



Workshop Report

**Crimes in the Name of Honour:
Maharashtra and Gujarat**

Organised

by

**Mrinal Gore Interactive Centre for
Social Justice and Peace in South Asia**

Date: 13th - 14th June 2015

*Venue: S.M.Joshi Socialist Foundation,
Pune*

Introduction and Context

In the context of a changed socio-political, economic scenario there has been a silencing of ideological debate on issues of social importance and a marginalisation of social movements in advocacy for change. The Mrinal Gore Interactive Centre established in Mumbai provides a space for policy discussion outside the capital and mobilises grassroots networks to connect with macro issues.

Stalwarts from the political and social movements in Mumbai came together and formed a core group that invited people from South Asia to collaborate and extend their support to develop the Centre. The Centre provides a platform to engage in dialogue and debate and also revive interactions between networks across South Asia.

A key feature is to build bridges between academics and researchers and grassroots activists' and communities. Hence it was fitting that collaboration between the Centre and Advanced Women's Studies Centre of Tata Institute of Social Sciences was forged to organise the first conference in December 2014, which marked the launch of this Centre. The theme of the conference was '**Violence: A Human and Political Predicament**' - A South Asian Women's Perspective. This conference was only the beginning of a continued collaboration between TISS and the Centre.

The overwhelming response that the conference received provided the Centre with confidence to move ahead with the role that it defined for itself. This conference gave us a political direction and a path for engaging in research, advocacy, networking and campaigning in the coming period specifically on the broad issue of South Asian Masculinity.

Hence for its first year the Centre has decided to hold a series of workshops in different regions of the country, the first of which was held on 13-14 June 2015 in Pune on the topic '**Crimes in the Name of Honour**' which brought together participants from Maharashtra and Gujarat.

Our societies in South Asia are undergoing a huge transition influenced by post-modern globalisation processes and we are witnessing the huge impact of the imbalance which is a fall out of this transition. Violence is embedded and integral to this imbalance and its manifestations are many and we are focusing primarily on the crimes meted out on the bodies of women and on religious minorities and lower caste communities/groups, especially when they challenge the system or show aspirations to rise above.

‘Crimes in the name of Honour’ are not only about gender but would include other types of crimes, especially for example the crimes committed by men on men.

The workshop was consciously designed not as an academic forum but interactive space to share experiences of violence and draw from them to enhance our understanding on the issue. A group of around 100 participants, including survivors, activists, and facilitators met over a period of 2 days to deliberate on the issue.

The dominant position on defining the term honour is proclamation and self glorification of superiority derived from a perceived historical past, geographical location, caste and class structure, economic supremacy and power, hegemony of knowledge, masculinity etc which gives them the right to inflict violence on the so called ‘other, weaker sections of society’.

This violence is inflicted not only on the other but also when there is a challenge to supremacy from within as well. Also it is just not a physical act of violence but it is entrenched in the social, political and economic structures of our society. When people directly facing this injustice (along with their supporters) challenge these very power structures they are meted out with further ostracisation, stigma, ridicule, threats, warnings and actual violence.

To maintain hegemony, capture and control over resources the so called honourable communities as defined above attack and destroy the foundations of honour of the other leading to their systematic marginalisation which over years eventually leads to their dehumanisation and elimination of their culture, livelihood, leading to a life of abject impoverishment.

We recognise that there are differences and similarities in the political, cultural and social ethos of South Asia and through our platform we intend to foster dialogue to make connections between micro and macro issues that affect the entire region.

Inaugural Session

Facilitator: Jyoti Kelkar

Speakers: Pushpa Bhave, Jatin Desai, Manjula Pradeep, Nirja Bhatnagar and Manisha Gupte



- Welcoming the gathering Jyoti Kelkar, social activist and working with Keshav Gore Smarak Trust, gave an overview of the Centre and explained the objectives of the two-day workshop and its key sessions. The objectives are defined as below:
- Discuss the basic framework to document and advocate about the issue of violence within the context of patriarchy and hegemony by caste, class

ethnicity, linguistic groups, religious structures with reference to Maharashtra and Gujarat.

- Build a critical mass of people who will commonly connect around the framework and participate in regional, bilateral and South Asian processes.
- Build a solidarity network of such activists to be able to work with more energy on the ground and even connect at the macro level.
- Evolve communication strategies to bring visibility to these issues and situations.
- To reach out to grassroots activists located in smaller towns and villages and take their voice to a larger audience.
- 6. Offer concrete support - legal, media related etc to activists fighting specific cases.

She explained that the workshop was divided into 3 thematic sessions namely:

1. Caste and Community Violence in the Name of Honour
2. Migration, Livelihood and Honour Crimes
3. Domestic Patriarchal Violence and Honour Crimes

When honour as redefined by the Centre in the broad sense explained above it gives it a wider horizon to discuss domestic violence, caste based violence, ethnic and communal violence and violence inflicted on migrant communities as crimes and also does not limit us to discussing honour killing and women as victims alone. Hence the workshop was designed to focus on these intersectionalities.

Pushpa Bhave, (via video recording) veteran socialist thinker, author, activist and a founder core member of the Centre explained the context and significance of the workshop theme. She said that we should redefine the term 'honour' in the current scenario, based on concepts of humanism, egalitarianism, liberalism, modernity, democratic principles and social justice. Honour should not flow from

ones prescribed status and hence we should reject religion, caste, class, ethnicity and masculinity as its basis.

Pushpa Bhave stated that crimes in the name of honour are not a new phenomenon related to fractured modernity alone, though their scale and brutality has become more complex and its insidious acceptance and entrenchment in our society is worrisome and needs to be exposed and confronted.

Jatin Desai, senior journalist and Indo-Pak activist, stated that ‘honour crime’ is



Jatin Desai

peculiar to South Asia and it should be addressed immediately through spreading awareness and sensitising people on these crimes and their causes. He gave an example of the plight of Rohingya's of Myanmar who were stranded on boats for weeks together as they were facing persecution in their home country and non-acceptance by any of the

surrounding countries. He said that like this there are many communities in South Asia that are on the verge of expulsion due to socio-economic marginalization, social instabilities and are forced to migrate from their native lands. Women here are again the worst sufferers when migration is imposed on people due to internal or external unrest.

Referring to Maharashtra and Gujarat as states which have a history of progressive movements he lamented that today it seems that these movements have lost their vigour, but need to be revived in order to address grave issues facing these states in specific and the country in general. Social forces should ally with the media for they have wider reach and impact on people's minds.

Manjula Pradeep, Human Rights activist and founder of Navsarjan in Gujarat, spoke about the various challenges that pro-people organizations such as her's face in their work. It is even more challenging to work with minority communities and suppressed caste groups to help in the protection of their rights, she said. Navsarjan has faced the wrath for upholding these rights of minorities and dalit communities and its office has been attacked for it's so called 'anti-social' activities. Civil society organizations are scattered and not unified, hence they are easy to isolate and target. She added that challenges before rights based workers are more severe since they have to simultaneously take on struggles against the state, dominant and majority communities and corporates.

Coming from Gujarat, which has been projected as a model state for development, she was a close witness to the disparities and imbalances caused by the so called ideal model. Erstwhile resource rich adivasi dominated areas are worst hit. Development projects have robbed them off their sources of livelihood and the water scarcity continues to remain an acute problem in many parts of Gujarat. Due to low wages communities are now forced to migrate. To add to these woes adivasi girls are now being trafficked and all these issues are being pushed under the carpet. In Gujarat, not all minority communities are targeted. Affluent and powerful minority groups like the Jains are never targeted but the Muslims and Christians are. Therefore the need for State ideology and political will to execute existing laws protecting the rights of weaker and socially vulnerable sections is crucial.

She concluded that the discussion on honour crimes should be situated within this challenging context. We need to unify our collective strength to address this problem be able to relates it with the social power dynamics.

Nirja Bhatnagar, Regional Head, Action Aid, Maharashtra explained the focus and priorities of Action Aid work. She said that as a principle Action Aid collaborates with pro-people organizations that are working to strengthen marginalized

communities. In this regard Action Aid shares an ideological connect with the Centre.

In its Country Strategy Paper, Action Aid has agreed to prioritize the fight against patriarchy and poverty which are two sides of the same coin. In a patriarchal society women are bearers of the ultimate burden of poverty, which denotes deprivation of dignity, identity, human rights, political space and voice.

Stressing the need to change social mindsets, Nirja Bhatnagar said that we must assert what we believe in. There is no honour in killing. Women are independent human beings and patriarchal structures need not define or determine their existence. However the reality is far from our vision of a society that we would like to have. She gave the examples of Western Maharashtra where women who challenge the conventional norms get brutally murdered and in the Marathwada region we see patriarchal control over single women of which the numbers are very high. She pointed out that this situation is really worrying.

Manisha Gupte, women's rights activist, Founder of MASUM and Advisory Committee member of the Centre explained the key characteristics of the concept of honour.

Honour is seen not as an intrinsic human quality, but as an external trait. That is to say it is defined by others for women. The woman is seen as the man's honour, where she needs to 'behave'. Family honour gives emphasis on purity and superiority of blood lineage. Hence 'honour crimes' often end up in brutal killings of girls by her own blood relatives. In hypogamous marriages/relationships the boy is also killed.

Violence against women has often been used as a weapon against women and as a controlling mechanism. Honour crimes should be seen as a continuum of domestic violence, sexual violence and other forms of gender based violence. However, there is also a distinctive characteristic of honour crimes, that it targets those who

challenge the social structures and conventions. Therefore honour crimes are seen as legitimate and enjoy justification.

She concluded by stressing the need for organisations to come together and join hands against communal forces.

The inaugural session helped to set the tone of the workshop by bringing clarity on various aspects of the workshop theme. The speakers provided a wide canvas for subsequent deliberations and also posed critical areas of concern to reflect on.

Community Violence and Honour Crimes

Facilitator - Anvar Rajan

Sharing of personal and field experiences: Faridaben, Firoza Khatun

Speakers - Geetali V M, Vrinda Grover



Anvar Rajan, Firoza Khatun & Faridaben

Participants from the Gujarat based NGO, Center for Development (CFD), spoke about their experiences of the period post 2002 riots. Faridaben a survivor and working with CFD shared that the work of the organization with the orphaned children and affected women has helped the survivors and empowered them greatly. Firoza, activist from Ekta Nari Sangathan

(Ahmedabad) who lost her husband in the riots of 2002 had the tough task of raising her children all by her self. She strove to ensure that her daughter is educated and could stand on her own and be prepared to face any challenge in her life. She ensured that her daughter would be permitted to work and got an assurance from the in-laws family as well.

Although there are a few individual empowering stories but the problems of the community are galore. Espoused as a developed state, most projects in Gujarat favour the dominant and affluent communities, while the minority community feels that they pay the price for the same. Minority groups share their plight with dalits and other poor marginal social groups, but are scared to raise their voice, especially post 2002. The presentation highlighted the sense of insecurity the community feels and their struggle for survival against all odds amidst a communal and hostile environment.

Sarita Avhad, Alka Pawangadkar, Sugandhi Francis also shared their experiences of the riots and their interactions with the survivors that they had come across with. In 1992 riots of Mumbai Sugandhi intervened at the right juncture and saved two minority families from an attack by a local group. Later she also identified the attackers and got them arrested.



Participants involved during a session

Nisha Shivurkar also shared experiences from Sangamner, a town in North Maharashtra having a sizeable muslim population, where communal tensions were built-up by right wing groups and she had fought legal cases for the minority youth who were falsely implicated. Despite support and social intervention to maintain peace, the two communities even today stand divided. She pointed out that muslim women now had increasingly started observing *parda* and interaction/discussion of activists with muslim families was getting difficult. These experiences highlighted both the need to intervene and also the limitations to bridge the separation caused by communal tensions. The burden of honour upon women further increased in such a conflict ridden environment.

Vandana Bhagwat, a writer and academic also shared a similar example from the post Babri riots time when her muslim students were forced by their families to

wear burkha when they came to college. Within the college right wing teachers became more vocal and visibly dominant. She said, post 1992 the communal divide had become institutionalized and hence we now need to work much harder to keep the secular nature of the institutions alive.

A peace loving small town like Saswad, a few kilometres from Pune, also witnessed communal attacks post 9-11. Sharing the incident and MASUM's intervention to re-establish peace and harmony, Manisha Gupte said that college youth were targeted at that time with inflammatory speeches that provoked them to assert their masculinity (mardangi). MASUM initiated 'Lokshahi Utsav' after a rally and public meeting as part of its peace making efforts, which has now become a collective annual event of celebration of democracy. She said that more such alternatives should be explored and established.

Rubina Patel, an activist of Muslim Satyashodhak Mandal in Nagpur, shared her experiences about the biased treatment by the state machinery towards minority youth. They are often falsely implicated and are seen as terrorists. This creates fear in the minds of people. She herself was once arrested for 'unlawful' activities, while she was only protesting with other workers against a rape incident in the city.

For majority of the muslims, marginalisation is like an everyday experience. For example, due to false propaganda of terms like 'Love Jihad', Maulanas are unwilling to conduct nikah if one of the partners is from another community. Another glaring example of marginalisation is that muslims are refused housing on rent or sale in cosmopolitan localities. Also in some cases they are not allowed admission in mainstream schools and are advised to go to 'their urdu schools', while even good urdu schools refrain from celebrating popular hindu festivals. She observed that since RSS headquarters is situated in Nagpur minority groups in the city live under constant pressure.

Rubina Patel also pointed out that the newly emerging parties like Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen (MIM) cash on these fears and talk about economic problems

of the muslim community but they do not take any progressive stand on other issues such as status of women within their own communities. Thus the space for struggle is shrinking for muslim voices like hers.

Devkumar Ahire from Yuva Bharat, pointed out that both caste and community are closely linked and cannot be separated while analyzing communal politics. It is the poor and suppressed people irrespective of their religion who suffer in the riots and communal tensions while the upper caste leaders flare it up.



Vrinda Grover, Devkumar Ahire, Anvar Rajan & Geetali V.M.

Milind Champanerkar and Deepti Raut, both journalists, talked about media's role in reporting communal conflicts. In 2014 communal conflict broke out in various parts of the Pune city, supposedly caused by derogatory posts on social media. However, no incident was reported by the media for over two days, till a young IT professional was killed in one of the incidents. Media told that they were asked not to report by the Police, as it would have spread the tensions. But it was equally important to bring out the reality and the media failed to live up to its responsibility, said Champanerkar. Deepti also shared similar such examples from Nashik. She pointed out to the communal biases among media people as the reason behind the lack of inadequate coverage. In Malegoan and many places in the district of Nashik, towns and villages are divided on community lines. There are visible or non-visible borders separating one community from the other. Conflicts among them break out on seeming trivial issues, but it indicates that the situation is so volatile that anything can happen anytime. However, nothing comes on record due to lack of media reporting.

One of the main speakers in the session Geetali V M, senior women's rights activist, emphasized that having a nuanced understanding of intersectionality of caste, religion and patriarchy is essential. She lamented that progressive movements failed in providing cultural alternatives to people while critiquing religious dogmas. Religion does play a part in day to day lives of common people and one cannot outrightly deny its existence and meaning in their lives. Hence we have also failed to make our alternative programmes as popular as the conventional religious gatherings and festivals.

Another key speaker Vrinda Grover, a human rights lawyer, exposed the communalization of systems, especially the police and the judiciary, that are meant to protect people and their rights. Religion in its present form has moved much away from its philosophical preaching's and has become a tool of politics. She strongly stated, it is high time social movements recognize how communalism has become a basis of mainstream politics, and unless this reality is recognized, we will not be able to deal with its repercussions on society.

She continued that most parties use caste and community cards to get votes, but there is a fundamental difference between the communal politics of Congress and BJP, the two major national parties in India. While Congress has a 'pragmatic' approach, BJP has a more 'programmatically' approach to communalism. The latter is more dangerous as it is divisive and affecting the very social fabric for years and years to come. As a concerted effort to fight back right wing upsurge, civil society activists in Delhi have decided to ally with non-NDA parties, she informed.

Participants of this session felt efforts should be directed to work for the economic upliftment and stability of the marginalized communities in all religions along with their social development.

Anvar Rajan, senior social activist and group facilitator, concluded by highlighting the key points of the discussion. He stressed the need to reach out to all people to make them realize the significance of secular and democratic values, which is the only way ahead for our society and nation. He also stressed to be more upfront in

addressing and exposing issues like Love Jihad and Ghar Vapasi and involve more youth in the process.

Caste Violence and Honour Crimes

Facilitator - Raziya Patel

Sharing of personal and field experiences: Shantabai Shinde, Nitish Navsagare, Madhuben, Sandhya Nare Pawar

Speakers- Umesh Bagade, Lata Bhise Sonawane

The session started with sharing of experiences from Maharashtra and Gujarat.

Shantabai a survivor from Baramati, Pune, belonging to Vaidu, a nomadic tribe, shared her story of fighting violence and ostracism faced by her family from her own community's Jat Panchayat. Her son, who had married outside the community, was unacceptable to the other community members, who committed heinous violent attacks on the family and sexually assaulted the women in the family. The aggrieved family did approach the police, but they did not register their complaint for over a week, until Andhshraddha Nirmulan Samiti, (a civil society organization working against the ills of Jat Panchayats) intervened. Till date the charge sheet has not been filed.

Madhu a survivor now working with CFD in Gujarat shared her story of domestic violence inflicted on her due to outdated notions of family honour. Coming from a dalit background she was married at a young age into a poor family. She faced violence and torture as she could not bear a son. Although she wanted to work to support the family, she was not allowed to do so as it was against the family's honour.



Madhu, Geeta & Sajida

Later her husband passed away after a prolonged illness. As a widow she faced even stricter restrictions on her appearance and mobility but there was hardly anyone to support her and her children. The abuse continued and she even contemplated suicide. But being a fighter and a survivor, Madhu shared how she refused to follow the family norms that restricted her. Working with CFD she gained strength to stand on her own feet. Now along with her own family she also looks after her in-laws. A widow taking the responsibility of the entire family is unseen in her community.

These two experiences show nature of honour crimes within the caste.

The following sharing brings forth the heinous nature of caste dominance. In recent days Ahmednagar district in Maharashtra has become infamous for its caste based honour crimes. Dalit rights activist and advocate Nitish Navsagare, who is actively involved in supporting, investigating and addressing many of these critical cases, said that these incidents of brutal killings should not be seen as individual cases of anger and assault, but as structural violence of upper castes in the district against the lower castes. The victims are migrant, landless workers and the violence is inflicted because of inter caste relationships. The well known Kharda and Sonai cases and other such ill famous incidents were clearly triggered to terrorize suppressed communities as a result of inter-caste relationships. He said that the police and judiciary are not carrying out their duties with any seriousness and lacked the sensitivity required. For instance, the FIR in the above mentioned case does not include the fact that the girl (from the upper caste) was in the relationship, so the motive of the crime is not established. A fast track court was not provided as promised and the public prosecutor is far from being effective. Altogether the course of law shows how justice will surely not be done, as it often happens in such cases.

Journalist and women's rights activist Sandhya Nare Pawar pointed out that the media covers the incident after the damage is already done. That is 'honour killings' get reported, but 'crimes' are not. Problems like girls dropping out of schools, child marriage, practicing dowry are all indicative of impositions of

honour, but these do not get challenged and therefore garner social acceptance. Witch hunting is a serious honour crime in certain adivasi communities. Women who are branded as witches get killed by their own family and community. If her husband does not agree to the killing he is considered an outcaste and called an impotent. She urged the gathering to understand how caste, kith and kin are the world for common people and therefore they are scared to be thrown out. There is a need to facilitate intermixing of different social groups in innovative ways and facilitate their inclusion in the mainstream society.

Lata Bhise Sonawane, a senior activist working on women and dalit rights, talked about the role of the State and its various systems in dealing with honour related crimes. She said that our Constitution and the democratic system of governance are ideal but are controlled by the people in power and the common people do not get a sense of these ideals. Political leaders cash upon caste-communal vote banks. The police and judiciary are also biased and prejudiced and hence people have no choice but to cling to their community groups for their existence and survival. She said that the caste panchayats have become stronger as a result of the declining strength of the anti-caste movement. The upsurge of the dominant identity groups is fuelling crimes in the name of honour.

Umesh Bagade a senior academic in the discussion critiqued brahmanical patriarchy, which is at the root of crimes against women in the name of honour. The system works on hierarchies and discrimination, superiority of the man is proven when woman is considered inferior and secondary or upper caste draws assurance of supremacy from suppressing lower castes and so on. This structural domination should be seen



**Kamla Ganesh,
Nitish Navsagre, Umesh Bagade**

and understood in the context of caste, religion and patriarchy. He also stressed the need to re-read history to bring out reality of women's struggle and their resistance to suppress and enslave them.

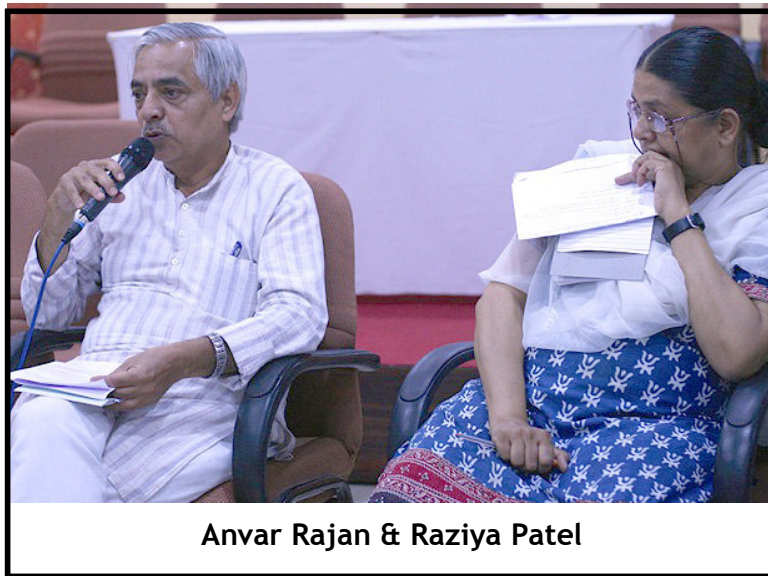
Women's rights activist and group facilitator Raziya Patel summed up the major points of the discussion added her own insights.

Sharing her experiences of 1994 while she was a Times Fellow her research work across the states showed the existence as well as acceptance of inter-caste and inter-religious marriages. She said there was opposition even then, but it was not long lasting. Mostly it would get converted into acceptance over a period. However, now, as a society, we have back tracked from our values of tolerance

and inclusiveness.

Communal forces have succeeded in co-opting women and adivasi/dalit groups in their fanatic attacks against minority groups.

In the context of these challenges she said we can draw lessons and strength from history



Anvar Rajan & Raziya Patel

and stalwarts like Dr. Ram Manohar Lohiya, Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar and Mahatma Gandhi, all of whom advocated inter-faith marriage as a way to denounce and annihilate the caste system. Such marriages also propagate right of people to choose their partners, as against the arranged marriages that are restricted to ones' kinship groups.

Migration, Livelihood and Honour Crimes

Facilitator - Vidya Bal

Sharing of personal and field experiences - Vilas Bhongade, Pratibha Shinde, Medha Thatte, Poornima Chikarmane, Ulka Mahajan, Vrushali Magdum, Subhash Lomte

Speakers - Kiran Moghe and Surekha Dalvi

The session theme was explored with nuanced experiences and perspectives by social researchers and activists working in rural, urban and tribal settings.

Vilas Bhongade, social activist from Nagpur working with unorganised workers

Nagpur accommodates migrants from far flung areas like Orissa, UP and Bihar as well as from nearby districts from the Vidarbha region. Migration has become a compulsion



Pratibha Shinde, Vilas Bhongade, Surekha Dalvi, Vidya Bal

for marginal and poor communities who cannot earn their livelihood locally. Lack of social support and pathetic civic facilities add to their day to day misery.

While relocating the displaced people into new colonies we encourage them to live in mixed settlements, and not be divided by caste. This experiment has succeeded in some villages, which over the years have shown a rising acceptance of different caste and community groups. There are also villages which strictly follow caste-wise structures and here each community pushes for their place of worship to be located in the prominent part of the village. Individual and community honour

becomes a cause of conflicts manifested in the form of temple and religious festivities.

Pratibha Shinde - senior social activist upholding the rights of adivasi communities

Most adivasi communities earn their livelihood from forests, which have been destroyed due to intrusive State Policies. Adivasis of Nandurbar now find it hard to get work locally. Contractors are reluctant to employ local workers as there are chances that they will organise and make demands. Hence labour in Nandurbar is sourced from outside and local people are compelled to migrate to Gujarat for work. Migrant adivasi workers are exploited like bonded labourers. They are made to work hard, driven to addictions of various kinds and are very vulnerable. To add to the woes the adivasi girls are trafficked.

The adivasi community follows a system of 'dej' which unlike dowry, is a form of gift to the girl's family as they give away their daughter. The non-adivasi communities, due to declining sex ratio trade their daughters by giving the bride price.

Subhash Lomte - senior social and political activist working with the unorganized sector.

Unorganised sector workers form a sizable majority of the total workforce, almost 93% as against the organized workers which comprise 7%. The unorganized sector workers do not have strong legal protection as their counterparts in the organized sector. The issues pertaining to their dignity and identity never come to fore in their struggle for survival. Although there have been some legal protections for domestic workers, they are far from adequate. The unorganised sector not only needs legal protections but also a change in the mindset of the people towards them.

Vrushali Magdum -
activist with Stree
Mukti Sanghtana

Stree Mukti Sanghtana
with waste pickers in
Mumbai. These are
mostly women who are
sole bread winners in
their families. The
organization addresses
their work related
issues as well as their
social issues like



domestic violence, early marriage of girls, education of children and so on. Most of them reside in mixed community settlements but their interaction is restricted to their own. Socio-economically they are on the fringe, but they still cling on to their caste groups. There is strong opposition to inter-caste marriage. Fearing the girls would elope they are forced to marry early and against their wishes. The common experience is that the girls are unable to adjust into their new homes and return back.

Medha Thatte -social activist from Pune working with domestic workers and other contract workers

Pune has seen one of the pioneering efforts to collectivize domestic workers. Women have successfully fought to secure work benefits, even in the absence of a supportive law. But the situation is now growing worse, especially for the contract workers, who lack skills that will sustain their livelihood.

One of the recent initiatives of the collective of domestic workers is the establishment of a Centre to help inter caste, inter religious couples. Our survey showed that there are many such marriages taking place, but they get into trouble

due to lack of social support. Families obviously do not support these couples initially. Rather they are ready to go to any extent to establish their family honour. Therefore the couples feel isolated and trapped, for which many are not prepared. In such instances, extending financial help, counselling, police and legal support helps them to be on their own. The organization has felicitated such couples publicly, as an expression of social support and acceptance.

Ulka Mahajan - founder of Sarvahara Jana Andolan, Sanghathan for adivasi, dalit and farmers in Raigarh district.

Ulka right at the beginning of her talk stated that in India physical labour and people who survive on physical labour for a living are seen with contempt. Thus it is necessary to protect these people with the enforcement of laws that grant social protection and dignity of labour to these people.

In case of both interstate as well as intrastate migration, workers are vulnerable to extreme forms of exploitation. They are scattered and unorganised and hence unable to protest against the exploitation. Women are also sexually exploited. A recent practice observed is that when labourers take leave they are made to leave their children back especially girls at the workplace. Such problems can be dealt with only through organizational strength. Hence trade unions should unite in the form of a network, so that workers can connect with them at the nearest collective during times of need. It is also essential to start a helpline for migrant workers, especially for women's protection.

Poornima Chikarmane - founder of Kagad Kach Patra Kashtakari Panchayat, an organisation of women waste pickers in Pune

Most waste pickers belong to poor dalit, Muslim and Christian communities. Inter-caste marriage among them is accepted and they are even open to live-in relationships. Hence honour crimes are not a big issue in this community.

Kiran Moghe - women's rights activist with All India Democratic Women's Association (AIDWA)

Problem of rising violence and crimes in the name of honour should be seen in the context of neo-liberal economic policies and its impacts. The policies have pushed major sectors, such as agriculture into a state of crisis and have caused inflation, unemployment and degradation of the environment.

The agriculture crisis is not a result of only unpredictable weather conditions as it is shown out to be, but a result of changing government policies, retracting protection and lack of government will to fix prices based on production costs. Changes in cropping pattern, in terms of a growing trend towards producing more and more cash crops, is altering the land use pattern, which ultimately is pushing us to food security issues. Changing labour welfare legislation, land acquisition bill or propaganda of 'Make in India' is all but indicative a changing political economy and priority of the State to seize lands from marginal farmers for the benefits of a few corporates.

As a result of the rural crisis we witness distress migration, but there is shortage of work options in urban areas as well. Most people get into self employment of different kinds, which is essentially a hidden form of unemployment. Workers are most exploited in home based or self employment sectors, where the employer is not accountable and the workers become vulnerable.

The present government has cut the budget for women and child development substantially. While the 5 crore worth relief to corporates is termed as tax exemption, social welfare budgets are termed as subsidies for the poor.

Unless we locate the issues of violence against women and honour crimes in the present political economy, we will not be able to address it effectively. Therefore we need to contextualise and define it in relation with other issues like land acquisition, poor implementation of MNREGA and Food Security Acts, labour laws and so on.

Surekha Dalvi - senior social activist and founder of Shramik Kranti Sanghathan for adivasi, dalit and farmers in Raigarh district.

Migration can be voluntary or imposed. One approach towards migration is to see it as an opportunity for livelihood, another is to see it as displacement from ones local community and livelihood in search of work elsewhere. The latter results in uprooting the communities and they are not accepted in their new settings and feel isolated which makes them vulnerable to exploitation and violence of different kinds.

Neo-liberal policies have been implemented in all the South Asian countries and displacement of an unprecedented scale is the order of our times. Neo-liberal policies have had other impacts as well, for instance, natural resources, which were seen as community assets have now become individual assets, which makes it easier to confiscate them through policies suitable to corporates.

Very often the concept of honour has been modifying women's autonomy and mobility. She said that she has observed that in working class families where the husband allows the woman to work outside, it is only when he is unable to find the work. But when he finds a job he does not like the fact of the women going out to work and feels it is lowering his dignity. This trend is unfortunately growing.

Vidya Bal - noted women's rights activist and founder editor of a well known marathi magazine "Miloon Saryajani"



Participants involved in a session

The experience of displacement and uprooting is common for most women as they have to leave their native family after marriage. However, migration is also caused by other factors such as the search for work, natural calamities, riots and armed conflicts.

In the context of honour crimes, she said that we need to raise core issues about human relations that is, why the parents are so carried away with the concept of purity of blood and kinship bonds rather than valuing the future well being and happiness of their own children?

She also said that the discussions of this session highlighted how 'honour crimes' are rooted in political economy and policies regulating economic change. Thus it is not merely a gender issue, to be understood from gender-caste-class perspective, but a problem having its roots in changing economic order under the neo-liberal policies regime and the problems of unemployment, environmental degradation and the agricultural crisis caused. The session, in essence, stressed the need for devising a strategy, to counter honour crimes, by taking into account these varied dimensions.

Domestic Patriarchal Violence and Honour Crimes

Facilitator - Nisha Shivurakar

Sharing of personal and filed experiences - Priyanka Patankar, Rohini Kulkarni, Yogita Tayde, Rubina Patel, Harish Sadani and Vandana Bhagvat

Speakers - Kamala Ganesh, Nasreen Contractor

Kamala Ganesh: noted sociologist and academic.

There is a need to distinguish between patriarchy and patrilineal kinship and understand how both have a bearing on the concept of honour and reality of honour crimes. Kinship rules determine what we are entitled to. Men have unconditional rights in the parental family, while for women it is conditional. Before their marriage they have a right, but after marriage it becomes conditional, that is to say if they follow the kinship norms then their share is protected.

Although the kinship rules are not paramount, they do provide a foundation to what is acceptable and what is not and shape behaviour. Kinship exists in many realms of life and the family ceases to be the private institution, it is portrayed out to be. Nevertheless, family does provide a welfare structure, however imperfect; therefore people do not give up their family ties.

Patrilineal kinship is something that is specific to South Asia and gets reflected in systems like dowry, sex selection and honour crimes which are peculiar to the South Asian communities. For instance, sex ratio is favouring women all over the world except in South Asia.

One of the paradoxes of globalization is that the opposite impulse, to cling on to your specific individual identities, is becoming equally strong. In this process women become the matter of upholding honour of the group - family, biradari, community. In this context we need to understand how patriarchy interprets old rules in new forms.

Priyanka Patankar from Mumbai shared her experience of struggle against domestic violence. Her husband had the support of the political leaders, therefore she could not get help from the police. So even when there is protective legislation



Discussion in open space

it is very difficult for women to claim their dues. Yogita from Disha Kendra also shared her experiences. Rohini Kulkarni, counsellor from Swadhar, asserted that

along with direct intervention for support to aggrieved women, we also need to make them more aware and capable of being more assertive

Harish Sadani - woman's rights activist working with men and founder of 'Men Against Violence and Abuse'(MAVA)

Patriarchy exercises control over women's labour, reproduction, property and sexuality and this control is established through the institution of the family. In this oppressive system men are also pressurized to maintain the existing social structures, as is seen in a number of honour related crimes. In the case of Asha Shinde, who was killed by her own father for having a relationship with a boy from outside their caste, it was revealed later that the father had come under pressure by the family of his elder married daughter. They warned him that they will send the elder daughter back if they allowed Asha to go ahead with her relationship.

In case of farmer suicide, which is a serious problem in Maharashtra, the farmers are certainly pushed to the wall because of economic reasons and indebtedness. However, the farmer also deems himself as a failed head of the family, who could not fulfill his role to provide for his wife and children. Addressing these patriarchal notions of masculinity and kinship is necessary while we are dealing with honour crimes.

Nasreen Contractor - social activist and academic

Problem of honour crimes is prevalent in all South Asian communities irrespective of their religion, caste and class. There is a general reluctance to recognize violence against women in



Nasreen Contractor, Wandana Bhagwat, Nisha Shivurakar, Rohini Kulkarni & Rubina Patel

any form, including domestic violence as a crime. These are kept as secrets in the black box of the family to maintain family dignity and honour. In Nepal, domestic violence is not even recognized officially as a crime. In India, though there is a law, it is not implemented in letter and spirit, owing to several factors, including the patriarchal mindset of the police and judiciary. All South Asian communities deem women as their symbol of dignity and impose restrictions on women to protect their honour. Thus women are a victim of patriarchal honour codes and societies need to unlearn these codes imposed on women.

At the same time we must point out that these honour codes are patriarchal and not religion specific to counter western Islamophobic interpretations. As a South Asian community we need to have a nuanced micro - macro connect and solidarity to come up with a cross cutting analysis of the issue and build effective strategies to deal with them.

Rubina Patel - social activist from Nagpur founder of Ruby Social Welfare Society

She said that women activists like her work in a hostile environment. They are not accepted by their own community as they take up issues threatening to them. They are neither accepted by other communities also who look upon them as minorities. She said that she had observed and lived through the growing impact of communalisation of the muslim community. The number of masjid and women's wearing burkhas are on the rise. Huge amounts of money are spent on renovation and beautification of religious places, but the basic civic issues of the community remain unattended due to lack of adequate funding.

In order to maintain an independent identity, some Muslims have started educational institutions, of quality, but are embedded in muslim culture. These schools do not celebrate festivals of other cultures and some do not even recite the national anthem. Problems of marriage and talaq faced by muslim women are not addressed by the personal laws. Rising communalism is pushing us to become a

further closed community. As a collective we need to advocate with maulanas and also with the State.

Vandana Bhagwat - a writer and academic



**Nasreen Contractor, Wandana Bhagwat,
Nisha Shivurakar, Rohini Kulkarni & Rubina Patel**

Although the problem of violence is seen in all South Asian communities, it changes its form with caste and class. Hence, in order to unravel its myriad forms and underlying causes of violence we have to analyse it from caste-class-gender framework.

After the Babri masjid demolition in 1992, the progressive spaces have shrunk considerably. But even before that, since 1980s, upper caste brahmins joined hands with global capitalist forces and started giving legitimacy to regressive ideologies. This led to twin processes of their material development on one hand and propagation of brahminical culture as supreme on the other. The propagation is done through several norms and models, like we see a rise in the number of temples and practice of rituals. We also see non-brahmin communities buying on the Hindu propaganda and following their model of family and community celebrations.

She said that we need to challenge the family model that is projected as ideal by the dominant brahminical ideology. Rather than opposing the system of institution of family we should broaden its definition. This way we will be able to counter the mainstream propaganda through non-violent means. She suggested that families

that break away from conventional norm and be more inclusive of gender and sexual identities and transcend gender divisions.

Nisha Shivurkar (Advocate) - social activist and organizing secretary of Samajwadi Janparishad.

Women have a history of struggle against their subordination and suppression. Rukeya Sakavat's 'Sultana's Dream' and others like her have aspired for freedom and autonomy. Thus, although the problems are daunting, as has been narrated by the various speakers of this session, we also have an inspiring history to draw our strengths from.

She said that domestic violence is caused and intensified because of the violence in society and therefore it is imperative to talk about all kinds of violence to deal with gender based violence. First and foremost violence should be recognized and then addressed. But there is always a resistance to acknowledge that family is also a site of injustice and violence. Rather family is seen as a vehicle of community and personal honour. It was not surprising to me, when our Law Minister declined the demand for legislation against marital rape. He said it will go against family culture that India is known for. It does not matter how the woman gets treated within the family. We need to challenge and change these notions and mindsets towards violence against women.

Patriarchal structures reduce both men and women to set stereotypes, men have to be superior and providers, while women are to be meek and dependent. Although men do enjoy power and cultural sanctions, neither of the two are able to be themselves and live life as human beings. She concluded by highlighting the need for both women and men to break away from patriarchal structures.

The session highlighted very well the influence of patriarchy in causing and perpetuating violence against women. It also highlighted the family being the site of oppression and violence. Hence there is a need to broaden the concept of family and break it from the present upper caste model. Family needs to be defined by

blood or marital heterosexual relations and should be more inclusive rather than be based on kinship ties. The session also articulated the importance of maintaining a South Asian perspective, as against an anti-islamic western perspective, to understand and deal with honour crimes.

Concluding Session - Continuing Networking and Remaining Connected

Facilitator - Varsha Rajan Berry

Speakers - Vrinda Grover, Sadhana Dadhich, Manisha Gupte and

In this session, the speakers summed up the key issues emerging from the workshop and also suggested the course of action for the future.

Vrinda Grover, lawyer and human rights activist

The present political system presents a mixed baggage as far as gender based



Varsha Rajan Berry, Sadhana Dadhich, Manisha Gupte, Vrinda Grover

violence and honour crimes are concerned. Two recent judgements from two states are contradictory. In its verdict on a case of parents against a couple, the Karnataka High Court stated that the girls are not capable to take the right decisions. They are carried away by hormonal rage and hence face problems later. While the Karnataka High Court undermined the right to choice of an adult girl, the Haryana High Court proclaimed the need for 'couple shelter homes' as families hound the couple if the marriage is against their wishes.

The societal mindset is also changing and we get a mixed response in cases of violence against women. Recently, women in Muzaffarnagar came forward to lodge complaints of sexual violence on them. The women's movement should take due credits for its work to bring rape into right perspective. A rape survivor should not be blamed or her honour does not get blemished when she faces sexual violence. Survivor support was clearly evident in the Nirbhaya rape case. In the Muzaffarnagar incident too, the husbands of the women accompanied them to police stations and courts, which shows they felt rape was 'unjust' and did not consider it a family 'stigma'. Now, in the light of these changing and broadening points of view towards violence against women, we need to redefine the problem of honour crimes.

Our articulation should be based on sound understanding of political economy and policies which lead to violence. For instance, in the recent 'Men Engage' Conference in New Delhi some reports about intimate partner violence stated economic distress as one of the main reasons. These are not individual cases and we need to link violence with economic policies. The present economic policies are constantly eroding the control people have on their lives and dignity of their work.

Sadhana Dadhich - founder of Nari Samata Manch and senior social activist

South Asian countries share somewhat similar culture, rituals and practices and therefore they can connect well with one another as a network to deal with issues prevalent in these countries. The networking will not only strengthen our

understanding of issues, commonalities and differences but also build our strength as a collective to fight against those issues.

Apart from socio-economic and political analysis, which is immensely important, we also need to understand why people stick or cling to their kith and kin, why they feel secure by doing so. Unless we understand this we will not be able to fully grasp the challenges or come up with alternatives acceptable to people to counter these problems.

Manisha Gupte - women's rights activist, Founder of MASUM and Advisory Committee member of the Centre

We have a massive task ahead to build and project our unified identity as South Asians as well as to understand and unravel complexities of 'honour crimes'.

Women are seen as the site of honour, be it family honour or national honour. Therefore women become the targets when one wants to rob off a family or national honour. We have history of such violence, which is sensitively documented by feminist writers. Stories of Bhanvaridevi, Muktarmai and their likes are well known, as they were attacked because of false notions of social honour. These disturbing facets of our 'honourable' history should be brought to light and made known. This will help us challenge all notions imposed on women in the name of honour.

In the present structure, marriage for women becomes indispensable as it defines their identity and scope of rights. They have to be part of the family institution in a manner that is considered legitimate and acceptable by the kith and kin, and then they can derive rights from that status. Which basically means women out of marriage or who do not want to marry have no right to rights? Therefore women need to explore alternative forms of family, relationships and extended family ties. This is possible if women come out of the victim mode and establish their agency and strength.

Although all South Asian countries are in transition, it is possible to build our network with an aim to reconceptualize 'honour' and find alternatives to challenge it.

Varsha Rajan Berry - social activist, researcher and Coordinator
Mrinal Gore
Interactive Centre for Social Justice and Peace in South Asia

We need to be continually engaged in political discourse, networking, campaigns, research and writing on this theme at the regional level. The Centre aims to provide this platform and also be a pressure group to evolve actions and a better understanding. There is a strong need for people's voices to be heard and to forge a pan-South Asia identity through advocating for multi-lateral relationships between our countries and engaging with the SAARC platform on common issues, she concluded.

The Pune workshop, which was a first in a series of workshops on the theme of 'Crimes in the name of honour' had fruitful two days of discussions and came up with valuable suggestions for the future. Now the Centre accepts the responsibility to take the process forward based on shared learnings.

With the next workshop planned in Rajasthan, we will bring more partners on board with us and make our voice heard nationally.

The workshop concluded with a vote of thanks by Pramod Nigudkar, social activist, Managing Trustee of Keshav Gore Smarak Trust and member of the Core Committee of the Centre.

The Mrinal Gore Centre, intends to work as a pressure group for the right causes and help bring different people together for evolving better understanding.

In keeping with Mrinaltai's character and concerns that took root in Mumbai but went far beyond, the Mrinal Gore Centre started its activities with a dialogue on out-standing South Asian issues. It was in the fitness of things to launch the Centre in her memory by reaching out to people, initially in the region and later internationally.

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