even their hair. Some were executed for disobeying Taliban's extremist rules.
Women hope for a free and peaceful Afghanistan.

Holidays in Afghanistan – In Australia the mosque gives a list of when the days occur.

The religious holidays in Afghanistan are celebrated according to the lunar calendar, and other holidays such as Independence Day and New Year's Day are celebrated based on the solar calendar. During many holidays, Afghans usually visit friends and families, prepare lavish meals, and attend special prayers.

1. EID AL-FITR – also in Pakistan

Day: After a month of Fasting (Ramadan). Many start out the day by wearing new clothes, and going to prayer. Afterwards, people visit or entertain their friends and families. Children usually receive gifts or money called "Eidi".

2. EID AL-ADHA – also in Pakistan

Day: Tenth day of the twelfth month of the Islamic (Hijra) calendar. The day commemorates the Prophet Abraham's devotion to God. He was willing to slay his son Ismael as a sacrifice. Ismael was never killed; instead, Allah provided a lamb for the sacrifice. Muslims performing the Haj (pilgrimage to Mecca) sacrifice a lamb, and the meat is given out to the poor. This holiday is celebrated in the same fashion as Eid al-Fitr, people visit friends and families, gifts are exchanged, etc.

3. ASHURA – also in Pakistan, for Shi'a Muslims.

Day: Tenth day of the month Muharram in the Islamic calendar.

This is a day of mourning. It commemorates the martyrdom of Prophet Muhammad's grandson Hussain and his followers at the battle of Kerbala.

4. MAWLEED AL-NABI – also in Pakistan

Day: The 12th day of the month Rabi al-Awal in the Islamic calendar.

On this day, people celebrate Prophet Muhammad's birthday. They attend prayers, remember Muhammad, and entertain/visit friends and family.

5. NOWROZE

Day: March 21. This is the first day of spring (New Year's Day for the solar calendar). The Taliban declared this holiday as anti-Islamic and tried to stop its celebrations. Despite this, people continued to celebrate it.

6. JESHEN

Day: August 19

August 19 marks Afghan Independence Day. Even though, Afghanistan was never a British colony, the British did have control of its foreign policy due to an agreement signed by a former Afghan King. The Third Anglo-Afghan War ended this agreement

Getting to know someone from Afghanistan or Pakistan

From reading *The War Within* do you have an idea of the background of an Afghan refugee or asylum seeker? Here are some ideas to help you.

Some experiences they may have had.

Loss of job, loss of rights, persecution, separation, refugee camps, war and trauma, death of family members, grieving, displacement, ill health, entry to new culture involving culture shock, poverty, loss, forced military service, dismemberment from landmines.
Post-Traumatic Stress Syndrome.

Cultural background

In Afghan culture there is a strong family life, extended family, authority of family, (father is obeyed even by adult sons), not individualistic, not private, indirect in communication, people orientated, polite, strong sense of family honour, revenge, hospitality, relating between sexes is different to the West, male dominated society, no dating, arranged marriages, work experience may be different, they wear covering clothes, maybe girls wear scarves on their heads, time is more flexible, they may keep social and religious rules, they may feel freedom of a group is more important than an individual's freedom

There is a North American Indian proverb that you never really know someone unless you've walked a mile in his/her moccasins.

Question: After reading *The War Within* and these notes can you understand the Afghan worldview i.e. the way they may see the world and know it to be? Worldview is partly what is there and partly what we are and how we interpret what we see and experience. We are a product of our culture and family upbringing. What is your worldview?

Question: After reading *Dear Pakistan & The War Within*, could you now outline some of the problems that an Afghan or Pakistani teenager may face coming into an Australian high school?

Question: How would you talk to such a person to make them welcome?

The first easy thing is to smile, say hello, pronounce the name of their country correctly, and pronounce their name correctly. Accept their way of doing things and thinking about things. They don't have to think like you do. Don't be intimidated by something different, be prepared to learn something new that's helpful; let them show you how to do something eg learn some words of their language, a game, or a recipe.

Question: If you are male and you have read *Dear Pakistan* and *The War Within* would you now talk to a new girl from the Middle East and try to ask her out?

The fact that you know some of a person's background and customs goes a long way in understanding and seeing things a little like they do. They will sense you are a friend.

Related topics to *The War Within*

Grief management
Women's rights
War
Volunteers abroad
Landmines
Conservation issues e.g. solar ovens
Re-building a country
Refugees
Asylum seekers

Sources

Dupree L. (1973, 1978). *Afghanistan*. NJ: Princeton Uni Press.

Web sites for extra info

Afghanistan online: www.afghan-web.com

War in Afghanistan

- <http://www.afghan-web.com/history/chron/index4.html>
- [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/War_in_Afghanistan_\(2001%E2%80%932014\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/War_in_Afghanistan_(2001%E2%80%932014))

News: <http://news.bbc.co.uk>

Afghan news: www.afghana.com links to other news here

The Guardian: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/afghanistan>

Extra reading about Afghan women

A woman should only leave her house twice: once at her wedding, to go to the household of her husband, and once when she dies, to be taken to the graveyard. Afghan saying.

Benard, C. (2002). *Veiled Courage*. Sydney: Random House.

Davies & Dal Bosco. (2002). *Tales from a suitcase –The Afghan experience*. Pt Melbourne: Lothian. (Also a DVD).

Latifa. (2002). *My forbidden face*. London: Virago Press.

Logan, H. (2002). *Unveiled*. NY: Regan Books.

'To women across the world: Please help us Afghan women. We have come from a dark period into the sunshine. Please do not forget that we are here. Learn from us so that what we have suffered will never happen again' (Logan, p. 93).

Related fiction:

Ellis, D. *Parvana & Parvana's Journey*.

Gleitzman, M. (2002). *Boy Overboard*. Camberwell, Vic: Puffin. (a Western POV, but insightful into plight of refugees).

Gleeson, L. (2008). *Mahtab's Story*. Crows Nest, NSW: Allen & Unwin.

Grant, N. (2012). *The Ink Bridge*. Crows Nest, NSW: Allen & Unwin.

Heffernan, J. (2014). *Naveed: Through my Eyes*. Crows Nest, NSW: Allen & Unwin

Hosseini, K. (2009). *The Kite Runner*. London: Bloomsbury.

Murari, T. (2012). *The Taliban Cricket Club*. Crows Nest, NSW: Allen & Unwin. (adult)

Film: *Kandahar*

Omah

Arranged

The Kite Runner

Tales from a suitcase series