

Honor Killings in Western U.P.

Abstract

Uttar Pradesh has earned the dubious distinction of reporting the highest number of honor killing murder cases in 2015, followed by Haryana, Punjab and Madhya Pradesh. Mostly females are the victims of such killings. As in Indian society, women are considered the symbol of honor of their families. Patriarchal mindset, inter caste marriages, 'sagotra marriages', lenient laws are the main factors behind honor killings. In most of such cases Khap Panchayats which are unelected and all male dominated bodies are playing dubious role. The degree of freedom given to women increase the scope of their independent choice regarding marriage, inter caste and sagotra marriage, elopement with boy of lower caste or of the same village cause the rage of these Khap Panchayats.

Keywords: Honor Killings, Sagotra Marriages'

Introduction

Of the total 191 cases of honor killings, 131 cases were reported from Uttar Pradesh in 2015 whereas in 2014 maximum of such cases were reported from Madhya Pradesh. In U.P. also most of such cases are reported from western U.P. where Khap Panchayats are dominant. Honor killings are act of vengeance usually death committed by male members against female family members who are responsible to have brought dishonor upon the family for a variety of reasons including refusing to enter into an arranged marriage, committing adultery, having sexual relations before marriage or entering into inter-caste marriage. Mostly women are the victims of this type of killings but in rare case men can also be the victims.

India's social system is based on caste hierarchy. Varna system first referred in Rigveda, became intricate and rigid with the passage of time¹ caste is deeply entrenched in the minds of people and marriage between higher and lower caste are still considered to bring dishonor to the concerned family. Indian society is patriarchal society such a society invariably place women in a position secondary to the male members of family. Parental control in choice of spouse is utmost. They can't accept the very fact that their children especially daughters getting married according to their own wishes, girls are considered to be symbol of honor² and if she does something indecent like – marrying sagotra male, honor of family is considered to be lost. The Khap Panchayats are instrumental in carrying out most of honor killings.

Objective of the Study

Objective of the study is to elaborate the causes of honor killings, demark the areas of its wide prevalence. Role of Khap Panchayats in honor killing, structure of these Khaps is also to be discussed. Positive steps taken by some Khap Panchayats is also to be studied.

Source of Study

The Paper is based on the secondary sources such as books, newspapers, web portals and internet etc.

Discussion

Khaps or community or clan councils have been in news in recent past for passing diktat that range from out landish to ridiculous ban on eating chowmein or carrying mobile phones. Khaps a social organization, is a group of elderly men united by caste, geography and beliefs which have taken shape of quasi judicial body. Hierorchy of khap ranges team Ghar (home) gali, Dhoog (Sector), Panchayat to Khap Panchayat. Intially emerged as the system of social administration in the ancient republics that flourished in north western areas of present U.P., Haryana and Rajasthan.³ These were meant to keep the flocks around the village together, protect local customs and solve interpersonal conflicts.



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These are not constitutional bodies neither they have any provision of election, and no provision of formal membership. The areas where these khaps are dominant are ironically those area where sex ratio is competitively less than average.⁴

Within last, twenty years these institutions have become instrumental for honor killing. National commission for women reported 600 people as having been victim to honor killing between 2005 and 2010. Most of these cases were of sgotra marriages. Khaps are against these marriages which acts as a check against inbreeding as the sgotra marriages which have been scientifically proved to be the main cause of genetic diseases since Khaps don't handle money unlike elected panchayat, even than these bodies command enormous respect from the local people and are more powerful than the panchayats. So that's why their decisions are more dreaded. The few cases of honor killings initiated by Khaps are: Manoj Babli, Pantavas case Rathi v/s Hudda case, Vedpal v/s Sonia case and the latest to add is the case of Skronid village in Baghpat where Khap has ordered punishment to two sisters aged 23 and 15 to be raped, paraded naked after blackening their faces.⁵ Their only crime was that their brother eloped with a married Jatav lady Girls sought protection through intervention of Supreme Court. The incident caught attention of human right organization, Amnesty international and even the house of commons of England was rocked over the issue.

No culture, No religion, No human beings with any humanity would support this. In 2011 Supreme Court of India declared these Khaps illegal as these encourage honor killing and atrocities against boys and girls of different caste and religions who wish to get married. On the name of Bhai-chara (brotherhood) these khap oppressed dalits, women and any other modern view. In fact khaps were raised the genuine questions relating to peasant or any other important questions like lack of schools, hospitals or roads in the village. In spite of being declared illegal, these khaps continued to be having the support of political parties and social recognition.

However we cannot blame khaps behind every honor killing even 'The Arushi Talwar case' was allegedly an honor killing case. Moreover recently a wave of change was felt '**Satrol khap**' the biggest khap allowed inter caste marriage, provided the marriage is not in the same gotra. This put an end to six century old ban on matrimonial alliances among people living in forty two villages of this khap in April 2014. Skewed Sex ratio may be driving force behind this decision. Since bhai-chara is the main force that binds all social transactions in these close knit communities many of disputes among villages should be amicably solved. Yogendra Yadav of AAP party who hails from Bhiwani of Haryana is also of view that not every social issue must end in court of law. However a line must be drawn when it comes to the law of the land. Khaps are social group, social organizations which target social evils like alcoholism, dowry and feticide. Khap of Bibipur, Jind district had

declared feticide a crime on 14 July 2012. To add the latest khaps panchayats in Haryana are supporting govt is decision to make education compulsory for candidates contesting election for grass root level organization class X for general and class VIII for reserved category. Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao Programme of central govt. was received warmly in Haryana where some khap heads have started Beti Pao, Dharam Kamao programme in order to curb feticide.⁶

Conclusion

Honor killing is not prevalent only in India but many south east Asian and Arabian societies also witness these brutal murders. Education, change in the mindset of society, separate laws on honor killings can be helpful in curbing these killings. With the change of time, social institutions should also change according to requirements of society and if any institution does not change, it is going to be declined. This is high time that Khap Panchayats should change their age old laws and attitude.

References

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