

Chapter 15

Shattered Honor: Understanding and Addressing Honor-Related Crimes in the Netherlands and India

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ABSTRACT

Honor killings motivated by false ideas of communal honor remain a tragically pervasive social problem in a variety of cultural contexts. This chapter examines honor killings in India and the Netherlands, two countries that have different legal systems, social structures, and cultural backgrounds yet are united in their opposition to this horrible behavior. The research employs a multifaceted method to investigate the historical and contemporary elements that have shaped honor killings in each nation. It investigates how cultural norms, gender inequality, and patriarchy contribute to this violence. This chapter examines the existing legislative frameworks and enforcement measures aimed at curbing honor killings, emphasizing the advantages and disadvantages of each in the given situations. In the end, the goal of this comparative research is to pinpoint possible best practices and practical approaches to stop and end honor killings.

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INTRODUCTION

Honor killings refer to the killing of a family member by another family member for bringing dishonor to the family by going against the family norms, tradition, or culture. On a global platform, both India and the Netherlands appear largely different in their functioning, population, and socio-economic criteria. But both nations suffer through this secretive murder practice in the name of family respect and cultural continuance. This chapter tends to prepare a comparative analysis between the two nations, understanding the factors responsible for the commission of honor killings. Through this chapter, the aim is not to compare the pain or suffering but to connect the dots for understanding the reasoning and status of honor killing crime in both these nations.

Despite the differences in functioning, economy, or legal frameworks, there are a few common threads that bind the narratives of honor killings in India and the Netherlands. Patriarchy can be seen as a foundation in both these societies, whereby women are believed to be subordinate to men, and this creates a justifiable ground for violence against women, be it in India through arranged marriages or be it in the Netherlands through restrictive cultural norms. In both societies, misinterpretation of tradition is a root cause to justify violence. From caste hierarchies and specific interpretations of religion in India to cultural clashes with immigrant communities, all contribute to the act of violence.

Amidst the similarities, it becomes crucial to also acknowledge the different problems shaping the honor killing realities in each of these nations. The triggers for the commission of honor killings differ in both these nations. In India, the socio-cultural landscape is affected by inter-caste relationships, defying arranged marriages, or choosing distinct career practices that do not align with the family's culture. In the Netherlands, the cultural clashes of immigrants against the Dutch values and controlling family dynamics lead to the triggering of violence. The Netherlands though not one hundred percent immune to these issues but relatively, holds a stronger stand against societal attitudes toward honor killings.

Honor killings must be stopped with a multidimensional strategy that takes into account the contextual subtleties as well as the common threads. Important first efforts include education and awareness campaigns that question prevailing ideas about gender roles, confront damaging interpretations of religion and tradition, and advance gender equality. Breaking the cycle of violence also requires empowering women via economic independence, safe spaces, and access to healthcare and education. Strengthening legal frameworks with strong sanctions for abusers and effective protection for victims is crucial. Breaking the taboo around gender-based violence and promoting open dialogues and awareness campaigns with religious leaders, community leaders, and civil society organizations can help transform attitudes.

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