

PROBLEM OF HONOUR KILLING: A WORLD-WIDE PERSPECTIVE

Dr. Ramesh Verma*

Abstract

We are living in the twenty first century, where all over the globe it is being advocated to give equal rights to all the persons irrespective of their sex, caste, religion etc. But, still we are very often confronted with such issues which appear to be barbaric, outlandish and against the principles of equality. Crimes in the name of honour are being committed against the young couples, who marry out of their choice defying the age old rustic traditions not only in India but also in the various parts of the world, particularly in the Middle East and South Asia. According to estimates around one thousand couples every year are being subjected to murder in India and five thousand globally in the name of honour. Women are more often victims of these crimes as they are treated as commodities on which men exercise full control both inside and outside the four walls of the house. Such killings indicate the feudalistic mindset of the perpetrators, who happen to be victimising their own family members on the false pretext of protecting the honour of the family. Such incidents across the globe remind us of uncivilized and undemocratic society. The objective of the present paper is, therefore, to study

* Assistant Professor, Department of Laws, Himachal Pradesh University, Shimla- 171005 (H.P.).

and analyze the problem of honour killing not only in India, but across the globe. The present study is doctrinal in nature and is based on secondary data gathered from various sources such as books, journals, reports etc.

Keywords: Honour, Killing, Marriage.

Introduction

In recent years, violence against women committed in the name of honour has attracted increasing attention across the globe.¹ Gender, equality and women's empowerment are fundamental to the global mission of United Nations Organizations to achieve equal rights and dignity for all. In present decades, much progress has been made, but even today nowhere in the world can women claim to have same rights and opportunities as men and they still face inequality and marginalization.² So called honour killings have become a macabre trend; a new incident is reported almost every day in some part of the world. Honour killing is a problem in a number of countries around the globe.³ Relatives, usually male, commit acts of violence against wives, sisters, daughters and mothers to reclaim their family honour from the real or suspected actions that are perceived to

¹ Aisha K. Gill, "Introduction: Honour and Honour-Based Violence: Challenging Common Assumptions", in Aisha K. Gill, Carolyn Strange et. al., *Honour Killing and Violence: Theory, Policy and Practice*, p. 1 (Palgrave Macmillan, UK, 2014).

² S.D. Moharana, "Honour Killing on the International Humanitarian Law", Vol. XL, No. 1, *IBR*, p.25 (2013).

³ *Ibid.*

have compromised it.⁴ According to Widney Brown, Advocacy Director for Human Rights Watch, the practice „goes across cultures and across religions“.⁵ Due to recent media attention, the problem of honour killings has come under increasing global scrutiny, in various countries throughout the world, particularly in the Middle East and parts of South Asia. According to the latest data available, honour killings have been officially reported from six continents and in thirty one countries, including Asia, Europe, North America, Latin America, Australia and Africa and leads to murder of thousands of people annually.⁶ The list includes Argentina, Australia, Bangladesh, Brazil, Columbia, Ecuador, Egypt, Haiti, Guatemala, India, Israel, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, the Netherlands, the Palestinian National Authority, Pakistan, Peru, the Syrian Arab Republic, Turkey, Uganda, Venezuela, Yemen and other Mediterranean and Persian Gulf countries, such as France, Germany, Sweden and the United Kingdom, as well as the United States (usually within migrant populations).⁷

⁴ Sudarshan Verma and Priti Saxena, “Roots, Rationale and Judicial Outlook on Killings in the name of Honour: A Solution Based Scrutiny”, Vol. XXXIX, No.4, *IBR*, p.47 (2012).

⁵ Hillary Mayell, “*Thousands of Women Killed for Family Honour*”, Available at: http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2002/02/0212_020212_honorkilling.html, (Last visited on December 11, 2021).

⁶ *Supra note 4* at 47-48.

⁷ *Id.* at p. 48.

The United Nations estimate for the number of honour killings in the world each year is about 5000. Many women groups in the Middle East and Southwest Asia suspect that more than 20,000 women are honour killed in the world each year.⁸ The Special Rapporteur of the United Nations concerning cultural practices in the family that are violent towards women indicated that honour killings had been reported in Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Pakistan, the Syrian Arab Republic, Turkey, Yemen and other Mediterranean and Persian Gulf countries, and that they had also taken place in western countries such as France, Germany and the United Kingdom, with migrant communities.⁹ Every year in United Kingdom, a dozen women are victims of honour killing.¹⁰ A June 2008 report by Turkish Prime Minister's Human Rights Directorate says that in Istanbul alone, there is one honour killing every week.¹¹ Methods of killing include stoning, stabbing, beating, beheading, hanging, throat slashing, lethal acid attacks, shooting and strangulation. The murders are sometimes performed in public to warn the other women within the community of possible consequences of engaging in what is seen as illicit

⁸ Seshadev Moharana and P.K. Pattanaik, "Campaign Against Honour Killing: Human Rights Approach" *AIR*, p.67 (2014).

⁹ UN doc. E/CN.4/2002/83, January 31, 2002.

¹⁰ Avimanyu Behera, "Honour Killings", Volume XL, No. 1, *IBR*, p.60 (2013).

¹¹ *Ibid.*

behaviour.¹² The number of honour killings is routinely underestimated, and most estimates are little more than guesses that varies widely. Definitive or reliable worldwide estimate of honour killing incidence do not exist. Most honour killings are not classified as such, are rarely prosecuted, or when prosecuted in the Muslim world, result in relatively light sentences. When an honour killing occurs in the West, many people, including the police, still shy away from calling it an honour killing. In the West, both Islamist and Feminist groups, including domestic violence activists, continue to insist that honour killings are a form of Western style domestic violence or femicide (killing of women).¹³

Honour Killing in India

In India, crimes against women are increasing drastically. According to the National Crimes Record Bureau 2011, annual growth rate of crimes against women between 2001 and 2011 was 4.7%. In the year 2011 alone 2,28,650 crimes were reported against women. The honour killings, which basically deal with crimes against women, has become burning topic now a days as the cases of honour killing has increased manifold since 2001.¹⁴ In India alone, hundreds of women if not thousands are killed in the

¹² Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia, "*Honor Killing*", Available at: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Honor_Killing, p. 4 (Last visited on July 13, 2021).

¹³ Arun Pal, *Honour Killing: Culture, Dilemma and Ritual*, Arise Publishers and Distributors, New Delhi, 1stedn, 2012, pp. 168-169.

¹⁴ Manpreet Kaur and Mandeep Kaur, *Honour Killings in India: A Crime against Humanity*, Anamika Publishers and Distributors (P) Ltd., New Delhi, 2015, p. 11.

name of honour.¹⁵ The honour killing practice in modern history seems to have gained momentum since the partition of India in 1947.¹⁶ During the partition, there were a lot of forced marriages which were causing women from India to marry men from Pakistan and vice-versa and hence were killed so that family honour could be preserved.¹⁷ About 1,000 honour killings occur in India every year.¹⁸ Honour killings are rising in northern region, mainly in the states like Punjab, Haryana, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh. Some cases of honour crimes have also been reported in Tamil Nadu.¹⁹ Ascending to survey done by the Delhi based Indian Population Statistics Survey (IPSS) in mid 2007, in India almost 655 homicidal cases have been registered as honour killings, while in Punjab and Delhi is 32% and in Muzaffarnagar, the worst affected district of UP, 25% honour killings have been registered so far.²⁰ In 2010, there were roughly 900 reported honour killings in the northern Indian states of Haryana, Punjab and Uttar Pradesh alone while 100-300 additional honour killings

¹⁵ Anil Trehan, "Brutality of Honour Killings is on the Rise: A blot on Indian Society, Culture and the Need for a New Legislation", Volume XI, Issue 4, *ND*, p.78 (2010).

¹⁶ Nitu Nawal, "Honour Killing – Need for Effective and Realistic Legislation" *CrLJ* p.263 (2012).

¹⁷ Pranab Kumar Rana, "Socio-Legal Perspective on Honour Killings in India: A Case for False Projection of Patriarchy", Volume XL, No. 1, *IBR*, p.39 (2013).

¹⁸ "Honour Based Violence Awareness Network – Statistics and Data", Available at: <http://hbv-awareness.com/statistics-data/> (Last visited on July 13, 2021).

¹⁹ *Supra* note 14.

²⁰ *Supra* note 13 at 255.

took place in the rest of the country.²¹ The Indian State of Punjab has a large number of honour killings. According to data compiled by the Punjab Police, 34 honour killings were reported in the state between 2008 and 2010.²² Most victims of honour killings reported from various parts of the country are young people who choose to love or marry outside their caste, sub-caste or religions.²³ Report tabled in the state assembly of Haryana on March 26, 2013 disclosed that the number of runaway couples, who sought police security during the past two years, has increased 400 per cent. In 2010 the numbers of such couples were 366 only, which went up to 1345 in 2012.²⁴

In India, there are various reasons why people or family members decide to kill the daughter in the name of preserving their family honour. The most obvious reason for this practice to continue in India is because of the fact that the caste system continues to be at its rigid best and also because people from the rural areas refuse to change their attitude to marriage. According to them, if any daughter dares to disobey her parents on the issue of marriage and decides to marry a man of her wishes but from another gotra or outside her caste, it would bring disrepute to the family honour and hence they decide to give the ultimate sentence,

²¹ *Supra note 19* at 36.

²² *Supra note 16* at 264.

²³ Subodh K. Singh, "Honour Killing in India – A Social Malaise" *CrLJ* p. 290 (2012).

²⁴ *Supra note 14*.

as in death, to the daughter. Now as has become the norm, the son-in-law is killed as well.²⁵ One reason for the increased visibility of such crimes is the trend of more and more girls joining educational institutions, meeting others from different backgrounds and castes and establishing relationships beyond the confines of caste and community. Such individuals, both boys and girls, are being targeted so that none dares to breach the barriers of castes and communities.²⁶ Honour killings are not always committed by the family, often the announcement of the brutal punishment is done by a Khap panchayat (prominent in Haryana and Western Uttar Pradesh) or a caste panchayat, a court which protects traditional norms of caste in a village.²⁷ Defiance or resistance against khap panchayat rulings in such cases is frequently met with violence. Khap violence can range from direct interpersonal violence such as murder, murder disguised as suicide and public lynching. Symbolic violence prevails through mechanisms such as social boycott of the family, forcing a family to leave the village or in some cases the panchayat forcing the couple into tying a rakhi (a customary band) to suggest that their relationship is one of brother and sister.²⁸ It is said that they use these methods to restore faith in

²⁵ *Supra note 16.*

²⁶ *Supra note 15* at 85.

²⁷ *Id.* at 78.

²⁸ Suruchi Thapar – Bjorkert, “If there were no Khaps [...] everything will go haywire [...] young boys and girls will start marrying into the same gotra: Understanding Khap-Directed „Honour Killings“ in Northern India”, in

the orthodox approaches of the rural people.²⁹ Even the government and the police force failed to confront this issue. In the name of preserving social order and saving the honour of their community, caste or family, they justify all their heinous acts. And these people are even backed by the number of political leaders, civil servants, police officers, lawyers and even judges. In Haryana and other places in and around Haryana, the number of heinous killings escalated to an unprecedented level. The state remained a mute spectator to these unruly acts. The role played by the media was laudable which raised their voice by setting a stage for a national debate on this issue. But that wasn't enough to address the gross violations of these communities. The perpetrators are not only left scot free but also urged for certain amendments with their proposed demands. Some of the caste panchayats like Khap Mahapanchayat demanded the amendment of Hindu Marriage Act and even specified to implement the prohibition of marriages within same village and contiguous villages. They even demanded for the de-recognition of the temple weddings for the eloped couples.³⁰ In history of Indian democracy, no law has been enacted against the honour killing, because of that no data is collected separately regarding this crime by the National Crimes Record Bureau, and the same is covered under murder.

Aisha K. Gill, Carolyn Strange et. al., *Honour Killing and Violence: Theory, Policy and Practice*, p. 158 (Palgrave Macmillan, UK, 2014).

²⁹ *Supra note* 14 at 16.

³⁰ *Supra note* 13 at 234-235.

Thus at present there is no separate law to deal with honour killing / crime and such crimes are dealt under the provisions of the Indian Penal Code and are investigated and prosecuted as offences under the I.P.C./Cr.P.C.³¹

Honour Killing – A Global Phenomenon

Honour killing is a primal act and knows no religious, cultural, racial or geographical boundaries.³² Honour violence occurs worldwide, from South America to Asia. The exact figures of how many men and women have been killed in the name of honour are unknown. Not all countries keep official statistics and it's a crime that can be difficult to detect. But it is believed that the numbers of deaths are in thousands.³³ In September 2000, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) estimated that as many as 5000 women and girls are murdered each year in so called honour killing by members of their own families.³⁴ The United Nations Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial executions, have received reports of so called honour killings of women from Bangladesh, Brazil, Ecuador, India, Israel, Jordan, Morocco, Pakistan, Sweden, Turkey, Uganda and the United Kingdom.³⁵ Honour killings have also taken place in USA and Australia. Every year in Pakistan hundreds of women, of all ages

³¹ *Supra note 23* at 291.

³² Amir H. Jafri, *Honour Killing: Dilemma, Ritual, Understanding*, Oxford University Press, Karachi, 1stedn, 2014, p. 140.

³³ *Supra note 16* at 262.

³⁴ *Supra note 8* at 74.

³⁵ UN doc. E/CN.4/2000/3, 25 January 2000.

and in all parts of the country, are reported to be killed in the name of honour. It seems, however, that honour killings are most prevalent in the Middle East and South Asia.³⁶ “Shame Killings” as UN former Secretary General Kofi Annan has preferred to call the practice is a global phenomenon. Cold-blooded murders in the name of saving family pride had been prevalent in many parts of the world. The number of women killing in the name of honour is increasing every year around the world.³⁷ Most honour killings occur in countries where the concept of women as a vessel of the family reputation predominates, said Marsha Freeman, Director of International Women’s Right Action Watch at Hubert Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs at the University of Minnesota.³⁸ Violence against women is being tackled at the international level as a human rights issue. In 1994, the UN’s Commission on Human Rights appointed special reporters on violence against women and both UNICEF and the UN Development Fund for women have programmes in place to address the issue.³⁹

(a) Europe

The issue of honour killings has risen to prominence in Europe in recent years, prompting the need to address the occurrence of honour killings.⁴⁰ The European Parliamentary

³⁶ Madhu Sudan Dash, “Rationale of Honour Killing”, Volume XXXIX, No. 3, *IBR*, p.146 (2012).

³⁷ *Supra note 4*.

³⁸ *Supra note 15* at 80.

³⁹ *Id.* at 81.

⁴⁰ *Supra note 12* at 10.

Assembly in its Resolution 1681 of 2009 noted the urgent need to combat so called honour crimes. Drawing attention to its resolution 1327 (2003) on so called honour crimes, the Parliamentary Assembly notes that the problem, far from diminishing, has worsened, including in Europe. It mainly affects women, who are its most frequent victims, both in Europe and the rest of the world, especially in patriarchal and fundamentalist communities and societies. All forms of violence against women and girls in the name of traditional codes of honour are considered to be so-called “honour crimes” and constitute a serious violation of fundamental human rights. Such violence takes various forms, such as “honour killing”, assault, torture, restrictions on free association, captivity or imprisonment, and interference in the choice of spouse or partner. The assembly firmly denounces these crimes and dismisses any form of excuse for them: no tradition or culture can invoke any kind of honour to violate women’s fundamental rights. There is no honour in so called “honour crimes”. The assembly is determined to put a stop to this practice as a matter of great urgency. It consequently asked the Council of Europe member states to draw up and put into effect national action plans to combat violence against women, including violence committed in the name of so-called „honour“, if they havenot already done so.”⁴¹

⁴¹ Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly – Resolution 1681 of 2009, Available at: <http://assembly.coe.int/nw/xml/XRef/Xref-DocDetail->

(i) Germany

Honour killing is a relatively new phenomenon in Germany, up until recently it has not received much public attention. In 2001, for example, the German Parliament introduced a motion that attracts attention to incidents of honour killing occurring worldwide. This motion listed 13 countries in which such murders had occurred, including Jordan, Syria, Turkey and Sudan. Germany was not included on the list. This, however, is not to say that such incidents had never occurred in Germany, they had, but they were not politicized in public discourse. Four years later in 2005, honour killing suddenly became a major issue in Germany. The immediate catalyst for this was the brutal murder of a young Turkish / Kurdish woman, Hatun Surucu, in Berlin on February 7th. Hatun was shot in the head three times by her youngest brother, Ayhan, on her way to a bus stop. The court records stated that Ayhan wanted to kill Hatun in order to maintain family's honour. Hatun had divorced the cousin whom she was forced to marry at 16 and was reportedly dating a German man when she was murdered at the age of 23. After Hatun's murder, several other cases that had occurred previously were also labeled as honour killings. It was reported that between October 2004 and June 2005 alone, eight women were killed for allegedly bringing dishonour to their families.⁴² The Turkish Women's Organization

[en.asp?FileID=17766&lang=en](#) (Last visited on July 13, 2021).

⁴² Selen A. Ercan, "Same Problem, Different Solutions: The Case of „Honour Killing“ in Germany and Britain", in Aisha K. Gill, Carolyn Strange et. al.,

Papatya documented 40 instances of honour killing of Turkish descendents in Germany since 1996.⁴³

(ii) United Kingdom

In recent decades there has been a greatly increased focus on honour-related violence within academic, policy and media circles in Britain.⁴⁴ Every year in UK a dozen women are victims of honour killing, occurring almost exclusively to date within Asian and Middle Eastern families and often cases are unresolved due to the unwillingness of family, relatives and communities to testify.⁴⁵ In 2003, particularly after the murder of 16 year old Heshu Yones by her father, honour killing became a separate policy area in Britain. In this case the Metropolitan Police Service labeled a murder for the first time as an honour killing and Heshu's father was the first person to be convicted of an honour killing in Britain.⁴⁶ In the UK, in December 2005, Nazir Afzal, Director, West London, of Britain's Crown Prosecution Service, stated that the United Kingdom has seen at least a dozen killings between 2004 and 2005. While the precise figure do not exist for

Honour Killing and Violence: Theory, Policy and Practice, p. 201 (Palgrave Macmillan, UK, 2014).

⁴³ *Supra note 10*

⁴⁴ Rupa Reddy, "Domestic Violence or Cultural Tradition? Approaches to Honour Killings as Species and Subspecies in English Legal Practice", in Aisha K. Gill, Carolyn Strange et. al., *Honour Killing and Violence: Theory, Policy and Practice*, p.27 (Palgrave Macmillan, UK, 2014).

⁴⁵ Pranab Kumar Rana and Bhabani Prasad Mishra, "Honour Killings – A Gross Violation of Human Rights and its Challenges", Volume 2, Issue 6, *IJHSSI*, p.25 (2013).

⁴⁶ *Supra note 42* at 206.

the perpetrators cultural backgrounds, Diana Nammi of the UK's Iranian and Kurdish Women's Rights Organisation is reported to have said: "about two-thirds are Muslim. Yet they can also be Hindu and Sikh".⁴⁷ In February 2008, giving evidence to the Home Affairs Committee of the House of Commons, Commander Steve Allen, who speaks for the association of Chief Police Officers, said that around 500 cases of forced marriage and honourkillings – the two practices are inextricably linked – are reported to the police and the Foreign Office forced marriage unit each year.⁴⁸ In 2010, Britain saw a 47% rise of honour-related crimes. Data from police agencies in the UK report 2283 cases in 2010, and an estimated of 500 more from jurisdictions that did not provide reports. These honour related crimes also include house arrests and other parental punishments. Most of the attacks were conducted in cities that had high immigrant populations. A highly publicized case was that of Shafiea Iftikhar Ahmed, a 17 year old British Pakistani girl from Great Sankey, Warrington, Cheshire, who was murdered in 2003 by her parents.⁴⁹ Shafiea's death was product of many factors, including the relationship between honour and both gender and power inequalities within the Ahmed household. The case highlights the fact that while honour is an

⁴⁷ Azad Kumar Singh, *Honour Killing: A Global Perspective*, Saad Publications, Delhi, 2014, p. 19.

⁴⁸ Ayse Onal, *Honour Killing: Stories of Men who Killed*, Saqi, Beirut, 2008, p. 11.

⁴⁹ *Supra note 12* at 11.

important motivating factor in most murders of this nature, it is rarely the only issue at stake.⁵⁰

(iii) Sweden

In Sweden, more than ten cases of honour killings have been reported since 1994. The murderers have in most cases been male family members of young women of ages between fifteen and twenty one. Notions of culture and/or honour are either directly or indirectly claimed by offenders to be linked to the crime. The rationale behind the killing being that it is the duty of the male members of the family to ensure that the female family member's sexuality is intact according to the prescribed codes of sexual conduct. If such sexual codes are violated than the family honour and the manhood of the male concerned is at play and must be restored instantly.⁵¹ In 1996, a sixteen year old Kurdish boy stabbed his seventeen year old sister to death. In court, he argued that the sister's behaviour had brought shame to the family, and that she had provoked his action by inter alia being disrespectful.⁵² In Sweden, the 26 year old Kurdish woman Fadime Sahindal was killed by her father in 2002.⁵³ Since then, Sweden has had an increasingly high profile on state policies against „honour-

⁵⁰ Aisha K. Gill, "All they think about is Honour: The Murder of Shafiea Ahmed", in Aisha K. Gill, Carolyn Strange et. al., *Honour Killing and Violence: Theory, Policy and Practice*, p. 188 (Palgrave Macmillan, UK, 2014).

⁵¹ *Supra note 47* at 273.

⁵² *Id.* at 276-277.

⁵³ *Supra note 12* at 12.

related violence and oppression“ which is the official term.⁵⁴ Sweden was the first Scandinavian country to issue a joint policy document with the comprehensive and thus lengthy title „Action Plan for combating Men“s violence in same-sex relationships“.⁵⁵

(iv) France

France has a large immigrant community from North Africa (especially from Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia) and honour violence occurs in this community. A 2009 report by the Council of Europe cited the United Kingdom, Germany, Belgium, France and Norway as countries where honour crimes and honour killings occur. France traditionally provided for leniency in regard to honour crimes, particularly against women who had committed adultery. The Napoleonic Code of 1804, established under the Napoleon Bonaparte, is one of the origins of the legal leniency in regard to adultery related killings in a variety of legal systems in several countries around the world. Under this code, a man who killed his wife whom he caught in the act of adultery could not be charged with premeditated murder – although he could be charged with other lesser offences.⁵⁶

⁵⁴ Anja Bredal, “Ordinary v. Other Violence? Conceptualising Honour-Based Violence in Scandinavian Public Policies”, in Aisha K. Gill, Carolyn Strange et. al., *Honour Killing and Violence: Theory, Policy and Practice*, p.139 (Palgrave Macmillan, UK, 2014).

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ *Supra note 12* at 10-11.

(b) Middle East**(i) Egypt**

An Egyptian report based on 1995 statistics counted 52 honour killings (out of 819 murders) reported. Modern Penal Codes and also the practices reinforce the notion that men have a right to punish woman for improper sexual behaviour. The Association of Legal Aid for Women (CEWLA), an Egyptian NGO collected some news and articles written on honour crimes in Egyptian Press (newspapers and magazines) published during the period 1998 and 2001, analyzed it and finally reached on the opinion that killing the girl is not only for establishing pre-marital relationships but also for marrying someone the family does not approve. It examined several cases of murder, until, it collected ten murder case committed because of honour killing. In all ten court cases the penalties ranged from no verdict to imprisonment between 2 and 4 years except the first two cases. In all cases Article 17 of the Penal Code was applied. Article 17 of the Egyptian Penal Code allows judges to decrease the sentences given in the case of murder when they decide that the condition of the murderer requires so. Such reductions reach as little as six months that could also be spent during the trial. Therefore, the murderer can escape from being imprisoned and walks free. Also in the same penal code, a man's act of adultery is adulterous only in the marital home (Article 277), but a wife is adulterous outside or inside the marital home, and need not be found deflagrate

delicate for the husband to benefit from the defence of inflated emotions. The constitutionality of these laws has been challenged by activists in Egypt.⁵⁷ In 2013, three Egyptian women were beaten and strangled to death in the so called „honour killing“ in the conservative region. Ten male relatives killed the three women, reportedly believing that they had affairs.⁵⁸

(ii) Jordan

According to a statement issued by UNICEF Executive Director Carol Bellamy on March 7, 2000, there are an average 23 honour killings per year in Jordan.⁵⁹ In 2013, the BBC cited the estimates by the non-governmental National Council of Family Affairs in Jordan that upto 50 women and girls were killed in last 13 years. But the BBC indicated that the real figure is likely to be far higher, since most honour killings go unreported.⁶⁰ In Jordan, honour killings are sanctioned by law.⁶¹ Rana Hussein, a leading journalist on that topic of honour killings, states that under the existing law, people found guilty of committing honour killings

⁵⁷ *Supra note 4* at 48-49.

⁵⁸ Melissa Stusinski, “Three Egyptian Women Killed in ‘Honour Killing’, Five men arrested”, 25 May 2013, Available at: <http://www.inquisitr.com/674939/three-egyptian-women-killed-in-honour-killing-five-men-arrested/> (Last visited on July 16, 2021).

⁵⁹ “UNICEF Executive Director Targets Violence Against Women”, UNICEF, 7 March 2000, Available at: <http://www.unicef.org/newsline/oopr17.htm> (Last visited on July 16, 2021).

⁶⁰ Ahmed Maher, “Many Jordan teenagers support Honour Killings”, BBC News, 20 June 2013, Available at: <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-22992365> (Last visited on July 16, 2021).

⁶¹ Alka Bhatia, “Honour Killing – A Study of the Causes and Remedies in its Socio-Legal Aspect”, Volume IV, Issue 38, *IJRRJ*, p.7 (2012).

often receive sentences as light as six months in prison.⁶² Article 340 of the Jordanian Penal Code states that a husband or a close blood relative who kills a woman caught in a situation highly suspicious of adultery will be totally exempt from sentence. Article 98 stipulates a lighter sentence for male killers of female relatives who have committed an act which is illicit in the eyes of the perpetrator. In practice, once a murder has been judged an honour killing, the usual sentence is from three months to one year.⁶³ There has been a public support in Jordan to amend Article 340 and 98. In 1999 King Abdullah established a special committee to review and amend gender – discriminatory laws. The committee recommended repealing of Article 340. The cabinet approved the recommendation and the measure was presented to Parliament twice in November 1999 and January 2000 and in both cases, though approved by the upper house, it failed to pass the elected lower house. In 2001, after the Parliament was suspended, a number of temporary laws were created which were subject to the parliamentary ratification. One of the amendments was that husbands would no longer be exonerated for killing unfaithful wives, but instead the circumstances would be considered as evidence for mitigating punishments. In the interest of sex equality, women were given the same reduction in punishment if found guilty of the crime. When Parliament returned to session in

⁶² *Supra note 14* at 35.

⁶³ *Supra note 4* at 49.

2003, the new amendments were rejected by the lower house after two successful readings in the upper house.⁶⁴

(iii) Lebanon

There are no exact official numbers about honour killings in Lebanon as many honour killings are arranged to look like accidents.⁶⁵ It is believed that 40 to 50 women are killed each year in honour related killings.⁶⁶ A 2007 report by Amnesty International said that the Lebanese media in 2001 reported 2 or 3 honour killings per month in Lebanon, although the number is believed by lawyers to be higher.⁶⁷ On August 4, 2011, Lebanese Parliament agreed by a majority to abolish Article 562, which for years had worked as an excuse for honour killing.⁶⁸

(iv) Turkey

A report compiled by the Council of Europe in 2007, estimated that over 200 women were killed in the name of family or community honour in Turkey.⁶⁹ A June 2008 report by the Turkish Prime Ministry's Human Rights Directorate said that in Istanbul at least one person die every week because of honour killing and the number of murders committed for honour in last

⁶⁴ Amman "*Special report on Honour Killings*", 18 April 2005, available at: <http://irinnews.org/report/25021/jordan-special-report-on-honour-killing> (Last visited on July 16, 2021).

⁶⁵ "*Honour Killing*", Available at: <http://abuse.wikia.com/wiki/Honour-killing> (Last visited on July 16, 2021).

⁶⁶ *Supra note 63.*

⁶⁷ *Supra note 65.*

⁶⁸ *Supra note 12 at 15.*

⁶⁹ "*Number of Honor Killings in Europe Higher than Thought*", Available at: <http://m.voanews.com/a/a-13-2009-05-21-voa39-68815262/363828.html> (Last visited on July 16, 2021).

five years has exceeded 1000. The report declares that metropolitan cities are leading crime scenes of honour killings.⁷⁰ In 2010, a 16 year old Kurdish girl was buried alive by relatives for befriending boys in southeast Turkey; her corpse was found 40 days after she went missing. Ahmet Yildiz, a Turkish physics student who represented his country at an international gay conference in the United States in 2008, was shot dead while leaving a café in Istanbul. It is believed Yildiz was the victim of the country's first gay honour killing.⁷¹

(v) Palestinian Authority

According to UNICEF, in 2000, two thirds of all killings in the Palestinian territories were honour killings.⁷² The Palestinian Independent Commission for Human Rights has reported that 29 women were killed between 2007 to 2010, whereas 13 women were killed in 2011 and 2012 in first seven months of 2012.⁷³ The Palestinian Authority, using a clause in Jordanian Penal Code which is still in effect in the West Bank, exempts men from punishment for killing a female relative if she has brought dishonour to the family.⁷⁴

⁷⁰ Jim Hoft, "Honor Killings claim 1000 lives in 5 years in Turkey", 22 June 2008, Available at: <http://www.thegatewaypundit.com/2008/06/honor-killings-claim-1000-lives-in-5-years-in-turkey/> (Last visited on July 16, 2021).

⁷¹ *Supra note* 12 at 16.

⁷² *Supra note* 59.

⁷³ *Supra note* 71 at 15.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

(vi) Iraq

As many as 133 women were killed in the Iraqi city of Basra alone in 2006 – 79 for violation of Islamic teachings and 47 for honour killings, according to IRIN, the news branch of the UN's Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. Amnesty International has said in a 2007 report that politically active women, those who do not follow a strict dress code and women (who are) human rights defenders were increasingly at risk of abuses, including, by armed groups and religious extremists.⁷⁵ 17 year old Du'a Khalil Aswad an Iraqi Kurdish girl of the Yazidi faith was stoned to death in front of a mob of about 2000 men in 2007, possibly because she was accused of wanting to convert to Islam.⁷⁶

(vii) Iran

Honour killings are perpetrated throughout Iran and occur among all ethnic groups. The available source material suggests that honour killings primarily occur among tribal peoples such as Kurdish, Lori, Arab, Baluchi and Turkish-speaking tribes. Honour killings in Iran have not been systematically mapped. Figures given by the Iranian authorities or presented on Iranian websites are largely restricted to the provinces of Kurdistan, Ilam and Khuzestan. Asia Pacific Women's Watch (2004) refers to a

⁷⁵ Arwa Damon, "*Violations of 'Islamic Teachings' take deadly toll on Iraqi Women*", 8 February 2008, Available at: <http://edition.cnn.com/2008/WORLD/meast/02/08/iraq.women/index.html> (Last visited on July 14, 2021).

⁷⁶ *Supra note* 12 at 15.

governor representative in the Khuzestan province's statement that 565 women had lost their lives through honour related violence in Khuzestan in 2001. Of these, 375 women are said to have committed suicide (self-immolation). In 2003, 45 women under the age of 20 from the same tribe are said to have been the victims of honour killings. In 2003, it was reported that on average one woman was killed per day in the province of Ilam. The towns Shirvan and Chardoval top the list with 170 honour killings, followed by Darreh Shar with 165, Abadan with 100, Ilam with 50, Mehran with 45 and Ivan with 30. It has been reported that perpetrators burn the birth certificates of the victim and hide the body to escape justice.⁷⁷ British authorities have also referred to Khouzistan, concluding that at least 40 women are said to have been killed by their families for the sake of honour from March to May in 2003.⁷⁸ According to an Iranian source, six (possible nine) women are said to have been victims of honour killings in Iranian Kurdish in the first five months of 2008. The most talked about killing was that of a young woman who was killed by her father after she left her husband. The killing enraged the local community and a large crowd of people followed the funeral processing demanding that the killer be brought to justice.⁷⁹ The Suuntaus project report compiled by the Finnish Immigration

⁷⁷ "Report Honour Killings in Iran", 22 May 2009, Available at: www.landinfo.no/asset/960/1/960_1.pdf (Last visited on July 17, 2021).

⁷⁸ *Supra* note 47 at 265.

⁷⁹ *Id.* at p. 266.

Service on „Violence against women and honour- related violence in Iran“ dated 26 June 2015 citing various sources stated that: Honour killings are an established phenomenon in many of Iran’s outermost provinces, while they are less common in cities. According to Bakhtiarnezhad’s survey [a field survey carried out in Iran concerning honour by anthropologist Parvin Bakhtiarnezhad in 2009-2010 in communities where there had been murders of girls and women], honour killings are most common among nomads and uneducated people. The victims are most likely to be married women who are suspected of adultery, but young girls who are suspected of having relations with boys can also be targeted.⁸⁰

(viii) Yemen

Honour killings are common in Yemen. In some parts of the country, traditional tribal customs forbid contact between men and women before marriage. Yemeni society is strongly male dominated.⁸¹ It was estimated that about 400 women and girls died in honour killings in 1997 in Yemen.⁸² In 2013, a 15 year old girl

⁸⁰ “Country Policy and Information Note Iran: Honour crimes against women”, 17 October 2017, Available at: [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/653537/CPIN - Iran - Honour crimes October 2017_ex.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/653537/CPIN_-_Iran_-_Honour_crimes_October_2017_ex.pdf) (Last visited on July 16, 2021).

⁸¹ *Supra note* 12 at 16.

⁸² *Id.* at 16-17.

was burned to death by her father for getting in touch with her fiancé before their wedding.⁸³

(c) South Asia

(i) Pakistan

In Pakistan, honour killings are known locally as karokari.⁸⁴ Karo literally means the black(ened) men in the Sindhi language while kari means black(ened) women.⁸⁵ Originally, Karo and Kari were metaphoric term for adulterer and adulteress, but it has come to be used with regards to multiple forms of perceived immoral behaviour. Once a woman is labeled as Kari, family members consider themselves to be authorized to kill her and the co-accused Karo in order to restore family honour. In the majority of cases, the victim of the attacks is female with her attackers being male members of her family or community.⁸⁶ Pakistan has the grotesque reputation of being one of the leading honour-killing countries in the world.⁸⁷ Statistically, honour killings enjoy high level of support in Pakistani society, despite widespread condemnation from human rights group.⁸⁸ Women have no independent identities; they are not independent human beings. Men also think of women as an extension of themselves, when a

⁸³ “Yemeni Burns Daughter to Death for Contacting Fiancé”, 23 October 2013, Available at: <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-24638059> (Last visited on July 16, 2021).

⁸⁴ *Supra note 47* at 216.

⁸⁵ *Supra note 32* at 15.

⁸⁶ *Supra note 84*.

⁸⁷ Robert Fisk, “Relatives with Blood on their Hands”, *The Sunday Tribune*, September 19, 2010.

⁸⁸ *Supra note 4* at 49-50.

woman violates these standards, this is a direct blow to the man's sense of identity.⁸⁹

In 2002 alone above 382 people, about 245 women and 137 men became victims of honour killings in the Sindh province of Pakistan. Over the course of six years, more than 4,000 women have died as victims of honour killings in Pakistan from 1999 to 2004. In 2005, the average annual number of honour killings for the whole nation was stated to be more than 10,000 per year. According to women's rights advocates, the concept of women as property, and of honour, are so deeply entrenched in the social, political and economic fabric of Pakistan that the government mostly ignores the regular occurrences of women being killed and maimed by their families. Frequently, women killed in honour killings are recorded as having committed suicide or died in accidents.⁹⁰ Ghazala was set on fire by her brother in Joharabad, Punjab province, on January 6, 1999. According to reports, she was murdered because her family suspected that she was having an illicit relationship with a neighbour.⁹¹ In August 2008, five women were buried alive for honour crimes in Baluchistan by armed tribesmen; three of them – Hameeda, Raheema and Fauzia – were teenagers, who after being beaten and shot, were thrown still alive into a ditch where they were covered with stone and

⁸⁹ Robert Fisk, "The Truth about Honour Killings", *The Sunday Tribune*, September 19, 2010.

⁹⁰ *Supra note* 12 at 17.

⁹¹ *Supra note* 47 at 227.

earth. When the two older women, aged 45 and 38, protested, they suffered the same fate. The three younger women had tried to choose their own husbands.⁹² In Pakistan, most honour killings were encompassed by the 1990 Qisas and Diyat Ordinance, which permits the individual and his or her family to retain control over a crime, including the right to determine whether to report the crime, prosecute the offender, or demand diyat (compensation). Since most honour killings are committed by a close relative, if and when the case reaches a court of law, the victims family may pardon the murderer, or be pressured to accept diyat (financial compensation). The murderer then goes free. Once such a pardon has been secured, the state has no further writ on the matter although often the killers are relatives of the victim.⁹³

(ii) Afghanistan

Suraya Sobhrang, head of women's affairs department in Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC) said that around 240 cases of honour killing and 160 cases of rape have been recorded across the country during 2012. According to AIHRC findings around 21% of honour killings were committed by husbands of the victims, 7% by brothers of victims, 4% by fathers and the rest by other relatives.⁹⁴

⁹² Robert Fisk, "Searching for Honour in Murder", *The Sunday Tribune*, September 19, 2010.

⁹³ *Supra note* 47 at 27.

⁹⁴ Ghanizada, "240 cases of Honor Killing recorded in Afghanistan, AIHRC", 9 June 2013, Available at: <http://www.khaama.com/240-cases-of-honor-killing-recorded-in-afghanistan-aihrc-2177> (Last visited on July 15, 2021).

(d) The Americas**(i) Canada**

In Canada, honour killings have been treated as barbaric and unacceptable.⁹⁵ In recent years, numerous national media accounts have reported that Canada witnessed 12-15 honour killings in the period between 2000 and 2009. These accounts focus almost exclusively on a number of high profile murder cases that claimed the lives of young south Asian and Muslim girls and women in Canada, including the murder of Aqsa Parvez, a teenager who was strangled by her brother and father in 2008.⁹⁶ A 2007 study by Dr. Amin Muhammad and Dr. Sujay Patel of [Memorial University, Canada](#), investigated how the practice of honour killings has been brought to Canada. The report explained that when people come and settle in Canada they bring their traditions and forcefully follow them. In some cultures, people feel some boundaries are never to be crossed, and if someone would violate those practices or go against it, then murder is justified to them. The report noted that in different cultures, they can get away without being punished - the courts actually sanction them under religious contexts. The report also asserted that the people who commit these crimes are usually mentally ill. The report asserted that the mental health aspect is often ignored by western observers

⁹⁵ *Supra note 36* at 145.

⁹⁶ Dana M. Olwan, "No place in Canada: Triumphant Discourses, Murdered Women and the Honour Crime", in Aisha K. Gill, Carolyn Strange et. al., *Honour Killing and Violence: Theory, Policy and Practice*, p.219 (Palgrave Macmillan, UK, 2014).

because of a lack of understanding of the insufficiently developed state of mental healthcare in developing countries in which honor killings are prevalent.⁹⁷ Honour killings have become such a pressing issue in Canada that the Canadian citizenship study guide mentions it specifically, saying, “Canada’s openness and generosity do not extend to barbaric cultural practices that tolerate spousal abuse, honour killings, female genital mutilation, forced marriage or other gender based violence”.⁹⁸

(ii) United States

Several honour killings have occurred in the U.S. during recent years. In 1989, in St. Louis, Missouri, 16 year old Palestinian „Tina Isa was murdered by her Palestinian father with the aid of his wife. Her parents were dissatisfied with her „westernized“ life style.⁹⁹ In July 2008, New York Post writer John P. Avlon claimed that the murder of 25 year old Sandeela Kanwal – allegedly by her father, Chaudhry Rashid – was an American honour killing. Rashid is said to have strangled Kanwal to death with a bungee cord after she tried to end her arranged marriage.¹⁰⁰ In October 2009, in Arizona, Faleh Hassan Almaleki, an Iraqi immigrant, killed his daughter Noor Almaleki, aged 20, because

⁹⁷ “*Honor Killing or Honour Killing*”, The Conservative Chronicles 24x7 Magazine, 29 September 2010, Available at: <http://theconservativethinkers.blogspot.com/2010/09/honor-killing-or-honour-kil.html> (Last visited on July 17, 2021).

⁹⁸ *Supra note* 12 at 19.

⁹⁹ *Id.* at 20.

¹⁰⁰ *Supra note* 47 at 286.

she was „too westernized“, defying Iraqi and Muslim values and had shunned an arranged marriage and was living with her boyfriend.¹⁰¹ The honour killing campaign, sponsored by the group Stop Islamization of America (SIOA), illustrates how Islamophobic representations not only eroticize such violence but also inscribe it as a timeless feature of a culture locked in the uncivilized past.¹⁰² In 2010, SIOA used taxis in American cities as a medium to transport its message of deliverance.¹⁰³ Phyllis Chesler argues that the U.S., as well as Canada, do not have proper measures in place to fight against honour killings, and do not recognize these murders as a specific form of violence, distinct from other domestic murders, due to the fear of being labeled “culturally insensitive”. According to her this often prevents government officials in the United States and the media from identifying and accurately reporting these incidents as honour killing when they occur. She also writes that, although there are not many cases of honour killings within the United States, the overwhelming majority of honour killings are perpetrated by Muslims against Muslims (90% of honour killing known to have

¹⁰¹ “*Iraqi Guilty of Murder in Daughter’s ‘Honour Killing’*”, 23 February 2011, Available at: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-arizona-iraqi/iraqi-guilty-of-murder-in-daughters-honor-killing-idUSTRE71L8IT20110222> (Last visited on July 14, 2021).

¹⁰² Carolyn Strange, “Adjusting the Lens of Honour-Based Violence: Perspectives from Euro-American History”, in Aisha K. Gill, Carolyn Strange et. al., *Honour Killing and Violence: Theory, Policy and Practice*, p.47 (Palgrave Macmillan, UK, 2014).

¹⁰³ *Id.* at 48.

taken place in Europe and the United States from 1998 to 2008). In these documented cases the victims were murdered because they were believed to have acted in a way against the religion of the family and perpetrators acted without remorse.¹⁰⁴

Conclusion

Honour killing is a global phenomenon and is prevalent in many countries across the globe. United Nations estimated that annual worldwide number of honour killings is around 5,000. Middle East and South Asia are said to be most affected parts of the world of this crime. In India, it is estimated that 1,000 honour killings occur every year. Instances of honour killing are increasing in northern region (particularly in Haryana, Punjab, Western Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan) of India, which is being dominated by the khap or caste panchayats. These panchayats has been held responsible for growing number of honour killing of young couples who dare to go against their illegal diktats. Discrimination and violence against women is growing rapidly almost everywhere in the world. Even in the developed countries like United States, United Kingdom, France etc. honour killings can be witnessed. In some countries (like Jordan, Egypt etc.) perpetrators of the crime take the advantage of the discriminatory penal provisions and get lesser punishment for killing a woman on the pretext of saving honour. Women are still considered as a property of the males in their family and when they transgress the

¹⁰⁴ *Supra note 12 at 20.*

set boundaries in the patriarchal societies, they are being killed in order to save/restore the honour of family, caste or group. Honour killings are against the various international commitments and also against the spirit of Universal Declaration of Human Rights and International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. A lot has to be done through joint cooperation and efforts of all sections of the society in order to achieve the goal of equality and to eradicate the social evil of honour killing from the civilized society.