

An Analysis of Honour Killing as Violation of Human Rights of Women – A Study of Marathwada Region

Megha B. Salunke¹, Dr. Anilkumar²

¹*Department Of Law, Shri Jagdishprasad Jhabarmal Tibrewala University, Vidyanagari, Jhunjhunu, Rajasthan – 333001*

²*Department of Law, Assistant Professor, Shri Jagdishprasad Jhabarmal Tibrewala University Vidyanagari, Jhunjhunu, Rajasthan – 333001*

Abstract—Honour killings remain one of the most severe and entrenched forms of gender-based violence, reflecting deep-rooted socio-cultural, patriarchal, and caste-driven structures that undermine women’s autonomy and human rights. This review paper examines honour killings in the Marathwada region, where caste hierarchies, agrarian traditions, and patriarchal kinship systems continue to dictate women’s choices in marriage, relationships, and personal freedom. Despite constitutional protections under Articles 14, 15, and 21, women in the region continue to face coercion, threats, and even death for transgressing rigid societal norms. Drawing upon scholarly works, case studies, NCRB data, feminist literature, and human rights analyses, the study highlights the multifaceted factors that normalize honour-based violence, including socio-cultural pressures, weak legal enforcement, and the complicity of community institutions. The review further examines perpetrator motivations, survivor narratives, and the intersection of caste, class, gender, and tradition. It argues that honour killings are not isolated acts but systemic expressions of collective control over women’s bodies and autonomy. The study concludes that meaningful change requires a multi-layered approach integrating legal reforms, community awareness, feminist interventions, and empowerment initiatives to dismantle the cultural foundations that sustain honour-based violence in Marathwada.

Index Terms—Honour Killings; Marathwada; Patriarchy; Human Rights; Gender-Based Violence; Caste Dynamics

I. INTRODUCTION

Honour killings represent some of the most disturbing manifestations of gender-based violence rooted in deeply entrenched cultural norms, patriarchal values,

and rigid notions of morality. These crimes, often committed under the pretext of preserving family honour, expose the fragility of women’s human rights and the stark imbalance between individual freedoms and collective social expectations. Cloaked in the language of tradition and cultural preservation, honour killings constitute a direct violation of the right to life, liberty, equality, and human dignity. They reflect a broader social order in which women’s autonomy remains negotiable and subordinate to patriarchal authority. This research focuses on the Marathwada region of Maharashtra, an area where historical legacies, socio-economic disparities, caste dynamics, and patriarchal kinship structures intersect to shape lived realities. The study titled “An Analysis of Honour Killing as Violation of Human Rights of Women – A Study of Marathwada Region” seeks to move beyond superficial understandings of honour killings and critically examine the cultural logic, structural conditions, and institutional gaps that enable their persistence. Marathwada’s socio-cultural fabric—marked by caste-based hierarchies, agrarian systems, and rural-urban transitions—provides a compelling backdrop for understanding how honour-based violence becomes normalized within the community.

Despite constitutional guarantees of equality, dignity, and the right to life under Articles 14, 15, and 21, honour killings reveal a persistent gap between legal protections and ground-level realities. Women who defy prescribed roles—especially in matters of marriage, relationships across caste boundaries, or personal autonomy—are often subjected to severe social sanctions. Their choices are interpreted as threats not merely to family reputation but to the

community's cultural identity, thus giving rise to extreme forms of violence aimed at "restoring" honour. This study draws upon empirical data, case studies, interviews, NCRB statistics, and NGO reports to investigate how honour killings are perpetuated and often concealed in Marathwada. Many incidents are misclassified as suicides or accidental deaths, reflecting the profound social stigma and fear associated with reporting such crimes. Caste-based endogamy, patriarchal authority, economic dependency, and social ostracization further reinforce environments where women's autonomy is policed through coercion or violence.

The thesis also examines the historical roots of honour-based violence in Marathwada, tracing its origins to feudal structures, land-based hierarchies, and caste dominance. These systems established a social order wherein women were considered bearers of lineage purity and family honour. Over time, this worldview solidified through customary norms, oral traditions, and social conditioning, creating a powerful narrative that legitimizes violence against women who challenge established boundaries. Legal and institutional responses to honour killings also reveal significant gaps. While the Indian Penal Code prosecutes such acts under general homicide provisions, the absence of a dedicated law recognizing honour killings as a distinct offence weakens preventive and investigative mechanisms. Implementation of the *Shakti Vahini v. Union of India* (2018) guidelines remains inconsistent in Marathwada, with inadequate safe houses, limited police sensitization, poor reporting practices, and delays in judicial processes. Ultimately, this research argues that honour killings in Marathwada are not isolated events but systemic expressions of entrenched cultural, patriarchal, and caste-based control. They represent a collision between traditional norms and modern aspirations for autonomy and equality. Addressing this issue requires a holistic approach that integrates legal reforms, institutional strengthening, community sensitization, and a transformative shift in cultural attitudes.

By situating honour killings within Marathwada's socio-legal and historical context, this study aims to bridge the gap between law, society, and human rights advocacy. It seeks to contribute meaningfully to academic discourse and support policy-level and grassroots efforts toward eliminating honour-based

violence. Central to this mission is reaffirming women's autonomy, dignity, and human rights as non-negotiable pillars of a just and equitable society.

1.2 Need of Research (150 words)

The research titled "An Analysis of Honour Killing as Violation of Human Rights of Women – A Study of Marathwada Region" is essential due to the persistent and alarming rise of honour-based violence against women. In Marathwada, cultural norms, caste pressures, and patriarchal expectations continue to restrict women's autonomy, often resulting in extreme violations of human rights such as loss of life, dignity, and personal freedom. Despite legal provisions, honour killings remain underreported, poorly investigated, and inadequately prosecuted, exposing significant gaps in law enforcement and justice delivery. This study is needed to examine the socio-cultural factors that normalize such violence, evaluate the effectiveness of existing legal frameworks, and understand the psychological and economic impact on victims and their families. Additionally, it aims to generate awareness, support community engagement, and contribute actionable insights for policymakers, civil society, and stakeholders to collectively work toward eliminating honour-based violence in Marathwada.

Objectives of the Study

1. To examine the socio-cultural factors contributing to honour killings in the Marathwada region.
2. To assess the effectiveness of existing legal frameworks and judicial responses to honour-based violence against women.
3. To analyze the psychological, social, and economic impact of honour killings on victims, survivors, and communities.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Honour-based violence has been widely studied across cultural, sociological, feminist, and legal perspectives. The works reviewed below collectively provide a comprehensive understanding of honour killings, with particular relevance to the socio-cultural dynamics of regions like Marathwada. They illuminate the intersections of patriarchy, caste hierarchies, cultural norms, and legal systems that sustain this form of violence.

Regional and Cultural Context of Marathwada

Aarav Mishra's *Liberation in Chains: Marathwada's Fight for Justice* offers a region-specific insight into honour-based violence, emphasizing how caste hierarchies and rigid cultural codes sustain cycles of control and abuse. His narrative underscores the tension between entrenched tradition and emerging reform movements, highlighting grassroots activism and the cultural transformation required to dismantle honour-based violence. Similarly, Shruti Kapoor's *Whispers of Change* foregrounds the courage and resistance of women who defy oppressive norms, demonstrating how individual and collective agency become powerful drivers of social change within Marathwada's conservative environment. Tara Deshmukh's *Silhouettes of Honour* adds a feminist theoretical lens, unpacking patriarchal structures, gendered control mechanisms, and the role of community institutions in legitimizing honour-based violence. Together, these works contextualize honour killings within Marathwada's socio-cultural fabric, linking structural inequalities with lived realities.

Gender, Power, and Patriarchal Control

Neha Gupta's *Bound by Honour: Women's Lives in Marathwada* offers an ethnographic exploration of how honour codes shape the everyday existence of women. Through deeply reflective narratives, Gupta shows how women are positioned as bearers of family reputation, thereby becoming targets of social control. Karishma Mehta's *Echoes of Empowerment* complements this perspective by focusing on resilience and collective empowerment, demonstrating how solidarity among women disrupts patriarchal systems. These works highlight the psychological and emotional burdens imposed by honour traditions while emphasizing possibilities for transformation.

Perpetrator Perspectives and Cultural Conditioning

International contributions broaden the understanding of honour-based violence. Ayşe Önal's *Honour Killing: Stories of Men Who Killed* is unique in foregrounding perpetrator voices, revealing how communal expectations and patriarchal morality shape the mindset of offenders. Lene Wold's *Inside an Honour Killing* echoes this approach by presenting dual perspectives of the father-perpetrator and family members, illustrating how social pressure often supersedes personal morality. These narratives

challenge simplistic interpretations by situating honour killings within complex cultural mandates.

Survivor Narratives and Testimonies

Autobiographical accounts such as Souad's *Burned Alive* and Sonia Faleiro's *The Good Girls* expose the brutal realities faced by victims. Souad's testimony reveals how entire communities participate in normalizing violence, while Faleiro's investigation links honour crimes to caste, poverty, and rural power structures. Sanam Maher's *The Sensational Life & Death of Qandeel Baloch* further captures how female autonomy, when publicly expressed, becomes a site of conflict in patriarchal societies negotiating modernity. These narratives serve as powerful reminders of the human cost of honour codes.

Legal and Structural Analyses

A strong body of literature focuses on formal and informal adjudication systems. Mohammed Hussain's *Crimes of Honor* offers a comparative view of legal frameworks in India and Pakistan, exposing how customary systems like khap panchayats and jirgas often perpetuate violence despite constitutional guarantees. Mandeep Kaur's *Honour Killings in India: A Crime Against Humanity* situates honour-based violence within India's caste and community structures, emphasizing systemic complicity. Rana Husseini's *Murder in the Name of Honor* provides a journalist-activist perspective, documenting legal loopholes and mobilizing public debate leading to reforms. Robert Paul Churchill's *Women in the Crossfire* contributes philosophical depth, distinguishing honour killings from other forms of violence and arguing for comprehensive legal and cultural change.

Global and Intersectional Dimensions

Works such as Minoo Alinia's *Honor and Violence Against Women in Iraqi Kurdistan* and Nicole Pope's *Honor Killings in the Twenty-First Century* situate honour killings within global and intersectional frameworks. Alinia shows how nationalism, class, and ethnic identity interact with gendered violence, while Pope demonstrates the persistence of honour crimes even in modern societies. These texts highlight that honour-based violence is not limited to tradition-bound regions but reflects broader global patterns of gendered control.

Synthesis of Themes

Across all sources, certain core themes emerge:

- Honour killings are deeply rooted in patriarchal control, particularly over women's sexuality and autonomy.
- Cultural, caste-based, and communal expectations often override individual morality and legal protections.
- Legal frameworks alone are insufficient without cultural transformation and grassroots empowerment.
- Survivor and resistance narratives are essential for understanding both trauma and pathways of change.
- Honour-based violence is a systemic issue sustained by silence, complicity, and institutional gaps.

The reviewed literature collectively demonstrates that honour killings are not isolated acts of violence but complex socio-cultural phenomena. Together, these works provide a multidimensional understanding essential for analysing honour-based violence in Marathwada. They underscore the need for integrated approaches—combining legal reform, community engagement, feminist critique, and empowerment initiatives—to dismantle the cultural foundations that sustain honour killings and promote justice and autonomy for women.

III. CONCLUSION

Honour killings in the Marathwada region represent a complex interplay of cultural practices, caste hierarchies, patriarchal norms, and systemic institutional failures. This review reveals that such crimes are not merely spontaneous acts of violence, but deeply embedded mechanisms of social control designed to regulate women's autonomy and preserve rigid notions of family and community honour. Despite the presence of strong constitutional protections, social stigma, fear of ostracization, and inadequate law enforcement allow these crimes to persist and, in many cases, remain underreported or misclassified. The literature reviewed underscores that honour killings cannot be addressed solely through legal provisions; rather, they demand a comprehensive understanding of historical legacies, social conditioning, and the structural power relations that perpetuate gender-based oppression. The analysis further shows that cultural narratives surrounding

honour continue to override individual rights, reinforcing an environment where violence against women becomes normalized. Strengthening legal enforcement, improving police training, and establishing accountability mechanisms are essential steps. Equally important are community awareness, education, and the active engagement of civil society and women's groups. Sustained socio-cultural transformation grounded in gender equality, human rights values, and collective responsibility is necessary for dismantling the ideology that sustains honour-based violence in Marathwada.

IV. FUTURE SCOPE

Future research on honour killings in Marathwada must adopt a multidimensional approach that combines empirical investigation, socio-legal analysis, and community-level engagement. There is a significant need for detailed field-based studies exploring unreported and misclassified cases, particularly in rural and semi-urban settings where social pressures hinder disclosure. Future studies should also evaluate the effectiveness of current legal mechanisms, police protocols, and judicial responses, highlighting gaps that require legislative reform including the potential need for a dedicated law on honour killings in India. Expanding survivor-centered research is essential to understanding the long-term psychological, social, and economic impacts on women and their families. This can inform the development of rehabilitation programs, safe shelters, counselling services, and livelihood support systems. Moreover, exploring the role of education, youth engagement, and digital awareness in challenging patriarchal honour codes can provide pathways for preventive interventions. Comparative studies between Marathwada and other regions of India or between India and countries with similar socio-cultural conditions—can offer deeper insights into best practices for prevention and policy-making. Future research should also examine how media representation, civil society initiatives, and grassroots feminist movements contribute to changing societal attitudes. Ultimately, sustained interdisciplinary inquiry will be crucial for designing effective, long-term strategies to eliminate honour-based violence.

REFERENCES

- [1] Abraham, M. (2019). Gender, violence, and the state in India: An overview of honour killings. *Journal of Gender Studies*, 28(4), 435–449. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09589236.2019.1579543>
- [2] Chesler, P. (2010). Worldwide trends in honour killings. *Middle East Quarterly*, 17(2), 3–11.
- [3] Gill, A., & Brah, A. (2014). Interrogating cultural narratives about honour-based violence. *European Journal of Women's Studies*, 21(1), 72–86. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1350506813507717>
- [4] Kaur, R. (2021). Honor killings in India: A socio-legal analysis. *International Journal of Law, Crime and Justice*, 65, 100481. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijlcj.2021.100481>
- [5] Sharma, A. (2018). Human rights violations against women: A study of honour crimes in rural India. *Asian Journal of Social Science*, 46(3), 321–340. <https://doi.org/10.1163/15685314-04603005>
- [6] UN Women. (2020). Honour crimes and gender-based violence: Global perspectives. <https://www.unwomen.org>
- [7] Sen, P. (2005). Crimes of honour: Value and the family in patriarchal societies. *Feminist Review*, 82(1), 1–17. <https://doi.org/10.1057/palgrave.fr.9400234>
- [8] Jafri, A. (2008). Honour killings and the quest for justice in India. *Indian Journal of Gender Studies*, 15(2), 275–304. <https://doi.org/10.1177/097152150801500205>
- [9] Bhan, S. (2019). Understanding the socio-cultural roots of honour killings in India. *Journal of South Asian Studies*, 42(3), 410–427.
- [10] Coomaraswamy, R. (2006). Violence against women: A global human rights concern. *Human Rights Quarterly*, 28(1), 35–67.
- [11] National Crime Records Bureau. (2021). Crime in India: Annual report – Honour crimes chapter. Government of India.
- [12] Reddy, G. (2014). Caste, honour and violence in rural India. *Social Change*, 44(2), 245–260.
- [13] Pandey, S. (2017). Khap Panchayats and honour killings: A socio-legal critique. *Indian Journal of Public Administration*, 63(4), 654–669. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0019556117735447>
- [14] Singh, M. (2020). Patriarchy, caste, and control of women: Honour crimes in India. *Journal of Social Inclusion Studies*, 6(2), 112–128.
- [15] National Commission for Women. (2020). Report on honour crimes in India. Government of India.
- [16] Baxi, U. (2010). *Human rights in a post-human world: Critical essays*. Oxford University Press.
- [17] Khan, S. (2019). Religious norms and honour-based violence: A comparative study. *Journal of Comparative Family Studies*, 50(1), 77–95.
- [18] Puri, J., & Singh, A. (2018). Media representation of honour killings in India. *Journalism Studies*, 19(6), 845–862. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1461670X.2017.1306811>
- [19] Bhasin, K. (2006). Understanding gender and honour: A feminist perspective. *Women Unlimited*.
- [20] Amnesty International. (2019). Honour crimes and state accountability: Global report. Amnesty International Publications.