

Killing for Honour: A Social Disorder

Sanghamitra Pal

Faculty

Department of Philosophy

Hiralal Mazumdar Memorial College for Women, Dakshineswar

Abstract

Modern privileged society has tried to enhance the prestige of women by endorsing some great terms in favour of them like Women Empowerment, Women Education etc.; but the fate of the women has changed hardly even standing on the first quarter of the twenty first century as extortion in the form of rape, sexual harassment, dowry and women trafficking is still very common in the contemporary period. However, one such brutal incident- Honour Killing- has recently come up in the surface that unfortunately remained behind the curtain for centuries. Generally, killing of own people, relative by blood, offshoots for safeguarding of lineage from being thought to be stigmatized in the society is known as Honour Killing. This thought is nothing but the exposure of the superstitious mindset of a section of people in the society, results arbitrary killing of women. Women are not the only victims of this social curse, even men are also suffered a lot from this brutality. Since, women are the prime victims of this unacceptable phenomena, the topic demands further attention to be evaluated at a greater scale.

Keywords:

Honour Killing, Khap Panchayat, Customary Killing, Women Empowerment, Gender-Equality.

Introduction:

It is a perpetual truth that the life is uncertain. It is nothing but an unparallel fight just to survive till death where every life finds a secured place to sustain. However, it becomes so terrifying when someone finds a serious conversion of its secured place into a devastating one. Unfortunately, it has been seen that some of our beloved persons make some hidden attack to kill us coming out from that secured place of life in the name of protecting lineage or society, is termed as 'Honour Killing'. It is a clear case of murdering or killing someone but it should not be rated as equivalent like other killing, simply because, the significance and depth of

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‘Honour Killing’ is much more horrifying as it not only kills one person but at the same time it kills the faith, love and trust associated with it.

Explanation and Analysis:

It transpires from a research-based data that one Dutch Turkey Expert (University of Leiden Ane Nauta) in 1978 had first used the term ‘Honour Killing’ in order to differentiate it from the other mode of killing, which is also named as ‘Customary Killing’. It is a type of planned killing of a woman incurred by a dominating man of the same family, community or society who tries to find himself as the self-declared protector of image of the family, community or society. To him, the pride of the family, community or society becomes more important than an innocent life. It is absolutely needless to mention here that in most of the cases that male member commits the murder from a regressive and barbaric mindset. Exceptions are also observed when a man is also brutally murdered by another man of course, for same reason as stated above. However, this patriarchal society, in the context of our country, accuses women for whatever reasons pondering over all responsibilities and liabilities on their shoulders, killing for pride just adds into it being a soft target.

‘Honour Killing’ is not a newly introduced event. It can be found out in the history of the civilization of the longest past and in the different corner of the globe. This bloodshed is still going on a camouflaged manner in every tier of the society, although a microscopic number of incidents are brought to light and most goes inside the deep of the heap of events.

It is hardly possible to assess the exact point from which this sort of incident was started to happen, but it is evident from different surveys that ‘Honour Killing’ is a traditional practice which has been continued for more than 2000 years and it is not confined within the territory of India rather it has been found almost everywhere in the world and traditionally, it is still going on. According to the statistics of United Nations Populations Fund, 5000 women at least, are killed every year due to this brutality. In Egypt, a husband is legally empowered to kill his wife on the assumption of a post-marital relationship. ‘Honour Killing’ is lawfully accepted there. Women in the Middle-East and South-Asia gets capital punishment because of trivial family contentions. Even, developed countries like England, Canada, United States of America are no exception to it. Pathetic scenario in the history of India after partition regarding

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‘Honour Killing’ of women can be found in the year of 1947 and 1950 when women returned to their home after forcibly married by the people of other community.

It becomes most unfortunate where parents get absolutely daring to kill their children to maintain their family pride – as they believe. They become so daring that they don’t possess any regret for such unlawful activities. For Example, one mother of a country of south-asia killed her girl child by acid because she looked to a man while driving on a scooter. Later, the mother told in reply to the query that it was the destiny of her child. This futile mentality has, now, become the sickness of the entire society.

It transpires from the report of the International Women’s Human Rights Group that the many examples of ‘Honour Killing’ in different forms can be seen in different countries of Indian subcontinent, middle-east, some parts of Europe, North America and South America. In India, it is seen mainly in the North Indian states and partially in the Western India. In addition to that, examples of ‘Honour Killing’ can also be found in Southern part of India, Maharashtra and in some parts of Gujarat.

A woman can be a victim of this brutality because of the following incidents:

- 1) Not giving consent towards social marriage in accordance with the decision of the family;
- 2) Asking for alimony due to divorce;
- 3) As a rape victim;
- 4) Inter-caste/inter religion marriage;
- 5) False allegation and rumour.

Any of the aforesaid reasons is enough to commit this barbaric incident by so called conservative family to maintain ‘Pride’, although this ‘Pride’ is supposed to be a relative matter based on the other factors of that situation. However, victimizing the female member comes out as the only solution by the predators.

Experiences have shown that ‘Khap Panchayats’ are one of the root causes for the continuation of this menace in the Indian soil. These organizations are run by superstitious, uneducated and primitive minded people who are always active to pounce on the women in the name of maintaining pride. The Supreme Court of India has declared this type of organizations as

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completely illegal; still, they are active patronizing by some people having vested interests. It may be pertinent to mention here that Panchayati raj institutions don't have any power to indulge into any personal or family issues in terms of Rule 300 of Indian Penal Code, but, in spite of that, this corrupt practice has been going on in absence of social awareness and civic sense of the common people.

International Human Rights Organization has already admitted 'Honour Killing' as one of the most abusive incidents happening in the present era. This sort of incidence of violence definitely curtails the dignity of women and in consequence to that, international law makers compel all countries to frame rigid rule against such violence.

However, no specific act/rule has yet been framed in India against 'Honour Killing'. These crimes are judged by the Hon'ble Courts on the basis of general acts/rules and in most occasions, criminals have duly been punished. In this context, the case of Manoj and Babli is very relevant [Smt. Chandrapati Vs. State of Haryana and Ors. Dated 27th May, 2011]. Manoj (23) and Babli (19), coming from different communities of the society had married each other in 2007 going against their family decisions. The matter was straightway brought before the 'Khap Panchayat' of the village concerned and adjudged to be killed by the villagers/family members. Soon after, their dead-bodies were found beside the nearby canal. Later, it was found that the family members of Babli were pro-active to commit these unholy murders.

Consequently, the Hon'ble Judge of the Karnal District Court in 2010 had convicted family members of Babli by giving capital punishment to five and life imprisonment to one against such horrifying incident of 'Honour Killing'. While issuing the order, Hon'ble Judge Sri Bani Gopal Sharma said, "This court has gone through sleepless nights and tried to put itself in the shoes of the offenders. Khap panchayats have functioned contrary to the constitution, ridiculed it and have become a law unto themselves."

Hon'ble Justice of the Supreme Court of India Shri Markandey Katju also said when issuing order in the matter of 'Lata Singh Vs. State of Uttar Pradesh and Ors.' that "Honour killings are nothing but barbaric cold-blooded murder and no honour is involved in such killings". In this context, the Apex Court has also observed, "inter- caste and inter- religion marriages should be encouraged to strengthen the social fabric of society."

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However, it may be said here that it will be absolutely insufficient to act on the basis of the orders of Hon'ble Courts against such brutal crime, rather a firm law is urgently required to save the victims of this primitive incident.

It may be said in the end that this brutality has mentally strengthened women a lot. All international movement for empowering women is the burning evidences of it. Participation of women in higher education and in the highest political chair has made themselves immensely powerful socially, politically, and economically. This has made women united to fight against all obstacles in the coming future- procedure has started only. Strong, dignified, educated modern women are just the burning evidences of it.

Conclusion:

In view of the above, it may be said that the incident like 'Honour Killing' takes place due to superstitious mindset, unnecessary possessiveness, false desirability of pride and from the pleasure of controlling the society unlawfully. It is a social conflict which is gradually ending up the beauty of every relationship in the society. We all should be careful enough to take responsibility for the betterment of the social structure, although, this problem can not be resolved in the short term. To envisage the solution to this problem, entire structure of the social system needs to be up-graded which requires rigorous promotion of mass-education and mass-awareness. Government has to come in the fore-front to unit the people in this regard by enriching women socio-economically, up-grading the government policy, sensitive police management and developing gender equality in order to bring revolution in the thought process of the society.

Now, time has come up to revisit the entire matter in order to remove the hindrances for women development and devote ourselves in search of a new social philosophy to resolve this kind of brutality permanently. So, to eradicate the social disease like 'Honour Killing', social, philosophical and ethical effort is much required at the ground level in addition to the initiative taken by the Government. However, some reverse incidents are currently noticed as a result of spontaneous movement by a few Government and Private organisations which suggests that a ray of hope is visible, although it is just the tip of the iceberg. In the end, it is desired that a

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‘Honour Killing’ free society will be assured by us in future by adopting the aforementioned suggestions and hope to see it very fast.

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