

MAI, Mukhtar. *Dishonored - testimony, Rio de Janeiro: Best Seller - 2007.*

Claudete Ferreira de Souza Monteiro¹
Rosilane de Lima Brito Magalhães²
Sheila Coelho Ramalho Vasconcelos Morais³
Maria Tamires Alves Ferreira⁴



The book titled *Dishonored* – testimony of Mukhtar Bibi, written with the collaboration of the French journalist Marie-Thérèse Cuny, was published in Brazil in 2007 by Best Seller Ltda with the translation by Clóvis Marques. In 154 pages, the book relates one of the most shocking stories of sexual violence against a woman published by the personal victim.

One of the main objectives of the account is the gang rape suffered by the author in 2002 and shows the reality of the female world until then, little known in the western countries.

Born in Pakistan to a poor family, illiterate and divorced, the author tells her story of how she lived with her family, her childhood and shows the world the submissive conditions of families with little money and especially the women of her region to the superior caste system, in which justice is carried out by decisions made by the tribal council.

The story of Mukhtar takes place in a village in Pakistan with a supposed involvement of her 12 year old brother with a young woman of 20 of the superior caste became motive for sentencing which was decreed by the Council. Mukhtar was chosen to accompany her parents to implore pardon for her brother on her knees. However, the men of the “offended family” not only did not accept the request for forgiveness but gave Mukhtar to four men of her caste. She was brutally raped by the four men a few meters from her family and the people of her village and who returned her half naked, humiliated and traumatized. According to the local culture, women who have had similar experiences commit suicide and leave the aggressors unpunished. That is what the instigator and aggressors expected. But the story of Mukhtar followed another direction.

The seven chapters which compose the book with the preface by the journalist Miriam Leitão, point out the breaking of the silence of sexual violence and the importance of education for Pakistani women, the lack of intervention by the government in sexual violence situations and the fight of the women movement for human rights.

The importance of the book is not only in the exposition of the aggression suffered by the author but above all to reveal the force and the challenges the author faced to overcome her own fear, the courts, the aggressors and her illiteracy and to fight for the return of her and her family’s honor and to show the world that it is necessary to talk about what happened and to fight for justice. In the words of the author: “I fought for myself and for all the women who are victims of violence in my country. I have the least intention of leaving my village, my home, my family and my school. I also do not have the intention of showing the world a negative image of my country. On the contrary, by defending my human rights I am fighting against the principal of tribal justice which is against the official law of our Islamic republic. I have the conviction that I am supporting the political intentions of my country. No Pakistani man, who deserves the dignity of this name, can provoke the tribal council to punish a woman to resolve a conflict of honor.”

Because of her courageous act, she is called Mukhtar Mai and has become known worldwide. In 2005, she received the title “Woman of the Year” in the United States and in March of 2007, the European Council awarded her the 2006 North-South Prize for her notable contribution to human rights.

By telling her story of sexual violence by gang rape, Mukhtar Mai has added a new vision to the phenomena of violence in closed cultures and has contributed to professional practice in the sense of giving value and opportunity by listening to women, since talking about the fact, “talk about the pain, of a secret which we consider shameful, frees the spirit and the body.”

Keyword: Violence against women. Sexual violence. Rape.