

HONOUR DEATHS: THE STORY FROM THEN TILL NOW

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Abstract: Honor killings are acts of vengeance, usually death, committed by male family members against female family members, due to the belief of the perpetrators that the victim has brought dishonor upon the family or community. Women are basically the subject of honor killing who believed to be deviated from traditional gender role, crossing the social boundaries by committing an indiscretion that are deemed as taboo in their culture. Honour Deaths originated as a means of safeguarding family honour and were self inflicted, over a period of time they have come to take the shape of a cruel menace in the society worldwide. Honour based violence existed across cultures since time immemorial even though the extent and form of violence whether self inflicted or socially inflicted have been different. This paper highlight the prevalence of honour death during the ancient period and also its cultural and regional presence. Honour as a concept needs a redefining in terms of the extent and ownership that each member of a family, community and country holds towards it.

Keywords: Honor, Death, Dishonor, Family, Violence, Killing, Culture

Introduction: *Ignoring the pleas of his 14-year old daughter to spare her life, Mehmet Halitogullari pulled on a wire wrapped around her neck and strangled her - supposedly to restore the family's honor after she was kidnapped and raped... "I decided to kill her because our honor was dirtied," the newspaper Sabah quoted the father as saying. "I didn't listen to her pleas, I wrapped the wire around her neck and pulled at it until she died"* (The Associated Press, Ankara, Turkey).

Honor killings are acts of vengeance, usually death, committed by male family members against female family members, due to the belief of the perpetrators that the victim has brought dishonor upon the family or community. Women are basically the subject of honor killing who believed to be deviated from traditional gender role, crossing the social boundaries by committing an indiscretion that are deemed as taboo in their culture. ^(1, 2, 3)

Honor killing is not a new concept but its practice goes across cultures and across religions but with a different name. Widney Brown, reported honor killing practice goes across cultures and across religions. The present article focuses on its origin and existence. Its existence can be traced back to somewhere around 1200 BC. As noted by Christian Arab writer, Norma Khouri, honor killings originate from the belief that a woman's chastity is the property of her families, a cultural norm that comes "from our ancient tribal days, from the Hammurabi and Assyrian tribes of 1200 B.C." ⁽⁴⁾

Matthew A. Goldstein, J.D. (Arizona), has also noted that honor killings were encouraged in ancient Rome, where male family members who did not take actions against the female adulterers in their family were "actively persecuted". ⁽⁵⁾

Researcher here will try to focus on the traditional tales of honor killing across glob by bring in light:-

1. Honor killing during ancient times (Early Origin)
2. Regional presence & Cultural practice of Honor killing

Honor killing during ancient times (Early Origin): The tradition that gives rise to honor killing, namely that a woman's chastity is her family's property can be traced to pre-Christian and pre-Islamic periods.

The 3000 B.C. Assyrian legal code in Mesopotamia, for example, held that the father of a defiled virgin could punish her in any way he wished. The 1752 B.C. Code of Hammurabi, the ancient Babylonian set of laws, justifies honor killing related to sexual crimes.

Roman law held that married women were the property of their husbands and could be sold into slavery, imprisoned or even killed at their husband's whim. The Roman statesman Cato advised a husband who discovered his wife committing adultery to kill her without re-sorting to the legal system: "If you catch your wife in adultery, you can kill her with impunity; she, however, cannot dare to lay a finger on you if you commit adultery, for it is the law." ^{60(original book no)6}

Shakespeare's "Titus Andronicus," set in Rome's late empire, portrays the Roman general Titus killing his daughter Lavinia to restore their honor after she was raped and mutilated. As he kills her he cries, "Die, die Lavinia, and thy shame with thee, and with thy shame thy father's sorrow die!"

According to the ancient Laws of Manu, women were considered immoral. Widows were encouraged to throw themselves on the funeral pyre of their husbands (a custom known as *suttee*) to preserve their dead spouse's

honor and pre-vent themselves from living a "life of dishonor." Hindu-Aryan husbands "were entitled to cut off the nose and ears of wives suspected or found guilty of infidelity — a custom that eerily echoes various cases of 'honor' crimes in the Indian subcontinent across the centuries."⁷

Tragu which consisted of shedding blood of some member of one's family and calling down the vengeance of heaven upon the offender whose obstinance necessitated the sacrifice.

Jauhar and Saka a type of honor killing on record, find its root in the Khilji and Tughlaq times. Jauhar was a Rajput prerogative to avoid capture, enslavement and dishonor at the hands of Muslim invaders. Few cases of Jauhar are cited below:

Maharani Padmini, wife of of Rana Rawal Ratan Singh of Chittor performed Jauhar In 1303 AD, to save her honour from the hand of Ala-ud-din Khilji, the Muslim Sultan of Delhi.

Rani Karnavati, wife of Rana Sanga who died in 1528 AD after the Battle of Khanua performed jauhar.

Maharani Samyukta, wife of Prithviraj Chauhan the last Hindu king to rule Delhi, along with her ladies committed jauhar rather than surrendering to the Afghan invaders.^(8, 9)

Jigai and Seppuku, a form of Japanese ritual suicide by disembowelment means "stomach-cutting. Used voluntarily by samurai to die with honor rather than fall into the hands of their enemies, and also as a form of capital punishment for those who had committed serious offenses, or performed for other reasons that had brought shame to clan."^(10,11) Female ritual suicide known as Jigai was practiced by the wives of samurai who have committed seppuku or brought dishonor.

The first recorded act of seppuku was performed by Minamoto no Yorimasa during the Battle of Uji in the year 1180.⁽¹²⁾ One of the largest mass suicides was the 25 April 1185 final defeat of Taira Tomomori establishing Minamoto power.^[13] The wife of Onodera Junai, one of the Forty-seven Ronin, is a notable example of a wife following by suicide the seppuku (disemboweling) of a samurai husband.^[14] A large number of honour suicides marked the defeat of the Aizu clan in the Boshin War of 1869, leading into the Meiji era. For example in the family of Saigō Tanomo, who survived, a total of twenty-two female honour suicides are recorded among one extended family.^[15]

Some females belonging to samurai families committed suicide by cutting the arteries of the neck with one stroke, using a knife such as a *tantō* or *kaiken*. The main purpose was to achieve a quick and certain death in order to avoid capture. Women were carefully taught jigaki as a child.

Before committing suicide, a woman would often tie her knees together so her body would be found in a dignified pose, despite the convulsions of death *Karo-kari*, A form of gender-based violence, an honour killing is the homicide of a member of a family or social group by other members, due to the belief the victim has brought dishonor upon the family or community. The killing is viewed as a way to restore the reputation and honour of the family.⁽¹⁶⁾

Karo-kari is a compound word literally meaning "black male" (Karo) and "black female (Kari). Originally, Karo and Kari were metaphoric terms for adulterer and adulteress, but it has come to be used with regards to multiple forms of perceived immoral behavior. Once a woman is labeled as a Kari, family members consider themselves to be authorized to kill her and the co-accused Karo in order to restore family honour.

Origin of honor killing is colossal in its term as it is tough to identify exactly when it begins. It is there in every era (ancient, middle & modern). History has witnessed several cases of honor killing but with new name every time depending upon the place and culture.

Regional presence & Cultural practice of Honor killing: People change their geographical boundaries either by choice or force, they settle down in new place where along with their material belonging they tend to carry their culture and tradition belonging too which they follow with firm support, as the migrant are of the view that some boundaries are never to be crossed. Honor killing is present across globe, as people who are stronger supporter of their tradition and culture tend to follow all the taboo attached to their religion and culture where ever they go. So honor killing is a global phenomenon present in almost all the country.

Researcher here would like to throw a light on honor killing present in these regions: Europe, Middle East, South Asia, America, and Australia.

Europe: The 2009 European Parliamentary Assembly noted that the honor killing problem, instead of retreating, has worsened, and women are its most frequent victims, especially in patriarchal and fundamentalist communities and societies. For this reason, Assembly has asked the member states to 'draw up and put into effect national action plans to combat violence against women, including violence committed in the name of so-called 'honor'.^[17]

Germany: In 2005 *Der Spiegel* reported: "In the past four months, six Muslim women living in Berlin have been killed by family members". The

article went on to cover the case of Hatun Sürücü, who was killed by her brother for not staying with the husband she was forced to marry, and of "living like a German".^[18]

In March 2009, a Kurdish immigrant from Turkey, Gülsüm S., was killed for a relationship not in keeping with her family's plan for an arranged marriage.^[19]

United Kingdom: Official estimate of UK is that at least a dozen women are victims of honor killings every year, almost exclusively within Asian and Middle Eastern families.^[20] Sources say most of the cases cannot be resolved due to the unwillingness of family, relatives and communities to testify.

A 2006 BBC poll for the Asian network in the UK found that one in ten of the 500 young Asians polled said that they could pardon the killing of someone who dishonored their family.^[21]

In 2010, Britain saw a 47% rise of honor-related crimes. Data from police agencies in the UK report 2283 cases in 2010.^(22,23)

Another well-known case was Heshu Yones, stabbed to death by her Kurdish father in London in 2002 when her family heard a love song dedicated to her and suspected she had a boyfriend.^[24]

However, a lesser-known case is that of Gurmeet Singh Ubhi, a Sikh man who, in February 2011, was found guilty of the murder of his 24 year-old daughter, Amrit Kaur Ubhi in 2010.^[25] Mr. Ubhi was found to have murdered his daughter because he disapproved of her being 'too westernised'. Likewise he also disapproved of the fact that she was dating a non-Sikh man.^[26]

Denmark: Ghazala Khan was shot and killed in Denmark in September 2005, by her brother, after she had married against the will of the family. She was of Pakistani origin. Her murder was ordered by her father to save the family 'honour', and several relatives were involved.

Norway: Afghan refugee in Norway Anooche Sediq Ghulam (22), was killed by her husband in an honor killing. She had reported her husband to the police for domestic violence and was seeking a divorce.

Belgium: In 2011, Belgium held its first honor killing trial, in which four Pakistani family members were found guilty of killing their daughter and sibling, Sadia Sheikh.^[27]

Middle East:

Egypt: Honor killings in Egypt occur due to reasons such as a woman meeting an unrelated man, even if this is only an allegation; or adultery (real or suspected). In 2013, a woman and her two daughters were murdered by 10 male relatives, who strangled and beat them, and then threw their bodies in the

Nile. The women were alleged of having illicit affairs with men.^{[28][29]}

Iran: Honour killings occur primarily among tribal minority groups such as Kurds, Loris, Arabs and Baluchis, which are generally more conservative than the Persians. Discriminatory family laws, articles in the Criminal Code that show leniency towards honor killings, and a strongly male dominated society have been cited as causes of honor killings in Iran.^[30]

Iraq: As many as 133 women were killed in the Iraqi city of Basra alone in 2006—79 for violation of "Islamic teachings" and 47 for honor killings, according to IRIN, the news branch of the U.N.'s Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. Amnesty International says that armed groups, not the government, also kill politically active women and those who did not follow a strict dress code, as well as women who are perceived as human rights defenders.^[31]

Jordan: In Jordan there is relatively little sex discrimination compared to most other countries in the region, and women are permitted to vote, but men receive reduced sentences for killing their wives or female family members if they are deemed to have brought dishonor to their family. Families often get sons under the age of 16—legally minors—to commit honor killings; the juvenile law allows convicted minors to serve time in a juvenile detention center and be released with a clean criminal record at the age of 16. Rana Hussein, a leading journalist on the topic of honor killings, states that "under the existing law, people found guilty of committing honor killings often receive sentences as light as six months in prison".^[32] According to UNICEF, there is an average of 23 honor killings per year in Jordan.^[33]

A 2013 survey of "856 ninth graders – average age of 15 – from a range of secondary schools across Amman – including private and state, mixed-sex and single gender" showed that attitudes favoring honor killings are present in the "next generation" Jordanians: "In total, 33.4% of all respondents either "agreed" or "strongly agreed" with situations depicting honour killings. Boys were more than twice as likely to support honour killings: 46.1% of boys and 22.1% of girls agreed with at least two honour killing situations in the questionnaire." The parents' education was found to be a significant correlation: "61% of teenagers from the lowest level of educational background showed supportive attitudes towards honour killing, as opposed to only 21.1% where at least one family member has a university degree."^{[34][35]}

Lebanon: There are no exact official numbers about honor killings of women in Lebanon; many honor killings are arranged to look like accidents,

but the figure is believed to be 40 to 50 per year. A 2007 report by Amnesty International said that the Lebanese media in 2001 reported 2 or 3 honor killings per month in Lebanon, although the number is believed to be higher by other independent sources.

Palestinian: According to UNICEF, in 2000 two-thirds of all killings in the Palestinian territories were honor killings.^[36] The Palestinian Independent Commission for Human Rights has reported 29 women were killed 2007–2010, whereas 13 women were killed in 2011 and 12 in the first seven months of 2012.^[37] According to a PA Ministry of Women's Affairs report, which was translated by Palestinian Media Watch (PMW),^[38] the rate of 'Honor Killings' went up by 100% in 2013, "reporting the number of 'honor killing' victims for 2013 at 27".^[39] Palestinian Authority law caps a reduced sentence for "honor" murders at six months in prison.^[40]

Saudi Arabia: In 2008 a woman was killed in Saudi Arabia by her father for "chatting" to a man on Facebook. The killing became public only when a Saudi cleric referred to the case, not to condemn it but to criticise Facebook for the strife it caused.^[41]

Syria: Some estimates suggest that more than 200 honor killings occur every year in Syria.^[42] The Syrian Civil War has been reported as leading to an increase in honor killings in the country, mainly due to the common occurrence of war rape, which led to the stigmatization of victims by their relatives and communities, and in turn to honor killings.^[43]

Turkey: A report compiled by the Council of Europe estimated that over 200 women were killed in honor killings in Turkey in 2007.^[44] A report (June 2008) by the Turkish Prime Ministry's Human Rights Directorate said that in Istanbul alone there was one honor killing every week, and reported over 1,000 during the previous five years. It added that metropolitan cities were the location of many of these, due to growing Kurdish immigration to these cities from the East.^[45] The mass migration during the past decades of rural population from Southeastern Turkey to big cities in Western Turkey has resulted in "modern" cities such as Istanbul, Ankara, Izmir, and Bursa having the highest numbers of reported honor killings.^[46]

A report by UNFPA identified the following situations as being common triggers for honor killings: a married woman having an extra-marital relationship; a married woman running away with a man; a married woman getting separated or divorced; a divorced woman having a relationship with another man; a young unmarried girl having a relationship; a young unmarried girl running away with a man; a woman (married or unmarried) being kidnapped and/or raped.^[47]

In Turkey, young boys are often ordered by other family members to commit the honor killing, so that they can get a shorter jail sentence (because they are minors).^[48] Forced suicides – where the victim who is deemed to have 'dishonored' the family is ordered to commit suicide in an attempt by the perpetrator to avoid legal consequences – also take place in Turkey, especially in Batman, which has been nicknamed "Suicide City".^{[49][50][51]}

In 2009 a Turkish news agency reported that a 2-day-old boy who was born out of wedlock had been killed for honor by maternal grandmother of the infant, along with six other persons, including a doctor who had reportedly accepted a bribe to not report the birth, were arrested. The grandmother is suspected of fatally suffocating the infant. The child's mother, 25, was also arrested; she stated that her family had made the decision to kill the child.^[52]

In 2010 a 16-year-old Kurdish girl was buried alive by relatives for befriending boys in Southeast Turkey; her corpse was found 40 days after she went missing.^[53] Ahmet Yildiz, 26, a Turkish physics student who represented his country at an international gay conference in the United States in 2008, was shot dead leaving a cafe in Istanbul. It is believed Yildiz was the victim of the country's first gay honor killing.^[54]

Honor killings continue to enjoy public support in parts of Turkey, especially in the Southeast. A survey in Diyarbakir found that, when asked the appropriate punishment for a woman who has committed adultery, 37% of respondents said she should be killed, while 21% said her nose or ears should be cut off.^[55]

Yemen: Honor killings are common in Yemen, which is a very conservative society; in some parts of the country traditional tribal customs forbid contact between men and women before marriage.^[56] Yemeni society is strongly male dominated, Yemen being ranked last of 135 countries in the 2012 Global Gender Gap Report.^[57] It was estimated that about 400 women and girls died in honor killings in 1997 in Yemen.^[58] In 2013, a 15-year-old girl was killed by her father, who burned her to death, because she talked to her fiance before the wedding.^{[56][59]}

South Asia:

Afghanistan: In 2012, Afghanistan recorded 240 cases of honor killings, but the total number is believed to be much higher. Of the reported honor killings, 21% were committed by the victims' husbands, 7% by their brothers, 4% by their fathers, and the rest by other relatives.^{[60][61]}

Pakistan: Recent cases include that of three teenage girls who were buried alive after refusing arranged

marriages.^[62] Another case was that of Taslim Khatoon Solangi, 17, of Hajna Shah village in Khairpur district, which was widely reported after her father, 57-year-old Gul Sher Solangi, publicized the case. He alleged his eight-months-pregnant daughter was tortured and killed on 7 March on the orders of her father-in-law, who accused her of carrying a child conceived out of wedlock.^{[63][64]} Statistically, honor killings have a high level of support in Pakistan's rural society, despite widespread condemnation from human rights groups.^[65] In 2002 alone over 382 people, about 245 women and 137 men, became victims of honor killings in the Sindh province of Pakistan.^[66] Over the course of six years, more than 4,000 women have died as victims of honor killings in Pakistan from 1999 to 2004.^[67] In 2005 the average annual number of honor killings for the whole nation was stated to be more than 10,000 per year.^[68] According to women's rights advocates, the concepts of women as property, and of honor, are so deeply entrenched in the social, political and economic fabric of Pakistan that the government mostly ignores the regular occurrences of women being killed and maimed by their families.^[69] Frequently, women killed in honor killings are recorded as having committed suicide or died in accidents.^[69]

It is noted by sociologists that honor killings do not necessarily have to do with religion, but rather the cultures in different regions.^[70] Savitri Goonesekere qualifies this claim, saying that Islamic leaders in Pakistan use religious justifications for sanctioning honor killings.^[71]

India: Honor killings have been reported in northern regions of India, mainly in the Indian states of Punjab, Rajasthan, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, as a result of people marrying without their family's acceptance, and sometimes for marrying outside their caste or religion. In contrast, honor killings are rare to non-existent in South India and the western Indian states of Maharashtra and Gujarat. In some other parts of India, notably West Bengal, honor killings ceased about a century ago, largely due to the activism and influence of reformists such as Vivekananda, Ramakrishna, Vidyasagar and Raja Ram Mohan Roy.^[72]

The Indian state of Punjab has a large number of honor killings. According to data compiled by the Punjab Police, 34 honor killings were reported in the state between 2008 and 2010: 10 in 2008, 20 in 2009, and four in 2010.^[73]

Haryana is also notorious for incidents of honor killing, mainly in the upper caste of society, among rajputs and jaats.^{[54][74]} Bhagalpur in the eastern Indian state of Bihar has also been notorious for honor killings.^[75] Recent cases include a 16-year-old girl, Imrana, from Bhojpur who was set on fire

inside her house in a case of what the police called 'moral vigilantism'. The victim had screamed for help for about 20 minutes before neighbours arrived, only to find her smouldering body. She was admitted to a local hospital, where she later died from her injuries.^[76] In May 2008, Jayvirsingh Bhadodiya shot his daughter Vandana Bhadodiya and struck her on the head with an axe.^[77] In June 2010 some incidents were reported even from Delhi. In a landmark judgment in March 2010, Karnal district court ordered the execution of five perpetrators of an honor killing in Kaithal, and imprisoning for life the khap (local caste-based council) chief who ordered the killings of Manoj Banwala (23) and Babli (19), a man and woman of the same clan who eloped and married in June 2007. Despite having been given police protection on court orders, they were kidnapped; their mutilated bodies were found a week later in an irrigation canal.^{[78][79][80]}

In June 2012, a man chopped off his 20-year-old daughter's head with a sword in Rajasthan after learning that she was dating men.^{[81][82]} According to police officer, "Omkar Singh told the police that his daughter Manju had relations with several men. He had asked her to mend her ways several times in the past. However, she did not pay heed. Out of pure rage, he chopped off her head with the sword."^[83]

A young couple who were planning to marry were brutally murdered in Garnauthi village, state of Haryana on 18 September 2013 due to having a love affair. The woman, Nidhi, was beaten to death and the man, Dharmender, was dismembered alive. People in the village and neighbouring villages approved of the killings.^[84]

America:

Canada: A 2007 study by Dr. Amin Muhammad and Dr. Sujay Patel of Memorial University, Canada, investigated how the practice of honor killings has been brought to Canada. The report explained that "When people come and settle in Canada they can bring their traditions and forcefully follow them.

Canada has been host to a number of high profile killings, including the murder of Kaur Sidhu,^[85] the murder of Amandeep Atwal,^[86] the double murder of Khatera Sadiqi and her fiancé, and the Shafia family murders.^[87] Honor killings have become such a pressing issue in Canada that the Canadian citizenship study guide mentions it specifically, saying, "Canada's openness and generosity do not extend to barbaric cultural practices that tolerate spousal abuse, 'honour killings', female genital mutilation, forced marriage or other gender-based violence."^[87]

United States: Several honor killings have occurred in the US during recent years. In 1989, in St. Louis, Missouri, 16-years-old Palestina (Tina) Isa was murdered by her Palestinian father with the aid of his wife. Her parents were dissatisfied with her "westernized" lifestyle.^[88] In 2008, in Georgia, 25-years-old Sandeela Kanwal was killed by her Pakistani father for refusing an arranged marriage.^{[89][90][91]} Amina and Sarah Said, two teenage sisters from Texas were killed, allegedly by their Egyptian father, who is still at large.^[92] Aasiya Zubair was, together with her husband Muzzammil Hassan, the founder and owner of Bridges TV, the first American Muslim English-language television network. She was killed by her husband in 2009. In 2009, in Arizona, Noor Almaleki, aged 20, was killed by her father, an Iraqi immigrant, because she had refused an arranged marriage and was living with her boyfriend.^[93]

Latin America: Crimes of passion within Latin America have also been compared to honor killings.^[44] Similar to honor killings, crimes of passion often feature the murder of women by a husband, family member, or boyfriends and the crime is often condoned or sanctioned. In Peru, for example, 70 percent of the murders of women in one year were committed by a husband, boyfriend or lover, and most often jealousy or suspicions of infidelity are cited as the reasons for the murders.^[94]

Australia: In 2010, in New South Wales, Indonesian born Hazairin Iskandar and his son killed the lover

of Iskandar's wife. Iskandar stabbed the victim with a knife while his son bashed him with a hammer. The court was told that the reason for the murder was the perpetrators' belief that extramarital affairs were against their religion; and that the murder was carried out to protect the honour of the family and was a "pre-planned, premeditated and executed killing". The judge said that: "No society or culture that regards itself as civilised can tolerate to any extent, or make any allowance for, the killing of another person for such an amorphous concept as honour".^{[95][96][97]}

Conclusion: Despite of various cases and numbers presented by various sources it is tough to estimate that how many women die every year in name of honor killings because many crimes are never reported for the reason that in the majority of cases, the attackers is the male members of the victim family, distant relative or community member and also cases are never reported.

Whereas Honour Deaths originated as a means of safeguarding family honour and were self inflicted, over a period of time they have come to take the shape of a cruel menace in the society worldwide. Honour as a concept needs a redefining in terms of the extent and ownership that each member of a family, community and country holds towards it. However it would not be sweeping to conclude that honour based violence existed across cultures since time immemorial even though the extent and form of violence whether self inflicted or socially inflicted have been different.

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