



Why Honour Killings? A Socio-cultural Analysis through Gender Lens

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ABSTRACT

Crimes in the name of 'honour' are on a rise in our country. Both rural as well as urban areas are gripped with instances of horrific crimes where young citizens of our country are being killed for exercising their democratic right of choosing their life partners. The democratic minded people of our country are both shocked and distressed by these incidents. With changing economic and political contexts inter-mixing of boys and girls has increased in schools, colleges, clubs, workplaces and while long distance regular travelling in local buses and trains. Liberal education also makes them question inequalities based on gender, social and caste status. In the era of capitalist expansion, among the upper stratum of society, marriages are determined to enhance capital accumulation, facilitate mergers and business collaborations, increase property and develop joint businesses. Marriage for capital accumulation makes women and children of the propertied class, pawns in power games of the patriarchal class interest. Concentration of property, land, wealth, business, prestige, power and political mileage has become mantra for upward mobility. Thus, the elite set the benchmark for marriage practices. Cultural nationalism and identity politics coupled with neo-liberalism has provided material basis for forcible endogamous marriages. Those who rebel, lose property, prestige, plum position and at times their lives. During last three decades, women's movement in India has provided institutional support to young lovers and newly married couples faced with life-threatening consequences. The criminal justice system and state administration needs to be proactive in providing physical security, social security and safety to young women and men who are targeted in 'honour' related crimes. Strict law against honour killings in India which punishes all those responsible for violating the law will have to be backed by grass roots movements promoting secular humanism and respect for multicultural ethos.

Introduction

An honour killing or crime is based on the premise of salvaging the 'honour' of a clan, community or family that is supposed to have been 'violated', it can be a woman in the community choosing a husband, lover or boyfriend, against her family's wishes, if a meal is not served on time by a wife or daughter-in-law, if a woman is raped, if she is seen talking to a man, if she refuses to marry a man chosen for her, if she chooses to marry a man of another or "lower caste" or religion, or if she rejects a man who is obsessed to own her. The central notion behind "honour

crime” is that a community’s or family’s ‘honour’ is inextricably linked with a woman’s behaviour, and specifically her purity, chastity, loyalty to her biological family (Chowdry, 1997).

Initially women’s rights groups were the only one who responded by supporting the victims of honour related assaults, provided institutional support by ensuring emergency shelter, fight legal battle and helping the couples settle down in safe places far away from their kith and kin. Feminists also consistently campaigned with a slogan; there is no Honour in Honour Killing. Media started reporting cases, criminal justice system was sensitized and later the United Nations galvanized the nation states into action to stop this menace. In 2002, the UN adopted a resolution on ‘Working towards the elimination of crimes against women committed in the name of honour.’ Honour related crimes did not get legitimacy in the eyes of Indian Judiciary even after receiving the UN Resolution (Choudhry, 2004). In 2002, a High Court Judge stated that while such crimes were not unusual in Pakistan, they did not happen in a ‘secular’ nation like India: ‘The barbaric practice of “honour killings”... is frequently reported to take place in Pakistan which is a State based on feudal and communal ideology. However, this Court has been shocked to note that in our country also, which boasts of being a secular and liberal country ‘honour killings’ have been taking place from time to time.’ (Prajnya, 2014).

Crimes in the name of ‘honour’ are on a rise in our country. Both rural as well as urban areas are gripped with instances of horrific crimes where young citizens of our country are being killed for exercising their democratic right of choosing their life partners. The democratic minded people of our country are both shocked and distressed by these incidents. During last three decades, women’s movement in India has provided institutional support to young lovers and newly married couples faced with life-threatening consequences. The murders of young women and men, who have married by choice or across caste barriers, often go unnoticed. There are no statistics on loss of lives due to honour related crimes. Many are not investigated because the community closes ranks, apparently making it impossible to find out what really happened.

Spate of violence against love marriages involving couples from same *Gotra* and same village at the behest of caste panchayats (councils) meting Kangaroo justice in Haryana, has forced women’s rights organizations to demand laws deciding parameters within which caste councils can exercise their rights in the name of ‘identity’(Chowdhry, 2011). Though the mainstream media, politicians and community leaders call such barbaric acts of lynching, burning, stoning, brutally murdering young lovers ‘honour killing’, feminists refuse this term and declare it as ‘custodial killing’. (Chakravarty, Uma, 2005).

These two important cases are debated in India, one of inter-religious marriage labeled as ‘Love Jihad’ and the other one is of inter-caste marriage.

On 6th January 2017, in a suspected case of honour killing, a 20-year-old Dalit girl, Seema was killed by her family members in Amrit Colony of Rohtak for marrying an upper caste youth of her choice. Victim Seema was strangled to death by her father Khushi Ram with help of his wife Angrejo and elder son Rinku. The victim’s parents have been arrested, while her brother is

found absconding. (<http://justicenews.co.in/honour-killing-20-year-old-dalit-girl-killed-family/19386>)

Shafin Jahan, husband of Akhila alias Hadiya in Kerala, knocked on the doors of the country's apex court in August 2017 seeking freedom and justice for his lawfully wedded wife. His petition claimed that she had been placed "under house arrest" by her father, Asokan K.M., against her wishes and requested the judges to direct the concerned authorities to produce her before the Hon'ble Court. (Kolkata: The Telegraph, 21-8-2017)

Political Economy of 'Honour killing'

In a patriarchal society there is prevalence of a pattern of social evaluation based on the performance of the 'prescribed roles' by women. The notion of 'honour' as the apex of social values and the embodiment of social ideals establishes the framework for a woman's social worth as it is continuously evaluated and sanctioned by family, neighbours, clan, caste, community, colleagues at workplace etc. One's conformity to normative roles guarantees societal approval by conceding honour, while deviance leads to isolation, social boycott, ostracisation, even killing. Patriarchy also imposes double standard of morality for men and women. With respect to women, honour may be synonymous with 'chastity' or 'virginity', or in case of a married woman, 'fidelity' (Mathur, 2007).

Normative social assumptions even today understand women mostly in terms of domesticity and reproduction and therefore reinforce women's traditional powerlessness. Family pressures also often cause enormous disadvantage to women. More than 47.4 % of marriages in India are child marriages (NFHS, 2006). Many women are married off early in life to men chosen by their parents, often against their will. They do not have the liberty to get higher education or choose a career of their choice, and the liberty to decide whom and when to marry remains inaccessible to them. Women are repository of custom, tradition and identity of the community (Narayan, 2003). Violence against women among South Asians is in some way or the other connected to 'honour' of the family built on control of sexuality, fertility and labour of the women. In many regions of South Asia, it leads to the heinous crime called 'Honour Killings'. Despite legal provisions, government efforts and social activism to eradicate such crimes, defended by perpetrators as a necessary measure taken to protect 'tradition' and preserve caste, religious and ethnic lines, autonomy of women takes the beatings (Puniani 2005).

Medieval thinking and retrograde practices are still very much present in South Asia. Caste, religion or ethnic identities in many parts of South Asia still trigger undemocratic divisions between citizens and gendered crimes such as 'honour killing' have come to dissolve women's right to choose. Identity politics has posed major challenge to the women's movement (Sen, 2005). For instance, today many women in India are at the receiving end of socio-cultural distortions that work to the detriment of their interests the right to exercise freedom of choice. The many rights which have been granted to women by the Constitution of India since independence such as the right to marry a person of one's individual choice, right to claim property and right to inheritance do not exist in practice for majority of the Indian women (Mathur, 2007).

With changing economic and political contexts inter-mixing of boys and girls has increased in schools, colleges, clubs, workplaces and while long distance regular travelling in local buses and trains. Liberal education also makes them question inequalities based on gender, social and caste status.

Ground Realities of Androcentric Practices

Tackling the complexities governing women's lack of autonomy within the cultural settings of androcentric practices are based on multiple aspects. There is a need to identify the socio-cultural and economic and political factors within the South Asian cultural framework that come in the way of women's autonomy and force women to live a controlled existence with the primary identity based on the biologic i.e. sex. There is a need to analyse and critique the deeply held gendered identities and androcentric practices grounded in caste, class and religious consciousness (Choudhry, 2012).

Agrarian economy is strongly linked to feudal set-ups. Material basis though is changing its forms with changing modes of production; the pertinent question here is how it affects women's autonomy in South Asia. Though forces of production are moving towards capitalism, but relations of production have strong pre-capitalist elements that determine socio-economic and cultural hierarchy.

India is undergoing U shape phenomenon so far as women's work participation is concerned. During 1950s, mass of women worked in the subsistence economy that involved household based labor-intensive manual work. With industrial modernization- mechanization, automation, rationalisation and agricultural mechanization- tractorisation, HYV- High Yielding Varieties, use of chemical fertilizers i.e. Green Revolution, White Revolution in the late sixties; households that prospered pulled out their women from menial chores. Young girls from these households were enrolled in schools/ colleges and 20 years down the line they enter the white-collar work force. During 1990s, economically independent women started challenging androcentric matrimonial practices and women's subjugation and began exercising choices in selection of their 'dress-code', 'hair-style', 'friends' and 'life-partners'. Since late 1970s, women's rights groups providing support to women in social distress have been inundated by requests for help from survivors of domestic violence who happened to be young unmarried daughters who refused to fit into the 'norms of the household' as they wore 'Western clothes', 'cut their hair' and chose 'close friends' or 'lover' from different 'caste', 'cultural' or religious' backgrounds (Patel, 2009). Added to this, was brutal and murderous attacks on couples involved in same sex intimate relations.¹

Macro-economic Reality and Attitude towards Children

¹ Deswal, Deepender, "Man Kills Two Widows over 'Lesbian Affair'", The Times of India, 19-4-2011.

In the era of capitalist expansion, among the upper stratum of society, marriages are determined to enhance capital accumulation, facilitate mergers and business collaborations, increase property and develop joint businesses.

Marriage for capital accumulation makes women and children of the propertied class, pawns in power games of the patriarchal class interest. Concentration of property, land, wealth, business, prestige, power and political mileage has become mantra for upward mobility. Thus, the elite set the benchmark for marriage practices. Cultural nationalism coupled with neo-liberalism has provided material basis for forcible endogamous marriages. Those who rebel, lose property, prestige, plum position and at times, their lives.

The Structures of Power that Make Such Violence Possible

Neoliberal macroeconomic policies have attacked the social security provided by the state in terms of health care, old age support and shelter to the needy. Commercialisation of human relations has resulted into erosion of kinship-sponsored social security. Thus, market fundamentalism and cultural fundamentalism create vested interest among parents over children's lives. Arranged marriage ensures greater control by parents and kinship networks over young couples. One can see this in most of the current TV serials in Hindi and other regional languages that portray joint family as a norm and show strongly misogynist family drama. In the middle class, couples with one or two children tend to be too possessive about their children. Small family norms adopted by the middle class educated families make housewives unduly demanding of their children. In recent cases of 'honour killing' educated mothers who are housewives have played key role in killing their daughters who opted for love marriages.²

Revivalist tendencies boosted by identity politics in the context of market fundamentalism and religious fundamentalism replace multicultural ethos and plural lifestyles with moral policing and violence in the name of 'family honour', 'caste honour' and 'community's honour'. Due to complicity of criminal justice system, most of the cases do not get even reported (Singh, 2010).

²NDTV Correspondent: **Journalist's mother arrested for alleged honour killing**, May 4, 2010
<http://www.ndtv.com/india-news/journalists-mother-arrested-for-alleged-honour-killing-416933>
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Sept. 10, 2017
<http://www.hindustantimes.com/jaipur/family-kills-son-in-law-to-save-honour-tries-to-forcefully-take-away-pregnant-daughter/story-hiO1IeXZmqFsEullTibUqL.html> Accessed on 10-9-2017

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Inter Caste Marriages

Inter-Caste marriages fall in broadly two categories: inter-caste marriages within the ‘pure’ Castes (from Brahman to Shudras). In other words, before, most of the inter-Caste marriages took place within the four *Varnas*- *Brahman*, *Kshatriya*, *Vaishya*, *Shudra* — all touchable amongst themselves. In the pre-independence period, the marriages between the ‘pure’ and ‘impure’ or between ‘Touchable’ and the ‘Untouchable’ were the rarest (Shah, 2001).

In many parts of the Indian countryside even now, tea shops maintain a three-tumbler system - one for non-Dalits, one for Dalits and one for the anonymous. In some parts of India, barbers don’t serve Dalit customers, and in many parts of India, non-Dalit children refuse to eat mid-day meals prepared by Dalits. (Gupta, 2004) Despite this terrible contempt for Dalits, there are several non-Dalit women risking their lives and marrying Dalits. This only symbolises that India’s greatest social revolution is underway.

After the elite boys, it is girls from upper castes and classes and boys from aspiring lower castes begin to join educational institutions and work centers. The Dalit and other poor or lower caste girls are still relatively unexposed to modern public life or move less confidently within it. In upper classes boys are admitted in English medium schools and girls are admitted in regional language medium school where neo-literate boys from lower castes are also admitted. This makes interaction between higher caste girls and lower caste boys’ common and mutual attraction possible. The traditional prejudice against lower caste status and patriarchal control of women’s sexuality is reflected in the taboo against *pratilom* marriages among Hindus in which the bride is of a higher *Varna* or caste. This is also true of status within the caste such as hierarchy of *kula* or ancient bloodline among Rajputs and groups of villages among *Patels* or *Anavils* of Gujarat.

Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar focused on the role of marriage in social construction of caste system and provided an important understanding of the issue of women’s emancipation in the Indian context. As Babasaheb said, “Caste is an endogamy and endogamy forms caste.” He also brought out how the origin and reproduction of caste rested on gendered violence (Rege, 2010). Now, there are several cases involving Dalit professionals/Civil Servants/businesspersons who bring their brides home with little resistance in Maharashtra. Educated and self-respecting upper caste girls find arranged marriages based on dowry and ferocious patriarchal conditionalities (confinement, suspicion on character, lack of autonomy, double standard of sexual morality, greed to extract money and goodies from her parents by in laws) extremely insulting. They opt for love marriages based on mutual respect with lower caste boys whose power needs are relatively limited. But, that’s mostly a metropolitan phenomenon involving the Dalit upper and middle classes. The problems begin in the countryside, small towns, and villages next to metropolitan cities. Those risking their lives and marrying outside their castes in general, and marrying Dalits in particular, are India’s new heroes and heroines. In Delhi, U.P., Bihar, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, even in Gujarat (in Western India) such marriages meet with tragic end.

A widely held belief about modernization and globalization is that these processes lessen/blur the private/public divide, promote higher levels of interaction between people of different ethno-religious groups and lead to the emancipation of women. At the same time, recent evidence from around the world point to the resurgence of ethno-religious movements which lead to the 'hardening' of boundaries between groups and which often use 'woman's conduct' as the primary mechanism of upholding 'tradition'.

History of Inter-caste and Inter-religious Marriages in India

In the 16th century, iconic figures such as King Akbar and Queen Jodha had an inter-religious marriage. In the pre-independence period, Dr. Ambedkar, born dalit married a Brahmin lady doctor, now highly respected as Mai Ambedkar. Mrs. Indira Gandhi, late Prime Minister of India from Kashmiri Brahmin caste background had married Shri. Feroz Gandhi, a Parsee gentleman and an activist of Indian National Congress. Several Gandhian workers in the pre- and post-independence period had inter-caste and inter-religious marriages. In some cases, their parents robbed them off their inheritance rights and severed relations but there were no physical attacks on them. George Fernandez, a trade union leader married a Muslim lady Laila Kabeer, but continued to remain popular leader for millions of industrial workers during 1970s. In the post-independence period, left parties/groups and socialists provided support to ostracized couples who opted for inter-caste and inter-religious love marriages.

Youth Radicalisation and “Love Marriages” in the 1970s

During radicalisation of youth in 1970s resulting into students uprising, rise of dalit movements, tribal struggles, trade union movements, agricultural workers unrest, farmers' movement, democratic rights and civil liberties movement, women's movement; hundreds of young men and women chose to have inter-caste, inter-religious along with inter-class love marriages but community/ society did not react violently against them. These marriages became successful due to alternative secular, democratic community created by these movements. Children of social activists grew up with ethos of social movements and they married sons/daughters of progressive couples who believed in social justice. Currently, in their fifties, many of them are at the fore front of contemporary social movements (Desai, 2006). In all progressive movements, incidences of love marriages are quite common.

In a metropolitan city such as Mumbai, there is more liberal attitude towards love marriages. Chopra and Punwani (2005) examined over 50 cases of Hindu-Muslim inter-religious marriages in Mumbai, India's most populous city with a sizeable Muslim population. The Muslims of Mumbai, they write, “consist of a number of different sectarians, linguistic and caste communities. In a country where caste endogamy is the general rule, these various Muslim communities rarely marry among themselves, and marriages between Muslims and other communities are even rarer.”

In 2007, Rizwanur, a Muslim teacher and Priyanka, his Hindu student, both residents of Kolkata got married in August under the Special Marriage Act, 1954. Priyanka's family found out about the marriage only after she moved into her husband's house. After that the police had been

harassing them, thrice summoning Rizwanur and Priyanka to the police headquarters, 'advising' Priyanka to return home, and even registering a case of abduction against Rizwanur. Ultimately, Priyanka went back to her father's house, after her uncle gave a written guarantee that she would return to the Rehman household in a week's time. Before that happened, Rizwanur was found dead (Bhaduri, 2010).

In the current political climate in India, where right-wing Hindu organizations are particularly strong and have been responsible, often with the collusion of agencies of the state, for organized massacres of Muslims, Hindu-Muslim relations have come under increasing strain.

Belated Response of Judiciary

The Supreme Court expressed concern over the growing opposition to, intimidation of, and violence against inter-caste married couples (AALI, 2012). A Bench consisting of Justices Ashok Bhan and MarkandeyKatju directed the administration and the police throughout the country to extend protection to such couples against harassment and initiate action against those who resorted to or instigated violence. The Bench also recommended that feudal-minded people deserve harsh punishment. Writing the judgment, Justice Katju said: "The caste system is a curse on the nation and the sooner it is destroyed, the better. In fact, it is dividing the nation at a time when we must be united to face the challenges before the nation. Hence, inter-caste marriages are in fact in the national interest, as they will result in destroying the caste system. However, disturbing news is coming from several parts that young men and women who unite in inter-caste marriages are threatened with violence, or violence is actually committed on them."³ Expressing anguish, the Bench said: "Such acts of violence or threats or harassment are wholly illegal and those who commit them must be severely punished. This is a free and democratic country and once a person becomes a major, he or she can marry whosoever he or she likes. If the parents of the boy or girl do not approve of an inter-caste or inter-religious marriage, the maximum they can do is to cut off social relations with the son or the daughter, but they cannot give threats or commit or instigate acts of violence and cannot harass the person who opts for inter-caste or inter-religious marriage."⁴

Referring to instances of killings of such couples, the Bench said: "There is nothing honourable about such killings, and in fact they are nothing, but barbaric and shameful acts of murder committed by brutal, feudal-minded persons who deserve harsh punishment."

Lata Singh (Jat) of Lucknow got married to Bramha Nand Gupta (Bania) of Delhi; both belonged to different upper castes. At the instance of the girl's brother, the boy's sisters and their families were arrested, and criminal proceedings were initiated against them. Ms. Lata Singh moved the Supreme Court seeking to quash the proceedings. Allowing her petition and quashing the proceedings, the Bench said: "This case reveals a shocking situation. There is no dispute that

³<http://lawjustice-bakeelsab.blogspot.com/2011/04/honour-killing-freedom-of-inter.html> (last accessed on 12=8=2011)

⁴(Indian Express, 20-11-2010).

the petitioner is a major and was at all relevant times a major. Hence, she is free to marry anyone she likes or live with anyone she likes. There is no bar to an inter-caste marriage under the Hindu Marriage Act or any other law. Hence, we cannot see what offence was committed by the petitioner, her husband or her husband's relatives." (The Hindu, 2006).

In 2010, in Tamilnadu- the home state of Home Minister who decried honour killing in North India, seven honour killings took place in 12 weeks. (Thufail, 2010).

A Dalit youth named Nagaraj and a non-Dalit girl named Sumathil of the Dindigul district, fell in love, fled to a nearby town, and got married. Hoping that things would have settled down back home, the couple returned to their village. But the girl's parents caught them and delivered a milder punishment. A goat was slaughtered, and its blood was smeared on the girl's forehead to declare the marriage null and void. The girl was later married off to a man of her own Caste. A few weeks later, a non-Dalit girl Sangeetha fell in love with a Dalit youth Balachandar in the same district. Both fled the village and married. But they ran out of luck as the couple was caught and brought back in the village. A few days later, the girl died in mysterious circumstances. Mercifully, in both the cases, Dalit youth survived death.

In 2008, a Dalit named Sunkara Srinivas fell in love with a non-Dalit girl Swapna Reddy of the Nizamabad district, Andhra Pradesh, and both got married. A few months later, both were stoned to death.

In the national capital, a Dalit youth Yogesh Kumar fell in love with a non-Dalit girl Asha Saini. Yet to be married, both were viciously murdered by the girl's parents. Not far away from the national capital, we witnessed high drama near Greater NOIDA countryside. In July 2010, a Dalit youth named Sanjay fell in love with a non-Dalit girl Priyanka Sharma and got married. Infuriated, the non-Dalit Panchayat has allegedly threatened to kidnap girls of the Dalit hamlet if Priyanka was not returned to her parents immediately.⁵

Incidents of inter-caste marriages involving Dalits, more often Dalit male and non-Dalit women, is no news anymore. It turns into news only when parents, most often from the girl side, punish couples by murdering them (Outlook, 2008). According to a report of the Government of India, nearly 5,000 inter-Caste marriages involving Dalits took place in 2008-09.⁶

The rate of social transformation seems to be faster than our heart beats. In our known history, caste has come under severe strain. Its foundations are shaking, given the fact that the twin principle of blood and occupational purity are the backbone of the caste order. The very backbone of the caste order is now fracturing (Baxi, 2006).

⁵The Daily Pioneer News Service: 'Caste issues lead to honour killing'Friday, 10 June 2016 | PNS | BHUBANESWAR, Orissa <http://www.dailypioneer.com/state-editions/bhubaneswar/caste-issues-lead-to-honour-killing.html>

⁶www.dailypioneer.com/269827/Killing-Caste-Order.html

Punjab and Haryana High Court today directed Chandigarh and the states of Punjab and Haryana “to publicize the centers opened for the protection of ‘runaway couples’, with the help of electronic media, radio etc. Advocates Navkiran Singh and TanuBedi, who are assisting the court in the case, have been asked to pay a surprise visit to the protection homes in Punjab and Haryana. The states have been directed to furnish details of number of marriages registered, counseling given to parents of ‘runaway couples’ and protection offered after marriage.”⁷

Active policing, speedy trials and serious penal sanctions can be the only antidote to this most dishonorable practice of “honour killing (Gupta, 2015).

Gender Question in Identity Politics in South Asia

Communal forces have strengthened their hold on important spheres of the state and civil society that include subversion of constitution and judiciary and communalisation of culture, media, religion and lifestyle. Women are the major casualties in the bargain. Communal politics has always played the major role in determining rights and limits of women (IIJ 2003).

Any fundamentalist propaganda that concerns itself with identity makes use of the gender question to impose rigid norms on women who are identified as repositories of culture and tradition (Sarkar, 2001).

These norms manifest themselves in son-preference and female infanticide (quotation from Hindu scriptures-Blessings for newlywed brides, ‘Be thy mother of 100 sons’, questions are asked to wife- “Did any heroes of Ramayana or Mahabharata have daughters? That shows daughters are inauspicious!”), glorification of sati, widow-burning). Thousands of sati temples have flourished all over India and Global Association for Glorification of Sati has its head-quarter in Chicago (USA). Witch-hunting of widows as they are perceived to be inauspicious, imposition of dress code, general demeanour and the social construction of the ideal woman who submissively accepts the patriarchal norm are imposed by fundamentalists.

In the last Kumbh Mela in 2001, 60000 women devotees were deserted by their brothers, sons and relatives. Allahabad police tried its best to reach them to their respective families, but the family members refused to have known them. Now, the government has made a special budgetary provision for abandoned widows at the pilgrimage centres and women in difficult circumstances (Patel, 2009).⁸

The fundamentalist belief also takes form of forced marriage of a widow to her brother-in-law (known as chader-nawazi) among Sikhs, Jats, Rajput castes to stop division of property. Among Muslims, the same fundamentalist forces (qazis and agents) organize *mutta* (temporary) marriages with ready nikahnamas and talaqnamas. Young girls are traded by their poor, illiterate, parasite and unemployed relatives in these marriages that are not registered and hence have no legal status. Main attraction for such contract marriages is Meher amount (cash as well as goodies).

⁷nhrc.nic.in/Documents/AR/NHRC-AR-ENG07-08.pdf

⁸ Patel, V., Fundamentalism, Communalism and gender justice in www.europe-solidaire.org/spip.php?article13223 - [Cached](#) (last accessed on 12-8-2011)

The girls are mostly cheated and sexploited (Patel, 2009). Thus, prostitution under the garb of religious ceremony is perpetuated. The criminal justice system of the demanding countries and supplying countries don't take stern measures as hard currency received through tourism is the most crucial concern in this religious form of flesh trade. The kinship network is used by the fundamentalist forces for cross-country trafficking of women. Young, frail, weeping and hungry girls are wrapped in burqa while being transported the South Asian Countries (India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh) to the Gulf countries. Many dice or disappear in the process. Those who survive the torturous assault are brought back to the native country by the same nexus after they become physically unusable due to sexually transmitted diseases or HIV-AIDS and mentally ill.

Denial of human rights and fundamental rights enshrined in the Constitution of India by the fundamentalists by imposition of dress code, not granting right to work and attacks on female headed households have been objected by women's rights groups throughout the world. Extreme form of punishment meted to women by the fundamentalists is in the form of stoning to death of 'an adulterous woman' by the assembled community. During the last decade innumerable women in several countries have lost their lives in painful and undignified manner at the hands of self-appointed 'custodians of morality'. 'Honour killing' has become most widespread among all types of fundamentalists and communalists throughout Asia, Africa and the Middle East not only among the tribal, but among so called civilized sections of the nation states. Girls and boys are punished for talking or marrying boys or girls from other religious groups even in seemingly progressive states such as West Bengal and Kerala. Caste Panchayats in Haryana have brutally killed and publicly hanged young lovers or newly married couples for inter-caste Hindu-Dalit marriages. Recently, the law court of Sharia in Nigeria has passed a judgment of stoning to death to a mother of an infant, Ms. Amina Lowal for adultery.⁹ There has been an international uproar against the judgment. As a result, for the first time, the state has not executed the decision of the Sharia.

Sex Segregation: The fundamentalist forces have prevailed upon the state to enforce sex-segregation in Iran, Albania, Sahel in West Africa, Pakhtun, Malaysia and Turkey. (Pervin, 2003). No-entry of women in the stadium and sports complexes is practiced in several theocratic states. On 22-1-2003, the chief justice of Afghanistan ordered nationwide ban on cable television and coeducation. (WLUML, 2003). Al Badr Mujahideen and Lashkar-e-Jabbar, an offshoot of Lashkar-e-Toiba pasted a poster outside the government Higher Secondary School in Kashmir asking girls to discontinue their studies on December 19, 2002.

Conclusion

Attempts to end 'honour' crimes need the involvement of the local community. Crimes of 'honour' are part of a continuum of violence against women that spreads across time and place (Sen, Purna, 2005) Ban on inter-caste, inter-religious and inter-racial marriages signifying obsession about racial, caste and religious purity are so deep in the psyche of status quoists and

⁹ Patel, V., 2009, Empowering Harmony at the Individual and Community Level": Communalism as product of the politics of the elite of a religious community, in <http://www.europe-solidaire.org/spip.php?article13669> (last accessed on 20-8-20011)



fundamentalists that have strong aversion to inter-mixing and inter-marriages among citizens of different caste groups, religious communities and racial backgrounds. Newspapers are full of incidences of torture, abduction, forced abortion, lynching, and murder of newly married couples with different caste, religious, ethnic or racial backgrounds. Even the state and criminal justice system miserably fails to provide adequate protection to such love marriages. Such couples must face social boycott, can't easily get jobs, accommodation and school admissions for their children. Though women's groups are silently supporting such couples, the enormous advocacy work is missing as peoples' movements have only paternalistic concern on the issue. Strict law against honour killings in India which punishes all those responsible for violating the law will have to be backed by grass roots movements promoting secular humanism and respect for multicultural ethos.

APIJGS

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