



Honour Killings in India: A Study of the Punjab State

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Abstract

The present study has been conducted through the documented case study as well as the content analysis methods. The study depicts that intolerance of the families to the pre-marital relationships and matrimonial choices of their daughters especially towards inter-caste marriages results into the honour killings. The extent of these causes, resulting into elopements and unpermitted love-marriages further aggravates the situation. The study further observes that in noticeable number of cases honour killings are executed as crimes of passion aroused by sudden provocation when the couples are caught in compromising situations by the family members of the girls. Besides fathers and brothers of the girls, there are direct involvements of their mothers, paternal and/or maternal uncles, family friends and even contract killers into the murders. It has been observed that the centuries old conformist mind set prevailing in the patriarchal society does not accept the girls to establish pre-marital relations or to find males of their own choices to marry with. The patronage of the community and the leniency of the law have made the honour killings frequent trend which possesses socio-cultural legitimacy as well. Therefore, besides constituting rigorous laws and rigid punishments to counter the problem, it is immediately required to change the mindset of the bigoted patriarchic societies to become tolerant towards matrimonial choices of their daughters especially towards inter-caste and inter-religious marriages.

Keywords: Honour killings, Jats, Patriarchic society, Inter-caste, sexual relationships.

Introduction

Man is affiliated to the society not only socially but psychologically as well. The norms of the society are acknowledged and accepted by the man not as unavoidable social bindings but as acceptable moral obligations. Reasonably, the socio-cultural customs dominantly control the psychological behaviour of the man. The notions of good and evil, sacred and profane, moral and immoral, permissible and forbidden, honour and dishonor are transferred to the mindset of the man by the process of socialisation through the socio-cultural phenomena in which he subsists. Thus man perceives the social behavior, status and role of his own and others within the milieu of his socio-cultural values. In every society, there are certain aspects of social behavior, patterned according to the status and role of various members of the society which are considered by the society as forbidden and if executed, are acknowledged as defiance and dishonor. The punishments in these cases obviously vary from society to society as per the nature and extent of the defiance and dishonor. The phenomenon of honour killings is the outcome of that socio-psychic milieu of typical societies where certain patterns of the behavior of human beings, particularly the females, are recognised as marking dishonor to their families and communities and the lost honour is reimbursed by killings them.

Conceptualising Honour Killings: Honour killing is a global phenomenon¹ and has been widely reported in countries such as Iran, Turkey, Afghanistan, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Egypt,

Palestine, Jordan, Bangladesh, Algeria, Brazil, Ecuador, Morocco, Israel, Ethiopia, Somalia, Uganda, the Balkans, Sweden, Holland, Germany, Italy, Yemen, India and many more countries². It is estimated by the United Nations Population Fund that as many as 5,000 women and girls are killed by the members of their families and/or relatives each year for the sake of honor around the world³. But Robert Kiener in the study "Can Murders of Women and Girls be stopped" claims that the number of 5,000 is thought to be gross under count and the figure is closer to 20,000 per year worldwide⁴.

There exist various views of experts regarding the precise meaning and nature of the term honour killing. Brandon and Hafez in their study based on honour based crimes divulge that honour is a comprehensive and complex phenomenon which has been differently construed by different societies, in the perspectives of the norms of their cultures. At one place honour can be associated to the characteristics as diverse as courage or cunningness, strength or prudence, antagonism or compassion. In all societies, honour has been depicted in private as well as public aspect. On one hand it explains an individual's notion that how he sees himself and his status and rank in the society. On the other side, honour of the individual is determined through measuring the level of status the society provides to the individual⁵. It divulges about the individual perception of honour⁶ as well as societal observation of the honour of the person⁷. Brandon and Hafez further remark the attributes of 'honour' in honour based violence (including

honour killings) as sexual honour. The structure of honour, in the cases of the murders of females by their own family members arises from ideas that the reputation and social standing of an individual, a family or a community is based on the behaviour and morality of its female members. Like other types of honour, this concept does not exist in a vacuum but rather as a central part of a complex social structure which governs relationships between different families, genders and social units within a given society⁵.

Human Rights Watch describes that honour based violence, including honour killings, are committed by male family members against female family members, who are supposed to have made the family embarrassed through establishing pre-marital, extra-marital intimate relationships. There can be variety of reasons. Major among them are denial of the woman to marry the man of the family's choice, resistant to marry the man of her own choice, committing adultery. The mere perception that a woman has behaved in a specific way to "dishonor" her family is sufficient to trigger an attack⁸. Amnesty International observes that "honour killing of a woman by a male relative is not an individual act of violence, but one which is collective, planned, sociologically predictable, and socially approved by both men and women in the family and community concerned"⁹.

The Law Commission of India views that the words 'honour killings' and 'honour crimes' are being used loosely as convenient expressions to describe the incidents of violence and harassment caused to the young couple intending to marry or having married against the wishes of the community or family members. They are used more as catch phrases and not as apt and accurate expressions¹⁰. Girija Vyas, then Chairperson of the National Commission for Women, had while preparing the draft of 'The Prevention of Crimes in the Name of 'Honour' and Tradition Bill, 2010'¹¹ had regarded honour killings as violation of certain fundamental rights in the Constitution of India, including the right to life, and liberty which, if broadly interpreted, includes the right to bodily integrity, and the right to choose whom to associate with. The actions of the parents of the girls to stop her from exercising her choice also result in curtailment of her freedom to movement and expression. A valid consent to a Marriage is also an essential prerequisite under the law.

Rout describes that honour Killing is the homicide of the female member of a family or her paramour or both of them by the family members of the girl, due to the belief of the perpetrators that the deceased had brought dishonour upon the family or community. Honour killing are directed mostly against women and girls, but have been extended to men¹².

Further, the experts consider the problem of honour killings as outcome of various causes. The major causes acknowledged in various studies include i.e. Inter-caste or inter-religious marriages, opposition to pre-marital and extra-

marital relationship between male and female, restriction of females to select the spouse of their own choice. Jane Haile (2007) while revealing the causes of honour killings perceive them as a practice whereby male members kill the female of the family who is supposed as brought embarrassment to the family. Honour killing can be caused even when a female is found indulged in verbal conversation with any male who is not relative; submissive to extra-marital sexual relationship, or willing to marry a man of her own choice. In most of the cases, even a suspicion, and not an evident confirmation of the woman's involvement into any of these transgression can be enough to murder them¹³. Kumar divulges that there is much probability of brutal and barbaric death to a female of the family if she is willing to marry the person of her own choice against the wishes of the parents, having extra-marital or pre-marital relations, entering into a wedlock within the same gotra or outside one's caste or with a close relation from a different caste in the belief that it has brought a dishonour upon the family, class or community¹⁴.

The scholars describe honour killings as more specifically gender-specific crimes. Bernard observes that honour based violence is further provoked to the level of killings by the unexpected or unaccepted behaviour of women which may include resisting the proposed dress code, meeting men not related to her, defying father or brother¹⁵. However, the actions that become more determinant causes of honour killing comprise the girl being involved in pre-marital or extra-marital sexual activity whether consensual or nonconsensual. Hence even rape victims are perceived as have brought disgrace to the honour of the family and the community¹⁶. Kurkiala reveals that honour killing are generally executed when a woman rebels to obey the traditional norms established community she belongs to, or when her 'dissolute behaviour' brings dishonor to the whole family. If other tactics to make the women abide by the verdicts of the family fail, the ultimate solution has been sought to recompense the lost honour by killing her. Thus, the murders are culturally sanctioned and designed to uphold a specific moral order¹⁷. In this perspective, such killings transmit the practice in which women are murdered by their male relatives to restore the honour they lose when 'their' women defile it. Women may hurt the honour of men in numerous ways¹⁸. Since socio-culturally the honour belongs to men and they own as well as comprehend their understanding of 'honour', men possess the right of declaring any act dishonourable. The studies conducted in the Muslim societies held that women are considered to have hurt the honour of their men when they do to protect their virginity and chastity¹⁹.

Honour Killings should not be considered as a self-directed phenomenon. While observed thoroughly, it is the worst constituent of various aspects of honour-based violence. The honour based violence generally includes forced marriages, domestic violence and eventually, the honour killings⁵. In the

circumstances, where the girls are willing for inter-caste intra-caste or inter-religious marriages, they are forcefully married to the persons of the choice of families. Resistance of the girls to the forced marriages causes domestic violence against them. If the girls elope away and/or get married with the persons of their own choice, the risk of their honour killings obviously aggravates.

Honour Killings in India: In India, honour based violence and particularly the practice of honour killings is an olden phenomenon prevalent since centuries²⁰. There are reports of cases in almost all parts of India but the states of Punjab, Haryana, Rajasthan and Western Uttar Pradesh are the regions where these incidents occur more frequently²¹. As far as the magnitude of the incidents has been concerned, there is no accurate data available with any of the governmental or non-governmental agency. But the studies conducted by various civil society organisations reveal that India stands into the category of worst affected nations. It is estimated that approximately 1000 people (both females and males) are killed every year in India owing to alleged honour killings²². In India, due to its complex socio-cultural patterns, there are variant causes which result into the honour killings. Various experts divulge the intolerance of Indian upper castes to inter-caste matrimonial/pre-marital relationship of females as the prime causes of honour killings²³. Even marriages into same *gotra* (lineage, clan) have emerged as the causes of honour killings in the northern parts of India particularly the state of Haryana²⁴. Besides these Inter-caste or Intra-caste factors, inter-religious marriages have also ascertained as reason behind people killing their daughters for allegedly restoring their lost honour²⁵.

It is an evident fact that honour based violence including honour killings own socio-cultural acceptance in all those communities where these are frequently practiced. In India, honour killings majorly occur in strongly patriarchal societies often referred to as 'honour-based' societies i.e. *jats* of Punjab, *Jats* of Haryana and *Rajputs* of Rajasthan. In traditional patriarchal societies inheritance is patrilineal. Moreover, the family or kin group, and not the individual, is the basic social, economic and political unit. Therefore, in all such types of societies, the role of community members, community elders and particularly the community councils (such as *Khap Panchayats* in Haryana) can be observed as patronising the honour killings and protecting the killers. These traditional patriarchal societies surprisingly denounce the role of state and the law to prevent honour killings by considering it as an unacceptable interference into their socio-cultural values and familial patterns²⁶.

Besides the socio-cultural patronage, the practice of honour killings has established largely in India due to legal clemency also¹⁹. The incidents of honour killings were acknowledged more as crime of passions resulting from sudden unavoidable provocation under exception I of the

section 300 of the Penal Code 1860. During 1835 -1837, while drafting the penal law for India, the members of the first law commission, constituted by the British Government, had also dwelt upon the issue of honour killings. They considered the issue carefully and favourably under the provision of the grave and sudden provocation. Without going much into the details and definitions of honour, they sympathised with the men whose honour was violated if someone had sex with his wife or sister. Therefore, they suggested that if a man finds someone having sexual intercourse with his wife, daughter or sister and kill the man, or women or both, such killing should not be termed as murder, but should be reduced to manslaughter only. The framers of the Indian Penal Code did not thoroughly observe the issue of honour killing in India's socio-cultural milieu and they surprisingly ignored the socio-religious implications as well. They were not able to observe the complex attributes of honour killings which differ with the variations of communities and the geographical regions. They rather adopted a baggy approach while defining honour killings as a universally practiced phenomenon wherein men kill the men who commit adultery with their wives or daughters¹⁹.

Constitutional and Legislative Provisions in India: Honour killings are also violation of Articles 14, 15 (1) and (3), 17, 18, 19 and 21 of the Constitution of India. The Article 21 under the chapter of Fundamental Rights of the Indian Constitution guarantees the Right to Life and Liberty to all persons irrespective they are citizens or not. Through various relevant judgments of the Supreme Court of India, the existing provisions in constitution are sufficient to protect various human rights including the right to life. The landmark judgments interpreting the rights to life conclude that the right to life means the right to live with dignity and it also includes the right to livelihood, right to education and right to health and so on. However, the interpretation through judgments do not particularly comprise the right to marry the girl or boy of one's own choice but it is implied that it is include the right to live with dignity corroborates the same.

Honour Killings are considered as brutal crimes of homicide under the IPC (Indian Penal Code). Section 299 and 301 of the IPC, deals with culpable homicide not amounting to murder while Section 300, deals with murder. Honour killing amounts to homicide and murder because the acts are done with the intention of murdering the victims as they have purportedly brought dishonour upon the family. The perpetrators can be punished as per Section 302 of the IPC. The members of the family as well as community can also be prosecuted under Section 302 of IPC for instigating suicide those who transgress the so called norms of the community.

Objectives of the Study: i. While considering the magnitude of honour killings in Punjab, focus is on examining the regional as well as community/caste specific variables. ii. The thrust of the study is to observe various causes of honour

killings in Punjab. iii. To observe the socio-familial profile of the victims as well as accused of honour killings in the state and recognize the affiliations of accused with the victims.

Hypothesis: The patriarchal patterns of Punjabi society along with the manifest hierarchy and established endogamy of caste severely prohibit the females to select their spouses, particularly in the inferior castes.

Material and Methods

The main thrust of the study is to conduct the comprehensive analysis of various dimensions and attributes of honour killings in Punjab. The present Study has been conducted through observational-analytical approach. Historical-analytical method has been applied to obtain the precise observation of the concept, nature and prevalence of honour killings worldwide with main focus on India. The primary part of the study has been carried out by employing content analysis, a method of qualitative and quantitative data analysis which aims at analysing the content of documents, i.e. books, newspapers, magazines and other forms of written documents. As honour killing is perceptibly a sensitive, bigoted and introvert issue attached to the honour and the social status of the concerned families, people belonging to both sides (the deceased girls or the boys) are not willing to disclose anything to anybody especially who is alien and irrelevant to the cases. Therefore, to be acquainted with the most methodical analysis, the content analysis method along with documented case study method has been applied. The use of content analysis method further facilitates the study by providing an appropriate access to the cases of honour killings within a certain time period. Therefore, 100 sample cases of honour killings occurred in the state from 2005 to 2012 and documented by The Tribune Newspaper (one of the most read English Daily Newspaper in Punjab) have been taken into consideration. The data obtained after an in-depth examination and systematic analysis of 100 sample cases has been expressed out with the help of relevant tables and charts which has been interpreted through an objective analysis. Furthermore, the eminent socio-political personalities of the regions, social activists, the police personnel and the persons related to the field of criminal justice system are consulted and interviewed to acquire their viewpoints on the issue. The findings of the study have been mentioned in the rest of the study.

Results and Discussion

Punjab is one of the states where there is very frequent occurrence of the incidents of honour killings. The socio-cultural subsistence of Punjab comprises the patterns of semi-tribal and patriarchic society, i.e. most of population residing in rural areas and pursuing agrarian-based occupations; patronage to social traditionalism and cultural

conformism in spite of rapid economic and infrastructural development; dominance of *jat-sikhs* in the social, economic and political spheres. In the region, honour based violence, and honour killings are not a new phenomenon. A thorough observation of the socio-cultural mind set of the major communities, especially the martial communities (mainly *jat-sikhs*) reveals that the term 'honour' owns much significance among certain communities. The word honour depicts very comprehensive connotations in Punjab and it is considered as a very significant constituent of socio-cultural values. Traditionally, *zarr* (wealth), *zoroo* (women), and *zameen* (land) are considered as three integral constituents of honour in this region and there have been historical traditions of pursuing violence and executing killings for reinstating the honour in case of an assault on any of the three. Even during present era, there are reports of frequent incidents of killings caused by these three elements. Even the connotation of honour and honour killings related to women is multi-dimensional. One aspect is that if the woman of the family is disrespected, teased, harassed or exploited sexually by other man, it is considered as attack on the honour of male family members and it probably causes violence against the accused which may result into his killing as well. The other part relates to those circumstances in which the married woman establishes extra-marital relations with other man and it is considered as assassination of his honour by her husband. Another form of honour related violence, also resulting into honour killings, is the girl establishing romantic or sexual relationship with any boy and/or willing to marry with the boy of her own choice. The romantic or sexual relationship of the girl is also considered as infringement of honour by the male family members of the girl and hence not tolerated. Even if the girl is willing to marry with the boy of her own choice, she is acknowledged as hurting the honour of the family. The situation gets more aggravated when the boy with whom the girl has established relationship and/or is willing to marry belongs to the inferior caste, or the other religion. There are obvious probabilities of honour based violence against the girl which usually results into the killing of the girl, the boy or of both. The present study deals with this current form of honour killings in the Punjab state.

As it has been already mentioned in the methodology, 100 sample cases of honour killings occurred in Punjab since 2005 to 2012 have been analysed to obtain precise information about various aspects, issues and concerns regarding the problem.

Proportion of the Magnitude in various Regions of Punjab: Historically, there is an established socio-cultural division of the territory of Punjab into three regions, i.e. *Majha*, *Malwa* and *Doaba*. The study has divulged that 56 per cent of the total number of cases happen in the *Malwa* region, while 31 per cent cases occur in the *Majha* region. However, only 13 per cent cases take place in the *Doaba* region of the state.

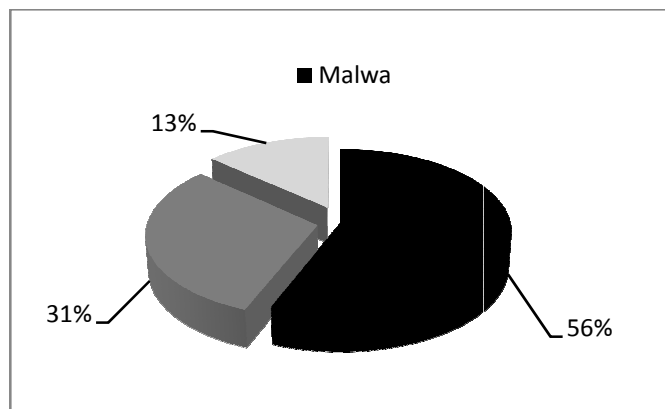


Figure-1

Proportion of the Magnitude in various Regions of Punjab

The study exposes that more than half of the cases occur in the Malwa region. There are a number of reasons behind this worrying number of incidents. The Malwa region occupies the largest territory and population of the State as 11 districts (out of total 20) of the State come under the region. Moreover, the largest districts of the State i.e. Ferozepore, Sangrur and Ludhiana fall under the Malwa region. Reasonably, it also comprises of majority of the Jat-Sikh population which has been witnessed as the caste practicing most of the honour killings. The Majha region practices approximate one third of the total number of cases in Punjab. The Majha region is much curtailed in territory and population in comparison to Malwa region. It comprises of three districts of Punjab, i.e. Amritsar, Gurdaspur and Tarn-Taran, with Amritsar and Gurdaspur featuring as second and third largest districts in population. Moreover, there is dense population of Jat-Sikhs in the region. In Doaba region, the honour killings are least practiced (only 13 per cent). There is visibly less population of Jat-Sikhs in this region in comparison to the Malwa and Majha regions and Scheduled castes form more than 35 per cent of the population of Doaba. Furthermore, Doaba region is considered as the hub of NRIs (Non-resident Indians) as numerous people from this region reside outside India. More connectivity of this region to the liberal Western World also minimizes the level of orthodox and bigot mindset among masses especially in regard to the passionate relationships among girls and boys.

Thus the study also reveals that Malwa region is most exaggeratedly effected due to largest population, especially of Jat-Sikhs, living in that region. The Majha region geographically comprises of quite less territory, but reasonably dense population of Jat-Sikhs in that region, results into frequent incidents of honour killings there also. The Doaba region, due to its curtailed territory, nominal population, especially of Jat-Sikhs is the least affected region of the State. Additionally, as far as social ranking and literacy rate has been concerned, the Malwa, Majha and Doaba regions are considered as respectively most backward, backward and less backward regions. Social underdevelopment and minimal literacy rate has further deprived the people of Malwa and Majha. The Malwa region

has been considered as socially the most backward region featuring the least literacy rate.

Caste-Wise Analysis of the Accused: While considering relevant to the study, thrust has been given to examine the caste-specific affiliations of the persons or families accused of honour killings. It has been observed that honour killings are more frequently practiced by the Jat-Sikh community in Punjab. While conducting a thorough content analysis of the 100 selected cases, caste of the accused has been known in 87 cases. Among these cases, Jats are found accused in 80 cases. In 06 cases, the honour killings are practiced by the Khatri; while in 01 case, a dalit has been found accused.

Table-1
Caste-wise Analysis of the Accused

Caste of the Accused	Percentage
Jats	91.95
Khatri	6.89
Dalits	1.14

The caste-wise analysis of the accused of the honour killings highlights a worrying concern that an overwhelming number of Jats emerge as accused. Reasonably, several socio-psychic attributes can be observed behind this trend among Jats. The Jats historically represent the tribal socio-cultural attributes which are dominantly based on patriarchal social set up. Furthermore, the Jats represent several socio-cultural notions of the Muslim orthodox societies such as Mughals and Pathans, which they have borrowed, adopted or persuaded while co-existing with them in Punjab since centuries (majorly from 15th century till 1947). There are numerous references of highly patriarchal social display in the history of these Muslim clans. The history depicts the references of several muslim clans in which the males, possessing social or political influence would not marry their daughters to anybody. The reason was that marrying the daughter was to feel and behave inferior to the bridegroom and his family, which was not acceptable to them. The Jats, who acquired social and political influence in Punjab during the Sikh Rule (under the Misaldari system and later, Maharaja Ranjit Singh's rule), by overpowering various Muslim clans, had ingeniously carried their patriarchal socio-cultural traditions as well. Still in present times, being called *saala* (brother of the wife) and *sahura* (father of the wife) are considered as highly abusive words in Punjab, especially among Jats, which may generally result into verbal altercations or even violent confrontation between the caller and the called. Moreover, majority of the Jats are farmers, living in rural areas and are illiterate or semiliterate. Living in rural segments makes them more socially endogamous. Thus they assume pre-marital relations of their daughters, especially with males of inferior castes, as their uncompensable dishonor in the society. Due to their occupational structures, their life is confined majorly to villages, keeping them devoid of modern socio-cultural

advancements. Further, their illiteracy invokes intellectual backwardness, conservative bigotry and psychological narrow-mindedness among them.

Proportion of the Killings of Girls and Boys: The study discloses that there are 41 per cent cases in which only girls were killed by their family members for honour while in 12 per cent cases only boys were killed by the girls' families. However, there are 47 per cent cases in which both the girl and the boy were killed.

Table- 2
Proportion of the Killings of Girls and Boys

Gender	Percentage
Killing of Girl only	41
Killing of Boy only	12
Killing of Girl and Boy Both	47

Honour killings are generally perceived as gender-specific crimes against females where girls are murdered by the male members of their families. The findings of the study confirm that certainly the girls are more frequent victims of honour killings in comparison to the boys but even boys are not much exception. The data divulges that the girls are murdered in 88 per cent of the cases of honour killings in Punjab. Worryingly, there are 41 per cent cases where only girls are murdered by their own family members. Reasonably, the girls become more soft and easier targets as their killers are not others but their own family members among whom they live and upon whom they trust for their safety and security. In a number of cases the family members of the girl believe that they would be able to conceal the matter of killing the girl from the police and the law. Moreover, the accused who consider killing of the girl for the honour of the family as their familial matter and tragically do not acknowledge murdering the girl for the sake of honour as illegal, anti-social or immoral. More reasonably, the family members of the girl, in majority of the cases, are hesitant to take the risk of making the family of the boy adversary and hostile towards them by killing the boy. Further, only girls are killed in majority of those cases where only the relationship between the girl and the boy comes into the knowledge of the family of the girl and there are no cases of elopement or performing secret marriage. In these cases, the family members kill the girl, finding her hostile to get married to the boy of her own choice. But the study has disclosed that even boys do not possess much immunity and are mercilessly killed in 59 per cent cases of honour killings. Noticeably, there are 12 per cent cases in which only boys are killed by the members of girls' families. It has been observed that in individual cases only boys are killed reasonably to give the expression to the society in general and community in particular that it was the boy who had deluded and immoralised the girl. In the cases where there are inter-caste relationships, and probably the girl belongs to upper caste, boys is killed to teach him and his family the lesson of carrying

relationships with the girl belonging to upper caste. Further, in 47 per cent cases, both girls and boys are killed together. Girls and boys are murdered majorly in those cases where the girl and the boy are caught in a compromising condition by the members of the girl's family. Besides that, these incidents also happen in the cases of elopements and secret marriages, particularly, when the boy belongs to the lower caste.

Age Variables of Girls Killed for Honour: To identify the most probable age of girls killed for honour, the information acquired through sample cases regarding the age variables has been categorised into two age groups, i.e. 15-19 and 20-25. These age groups are formed after observing from the sample cases the minimum age and the maximum age of the girls, victims of honour killings in Punjab. Examination of the sample cases discloses that 15 years is the minimum age of the girls, victims of honour killing. On the other hand, the age of 25 years has been found as maximum age. In 40 per cent cases, the girls killed for honour belong to the age group of 15-19 years, while in 60 per cent cases the deceased girls belong to the age group of 20-25 years.

Table- 3
Age of Girls Killed for Honour

Age Group (in years)	Percentage
15-19	40
20- 25	60

Adolescence is the period during which the teen-aged boys and girls get naturally attracted and intimated towards their opposite genders. The relationships established by the innocent and naive teen-aged girls with the boys of their age groups are considered by their own bigot parents and family members as intolerable and unforgiveable sins against the honour of the family and the punishment for them is not less than their murders. The girls belonging to the age group of 15-19 years supposedly include those whose relationships come into light or are caught in compromising conditions by their family members. The other 60 per cent girls belonging to the age group of 20-25 are allegedly those, who resisting the parents, get eloped or married with the boy of their own choice. The situation gets more exposed to the girls if the boy of their choice belongs to the lower caste. It shows that despite of a decent literacy rate, modernization and urbanisation, the people in Punjab still carry the orthodox, medieval mindset for their own daughters and sisters.

Age Variables of Boys Killed for Honour: The age variables of deceased boys have been categorized into three age groups, i.e. 20-25 years, 26-30 years and 31-35 years. After observing the sample cases, it has been found that 20 years is the minimum age and 35 years is the maximum age of boys/males killed in the incidents of honour killings. Among total number of cases of the killing of boys, 79 per cent belong to the age

group of 20-25; other 14 per cent belong to the age group of 26-30, while the remaining 07 per cent belong to the age group of 31-35 years.

Table-4
Age of Boys Killed for Honour

Age Group (in years)	Percentage
20-25	79
26-30	14
31-35	7

The data reveals the vast majority of boys, victims of honour killings, belong to age group of 20-25 years. Reasonably, during this age group the attitude of young sentiments is very fluent among boys and they probably get more frequently involved into relationships with the girls studying with them in schools or colleges, living in their neighbourhood, locality or living in the same village. Quite obviously, more chances of intimate relations during this age group result into the more frequent honour killings of boys belonging to this age group. After growing into maturity, the majority of the males generally get married and there are less chances for males to establish and carry forward relationships with the females. Hence there are less cases of killings of males belonging to age group of 26-30 and even very minimal cases of killings of males belonging to age groups of 31-35 years have been found. The deceased who belonged to age group of 31-35 years were majorly those who were married but still had maintained extra-marital relations.

Affiliation of the Killers: It is evident that incidents of honour killings are executed by the family members of the girls who are intolerant and harshly hostile towards the intimate relationships, elopements, secret marriages of their daughters. They consider these incidents as a massive social dishonor which can be compensated only by murdering the couple. Along with that, it is more relevant to be acquainted with the familial or social affiliation of those who are probably directly involved into the incidents of honour killings. The study asserts that in 64 per cent cases, father of the girl is among the persons declared as prime accused of honour killing. Further there is direct involvement of brother/s in 36 per cent cases. The noteworthy concern is that in 12 per cent cases the mothers of the girls are directly involved in the execution of killings their daughters and their paramours or even legal husbands. Besides that, the parental or maternal uncles of the girls are involved in the incidents of honour killings in 28 per cent cases. Quite surprisingly, there are other associates i.e. family friends, friends of girl's brothers etc. who are allegedly found involved in executing honour killings. Another tragic concern is that even contract killers are hired in 16 per cent cases by the families of the girls to execute killing of their own daughters.

Table- 5
Affiliation of the Killers

Relationship (with deceased girl)	Percentage
Involvement of Father	64
Involvement of Brother/s	36
Involvement of Mother	12
Involvement of Paternal/Maternal Uncle/s	28
Involvement of other Associates*	08
Involvement of Contract Killers	16

*'Involvement of other Associates' here means involvement of family friends, friends of girls' brothers.

Certainly the honour killings, particularly the planned and organized incidents, are not executed without the knowledge and consent of the father of the girl as he is the head of the family. But direct involvement of fathers in killing their own daughters in 64 per cent cases is a noteworthy concern. The fathers, the brothers and even the mothers murder the girls and their partners first-handedly. Moreover, the involvement of paternal and maternal uncles, family friends expresses the collective community support to the practice of killings for honour. The involvement of contract killers has been observed in those cases in which the couples elope or get married without the consent of girls' families. It has also been observed that the cases in which couples are caught in compromising conditions and killed on the spot, majorly the killings are executed by the family member/s. While in the planned and organised incidents of killings, there is involvement of uncles, family friends and contract killers. This notion of killing the girl along with his partner allegedly for the sake of preserving or reimbursing the lost honour is the outcome of the continuance of extreme conservative elements in the socio-cultural patterns of the region.

The Punjabi society, especially the Jat-Sikhs, due to the fertility of the soil, impact of the green revolution and migration to the western countries, has made noticeable economic and infrastructural development. But socio-culturally, the masses of the region, particularly the rural-folks, still carry the traditional patriarchal semi-tribal notions. Addition to this, Punjabi society, particularly residing in the rural areas is a combined society in which individual, whether male or female, is not considered as an independent unit but is acknowledged as a constituent unit of the community. In fact the family, but not the individual, is the basic unit of the society. Therefore, the decisions regarding matrimonial relationships are not accepted to be taken by the individuals, especially by the girls, who possess a subordinate status in the typically patriarchic society. In the combined semi-tribal society, the romantic or sexual relationships are considered as the hurt of the honour of the family in the community. Noticeably, none of the family has been visibly found having any harsh criminal background. In a number of cases, the alleged accused comprised educated, employees, urbanized, baptised sikhs with no previous criminal, anti-law or anti-social profile. It corroborates that the process of urbanisation, advent of education and the connectivity of people

to Western world through massive immigration has not changed the mind-set of the people. The impact of Sikhism has not much succeeded in changing the patriarchic pattern of the society and diminishing the caste impact in the establishment of matrimonial relationships.

Causes of Honour Killings: The study has disclosed three prominent causes of honour killings in Punjab, i.e. inter-caste relationships, relationship of girl with boy of same village and the girl's family hostile to the relationship of their daughter with any male. In 44 per cent cases, inter-caste relationship is the prime cause of honour killings, while relationship within same village has emerged as the cause in 28 per cent cases. Noticeably, other 28 incidents of honour killing happen as the family members of the girls do not tolerate the relationships of their daughters with males.

Table-6
Causes of Honour Killings

Alleged Cause	Percentage
Inter-Caste Relationship	44
Relationships within Same Village	28
Family Intolerant to Relationship	28

The data corroborates that inter-caste relationships between females and males emerge as the main cause of the honour killings in Punjab. The olden stratification of society on the bases of caste has established the continuing rigid tradition of endogamous marriages among all castes in the region. The convention of endogamous matrimonial relationship has been practiced by all castes, irrespective of their rank and status in the society. It has been observed that vast majority of honour killings in Punjab are practiced by the *Jat-Sikhs* who presume themselves as unique and probably most superior in the hierarchy of caste in the region. They are intolerant to the level of brutality towards their daughters to establish intimate relationships and get married to the males of other castes, particularly the *dalits*. The incidents where inter-caste relationship has emerged as the main cause possess majority of those cases where the girls belonging to *jat-sikh* families maintained relationships/caught in compromising condition/eloped/secretly married to the boys belonging to the *dalit* community. But a number of cases have been found where the *jat-sikh* families have executed honour killings when found their daughters establishing relationships with boys belonging to castes other than the *dalits*.

The findings of the study further divulge that there is seldom any tolerance for the girls carrying relationships or willing to marry with the boy of their own village. The semi-tribal socio-cultural pattern of Punjab, especially continuing in its rural areas, expects and hence compels the girls and boys of same village not to establish any pre-marital or matrimonial relationships with each other. There is hardly any practice of marrying the girl into the same village among any castes, clans, communities living in any part of the region. Thus it will not be

an error to admit that marrying the girl into the same village is forbidden as per the socio-cultural values of the region. Moreover, there is minimal tolerance for love-marriages and hence arrange-marriages are considered as most ideal marriages in the society. Reasonably, when the girls and boys belonging to same village wish to marry each other, they become the victims of double jeopardy. Firstly, the family members are not at all willing to marry their girls in the same village; and secondly, these marriages, acknowledged as love-marriages, are not acceptable to the families of girls.

Dimensions of Relationship between the Girl and the Boy: It has been observed that above mentioned categories of relationships among girls and boys obviously arouse the resentment of the family members of girls but these relationships do not result into honour killings in several cases. The above mentioned causes generally result into various categories of honour based violence such as physical and/or psychological violence and/or forced marriage of the girls. In fact, it is the nature and extent of these causes which exaggerates the level of resentment to the committal of murder of the girl, the boy or the both. The study reveals that 36 per cent cases of honour killings are practiced as the pre-marital relationship between the girl and boy comes into the light and not tolerable to the family of the girls. In 16 per cent cases the relationship reaches to the level of elopement; while in 20 per cent cases, the couple gets secretly married (court marriage or marriage in temple etc.). Noticeably, in 28 per cent cases of relationships the couple is caught in compromising condition by the family member/s of the girls.

Table-7
Dimensions of the Relationship

Nature and Extent	Percentage
In Relationship	36
Elopement	16
Secret Marriage without the Consent of Girl's Family	20
Caught in Compromising Condition	28

The study has disclosed that in 36 per cent cases, the parents and family members of the girls are totally intolerant and hostile towards intimate relationships of the girls. Quite similar to common Indian mindset, pre-marital relationships between girls and boys have been considered as a matter of huge social dishonor, especially for the girls' families. If the girl and the boy persist their relationship despite of the forbidding, warnings and violent reaction by the girl's family, it probably results into the honour killings of the girl or the couple. It has been observed that helplessness and vulnerability of the couple due to forbidding and violent behavior of girl's family towards their relationship sometimes compels the couple to elope to any secreted place. Again, fleeing of the girl has been considered as a matter of huge

dishonor and humiliation in society. Especially among traditional patriarchal communities, elopement of girl has been acknowledged as blemish of dishonor for seven generations²⁷. This orthodox and bigot mindset results into the tracing and then killing the couple on the spot or after calling them back home through betrayal promises of marrying them. There are other run away couples who probably get secretly married through courts or by performing religious rituals. The family members of the girls again consider these incidents as matter of huge dishonour and social humiliation for them. Among these conservative families, killing of the couple only can recompense honour to the family. It has been observed that in majority of the cases of elopement and secret marriages, which are performed without the consent and knowledge of girls' families, the consent, support and presence of the family members of the boys is quite visible.

More noticeably, the reason behind 28 per cent cases of honour killings is that atypical condition in which both the girl and boy are caught in compromising and intimating condition by the member/s of girl's family, particularly by the father or the brother. In these cases, the incidents of honour killings are not much planned and organized, but this category of honour killings expresses more the nature of crimes of passions or crimes resulting from sudden and provoked reaction rather than the organized crimes. Moreover, this finding establishes it as a fact that 28 per cent of the total number of cases of honour killings in the region happen as crimes of passion rather than organized crimes.

The previous finding exposing the causes of the honour killings in the region have found that in 28 per cent cases the alleged couple is caught in intimating condition by the family member/s of the girl. These atypical and unexpected circumstances possibly provoke the family members of the girls to take that extreme brutal step of killing the couple on the spot. But still there are 72 per cent cases in which the family members of the girls do not face that much atypical and intolerant situation of witnessing their girl in intimating condition with any male. This particular finding gives the impression that in these 72 per cent cases, the honour killings are very much executed as planned and organised crimes.

Therefore, the problem of honour killings is not exclusively caused by the intolerance of the family members towards the decisions of the females to marry the men of their own choice. Majority of the honour killings are practiced as the family members are annoyed to the pre-marital relationships of their teen-aged daughters. Further, the honour killings in Punjab are not caused by economic determinants in which male family members murder the families' daughters to terminate their claim over the property. But in fact, honour killings result from a socio-psycho pattern in which premarital relationships of girls and their intentions to marry the males of their own choices generally cause honour based violence.

Conclusion

The study concludes that honour killings have been practiced in Punjab since centuries. Though, the civil society and the government has become more concerned during recent years due to the emergence of feminist movements, exploration by the media and the transformation of India from traditional prejudiced society to a legal and rational society and from rigidly patriarchic to an egalitarian society. In Punjab, most of the incidents of honour killings occur in the jat-dominated regions. The problem of honour killings results into comparatively more casualties of females, however, it is not exclusively a gender-specific problem. Generally people in Punjab, irrespective of their castes and religions, are rigidly intolerant towards pre-marital relationships of their girls. In addition to this, there is general socio-cultural trend of endogamous matrimonial relationships among all castes, irrespective of their status in caste-hierarchy. In Punjab, quite similar to several other parts of India, there are hierarchical patterns of castes-within-caste and people belonging to a sub-caste of any caste do not marry their children to another sub-caste. Therefore, inter-caste marriages can be visibly seen as forbidden among all castes in Punjab. The upper castes in the state, especially the Jat-Sikhs are very possessive about their caste and assume themselves as superior in the scale of the caste-hierarchy in the region. Hence, they perceive inter-caste pre-marital or marital relationships of their daughters as a symbol of huge dishonor. This perception results into the honour based violence but actually the magnitude, extent and dimensions of these causes including elopements, unaccepted secret marriages and instant disclosure of sexual relationships further aggravates the problem which results into the murders of the girls, the boys or the couples. Another major concern highlighted by the study is that in twenty eight per cent cases the honour killings are committed as crimes of passions aroused by the sudden psychological provocation where the girls are found in compromising conditions with their paramours by their family member/s. In the state, more than forty per cent girls murdered for honour comprise the adolescent teenaged group of 14-19 years and the others are not older than 25 years of age. Huge majority of the males killed in honour killings belong to the budding youth age group of 20-25 years. In almost all the cases, there is direct involvement of fathers and/or brothers of the girls. However in a number of cases, first-hand involvement of the paternal or maternal uncles and family friends has been observed. Noticeably there is direct involvement of the mothers of the girls also in the killings of their daughters. A number of cases have been observed in which the contract killers have executed the killings, which depicts that the family members are committed to murder their own daughters even ignoring or sidelining their parental or familial sentiments. It has been observed that the centuries old mind set prevailing in these patriarchic societies along with patronage of the community and the leniency of the law has made the honour killings frequent trend which is considered socio-culturally legitimate as well. Therefore, besides constituting rigorous laws and rigid punishments, it is immediately required to change the mindset of the bigoted patriarchic societies to become tolerant to matrimonial

choices of their daughters especially towards inter-caste and inter-religious marriages. However, it is really a challenging task for the civil society, government and the judiciary to transform the socio-cultural psyche of the people who are much more possessive and committed to their ethno-community based socio-cultural patterns in comparison to the society, state and the law.

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