Jus Corpus Law Journal

Open Access Law Journal – Copyright © 2025 – ISSN 2582-7820

Editor-in-Chief – Prof. (Dr.) Rhishikesh Dave; Publisher – Ayush Pandey

Honor Killing: A Cultural and Legal Analysis of Gender-Based Violence

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Received 10 September 2025; *Accepted* 10 October 2025; *Published* 15 October 2025

Honor killing in India is a deep-rooted social evil that intricately highlights the conflict between traditional values and the modern legal framework. This research paper aims to investigate the socio-cultural factors and reasons that contribute to the rampant occurrence of the phenomenon, focusing on the intersection of caste, religion, and patriarchy. Through a comprehensive analysis of various case studies, legal responses, and laws, the paper aims to examine the primary reasons for the persistence of honor killings despite laws and the existence of social awareness campaigns. By analysing both rural and urban contexts, the research aims to provide a clear understanding of the intricacies and complexities surrounding honor killings in India and suggests policy reforms and recommendations for effective prevention to reduce such incidents. The paper aims to contribute to the discourse of gender equality and the protection of individual rights, advocating for a societal shift that prioritises personal and individual autonomy over outdated and conservative notions of honor.

Keywords: *social evil, policy reforms, individual rights, honor.*

INTRODUCTION

The occurrence of honor killings exists worldwide. The practice exists mainly within the Middle East, Maghreb, and the Indian subcontinent and extends through other cultural traditions such as those found in East Africa, Latin America, the Philippines, and

Mediterranean Europe. Honor killings occur with regularity in some minority communities that reside outside their countries of origin, even though the host countries do not enforce such cultural practices. Honor killings occur against men when family members of a perceived inappropriate relationship, and also when their own family members kill them due to either homosexuality or disability diagnosis. Multiple investigations indicate that honor killing has spread as a common criminal offense throughout the territory of our Indian nation, which features both the world's largest constitution and biggest democracy. Society in India now tolerates this practice to such an extent that it qualifies as both widespread and socially accepted. The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) presents the annual worldwide figure of honour killings at 5,000 women and girls, whereas non-governmental organizations (NGOs) present a higher estimate of 20,000 annual global cases. Statistics reveal that honor killings take place across women of various ages and religious backgrounds across different social classes and economic standings and educational levels, and geographical locations. The insufficient comprehension of this phenomenon, coupled with insufficient honourable killing data, has resulted in the sustained secretive nature of this devastating practice, which continues right now.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Honour killing has been practiced for thousands of years. Ancient Rome encouraged honour killings and 'actively persecuted' male family members who did not take action against the female adulterers in their households. The customs and cultures of many different regions make it evident that honour killings and the practice of controlling women have a long history. Honour killings originated from tribal cultures, which believed that a single charge might destroy a family's reputation, and that life was not worth living without honour. Most honour killings occurred in countries in Southeast Asia. Ancient Roman law, which stated that women found guilty of adultery might be executed by their husbands or spouses, also allowed honour killings. In China under the Qing era, fathers and spouses were allowed to murder daughters who were thought to have betrayed the family. Moreover, Mediterranean Europe has a lengthy history of honour killings. The custom of honour killing in the Arab world has its roots in pre-Islamic periods, when Arab colonists inhabited what is now Pakistan, an area known as Baluchistan. The customs of these settlers were primarily patriarchal, including the live burial of newborn females. The Quran and Hadiths make no

reference to honour killing. Honour killings are unknown or unreported in Indonesia, which is thought to have the largest Muslim population. This is also the situation in other West African countries where the main population is Muslim. Hence, it can be seen that honor killing has been a deep-rooted evil not just in Indian society but across the world. This factor in itself plays a major role in perpetuating and continuing the practice.

THE SOCIO-CULTURAL DYNAMICS OF HONOR KILLINGS

In India, honour-based violence and particularly the practice of honour killings, is an old phenomenon prevalent for centuries[1]. There are reports of cases in almost all parts of India, but the states of Punjab, Haryana, Rajasthan, and Western Uttar Pradesh are the regions where these incidents occur more frequently.

It is estimated that approximately 1000 people (both females & males) are killed every year in India owing to alleged honour killings. In India, due to its complex socio-cultural patterns, various causes result in honour killings. Various scholars divulge the intolerance of the Indian upper castes to inter-caste matrimonial/pre-marital relationships of females as the prime cause of honour killings. Even marriages into the same gotra (same descendants and same lineage, clan) have emerged as the causes of honour killings in the northern parts of India, particularly in the state of Haryana. Besides these Inter-caste or Intra-caste factors, inter-religious marriages have also been ascertained as a reason behind people killing their daughters for allegedly restoring their lost honour.

It is clear that honor-based violence, including honor killings, is accepted by society in all societies where it is commonly practised. among India, honour killings mostly take place among very patriarchal communities that are sometimes referred to as 'honour-based' societies, such as the Rajputs of Rajasthan, the Jat-Sikhs of Punjab, and the Jats of Haryana. Inheritance is patrilineal in traditional patriarchal societies. Furthermore, the fundamental social, economic, and political unit is the family or kin group rather than the individual. Therefore, it can be said that in all of these kinds of cultures, the job of community members, elders, and especially community councils is to patronise, instigate, and propagate honour killings while shielding the murderers. Surprisingly, these traditional patriarchal societies condemn the government's and the law's efforts to stop honour killings because they see it

[1] Lynn Welchman and Sara Hossain, *Honour: Crimes, Paradigms and Violence Against Women* (Zed Books 2005)

as an intolerable intrusion on their family dynamics and sociocultural norms. As a result, the intricate sociocultural framework of India is largely responsible for the spread of this practice and, in some ways, for giving it legitimacy in particular regions of the nation.

LEGAL FRAMEWORKS WITH RESPECT TO HONOR KILLINGS

The Indian government has not implemented a specific law against honor killings in the country's legal system. There exists no particular law in India to address honour killings directly. The relevant sections of the Indian Penal Code (IPC)[2] number 299-304 and 107 to 11 and 120A and 120B pertain to 'murder' offenses. These crimes fall under Section 101 BNS, 2023[3] (Murder) and Section 102 BNS,2023[4] (Culpable Homicide) of the bankruptcy legislation. Honour killings that happen to members of Dalit and indigenous populations qualify for protection under the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act of 1989[5]. The act results in identical consequences since 'honour killings' continue to produce feelings of pride in perpetrators because they protect their familial or caste, or community's honor. A proper legislation to handle honor killing represents a fundamental issue because there is no defined and specific law to address this phenomenon.

Moreover, Article 14 of the Indian Constitution[6] ensures equal treatment for all individuals. The legal system and fairness under the law. Engaging in honour killing contradicts this principle. Article 15 of the Indian Constitution[7] clearly bans prejudice and discrimination regarding the foundation on race, gender, societal class, and birthplace. Yet there are some other legislations too whose provisions may overlap with the issue of honor killing.

Domestic Violence Act 2005: The law mainly concerns domestic violence, though it also provides help and legal choices for victims of honour-based violence in the family, particularly women who are much more at risk of honor killing. Most of the law is aimed at domestic violence by husbands or their relatives; however, there is a possibility that such cases may be related to or result in honor killing.

[2] Indian Penal Code 1860, s 375
[3] Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita 2023, s 101
[4] Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita 2023, s 102
[5] Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act 1989
[6] Constitution of India 1950, art 14
[7] Constitution of India 1950, art 15

Protection of Human Rights Act 1993: This legislation, creating the NHRC, plays a role in tackling human rights abuses, such as honour killings.

State-Specific Laws: Certain states have implemented laws to tackle honour killings. As an example, Haryana and Punjab have put in place particular rules or actions to deal with and stop such offenses. These are only specific to such states

Supreme Court Guidelines: The Supreme Court of India has issued guidelines to protect individuals at risk and ensure accountability for honour killings.

As stated earlier, the main problem of honour killing is no rigorous laws against it. Though in India there are so many laws of murder or killing but there is no special law for honour killing; for this reason, the bride's family feels easy to conduct a murder to save their family's prestige. Though Article 14 of the Indian Constitution states that every person is equal before to law and cannot be discriminated against based on caste, creed, sex, or religion. Moreover, more emphasis needs to be laid on Article 19[8] and 21[9] which talks about the right of freedom of speech and expression, and the right to live a dignified life.

Moreover, Khap Panchayats also significantly contributed to exacerbating the issue of honor killings. Khap Panchayat is not an elected panchayat; this is a community organization that runs the clan by a socially influenced community, especially in the northern part of India (Uttar Pradesh). The body of the panchayat is formed by an upper caste community. Moreover, the community enjoys the power that is passed on by its ancestors. In such organizations, they take a decision against any constitutional provision or a legal framework in place; if any problem arises within the community, they call a meeting, and after the meeting, they impose punishment on the victim. At times, they compel or force people to be the victim. Hence, such communities inflict severe human rights violations and make it look like a legitimate rural body or organization. The All India Democratic Women's Association (AIDWA) has reported cases where the Khaps are alleged to have initiated threats of murder and violence against couples who marry outside of the circle. Despite the criticisms against this institution, it remains popular in some parts of India because, in its benign form, it resolves disputes and achieves social order with less time and resources,

[8] Constitution of India 1950, art 19
[9] Constitution of India 1950, art 21

compared to the court system, which is lengthier and expensive. In addition, taking a case to court may result in community ire. In some cases in Haryana, the police and locally elected leaders have also supported the decisions of the khap panchayat. But a fundamental development took place in the year 2018.

In the landmark case of ***Shakti Vahini v Union of India***[10]**,** the Khap Panchayats were declared 'unconstitutional' by the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India. On the 27th of March,2018, the Supreme Court gave a landmark ruling that any attempt by Khap Panchayats or any other assembly to scuttle or prevent two consenting adults from marrying is absolutely 'illegal' and laid down preventive, remedial, and punitive measures in this regard. The court's judgment came on a petition filed by a non-government organisation (NGO), Shakti Vahini, in 2010. The petitioner had sought directions to the States and the Centre to put in place a plan to curb honour killings.

The three-judge bench, constituting the Chief Justice of India, Mr. Justice Dipak Misra, Mr. Justice A.M Khanwilkar, and D.Y. Chandrachud, gave the 54-page judgment. It was held by the court that the criminal proceedings under honour killing or violence against the two individuals or the couple should be tried in that particular court/Fast Track Court, which shall be assigned the same purpose. The Criminal Procedure has to be tried on a day-to-day basis to ensure its completion, preferably in a time frame of 6 months after the offence has been taken on record. We can be quick to point out that this direction will be applied even to the cases that are pending. Those cases will be assigned to the concerned District Judge as far as possible. The judgment also provides that the Khap panchayats cannot take the law into their own hands, as they cannot act as a law-implementing agency since no law has empowered them with this power.

In this particular case, Writ petition under Article 32 of the Indian Constitution was filed by Shakti Vahini Organisation, a NGO seeking directions to the respondents- the state and the central governments to take preventive steps to combat honour crimes, to submit a National & State Plan of action to curb crimes of the said nature and further to direct the State Governments to constitute special cells in each district which can be approached by the couples for their safety and well-being. In this landmark case, the apex court issued

[10] *Shakti Vahini v Union of India* (2018) 7 SCC 192

preventive, remedial, and punitive measures to tackle the practice of honor killing. Also, prayers were made to issue a writ of mandamus to the State Governments to launch prosecutions in each case of Honour killing and take appropriate measures so that all such honour crimes and the embedded evil in the mindset of certain members of society are dealt appropriately. Moreover, in this particular case, the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India referred to the 242nd Report[11] submitted by the Law Commission of India, namely "Prevention of interference with the freedom of matrimonial alliances (in the name of honour and tradition): A suggested legal framework." It stated that the words honour killings and honour crimes are being used loosely as convenient expressions and as more of a catch phrase rather than an apt or accurate expression to describe the incidents of violence and harassment caused to the young couple intended to marry or having married against the wishes of the community or family members. There are reports that drastic action, including mental torture, infliction of or threats of severe bodily harm, wrongful confinement, persistent harassment, and sometimes even murder, is resorted to either by close relations or some third parties. Moreover, it laid down various causes of this crime:

- The belief that the victim has brought dishonour upon the family or the community.
- Changing the cultural and economic status of a woman and the woman going against their male-dominated culture.
- In Western cultures, honour killings often arise from women seeking greater independence and choosing their own way of life.
- Adulterous behaviour of a woman, or a premarital relationship or assertion of the right to marry according to their choice.

The report held that such violent crimes are directed especially against women. Men get attacked by members of the family of a woman with whom they are perceived to have an inappropriate relationship. It further held that this evil is not peculiar to our country but haunts many other societies also. This judgment in particular has served as a beacon to abolish the institutionalisation of honor killing by declaring Khap Panchayats as unconstitutional. Yet, these heinous crimes still exist. There is an urgent need for legislation

[11] Law Commission, *Report No 242 Prevention of Interference with the Freedom of Matrimonial Alliances (in the name of Honour and Tradition): A Suggested Legal Framework August 2012* (Law Com No 242, 2012)

to address the same issue. For the judgment in the Shakti Vahini case, the court also relied on other cases.

In the case **of *Lata Singh v State of U.P.*[12]**, the court observed that there is no bar for inter-caste marriage under the Hindu Marriage Act or any other law. The Court further held that this is a free and democratic country, and once a person becomes a major, he or she can marry whosoever he /she likes. If such inter-caste or inter-religious marriage is not approved by the parents of the boy/girl, the maximum they can do is that they can cut off social relations with the son or the daughter, but they do not have any authority to threaten or commit or instigate acts of violence, and cannot harass the person who undergoes such inter-caste or inter-religious marriage.

After so stating, the two-Judge Bench directed the administration/police authorities throughout the country to ensure that if any boy or girl who is a major undergoes inter-caste or inter-religious marriage with a woman or man who is a major, the couple should not be subjected to harassment or threats or acts of violence by anyone and the one who is involved in such violence either by himself or at his instigation is prosecuted and criminal proceedings to be instituted by the police against such persons. These barbaric and shameful acts performed to protect the honour have nothing honourable about them but just represent the brutal and feudal mentality. To add on, in the case of ***Asha Ranjan v State of Bihar and Ors*[13]**, the Court noted that the choice of a woman in choosing her partner in life is a legitimate constitutional right. It is founded on individual choice that is recognised in the Constitution under Article 19, and such a right is not expected to succumb to the concept of "class honour" or "group thinking". It is because the sense of class honour has no legitimacy, even if it is practised by the collective under some kind of notion. Hence, the above cases reflect on the narrow-mindedness of society with respect to preserving the so-called "honor" of the family. It also throws light on the fact that how deep rooted the issue of honor killing is in India.

Moreover, in the case of ***Kartar Singh v State of Punjab*[14]**, the court held that honor killing hinders individual liberty, freedom of choice, and one's own perception of choice. When two adults arrive at a consensual decision to marry each other, it is an expression of their choice

[12] *Lata Singh v State of U.P. & Anr* (2006) 5 SCC 475
[13] *Asha Ranjan v State of Bihar & Ors* (2017) 4 SCC 397
[14] Kartar Singh v State of Punjab (1994) 3 SCC 569

which is recognized under Articles 19 & 21 of the Constitution. Such a right is recognized under the constitution and hence needs to be protected from the illegitimate conception of class honour or group thinking. These intolerant groups who subscribe to the view of superiority class complex or higher clan cannot hinder the exercise of a fundamental right which is inherent in a person by relying on some self-proclaimed moral or social philosophy. Hence, this case laid the foundation for the Shakti Vahini case by upholding the right to choose one's own partner and bringing it under the ambit of Articles 19 and 21. In a nutshell, this case becomes very relevant and important with respect to the crime of honor killing.

The UN Commission on Human Rights reports that honour killings have occurred across India, Israel, Italy, Morocco, Sweden, Turkey, Uganda, and Bangladesh, as well as Brazil, Ecuador, Western nations, and Gulf countries. This practice affects societies across all cultures and religious groups. International organizations actively condemn honour killings as a major breach of human rights through their coordinated efforts. According to Article 42[15], the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention) 2014 forbids any crime justifications that use honor as an excuse. Her court serves as the protector of citizen rights since it represents the guardian of constitutional freedoms; therefore, adopting directives for law enforcement agencies and administrative bodies will help sustain legitimate marriage rights for couples and their associated persons. Hence, it is very clear that honor killing is a crime that knows no national borders and transcends across nations.

MEASURES TO CURB HONOR KILLINGS

Since there is no dedicated, concise, and specific legislation to deal with the crime of honor killings, there are certain measures that are needed to be taken to curb this heinous crime. Some of them are:

Preventive Measures: Gender sensitisation must become a norm in all government policies and programmes. The government must also be dedicated to fighting against caste-based discrimination and violence. Educational interventions and awareness programmes will also help curb honour-based crimes and killings. Furthermore, special fast-track courts can be set

[15] The Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence 2014, art 42

up that exclusively deal with such offences. Moreover, sensitisation of police personnel to handle such cases with empathy and professionalism would also help in proper reporting and redressal of such crimes. Social awareness campaigns also play a pivotal role in educating society about such heinous crimes. Educational institutions should introduce course modules aimed at spreading awareness amongst the younger population. Hence, a grassroots-level approach needs to be taken to tackle such crimes. Moreover, popular media such as films, books, television, social media, and newspapers can be utilised to disseminate knowledge to a wide audience.

Protective and Rehabilitative Measures: Reliable 'Safe Houses' are a need of the hour, and any person, couple, or family who feels threatened should be provided safe lodging with access to legal aid and police support. This is a state initiative that can only be executed through the state machinery. This would further help in preserving lives and provide an effective mechanism to report such cases. Moreover, setting up a 24/7 toll-free helpline for individuals at risk, ensuring swift and efficient action on reporting of such incidents.

Redress Mechanisms: As mentioned earlier, a dedicated legislation against honour-based crimes and honour killings is an immediate need. Any related law, like the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe (Prevention of Atrocities) Act (including the 2015 amendments), can be read together with new legislation to be more holistic and effective. Access to timely legal aid is vital. Victim protection must be made a priority. All ancillary services, like mental health and trauma counselling, must also be available to the victims on request.

To add on, the process of registering marriages under the Special Marriage Act needs to be made more sensitive by removing the 30-day notice period for objections against the marriage, which can conveniently turn violent. Statistics of honour-based crimes must be recorded exclusively under the respective rubric.

Furthermore, there were also some guidelines given by SC in the Shakti Vahini case in the year 2018. Those were:

- It is an immediate priority for the State Governments to identify Districts, Sub-Divisions, and/or Villages that have experienced honour killing or gatherings of Khap Panchayats over the last five years.

- The Home Department Secretaries in the respective States shall give directives to Superintendents stationed in these Districts to watch out for any inter-caste or interreligious marriage and alert the Officer in charge of the Police Stations accordingly.
- If any police officer or officer of the District Administration discovers new details about a Khap Panchayat gathering, he shall notify his immediate supervisor as well as tell the Deputy Superintendent of Police and Superintendent of Police immediately.
- After getting this news, the senior official from the police (or the officer chosen by the State Governments for the area/district as Deputy Superintendent of Police) must meet with the members of the Khap Panchayat and make it clear that such a meeting cannot be allowed by law and should be avoided.
- Despite taking such measures, if the meeting is conducted, the Deputy Superintendent of Police shall personally remain present during the meeting and impress upon the assembly that no decision can be taken to cause any harm to the couple or the family members of the couple, failing which each one participating in the meeting, besides the organisers, would be personally liable for criminal prosecution. He shall also ensure that video recording of the discussion and participation of the members of the assembly is done based on which the law-enforcing machinery can resort to suitable action.
- If the Deputy Superintendent of Police, after interaction with the members of the Khap Panchayat, has reason to believe that the gathering cannot be prevented and/or is likely to cause harm to the couple or members of their family, he shall forthwith submit a proposal to the District Magistrate/Sub-Divisional Magistrate of the District/ Competent Authority of the concerned area for issuing orders to take preventive steps under the CrPC, including by invoking prohibitory orders under Section 144 CrPC[16] and also, by causing the arrest of the participants in the assembly under Section 151 CrPC[17].

These guidelines establish an active approach to deal with both honor murders and unlawful gatherings of Khap Panchayats. However, how effective these guidelines prove to be depended upon how strictly the implementation is done by the concerned authorities. But as

[16] Code of Criminal Procedure 1973, s 144
[17] Code of Criminal Procedure 1973, s 151

it can be seen, the crime of honour killing persists in India despite landmark rulings and the laying of such elaborate guidelines by the apex court. This is an area where India has struggled, considering the regressive social mindset and attitude that prevails, especially in the rural and underdeveloped regions.

Table- II State/UT-Wise Cases Registered for Communal/Religious Murders and Honor Killings in India, 2017–2021

ANNEXURE-II
R.S.US.Q.NO. 3734 FOR 05.04.2023

State/UT-wise Cases Registered under Motives of Murder for Communal/Religious & Honor Killing during 2017-2021

SL	State/UT	Communal / Religious					Honor Killing				
		2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
1	Andhra Pradesh	0	0	4	0	0	1	0	1	2	1
2	Arunachal Pradesh	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	1	0	0
3	Assam	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
4	Bihar	0	12	7	6	2	0	0	0	2	0
5	Chhattisgarh	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
6	Goa	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
7	Gujarat	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	5	0	0
8	Haryana	0	0	0	0	1	3	0	3	4	4
9	Himachal Pradesh	0	0	0	0	0	3	6	0	0	0
10	Jharkhand	2	0	0	0	0	41	9	0	4	8
11	Karnataka	3	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
12	Kerala	2	0	0	0	0	2	1	0	1	0
13	Madhya Pradesh	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	1	3	6
14	Maharashtra	0	0	0	0	0	16	3	0	0	0
15	Manipur	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
16	Meghalaya	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
17	Mizoram	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
18	Nagaland	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
19	Odisha	3	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0
20	Punjab	0	0	1	0	0	2	3	6	4	8
21	Rajasthan	1	0	1	0	0	1	1	2	0	0
22	Sikkim	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
23	Tamil Nadu	0	2	3	1	1	2	0	1	0	0
24	Telangana	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	2	0
25	Tripura	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
26	Uttar Pradesh	1	6	1	0	0	14	0	0	0	2
27	Uttarakhand	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	0
28	West Bengal	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	TOTAL STATE(S)	**15**	**24**	**19**	**9**	**9**	**88**	**26**	**23**	**23**	**32**
29	A&N Islands	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
30	Chandigarh	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
31	D&N Haveli and Daman & Diu+	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0
32	Delhi	0	0	0	53	0	0	1	0	0	0
33	Jammu & Kashmir*	0	0	0	0	1	3	2	1	1	1
34	Ladakh	-	-	-	0	0	-	-	-	0	0
35	Lakshadweep	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
36	Puducherry	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	TOTAL UT(S)	**1**	**0**	**0**	**53**	**1**	**4**	**3**	**1**	**2**	**1**
	TOTAL (ALL INDIA)	**16**	**24**	**19**	**62**	**10**	**92**	**29**	**24**	**25**	**33**

Source: Crime in India
Note : '+' Combined data of erstwhile D&N Haveli UT and Daman & Diu UT during 2017, 2018, 2019
*' Data of erstwhile Jammu & Kashmir State including Ladakh during 2017, 2018, 2019

The right column of the above table shows the data about the occurrence of honor killings in various states across India from 2017-2021. It is clearly visible from the data that there has been a significant drop in the occurrence of such killings post-2017. A major reason could be attributed to the landmark decision passed in 2018 and the subsequent guidelines along with it. This has led to awareness and a sense of fear amongst people perpetrating the crime. Moreover, the announcement of Khap Panchayats as unconstitutional also plays a significant part. But there is also a problem. While there has been a decrease post-2017, a clear downward trend isn't visible with numbers still hovering around mid-twenties and early thirties. This indicates the fact that while there has been a substantial decrease in the number

of cases, the problem has not been resolved completely, and it still persists. This can be seen especially in the states of Jharkhand, Haryana, and Punjab. This clearly indicates the regional disparity with respect to the commission of the crime. In states like Nagaland, Manipur, Tripura, Chandigarh, Lakshadweep, and Sikkim, the number has been zero across the five years. Hence, this problem is more prevalent in the northern belt of the country. Yet there are other issues too, such as under-reporting or not reporting at all due to various factors. This may influence the numbers. Hence, it can be concluded that while the crime of honor killing has significantly reduced in India and the state machinery can take credit for that, it has not been eradicated completely, and there is a need to address the issue from the grassroots level, and dissemination of awareness is the need of the hour.

CONCLUSION

In a nutshell, Honor killings represent one of the most heinous forms of gender-based violence, rooted in archaic notions of family honor, societal expectations, and cultural traditions. This practice not only results in the loss of innocent lives but also perpetuates a cycle of oppression, particularly against women and marginalized groups. Despite constitutional protections and legal provisions in India, systemic gaps in enforcement, societal complicity, and cultural endorsement of such crimes hinder effective eradication. To combat this grave violation of human rights, a comprehensive and multifaceted approach is essential. Legal reforms, such as specific laws addressing honor killings and the strict regulation of extrajudicial entities like khap panchayats, must be complemented by social and educational interventions to challenge regressive norms and promote gender equality. Public awareness campaigns, coupled with robust support systems for at-risk individuals, can foster an environment of acceptance and dignity for all.