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The Analysis of Honor Killings in Pakistan and How it is Related to the Notion of “What will
Other People Say?”
by Mahum Nazar

A Thesis Submitted for Independent Study Requirement for Honors in the Degree Bachelor of
Arts in Philosophy, Politics, and Law
College of Harpur School of Sciences
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Introduction

Honor killings is a subject that is crucial for understanding because of its relationship to various cultures where it is predominantly prominent, such as the Middle East and South Asia. The focus of this paper will only be on honor related cases in Pakistan. This paper will attempt to connect the relationship between the mentality of ‘what will other people say’ to the matter of honor in a Pakistani society. In addition to this, this paper will also strive to expose the readership to the culture of Pakistan and how that plays a vital role when it comes to honor killings. This being said, religion cannot be utilized by Pakistani Muslims to justify honor related violence as the religion strongly opposes such a brutal and inhumane practice, which is discussed further ahead. Therefore, this paper will aim to erase the misconception of Islam endorsing honor killings because Pakistan is a largely Muslim country. Moreover, honor killing is a subject matter that should be researched by both scholars in the East as well as the West, because this topic is a humanitarian one. The more exposure it has to the audiences of the world, the more collectively a solution can be provided for the countries struggling with this violence. Similarly, the field pertaining to honor related violence is under researched which is problematic and this makes the issue at hand even more significant to analyze. Once this matter is looked upon as a cosmopolitan problem, only then can solutions come forth which have permanent consequences. Finally, this paper will provide various solutions in the form of grassroot movements against honor killings. These recommendations are an attempt to invoke a reaction out of the readership both in the East and the West. Pakistanis also need to be aware of how vital the case of honor killings is in their home country. Hence, Pakistanis need to start altering their culture and traditions which endorse such practices at home, and at the same time, start educating their elders about their belief systems which go back generations and merely breed violence in the society.

Honor related violence is prominent in various provinces of Pakistan. Men are the proponents of killing in their families for the sake of restoring honor, and only in a handful of cases are seen where women are the endorsers of honor killings. This does not automatically translate into men being aggressors and enemies of women; rather, the opinions of the outsiders are crucial as they form the basis of why many men kill from their kin. Moreover, when men and in some instances, women are acting in accordance with what the society is deeming ‘right’, their own consciousness and rationality evaporates. Instead, this deep petrified fear of ‘what will people say’ if I take such an action, or if I refuse to take this action rules the lives of such people and ends up deciding the fate of men and women who are blamed to be ruining the honor of their families. Additionally, it is important to emphasize that education does not play a role in honor related violence, no matter the common sentiment claiming that it does. In fact, there are prevalent case studies which break such a myth and demonstrate that even educated members belonging to a high socio-economic status, living in an urban setting are seen killing the women of their families for avenging honor. Therefore, with the toxic mentality of what will people say which is *log kya kahenge*, a term explained further in the next section, families in Pakistan end up ruining their family dynamics and snatching the safe haven off the heads of the women, and in rare cases men of their families, which ultimately results in honor killings in cold blood or banishment from the society permanently. The next section lists all the terminologies used within this paper, their meanings, and how they relate to the subject of honor killings in Pakistan.

Terminologies Used in this Work

There are various terminologies used throughout this thesis. These terms consist of English, Sindhi, and Urdu language words, and are defined as the following:

1. Honor Killings:

Honor killings are prominent in various countries in the world. In fact, even the West has seen its fair share of this violence as both the United States and Canada have reported cases of honor killings.¹ Aside from the West, reports of honor killings have been prevalent in the Middle East, as well as in South Asia. Some of these countries include Israel, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, India, Bangladesh, and finally, Pakistan.² For the purposes of this paper, I will be alluding to honor violence present in Pakistan. In Pakistan, when a man or a woman are killed due to the claims that he or she was guilty of immoral sexual conduct, such an instance is called an honor killing or honor related violence. A woman primarily is valued for her virginity or sexual modesty and when these are considered to be ruined, then her value decreases in the eyes of the society. There are plenty of other factors as well which influence one to kill another, such as a love marriage, the stigma with divorce, discontentment of a man with his spouse, as well as a woman who has been a victim of rape killed for bringing shame into family. Furthermore, killing for honor means taking the life of a family member for the sake of preserving respectability in the eyes of the society. An opposite of such a situation would entail people not resorting to violence when a case arises in their family structure where honor is being compromised by a family member, such as a desire for love marriage. How a love marriage can bring shame to a family is elaborated further in the paper. If families refuse to take any action against an event which is likely to bring shame to them due to the societal and cultural norms, then they would be called dishonorable by family members and outsiders. Amnesty International defines honor killing practices as “Among the most lethal forces which impact women’s dignity and security are customary practices which aim at preserving female subjugation.”³ Moreover, Amnesty International categorizes honor

¹ Alisa Chang, Alyson Hurt, and Robert Bernincasa, “Honor Killings: A Global View,” *NPR* (NPR), <https://www.npr.org/news/graphics/2009/jan/honor-killings/>

² Chang, Hurt, and Bernincasa, “Honor Killings”.

killings under a different scope. According to the International sphere of human rights, honor killings aimed at women are considered a form of domestic violence, and these range from a woman targeted in the family or in a community.⁴ Due to the nature of these violent acts and as they fall under a private sector rather than a public one, honor killings were regarded as private acts within the family, prior to being given a specific label. As a result, honor killings in their wake were regarded as being an issue of civil rights. However, the United Nations has explicitly acknowledged that honor violence against women is a human rights issue which includes the state's responsibility.⁵ This brings the violence in a broader light and gives a hefty duty to the countries where such practices are prevalent. In addition to this, women are more likely to be victims of honor-related violence as compared to men. A crucial reason for this is because of the status of a woman in a Pakistani society, the cultural significance, and how a female is deemed a weaker sex than a male. Therefore, as a disclaimer, this paper will be focusing on more cases against women rather than men because of the abundant nature of the honor killing cases. However, doing so does not entail diminishing the violence faced by men for the sake of honor in Pakistan. It is also significant to mention that during research for this paper, there were hardly any Pakistani case studies found where a man was killed in the name of honor and the woman was spared. This demonstrates the discrepancy when it comes to punishing a woman for honor as compared to a man for the same honor crime.

2. *Log kya kahenge:*

This famous Urdu phrase literally translates to 'what will people say'. This is an expression which is utilized by families in Pakistan whenever their child is attempting to engage in an action

³ *Pakistan: Violence against Women in the Name of Honor* (New York: Amnesty International, 1999), 2.

⁴ *Pakistan: Violence against Women*, 2.

⁵ *Pakistan: Violence against Women*, 2.

which is likely to bring shame to the entire family. Furthermore, this phrase deeply represents the significance Pakistani's place on the opinions of other people, whether their neighbors, distant family relatives, friends or acquaintances. Women are more likely to hear *log kya kahenge* as compared to men because of the gender differences in the society due to cultural norms, and Nazreen Fazal perfectly captures such a burden on women folk in the society, "they [women] must live their lives being careful that no person has a negative opinion about them...it's an invisible prison made of strangers' character evaluations of you."⁶ Due to such an expectation placed by the society on women in Pakistan, any action taken by them is required to be within the intangible sphere of what is acceptable for a woman to do. As soon as this boundary is broken, then the issue of honor comes into play and families with this fear of 'what will other people say', decide to participate in honor violence for the sake of maintaining respect in the eyes of the society.

3. *Ghairat*:

Often associated with women in a Pakistani society, this term can be rephrased as ideology of honor. This notion is utilized by men prominently in upper Sindh, as well in the rest of the provinces of Pakistan for "personal gains, to bring harm to their enemies, and to get rid of the woman they never wanted in the first place."⁷ Moreover, a woman is often associated with *ghairat* as this word is fragile for her honor. The term is also used to explain the instinct in men, and as a result, *ghairat* "encompasses both violence and a sense of personal violation in its implication".⁸ It is also important to recognize that *ghairat* is hardly ever associated with men.

⁶ Nazreen Fazal, "My Plan For Injecting Some Sense Into 'Log Kya Kahenge?'," (HuffPost India, December 14, 2016), https://www.huffingtonpost.in/nazreen-fazal/my-plan-for-injecting-some-sense-into-log-kya-kahenge-what-wil_a_21625116/)

⁷ Nafisa Shah. *Honor Unmasked: Gender Violence, Law, and Power in Pakistan* (Karachi, Oxford University Press, 2017), 2.

4. *Izzat*:

As defined by Nafisa Shah, *izzat* is a “moderate term.”⁹ By moderate it is implied here that *izzat* can be used for and against women. *Izzat* can be described as one’s honor and respect, and again, this term is associated more with women than men. An example which shows how prominently this is used against women is when a woman is deemed immoral because of allegedly *karo-kari* activities, because in such a case it is common to hear people telling her: ‘she has taken the *izzat* away from her parents’ house’. Additionally, it can also be used in an emotional manner to make the accused feel guilty about her actions, regardless of whether she is the accuser or simply the victim. Oftentimes a wife is recognized as the *izzat* of her husband in Pakistan.

5. *Karo-Kari*:

Karo is a black man and *Kari* is a black woman. This blackness is associated with immoral actions, such as having sexual relations before marriage among a couple, or participating in adultery. In local traditions, black symbolizes “someone who is sinful and morally weak.”¹⁰ Furthermore, it is important to mention that women are the ones who face real consequences as opposed to the men caught in an alleged improper relationship. This can take place as exile or the murder of the woman. Similarly, as Nafisa Shah mentions in her book *Honor Unmasked: Gender Violence, Law, and Power in Pakistan*, the violence associated with blackness and *karo-kari* actions are justified as a “*riwaj* or a *rasam*”, which means a custom or a tradition. Also, these terms are deprived of the “Balochi customs of *siyahkari*” which in other words means “being black”. This *karo-kari* term has the origins of the Baloch honour system, however, at the same it also takes place among the “Samatr who are considered native to Sindh.”¹¹

⁸ Shah, *Honor Unmasked*, 57.

⁹ Shah, *Honor Unmasked*, 17.

¹⁰ Shah, *Honor Unmasked*, 44.

Why do People Kill, the Meaning of Violence, and Other Disguises of Honor Killings

The term violence consists of various connotations and honor killings fall under this category essentially. The word violence is defined by Hughes and Bourgois in their anthology called *Violence in War and Peace: An Anthology* as a “slippery concept” which “gives birth to itself.”¹² The surrounding aspects of violence is what gives its’ true meaning, and in the case of honor-related violence in Pakistan, the mentality, social pressures and cultural norms is what gives birth to violence. In addition to this, violence can be an intangible being and sometimes it is challenging to give this term a meaning that it deserves. This is mentioned by Hughes and Bourgois as they explain the word in more details: “Violence defies easy categorization. It can be everything and nothing; legitimate or illegitimate; visible or invisible; necessary or useless; senseless and gratuitous or utterly rational and strategic.”¹³ Such is true when honor killings are analyzed because every individual case study pertaining to honor violence is different in a unique manner. It is also true that honor-related violence is deeply complex as various factors are involved when an honor killing takes place, such as the motive of the killer, the purpose of the action and how that is related to the social and cultural standards, the social status of the family, the victim’s point of view, and the overall influence of the outsiders. Therefore, for sociologists, professors, writers, and intellectuals from a variety of fields, it is significant to categorize what quality the violence in one’s work falls under. This is crucial especially when the subject matter is of honor-related violence because that understanding of the nature of the violence sets up the fieldwork which is persuaded later then. Additionally, when the researchers of the fields are

¹¹ Shah, *Honor Unmasked*, 43.

¹² Nancy Scheper-Hughes and Philippe Bourgois, editors. *Violence in War and Peace: An Anthology* (John Wiley & Sons), 1.

¹³ Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois, eds., 2.

knowledgeable about violence and the various factors related to it, only then it is possible to demonstrate their findings and research to their audience in a manner that is efficient and easily understood across. In this case, understanding honor-related violence taking place in Pakistan because the matter itself is a complex one.

A vital question that is worth contemplating is, why do people kill? The answer to this question is well being researched in the 21st century as the answer can range from various factors and the answer is different in every respectable case. The response to this question stems from a specific set of biopsychological universals, and these factors consist of “meat protein hunger, to unbalanced sex ratios to faulty genes to male hormones to the corrosive and explosive effects of social shame.”¹⁴ These are just a few components provided by Hughes and Bourgois which can justify human beings wanting to kill one another. However, the anthology of these authors fails to cover honor killings in the form of honor-related violence. Instead, the types of violence covered by the authors range from world wars, guerilla wars, civil wars, revolutionary violence, peacetime crimes, gendered violence, torture and modernity, and ethnographic witnessing. Even though a case can be formulated justifying that honor killings of Pakistan fall under the category of gendered violence, however, such a case is not credible. Both men and women are the victims of honor-related violence, hence the issue at hand is not as simplistic to be described as gendered violence. How men become victims of honor killings when the social and cultural standards favor them is explained in the next sections. Furthermore, the book by Hughes and Bourgois focuses on violence in war and peace, yet it does not focus on honor killings and violence. This is unfortunate as this lack of focus could potentially portray two scenarios. Firstly, lack of research in the discipline of honor-related violence could be the result

¹⁴ Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois, eds., 4.

of such a violence not being explained in the anthology. Another reason could be the authors' immediate bias towards certain countries and their lack of exposure to issues mainly prominent in the East, which could be interpreted as inessential for Western authors.

Honor violence can be described in various manners but it all interprets to a single fundamental meaning. The term is defined by Nafisa Shah as “aggressive men ready to defend their honour... while women are shown as part of the patrimony, along with other possessions, that men must defend.”¹⁵ In other words, for men, women are their property when these women are their wives, sisters, daughters, and in the most extreme cases, mothers. This results in women being “paradoxically both the victims and the cause of violence in the masculinist worldview.”¹⁶ Women are blamed for bringing violence to themselves and this can be depicted as the females of the society deemed as the weaker sex, who are unable to protect themselves and are easily able to fall into temptation with other men. Hence, the men justify killing off their women for their nature and because they look at themselves as the guardians of the women, doing what they should to protect their honor as well as the honor of the family. As for the men who become victims of such a violence, they do so when they are caught in an improper affair with a woman. Moreover, these men are only killed on certain occasions and the ultimate blame is placed on the woman for alluring the man in the first place and bringing shame to her family. To restate, the woman inevitably remains at fault in the eyes of the society.

There are other disguises of honor killings present in a Pakistani society. This violence is carried out on the flimsiest of grounds, such as when a wife does not serve a meal to her husband in a timely manner or even when the husband has a doubt that his wife is having an affair with another man.¹⁷ Men can get away with such arbitrary and foolish justifications by murdering their

¹⁵ Shah, *Honor Unmasked*, 15.

¹⁶ Shah, *Honor Unmasked*, 18.

wives because their claim is that they did it for honor. Similarly, according to Amnesty International, the law protects these murderers because the killings are done under the name of *ghairat*, even when it is impossible to know what is going on behind closed doors in a marital relationship. The law related to honor violence is discussed further in the paper.

Origin of Honor Killings

The history of honor killings and how they were implemented in a Pakistani society is crucial to understand. The earliest roots of laws pertaining to honor killings can be found in British colonial rule. For instance, in the year 1835, the British established a law commission to oversee the issue of honor killings.¹⁸ This commission predominantly took the side of the man who was dishonored by his wife, daughter, mother, or sister, and decided if a killing is done under such a sentiment, then the killer should be charged with manslaughter but to a lesser degree. In other words, killing the women of one's family for the name of honor was justified under the colonial British rule. However, these rulings were overturned by the emerging 1990 Islamic codes which implemented three factors of Islamic law in society: "*wali* (always male; heirs, brother, or father of the victim), *qisas* (retaliation/punishment) and *diyat* (blood money/forgiveness), into the Penal Code."¹⁹ The role of the *wali* is crucial as it plays the role of deciding the fate of the murdered involved in honor killings. Moreover, when it comes to intentional murder, the *wali* holds the authority of "voluntarily and without duress, waiving the right of *qisas* (punishment for causing bodily injuries or a death)" and when the *wali* decides to forgive or forego the killer and let him go free, then he has the right to obtain *diyat*, which is in the form of "compensation payable to him by the offender."²⁰ This code ultimately sheds light on

¹⁷ *Pakistan: Violence against Women*, 5.

¹⁸ Hanley, "Girls in the River."

¹⁹ Hanley, "Girls in the River."

the ultimate power that the man holds, whether he is a brother, a father, a son or the husband of the victim of honor killings. In addition to this, it is also significant to note that men killed for the sake of honor was non-existent in the mid 1800's under British colonial rule, as there was no mention of how to deal with the family of a man who was a victim of honor killing. Also, the penal code which recognized women as the victims of honor-related violence, gave the male members of the woman's nuclear family who was killed, a right to obtain money from the offender of the crime. This translates into the nuclear family pardoning the murderer and as a result, walking away free. Such a code translates into monetary compensation being equal to a woman's life. This penal code was soon altered when Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif came into power in Pakistan.

The new passage of the 2016 Criminal Law Amendment was initiated under the former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif. This amendment was an attempt to minimize the legal loopholes which were present otherwise in the legal system for killers, especially honor killers to go unpunished. Likewise, the new amendment introduced a new term into Pakistani legal structure, called *fasad-fil-arz* which can be defined as "committing a crime in the name or on the pretext of honour."²¹ As a result, the killers of women in honor violence were to be charged with life imprisonment, or death sentence. Such a ruling also meant that besides the exception of a *wali* accepting *diyat* for a murder of a loved one, no other condition would be viable for a killer to go unpunished. However, even though this amendment was a great start to combatting the predominant issue of honor killings in Pakistan, it did not provide any permanent solutions as honor killings are still on the rise.²² For instance, the honor avenging killers are not threatened by

²⁰ Hanley, "Girls in the River."

²¹ Hanley, "Girls in the River."

²² Hanley, "Girls in the River."

the strict punishments implemented by the 2016 amendment. Additionally, it is up to the judge's discretion to decide whether a murder was committed on the basis of honor or not and whether to charge the perpetrator with the death penalty or life in prison. The killer can also justify his killing on another motive than honor and can receive a lighter prison sentence.²³ Therefore, there is a grey area prevalent in this new 2016 amendment as uncertainty is present. Also, the prejudice from a judge can also influence the decision when it comes to punishing the culprit involved in honor killings.

How Honor Killings are Implemented Within a Country, its' Religion, and Culture

In the Pakistani culture, a son is desired more than a daughter. There are various reasons for such a want for a son among Pakistani parents. Firstly, a daughter being born in a family indicates that she will depart one day when she gets married and bear children of a different family name. Therefore, the family legacy of her parents cannot be passed through a daughter. A son on the other hand, holds the ability to produce offspring and extend the family tree when he gets married. Another reason why sons are given more salience as compared to daughters is because of the responsibility upon the sons to take care of their parents at their old age. Parents depend on their sons for support when they reach a tender age, and daughters are seldom bestowed these responsibilities because they are required to get married, birth children, and live a separate life with their husband. Due to these two factors which are purely cultural, families in Pakistan are ecstatic when a baby boy is born, and nonchalant or even sometimes worried when a baby girl is born. Moreover, this connects to honor killings as many females become victims of such violence as compared to males, and the reason for this is prevalent because of the two reasons mentioned above. The loss of a son is deemed more tragic as compared to a daughters.

²³ Hanley, "Girls in the River."

Only in a handful of cases are men killed for honor, and to be precise, according to the Asian Human Rights Commission, “70 percent of the victims of honor killings are women, while the remaining 30 percent are men.”²⁴ These highly disproportionate numbers reveal again the fragile state of being a woman in Pakistan.

A woman poet named Attiya Dawood expressed the sentiment of being a woman where the fear of bringing shame to one’s family is always hanging above one’s head. She quoted a 14-year old girl in a small sindhi village:

What is there to my body?...is it studded with diamonds or pearls? My brother’s eyes forever follow me. My father’s gaze guards me all the time, stern, angry...Then why do they make me labour in the fields? Why don’t they do all the work by themselves? We, the women, work in the fields all day long... not knowing who may cast a look upon us.

We stand accused and condemned to be declared *kari* and murdered.²⁵

This quotation by Dawood sheds light on the burden women folk have to deal with in society essentially. Even when a woman is working out in the fields and providing food for family, she remains susceptible to becoming a victim of honor killing. Also, the primary fear here is of these women laboring in the open fields all day and being seen with an unknown man by the onlookers. If she is seen even conversing with a man, or even giving directions to a passerby, the men of the family are quick to come to conclusions and regard the woman as immoral. This demonstrates that truth has no role when it comes to proving a woman’s guilt. Also, rumor also gives birth to tensions in families which is discussed later in the paper.

²⁴ “Responses to Information Requests,” Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, (June 25, 2018, <https://www.irb-cisr.gc.ca/en/country-information/rir/Pages/index.aspx?doc=454348&pls=1>)

²⁵ *Pakistan: Violence against Women*, 13.

Honor killings or expulsion from the community is practiced by the members of the close family, such as in the case of a woman, the brothers, husbands, or fathers. There are only a few cases where a stranger is accused of killing for honor, and in these cases, men become the victims of the killing. This demonstrates that a family which is considered a safe unit, is most of the times behind the murder of women who they call their own. Additionally, it is significant to note that the pollution related to the blackness in *Karo-Kari* cases is connected with bodily metaphors, therefore, the killings are used as a cleansing ritual. An example of such a case was found in Sindh, when a woman assisted in the killing of her daughter. Upon being interviewed, this mother asserted that “It is better to chop off a rotten finger”²⁶ implying that chopping the finger off will retain the purity of the rest of the body. This reveals that family members with such a mentality hold this notion that killing one member of a family is justified when this member is rotten, as doing so makes the rest of the family pure. Now would the son be killed if he was found to be rotten? Not likely because gender discrepancies are prominent among families of Pakistan. Sons are given more significance as compared to daughters, and women are also associated with *ghairat* more than men. Furthermore, as Nafisa Shah emphasizes constantly, it is crucial to understand that both *karo-kari* and *ghairat* are used as masks in front of conflicts,²⁷ because society is less inclined to raise questions or suspicions when a man or a woman is killed for the sake of *ghairat*. In other words, killing for the sake of *ghairat* is deemed normal and even justified by some in Pakistan, which is an unfortunate and rigid mindset of the people.

The highest empirical data found on the number of honor killings, in the form of *karo-kari* deaths in Pakistan is prevalent in Upper Sindh, where approximately “two hundred men, women, as well as children are killed each year”,²⁸ resulting in an estimation of a quarter of the

²⁶ Shah, *Honor Unmasked*, 45.

²⁷ Shah, *Honor Unmasked*, 7.

entire Pakistani population. There are various elements for such an astonishingly high number of deaths caused by honor killings, one of these being the social structure of Pakistan as a country itself. To illustrate, in Pakistan the “state power shapes the cultural forms of violence.”²⁹ There is a lack of consensus between the affluent and the poor populations, hence resulting in people with money and status dictating the law and justice procedures. This power is recognized in the form of a powerful “corporate-like military establishment” with the support of a “self-seeking elite.”³⁰ Furthermore, these two groups are then involved with the court system and most importantly, the judiciary, which results in them having influence over the legal orders and claims. In contrast, the poor citizens of Pakistan who remain the majority, do not hold the privilege of deciding what is moral and immoral in the society. It is significant to point out that status, wealth as well as networking with successful and rich individuals in Pakistan is critical to influence the legal proceedings of the country.

The structure of Pakistan and how that relates to a woman’s role in the country with the family, as well as the state plays a vital role in honor-related violence. The personal and family connections in the country form the basis of power and privilege. Additionally, the state plays two roles when it comes to the relationship with the families in Pakistan. Firstly, the reproductive power of the Pakistani women is protected by the state and consequently, not a single member of the family nor the society has power over a woman’s body.³¹ This demonstrates that in regards to abortion or reproductive rights, Pakistani women hold the autonomy and such is protected by the state. Also, this portrays that coercion cannot be used by the family of the women when it comes to their reproductive decisions. The second role the state plays via relationships with families in

²⁸ Shah, *Honor Unmasked*, 3.

²⁹ Shah, *Honor Unmasked*, 3.

³⁰ Shah, *Honor Unmasked*, 11.

³¹ Shah, *Honor Unmasked*, 13.

society is when it comes to the matters of life and death. Upon a woman's death, her immediate family comes into play and they have the authority to take the legal matters in their hands and "punish or condone the perpetrators"³² responsible for her death. This is the complete opposite of the first role the state plays and calls for the sovereignty of the family when it comes to the honor killings. The primary choice of the family to kill or let the women in their households live who are branded to be *kari*, is the decision the state cannot implement upon the citizens of Pakistan.

Pakistan is a country which has a social structure of close-knit communities. Such a close network of families is essentially responsible for giving birth to honor killings. The families living in the neighborhood, meet with each other frequently and oftentimes the outsiders are considered one's own. An example of this is kids calling a neighborhood woman their aunt or *khala* which means maternal aunt. Additionally, both the paternal and maternal sides of a family, such as uncles, aunts and cousins, are often close with the family on the basis of attending both celebratory and sorrowful events. Such close proximity with one's extended family and neighbours results in one's family issues no longer remaining private. Therefore, due to such closeness, sharing of information, and the privacy within a home opened to outsiders, unwanted interference starts being prevalent. This unfortunate reality can be in the form of marital affairs also in the knowledge of the entire extended family, whether the husband's, the wife's, or both, and also within the neighbor's ears. Due to this, many male relatives, even from the extended family of a woman who is deemed a *kari*, consider their responsibility to interfere in between marital affairs. In the worst-case scenario, these same male relatives pass the judgment to kill the woman in the name of honor. This judgment is passed primarily because when a woman is considered a *kari*, she is not only ruining her husband's honor, rather the entire families.³³

³² Shah, *Honor Unmasked*, 13.

Therefore, the close-knit societal structure of Pakistani families is what influences more cases of honor killings, as the privacy as well as the ability of a married couple to handle their own issues is exploited, and the decisions for them are made by outsiders.

The relationship between Islam and the practice of *karo-kari* killings is a significant one to understand. It can be easily assumed that due to the high number of honor violence in Pakistan, and because the country is predominantly Muslim, the religion provides a scapegoat for the perpetrators of honor killings. This misconception needs to be challenged, and Niaz Muhammad does so by asserting, “masses of Pakistan have their emotional attachment with Islam, rather than this attachment being logical and rational.”³⁴ This results in the citizens making irrational and often dangerous decisions on the basis of Islam due to a lack of understanding, when in reality Islam forbids honor related violence. Such is also supported by Nafisa Shah as she endorses that Muslims who are well versed in Islam are not proponents of honor killings, “*Karo-kari* is a practice that is a product of ignorance and lack of Islamic knowledge.”³⁵ Furthermore, the Quran and the Sunnah both are strong opposers of honor killings as violence is instructed to be avoided as much as possible. As for the illicit affairs and sexual relations outside of marriage which is the common basis for murder in the name of honor, such interactions need to be proved in order to put the blame on the guilty. Therefore, under the Quranic jurisprudence, four Muslim witnesses are required to witness the sexual act taking place in order to maintain a strong case against the *karo* or the *kari*.³⁶ There are further requirements and expectations from these four eye witnesses which are the following:

³³ *Pakistan: Violence against Women*, 50.

³⁴ Niaz Muhammad, et al. “Honor Killing in Pakistan: An Islamic Perspective.” *Asian Social Science*, (29 July 2012, www.ccsenet.org/journal/index.php/ass/article/view/19336.)

³⁵ Shah, *Honor Unmasked*, 15.

³⁶ Muhammed, et al. “Honor Killing in Pakistan.”

The witnesses should be reliable according to the Islamic law of evidence, which requires that they should not have been proved to be false witnesses on any previous occasion. They should not be dishonest, they should not be previous convicts, and there should be no proof of their having any personal grudge against the accused. In short, no one can be punished on the basis of unreliable evidence.³⁷ In addition to this, the witnesses should give evidence to the effect that they saw the man and woman in the actual state of intercourse i.e. the union was complete. Finally, the witnesses should be unanimous in regard to the time, the place and the persons committing the crime.³⁸ Any difference in these basis fundamentals will nullify the testimony of the witnesses, revealing them to be liars. These strict regulations are set in place in order to challenge the convictions raised by individuals among the Muslim community and to prohibit them from turning into each other's' enemies. It is vital to recognize that without any evidence, a person cannot be convicted of adultery or engaging in sexual relationships out of wedlock, no matter how ideal a case looks like. This is portrayed by Prophet Muhammad (SAW) as he strictly instructed his followers of the Islamic faith that the Islamic government is not permitted to act in any manner against its' citizen for adultery unless it is fully proved.³⁹ Under these lenses, if there are such strong provisions in Islam against honor killings and proving premarital sexual affairs or adultery, how can a family member killing one of his/her own kin justify killing for honor? This is a crucial question which reinforces the fact that people who participate in honor violence are ignorant when it comes to religion, or they are well-versed religiously, yet still fail to do what is instructed by Islam deliberately.

³⁷ Muhammed, et al. "Honor Killing in Pakistan."

³⁸ Muhammed, et al. "Honor Killing in Pakistan."

³⁹ Muhammed, et al. "Honor Killing in Pakistan."

Religion of a state can create a conflict between culture and traditions of an area. Traditions are utilized by families in Pakistan to justify honor killings as these practices are derived from the tribal areas of Pakistan, which are often in conflict with Islam as well as liberal democracy.⁴⁰ As a result, women are stuck between religious and traditional obligations and have to make a rational choice of choosing one out of the two. However, it is also crucial to identify that honor killings are not only confined to rural areas as they are also prominent in urban settings, though in less numbers when compared. It is a tragic reality that even educated families in Pakistan take part in honor killings. Therefore, being educated does not prevent one from practicing honor killings. An example of this is provided by Kathy Gannon in a news article, which covers a news story from Pakistan of Samia Sarwar. Samia's mother was a doctor and she was married to a doctor named Imran in 1989 in Peshawar by her parent's will. Imran was abusive to Samia and even pushed her down the stairs when she was pregnant with their second child.⁴¹ The mother of two pleaded with her parents to get a divorce from her abusive husband but to no avail. After her parents approved of Samia living separately from her husband in their house, Samia planned on getting a divorce finally. Her mother reluctantly obeyed and on April 6, 1999, at the lawyer's office where Samia was waiting for her mother with whom she was planning on finalizing the divorce, a hitman shot Samia two times: one on her head and one in her chest.⁴² This hitman was hired by Samia's mother, and after this event, no questions were raised about Samia's murder from the hands of her own mother. Moreover, her mother did not even look back once when her daughter Samia dropped to the floor. The police did bring in

⁴⁰ *Pakistan: Violence against Women*, 4.

⁴¹ Kathy Gannon. "A Woman Sacrificed for Honor of Her Family." *Los Angeles Times*, (Los Angeles Times, (9 July 2000, www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-2000-jul-09-mn-50070-story.html.)

⁴² Gannon, "A Woman Sacrificed for Honor."

charges against Samia's mother but no formal charges were ever convicted. This entire event breaks stereotypes of one being uneducated in order to participate in honor killings. Furthermore, the family's decision to kill Samia was supported by the radical religious group in Pakistan, as they talked about the family's honor being tarnished by Samia because she decided on pursuing a divorce from her husband.⁴³ This reiterates the claim that religion can create tensions between what is culturally accurate and what is religiously accurate, and in Samia's case, it was believed to be the cultural norm to kill her off rather than Islam permitting for her killing. In addition to this, the issue of 'what will other people say' comes into play in this event, as it would be the assumption that Samia's parents would have to answer to the society about why Samia decided to leave her husband. Certain questions would be raised such as why Samia was not able to live with her husband, besides the obvious that her husband was abusive. Another question would be that Samia's mother did not raise and educate her well in order for her to transit properly in her married life. To prevent the society from pointing fingers at Samia or her parents, Samia's mother decided to kill her off to protect herself and her husband.

The *Karo-Kari* Custom in Sindh, the Status of a Woman, and the Outsiders' Influence in Pakistan

In the *karo-kari* custom when a couple is found together in blackness, they are killed together. However, if one of them escapes, then the situation is different. For instance, when a man flees and the woman is caught, then she is killed, taken to a mediator, or "married off to someone in a far-off village" which is a form of her banishment from the community.⁴⁴ On the other hand, when a woman flees and the man is caught, then he is strictly banished from the community, or in rare cases, killed by the woman's family. This illustrates the notion that male

⁴³ Gannon, "A Woman Sacrificed for Honor."

⁴⁴ Shah, *Honor Unmasked*, 45.

victims of honor killings are mostly killed by the hands of strangers, rather than their own family. Also, these forms of punishment are the most prevalent among the communities in Upper Sindh. When the man and the woman are caught separately and their punishment is set to be death, both of accused are murdered in a public place while doing everyday chores, such as working in the fields, fetching water, or even washing clothes.⁴⁵ This is done deliberately as executing an individual in a public space where the entire community can witness the act has significant consequences. Firstly, the killing serves as a warning for the community and attempts to stop men and women from engaging in *karo-kari*. Secondly, there is also a fear factor involved in public execution as the witnesses who see the honor killings are more hesitant to inform the local authorities or the police about the deaths of the victims when asked, for the fear of making an enemy out of the killer. Therefore, many culprits involved in honor-violence killing walk free without facing any real consequences.

The victims of *karo-kari* are called out by the alleged perpetrators beforehand in public to give them legitimacy for the murder they are about to commit, and to provide them with a witness space. Phrases such as “*kari*” are yelled at for black women and “*assanjo karo a!*” which translates into ‘he is our black man’ for men publicly.⁴⁶ This in a manner sets the stage for the killing to take place as the killers want the bystanders to see they are doing a moral deed by eradicating ‘blackness’. Additionally, these men on the hunt for the *karo-kari* victims carry weapons with them sometimes, such as an axe, rifles, or even guns which can be interpreted as intimidating people around them. According to the police data from the Khairpur city of Sindh, the majority of the *karo-kari* deaths were revealed to be a result of “gunshot injuries, followed by pistol shots, strangulation, and even beating with batons”.⁴⁷ It is also significant to emphasize

⁴⁵ Shah, *Honor Unmasked*, 46.

⁴⁶ Shah, *Honor Unmasked*, 46.

here that these violent forms of killing are done in the open for the people to see, as well as for the victim to be humiliated for their actions before he/she is killed in cold blood. Furthermore, the practice of executing victims of honor violence in public places can be seen as a norm after a while when the tragic practice has been repeated several times. Therefore, the local people are then presumably used to seeing such violence taking place and as a result, are inclined to not raise any moral questions against such practice once it becomes a part of the routine for them.

There is a discrepancy evident among *karo* men and *kari* women when both cases are looked individually. Women are usually targeted first before the men are killed in the name of honor. However, when a situation arises where the *karo* man is killed first before the woman, that can result into a bloodshed by his relatives against the perpetrator as they are reluctant to accept the verdict of the killing.⁴⁸ This demonstrates that in some cases, men are never seen as guilty and as a result, some are let go. Thus, the blame automatically falls upon the women. Furthermore, Nafisa Shah raises a crucial question about this disaccord, asking, “If the custom of *karo-kari* states both men and women be killed, why are [*karo*] men often let go?”,⁴⁹ after they pay a substantial fine for taking the *ghairat* of another family’s woman. Such a concept reinforces the idea of women as promiscuous beings, as the conceived notion is that they are more prone to falling into immorality and seducing men into forming sexual relationships with them, which was mentioned earlier as well. On the other hand, men are then deemed as innocent and victims who are lured into traps by women because of their bewitching nature.

Women in some families in Pakistan are regarded as a weaker sex and therefore, face violence in various stages of life. This consists of the time period when a woman is a daughter in

⁴⁷ Shah, *Honor Unmasked*, 48.

⁴⁸ Shah, *Honor Unmasked*, 78.

⁴⁹ Shah, *Honor Unmasked*, 75.

her father's house, and the father or the brother can become a killer in the face of *ghairat*. Furthermore, when the woman gets married and goes into her in-laws, the husband or in some rare cases, the father-in-law becomes the perpetrator. Finally, when the woman is a mother, her son can stand up to her and kill her in the face of *ghairat*.⁵⁰ Such are tragedies experienced by some women in the Pakistani society, which can also be called an inevitable cycle of violence. Moreover, it is also crucial to understand the identities of the killers who shed blood in the name of honor killing. After looking at empirical data collected based on relationships, among the sixty cases that were looked at in the form of samples, about 95% of the murdered women were killed by close relatives, the same ones responsible for their protection and custody.⁵¹ To be more precise, the overwhelming majority of women killed in the name of honor are murdered either by their fathers, brothers, husbands, and sons. All of these are considered bonds which are special and near to a woman's heart, yet being killed by one is unspeakable. On the other hand, the men who are victims of honor killings are killed by the hands of either distant relatives or unrelated persons.⁵² Again there is a discrepancy seen when it comes to the gender dynamics. It is clearly distinct that the society does not raise concerns over a woman being murdered for honor, again reinforcing the fragility of being a female in Pakistan. Yet, when a man comes in the picture, the killing is done by the non-related persons which is later avenged by the family of the male victim.

Rumor plays a major role when *ghairat* comes into play, regardless of whether what is being told has any truth to it or not. The individuals who are responsible for *karo-kari* killings claim that they have seen the adulterers together. However, this is not even remotely true as

⁵⁰ Shah, *Honor Unmasked*, 130-131.

⁵¹ Shah, *Honor Unmasked*, 128.

⁵² Shah, *Honor Unmasked*, 129.

when they are questioned for further details, these perpetrators mention that it was in fact someone else who saw the victims together and informed the one who is questioned.⁵³ Additionally, according to the religious doctrine, the witness who claims he/she saw the adulterers together holds great responsibility to fulfill certain requirements in order to be called truthful, which were mentioned previously. A rumor has the power to create doubt in the heart of a man, no matter if it holds truth or not. Even if his wife, daughter, or sister is then seen simply conversing with another man, she is killed for this minute action because the overwhelming suspicion is that the woman might be involved in an affair with the outsider. Furthermore, the man responsible for the blood in his hands when asked, can simply justify his killing of the victims by mentioning a “public insult hurled at him by his peers”⁵⁴ when he did not take any action. This demonstrates the role of the society and how the decisions based off of outsider’s opinions can lead to someone being pressured into killing one’s own family. Also, rationality is not prominent here because when the killer has made the decision of murdering for the sake of honor, it is purely based on, ‘what would other people say if I do not kill?’

Various Case Studies Related to Men, Women, and Honor Killings

This toxic mentality of ‘*log kya kahenge*’, what will people say gives a man, or a woman a reason to kill from their kin. This is prominent as when a man does not do anything in the face of *ghairat*, he is called *beghairat* which means without a nose, and unless he can prove to the society that he can “retrieve his honour by avenging it” the man does not rest.⁵⁵ Again, this connects to the influence of the outside people and the interference of them in the private matters of a family. Such is the main thesis of this paper and also extremely crucial to identify and

⁵³ Shah, *Honor Unmasked*, 58.

⁵⁴ Shah, *Honor Unmasked*, 59.

⁵⁵ Shah, *Honor Unmasked*, 59.

converse about because this is still prevalent among many families in Pakistan. Like mentioned previously, under this spell of *log kya kahenge*, fathers, mothers, brothers, husbands, sons, and father-in-laws seem to forget about what is moral, forget what the religion instructs, and instead kill the women of their families because not doing so would only bring shame to them.

Moreover, this notion is largely portrayed in the documentary “Girls in the River: Pakistan’s Struggle to End Honour killings” which is directed by Sharmeen Obaid-Chinoy. The documentary sheds light on a love marriage between Saba who is 19, and Qaiser who is 21.⁵⁶ Qaiser belongs to a family of a low socio-economic status as compared to Saba, therefore, he is disliked by Saba’s father and her uncle. The young couple still proceed to get married at a local courthouse against the wishes of Saba’s family, and soon Saba faces the consequences of taking such a brazen step. Her father and uncle pick Saba up from her in-laws just hours after her marriage with Qaiser without informing her about their intentions. Furthermore, they swear on the Quran that they would not hurt her. This promise is soon broken as both her father and uncle take Saba to a riverside and beat her up for marrying Qaiser. In an attempt to kill her, the father shoots Saba and then dumps her in a bag which he throws in the water.⁵⁷ Such an action is taken by Saba’s father because he feels like the honor of his family has been snatched away, when Saba decided to marry a person she loved without the will of her parents. By a miracle however, the gunshot wound is not deadly and Saba comes out of the bag and asks for help from the first local person she encounters.

Saba is taken to a hospital after surviving her killing, where she goes into hiding. She reports the incident to the police which results in her uncle and father being sent to prison.

⁵⁶ Paul Hanley. “Girls in the River: Pakistan's Struggle to End Honour Killings.” *International Policy Digest*, (19 Sept. 2018, intpolicydigest.org/2018/09/19/girls-in-the-river-pakistan-s-struggle-to-end-honour-killings/)

⁵⁷ Hanley, “Girls in the River.”

However, both men are not seen even remotely shameful for their actions, and when asked by the reporter about the incident, Saba's father states, "After this incident, everyone says I am more respected."⁵⁸ This depicts how much of the opinions of other people impact families in a Pakistani society, because if Saba's father did not take such a violent action to 'avenge' honor for his family, people of the community would have called him degrading names, all because his daughter decided to marry against the wishes of her parents and pursue a love marriage. Therefore, in the pressure of *log kya kahenge*, men of the families are often pressured to kill their women for the sake of pleasing the people around them and maintaining a facade of honor.

The honor killing story of Saba is one of the rarest ones because she is a survivor. Her life story demonstrates the brutal mindsets of family members who are willing to bear arms when a woman of their family decides to marry for love. In addition to this, Saba's uncle and father are forgiven by her due to the pressure of her in-laws and the community to maintain peace.⁵⁹ The primary claim is that her father needs to provide for Saba's family as a sole breadwinner, and keeping him in jail would bring hardship to Saba's nuclear family. Also, the forgiveness law of Pakistan which permits the family of the victim of the honor violence to forgive the perpetrator, allows many men to walk free and avoid punishment for honor killings.⁶⁰ This allowed Saba's uncle and father's acquittal without facing any consequences for their actions. Moreover, Saba is now forgiven by her family and is living peacefully with her son and husband with her in-laws. Unfortunately, such is not always a reality for a couple who chooses to marry for love, as the fear

⁵⁸ Hanley, "Girls in the River."

⁵⁹ Hanley, "Girls in the River."

⁶⁰ Bina Shah. "Pakistan's Honor-Killing Law Isn't Enough." *The New York Times*, (The New York Times, 27 Oct. 2016, www.nytimes.com/2016/10/28/opinion/pakistans-onor-killing-law-isnt-enough.html.)

of their family finding and killing them is persistent, even long after they have started a life with each other.

Love marriages among some conservative families in Pakistan are a taboo. A woman wanting to marry a man she loves, for example, in Sindh will be deemed shameless because love marriages are regarded as a form of ruining a family's reputation. As marriages in most cases are done by the consent of two families rather than the man and the woman to be wed, when a woman voices her choice of a husband, it is not seen with the most favorable mindset. In addition to this, because of this radical way of thinking and the social stigma associated with love marriages, brides often run away from their homes in pursuit of their new married life. This is a form of liberation for women as voiced by Nafisa Shah, because such an action gives a woman "full autonomy and positions from where they can negotiate their status."⁶¹ However, even after women successfully run away from their parents houses and marry the person of their choice, they are still not too distant from the anger of their parents. In an effort to get their daughter back, the families of the runaway bride would file a report for their 'kidnapped' daughter and as a result, the daughter would be forcibly brought back home and the husband would be labelled as the 'kidnapper.'⁶² A demonstration of such an event can be seen in the following case. Mohammad Karim contacted the author Nafisa Shah in October 2004 regarding the kidnapping of his wife, Salma. At the same time, Salma sent a letter by mail to the author's office which claimed:

I am confined...in order to send this letter to you, I am giving my husband's wedding gift, a gold earring, to a greedy man and sending this letter with him...I have married with my own choice in Larkano courts, then I told my father on the phone that I am a married

⁶¹ Shah, *Honor Unmasked*, 276.

⁶² Shah, *Honor Unmasked*, 278.

woman...Despite which my father lodged a complaint of kidnapping with the police and had my husband and my father-in-law arrested for one month...we decided to come to Khairpur and give ourselves up to the police. Then I gave a statement...after that my uncle and my father swore by the Quran that they will by the evening, hand me back respectfully to my husband...It is now 22 days since and I really don't know where I am and where I have been confined. I have been drugged and kept in some other place.

Sister, for God's sake, help me.⁶³

After this statement, Karim attempted to appeal his case in front of courts but to no avail. After several weeks, Karim contacted Nafisa Shah again and informed her that “Salma had changed her statement under Section 164 before the session judge, and was now saying that she did not know any Mohammad Karim.”⁶⁴ In this situation, it can be inferred that Salma was killed by her family. Her family first took Salma away from her husband who was her legal partner, and then killed her for deciding to marry by her own choice. There is a stigmatization associated with a woman wanting to marry a man she loves to the point that she gets killed for such an action by her family. In fact, couples who elope in love marriages are declared black and pursued, even decades after running away and marrying in courts, as raised by Nafisa Shah: “There are numerous cases where women were killed with their husbands, and at other times, with their children.”⁶⁵ This is an unfortunate yet true reality for some of the women living in Pakistan, even today who live their lives in fear of being killed by their parents.

Women who are victims of rape in Pakistan are also considered *Kari*. The notion is similar to victim blaming here in the West when the victim of a rape is blamed for the violence

⁶³ Shah, *Honor Unmasked*, 279-80.

⁶⁴ Shah, *Honor Unmasked*, 280.

⁶⁵ Shah, *Honor Unmasked*, 281.

against her. Furthermore, consent or lack of consent is irrelevant to the guardians of honor, which is emphasized when a woman is raped, she is blamed for ruining the honor of the family.⁶⁶ Rather than pointing fingers at the men who sexually exploit women, the highly irrational persons of the society believe that, “a woman raped shames the community.”⁶⁷ An example of such a case can be demonstrated by the brutal killing of a 16-year old mentally retarded girl named Lal Jamilla Mandokhel:

In March 1999, she [Lal] was raped by a junior clerk of the local government department of agriculture in North West Frontier Province, when he took her to a hotel. A complaint of the incident was filed by the uncle of the girl to the police who did arrest the rapist, yet also handed the girl to her tribe, which was known as the Mazuzi in the Khurran Agency located at a tribal area. The tribal group decided that Lal has brought shame to her family and as a result, she was shot dead in front of the tribal gathering. The rapist was detained by the police and he was asked to be handed over to the tribesmen for his execution, according to the tribal laws. However, the rapist was deemed worthy of police protection and as a result, never faced any charges of execution by the tribesmen of Lal.⁶⁸

This gruesome incident sheds light on the lack of sensitivity to the topic of mental disability and the girl being accused of bringing shame, even when it was evident that she was unable to even comprehend her situation and was taken advantage of by the junior clerk. The lack of understanding of mental disability is a separate issue for the Pakistanis to be accustomed to. However, in Lal’s situation here, she was raped by a person of authority and then he was released because of his affiliations with the police. Why did Lal’s tribe let her criminal roam free

⁶⁶ *Pakistan: Violence against Women*, 22.

⁶⁷ Nafisa Shah. *A Story in Black: Karo Kari Killings in Upper Sindh*, (Reuter Foundation Paper 100, Oxford, 1998), 56.

⁶⁸ *Pakistan: Violence against Women*, 22.

so easily when she herself was killed for ruining the honor of her tribe by being sexually exploited? Here again the discrepancy issue takes place where men are often let free without facing any consequences as compared to the women, and in this case, a 16-year old innocent girl who was mentally unable to make sense of her surroundings.

The Police's Role in Honor Killings and the Various Forms this Violence Can Take

How does the police authority come into practice in response to honor killings? If the police are supposed to protect the citizens of a country against harm, then why do honor killings remain a vital problem in Pakistan? In fact, there are four possible outcomes or legal courses for registration of the offence by the communities where the *karo-kari* took place. The following are prominent in Upper Sindh:

1. When the woman is killed, “the first course for registration becomes applicable”, [reported by family of the accused]⁶⁹
2. The killer/perpetrator reports the incident as a form of confession in hopes for a lesser charge
3. A complaint might be registered by an individual who is related to the *karo* killed
4. Communities hide the death and the police only register the case once they learn about it.

Unfortunately, this practice is common in the family of the *kari* woman killed, as her family members claim that she died of an ‘illness’⁷⁰

It is important to understand that in all four of the above-mentioned factors, the police force depends on the community for evidence and it is also helpful to have a complainer leading the case,⁷¹as mentioned by Nafisa Shah. Hence, the evidence can be faulty or even completely

⁶⁹ Shah, *Honor Unmasked*, 200.

⁷⁰ Shah, *Honor Unmasked*, 201.

⁷¹ Shah, *Honor Unmasked*, 202.

formulated by the accused family in order to save themselves from any jail time. It is also significant to recognize that the majority of the families involved in honor killings use the fourth reason to inform the police that the women of their family died due to an illness. Also, some families use bribery to save themselves from being incarcerated which is a common yet lethal practice in Pakistan. Doing so creates corruption in the entire justice system which consists of the police forces, as well as judges passing sentences to criminals. Therefore, to catch and punish the real perpetrators of the honor killings becomes a demanding case.

Pakistan's Duty in the Face of Honor Violence

Pakistan holds obligations under international law to provide a safe haven for the citizens and protect them against violence, specifically against the face of gender inequality. This is significant because "Pakistan ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in 1996"⁷² which endorses protection of women against men in the society. To elaborate further, under this doctrine, Pakistan vows to protect women on the basis of gender equality and such should be strictly imposed by the means of legislative measures and by any other means necessary to erase discrimination against women in the hands of a man. A major example of this discrimination taking place is the honor killings of women by the hands of men, and sometimes women. Additionally, Articles 15 and 16 of the CEDAW calls for the assurance of women to be safe, secure, and ultimately hold the right to "freely choose a spouse and enter into marriage."⁷³ Hence, under these doctrines, Pakistan holds the moral as well as legal responsibility to provide legal protection to women and equate them as equal as men in the society. For such to become a reality, the country first needs to find means to

⁷² Hanley, "Girls in the River."

⁷³ Hanley, "Girls in the River."

eradicate violence in the form of honor killings which targets women unfairly, in order to hold itself as a country fulfilling its' moral, as well as ethical responsibilities.

Some Solutions for Pakistan to Combat Honor Killings

The role of Pakistan as a country in the face of honor related violence calls upon steps that should be taken to decrease such violent events in contemporary society. First of all, the priority should be given to raising awareness of such killings taking place in the country. The public should get exposed to the cold blood murders that are occurring to reveal to them the reality of such brutality taking place in the privacy of their homes. Moreover, once the public gets exposed and educated about the subject matter, then they can proceed to search for initiatives in a collective action manner to combat such violence, if a situation arises when they become a witness to it one day. A large variety of the audience should be men to condemn honor killings and to speak out about it in open and public spaces because of the disproportionate number of female victims of the violence as compared to male. Also, this has the power of gathering more attention from the public because in some patriarchal mindsets, a man is able to convey his message much more efficiently, which is a belief supported by Mustafa Qadri.⁷⁴ This again reinforces the higher status of a man in the Pakistani society. Furthermore, social media and mainstream Pakistani actors and actresses should utilize their voices and platforms to bring awareness to the problem. Doing so would result into the message being conveyed to a large amount of audiences, not just domestically, but globally. Similar to this is the voice of the affluent public and political figures who can implement change in the society with their connections and status. The education system should also be used as a platform by individuals to challenge gender stereotypes and to raise understanding that violence, even in the privacy of

⁷⁴ Mustafa Qadri. "SHOCKING: Surge of Honor Killings in Pakistan." *Amnesty International USA*, (2 July 2014, www.amnestyusa.org/shocking-surge-of-honor-killings-in-pakistan/.)

one's home is unacceptable and morally wrong.⁷⁵ Violence should not be normalized in any instance. Additionally, the major actors of a justice system, such as the police and the judges should be given special training to handle such violence efficiently without any prejudice. Along with this goes the ability of the victims of honor related violence to confide in these authorities about their individual situations in a safe and judgment free zone.⁷⁶ Taking these small steps would result in changes being prevalent in the Pakistani society, as Pakistani's hold the power to make a difference for the betterment of their country, by maintaining and keeping the country safe and open to all regardless of one's gender and providing a safer world for the upcoming generations.

Families in Pakistan are compelled to kill their kin on the basis of the opinion of others around them, and with this lingering fear of *log kya kahenge*. Failure to kill one's daughter, wife, sister, mother, and in the case of killing the man running away with the woman of one's family, can result into the society telling the people they are *beghairat*, without honor, which can essentially bring shame to them along with their family. In the case of Samia, her mother refused to be shamed by society because of her daughter filing for a divorce because of an abusive spouse, hence she murdered her daughter by hiring a hitman. To maintain a certain ego and a supposedly 'respectable' position in the society, both men and women engage in honor killings to maintain a facade of honor and respectfulness for the outsiders to see. This is primarily a cultural problem rather than a religious one, because Islam does not permit honor killings of men or women in any case. Hence, Pakistani's have created this toxic mentality and implemented it in the society for other men and women to follow, without raising any moral questions regarding it. This work on honor killings is vital because the solution is only possible with awareness, and

⁷⁵ Qadri. "SHOCKING: Surge of Honor Killings."

⁷⁶ Qadri. "SHOCKING: Surge of Honor Killings."

awareness is much needed in Pakistan. Also, this issue may seem to only impact Pakistanis and may be of a lower salience for the Western audience. However, with the United States being a hegemonic power and regarded as a moral country for reference by the rest of the world, paying attention to such issues which are human rights violation essentially, is a responsibility upon all the individuals.

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