



## HONOUR KILLING IN TAMIL NADU: A PSYCHE OF INTO LERENCE

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### ABSTRACT

Tamil Nadu is the land of social justice, Women equality, emancipation of dalits caste prejudice, rationalism, war against brahmanical domination, etc. For success of all things, social reformers were worked, such are, Ayyangali, Ayotidasa Pandithar, Father Periyar, Poet and Freedom Fighter Subramania Bharathiar, Bharathidasan, and Dr. Muthlakshmi Reddy, The Tamil Society, politically and economically changed but not socially, because, the Tamil people could not leave the caste psyche. The caste rigidity can alone project the conventional marriage system, but the modern society had changed their minds by the impact of science and technology and education. At the same time, the upper and middle class some groups it is indirectly prevent the changes, finally turned towards the extent of violence inflicted against women around the world has taken various forms of ranging from domestic violence to sexual violence, forced marriages to honour killings, forced abortion to female genital mutilation etc. There is no end to these crimes and every new day, the nature of crime is taking anomalous shapes distorting the lives of innocent women enhancing the atrocities against them which have engulfed them in the clutches of horrific darkness and fear emanating from this darkness. Suppression and subjugation of woman by man himself who carries with him the misconception that **'she is the one who belongs to him and have full control over her'** has in turn resulted in legal notions of adultery, seduction and enticement. Fathers, brothers or male members by exercising their male dominance do not lose any chance of retrieving their daughters or sisters from the male partner she chose to spend her entire life with. This even crosses the limits when innocent lives are shattered when their male partners are charged with kidnapping, abduction, and also inducing their daughter to compel them into marriage. This paper is focusing the actual incidents of caste based victims and mostly dalits are victimized, besides the reaction of government and the social activists.

**KEYWORDS:** honour killing, caste, dalits.

### INTRODUCTION

In most of the cases, such a situation leads to the brutal murder of the couple wherein, they go unreported with the police and local authorities turning a blind eye to what they presume and believe as an acceptable form of traditional justice by their families seeking to protect which they see as their 'honour.' There are no official figures on honour killings, though many studies and research have suggested that in India, many of the victims are tortured, burned, stoned or strangled every year in Tamil Nadu.

These atrocious practices prevalent in the society in one form or the other are a slur on the nation and all public policy initiatives should be to wipe out these heinous crimes. Unfortunately, the present provisions in law are not enough to deal with 'honour' killings. The gravity of the offence calls for the need to have an in depth understanding and to probe on the issues involved in 'honour based



crimes' which poses serious questions like why legislative provisions are allowing either partial or complete defense to the perpetrators of the crime? Whose honour is exactly at issue? Whether these crimes do not amount to violation of human rights? Is this not a '**cold blooded murder**'? Whether the Constitution gives a fundamental right to individual to make their own choice in marriage? Who is going to enforce their prohibition and how?

#### DEFINITION AND GRAVITY OF THE OFFENCE:

To look into the gravity of the offence, one has to understand the possible definition for 'honour killing'. "**Honour killings**" of women can be defined as acts of murder in which "**a woman is killed for her actual or perceived immoral behavior.**"<sup>1</sup> However, the words 'honour killings' and 'honour crimes' are used loosely to describe the incidents of violence and harassment caused to young couple intending to marry or having married against the wishes of the community or family members. Many experts object to calling the murders "*honour killing*". They are nothing but '*cold blooded murder*'. Some prefer to call the murders so called 'Honour killings', '*femicide*' or '*shame killings*'. Human Rights Watch defines "honour killing" as acts of vengeance, usually death, committed by male family members against female family members, who are held to have brought dishonor upon the family.<sup>2</sup> A woman can be targeted by (individuals within) her family for a variety of reasons, including refusing to enter into an arranged marriage, being the victim of sexual assault, seeking a divorce-even from an abusive husband- or (allegedly) committing adultery. The mere perception that a woman has behaved in a way that "dishonors" her family is sufficient to trigger an attack on her life.

Participating in International Child Abduction Relocation and Forced Marriages Conference organised by the London Metropolitan University here, Chandigarh based legal experts Anil Malhotra and his brother Ranjit Malhotra have said that in traditional societies, honour killings are basically '*justified*' as a sanction for '*dishonourable*' behaviour.

In a joint paper, they said: "Forced marriages and honour killings are often intertwined. Marriage can be forced to save honour, and women can be murdered for rejecting a forced marriage and marrying a partner of their own choice who is not acceptable for the family of the girl.

According to UNFPA (United Nations Population Fund) statistics, **approximately 5000 women fall victim to honour killings each year.**<sup>3</sup> According to the report of the Women's Human Rights International Group, most of these murders are committed in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Jordan, Egypt, Bangladesh, Morocco, Turkey, Iran, Brazil, Iraq, and also in Sweden, Canada, Uganda, United States, Britain, and about 1000 happen in India.<sup>4</sup> The NCW study, still underway, shows that of the 326 cases of conflict surveyed so far nationwide, 72% were because the couple crossed caste barriers and only 3% were because the couple were from the same gotra. "Women are making their own choices and in a patriarchal set-up this causes problems."<sup>5</sup> Hence, the honour killing has become common in many parts of our Indian country particularly in Tamil Nadu.

Elango was murdered by a gang of men who opposed his falling in love with Selvalakshmi 18, a dominant caste girl in Erode.<sup>6</sup> Megala 20, who loved with different caste youth Sivakumar (24) attacked and hated by her family and community in Manamadurai at Madurai (District).<sup>7</sup> Kannagi (22) from the backward Vanniyar caste and her Dalit husband, Murugesan(25), harassed and killed by the girl's parents and relatives in Puthukooraipettai village near Vriddachalam in Cuddalore district.<sup>8</sup> Lakshmi, a middle class family of Kallars. Sivaji (dalit) husband of Lakshmi was brutally murdered by her brothers in 2008, in Tiruvarur district.<sup>9</sup> Thevar youth Pasupathy (30) of Kamachipuram fell in love and married a Dalit girl Ilayarani (28), but allegedly killed her just a fortnight later to uphold the caste honour in Ayyanallur village, at Thanjavur district.<sup>10</sup> 21-year Arunadevi different caste eloped with her lover Devaraja in Nattarpatti village of Tirunelveli district.

Sangeetha 18, Naiyakar girl had fallen in love with a Dalit boy, Balachandar in Pullakkadupatti village of Dindigul district. Thankalakshmi in J-Mettur village of Dindigul district the girl, who belonged to the Kallar, had eloped with Vinoth Kumar a Dalit. Daniel Selvakumar (29), the Dalit Christian married a non-Dalit girl, Sathura, in 2008.<sup>11</sup> A 21-year-old pregnant woman was allegedly murdered by her family members for

having married a boy outside her community. Another gruesome killing, Gomathy, 17 year old was allegedly murdered by her two brothers for falling in love with a Dalit boy at Om Sakthi nagar in Seevalaperi village in Ramanathapuram District.<sup>12</sup> In 2012, the wave of honour killings caused after the inter-caste marriage of Dharmapuri couple, Divya-Ilavarasan, has claimed the lives of 17 people in the State, this report provided by Kadhira the Executive Director of Evidence, a Madurai-based NGO. Sasikala, an upper caste girl, had married Dalit Kottaisamy of Ponnaiyapuram secretly in a temple near Sathirakudi on October 11 against the wishes of her parents in Vilathur at Paramakudi Taluk.<sup>13</sup> Sriram, a resident of Madurai had fallen in love with Sonia, hailing from Srivaikundam in Thoothukudi.<sup>14</sup> But there is no data available to indicate the extent of the problem, primarily because cases were registered as murder under the IPC without charges to indicate that it may be an honour killing. If the case involves a Dalit and a non-Dalit, it is registered under the SC/ST Prevention of Atrocities, Act 1989. Honour killing is not happen between dalit and others, but also happened among the dalit communities.

In Villuppuram –a village by name Pallinenoor. Here a Pariyar girl and an Arunthathiyar boy fell in love. The girl and boy have been in love for over 8 years. They seem to have done register marriage and lived separately in their respective houses an account of fear and acceptance. When the girl's family know about this marriage they have expressed sever opposition for marrying a 'low cast boy'. So they tried getting the girl resister, parents seem to have asked her to call for the boy to 'honour' the love and marriage officially. The girl was conveyed this to her husband and went to sleep. It is reported that the parents of the girl killed her by thrusting a pillow on her month and next day burned her body.<sup>15</sup>

The next day when her husband heard the news and went to collect the body and rejected to burnt the body without any postmortem. Angered husband gave a complaint to the police station, the police as usual did not file FIR, and rather he started getting threatening phone calls from Paraiyars in the village. Cared for his life he and his family left the village, however the Pariyars in the village has beaten the husband uncle for not withdrawing the complaint and the uncle has been missing time and no trace of him.

Eettiampatti village, near Dharmapuri district- a boy by name Muthalaiyan belongs to Arunthathiyar caste and a girl by name Dhanalakshmi belong to Pariyar caste. Both have been in love and register marriage. The girl family could not bear their girl marrying a 'low caste' boy then they have threatened the entire 18 families living in and around the village. It is reported that entire Arunthathiyar community have vacated the village and is hiding out.<sup>16</sup>

In Chennai after Haryana's case of honour killing came to light in Tamil Nadu. A 21-years-old woman was brutally murdered by her father and relatives in Tirupur district as she married a dalit youth. Sripriya, who belonged to backward Kallar community had love with Badrakali, a dalit, while she was doing an internship for B.Ed. the couple eloped and got married in Salem on September 29. Police say Sripriya's father Srinivasan and two relatives came to Madathukulam, near Udumalpet in Tirupur, on Wednesday. Srinivasan asked sripriya, who was staying with Badhrakali's sister in Madathukulam, to come to Trichy to visit her ailing mother." She refused and told them she would decide after her husband returned home. The trio left quietly" Badharakali's brother-in-law Chandarsekar said, "but later the two of them returned. When my wife Rani questioned them, one man threatened her with a knife while the other stabbed Sripriya," said Chandrasekar. Sripriya later succumbed to her injuries. Udumalpet DSP C.Raja said the police have arrested Srinivasan (65), his nephew Asaithambi and Pannadi.<sup>17</sup>

The Dharmapuri violence is one of the worst caste based violence that happened in India. The incident took place on 7<sup>th</sup> November 2012 at Naikkankottai Dharmapuri district of western Tamil Nadu. Three colonies of Dalits of the Adi-Dravida community suffered the fury unleashed by a rampaging mob of Vanniyakula Kshatriya caste community when as many as 268 dwellings – huts, tiled-roof and one or two-room concrete houses – were torched by the mob. Even though there was no casualty reported as occupants of the houses escaped and took shelter in another village, systematic destruction of valuables, vehicles and other properties of victims took place. The prime target of the attack was Natham Colony while the adjoining Anna Nagar Colony and Kondampatti Old and New Colonies also suffered the fury of the caste Hindus.

An inter caste marriage between a Dalit boy and a Vanniyar was the immediate reason for the violent caste conflict. Ilavarasan and Divya were in love for two years and got married a month before the conflict despite threats from the local caste Hindus. This impelled the Vanniyar Community to call a Panchayat meeting on 3<sup>rd</sup> November which portended some extreme reactions from the upper caste Hindus. Some people gave an ultimatum to the Dalits that they should return the girl to her house within two days failing to which they would have to face dire consequences.

On 7th November, Divya 's father Nagaraj committed suicide when he was told that his daughter decided to stay with Ilavarsan. Some people seized this situation to mobilize the Vanniyar community using the dead body of Nagaraj. Nearly two thousand people carrying the body of the girls' s father the Dhamapuri –Timpattur road. Simultaneously another groups set ablaze the houses in the three Dalit colonies. All 268 houses were looted and then set on fire and the rampage continued for almost two hours. Valuable assets such as television sets, motorbikes, cycles, refrigerators, almirahs, all were damaged and burnt. All of the residents of the colony were reduced to destitution as all their savings were either looted or burnt.

A detailed analysis of the incident exposed a more brutal picture of the rampage. Everyone who is conversant with the facts about the incident, including police, are convinced that the incident was pre-planned. The Panchayat meeting of 3rd November, wherein an ultimatum was issued by some Vanniyar people, was just a precursor. The suicide of Nagaraj gave an impression that the rampage was a result of spontaneous reaction, but it was not. The mobilization of thousands of Vanniyar men within a few minutes, the police forewarning Dalits in the three colonies, keeping of police at bay by felling trees, the pattern of attack in which the inmates of colonies were not harmed physically but their properties destroyed and looted, all pointed to the fact that the attack was pre-planned. Moreover, the attacking mobs did not have people from the neighbouring hamlet. People from villages 20 to 30 km away from the area had already come well prepared in advance to take part in the attack with 150 litres of petrol and 200 litres of kerosene in mini trucks to torch the houses. Many of the Dalit victims were quoted saying that they could not recognize people in the mob, which meant that the people from distant villages participated in the attack. Even the time of the year for the attack was well chosen – months when only women, children and the elderly remained in the colonies as the men went to nearby towns and cities for jobs.

The dalits at Dharmapuri were basically workers in the agricultural fields of the Vanniyar community. But later on even though women still continued to work in fields, men started going outside the village to fend for their family. They started working in Bangalore and Coimbatore either as self-employed with such jobs like scrap dealing or in construction industries. This brought in huge developments in their standards of living. They became economically more secure as a result of which they began to acquire more land. They no longer had to depend or show respect to Vanniyaars and began to pursue even higher education. Dalits even started to wield power and to rule the upper castes as some of the constituencies became reserved. All these caused resentments in the Vanniyar community.

As aforementioned, the suicide of Nagaraj was not the actual cause of attack. The economic prosperity of Dalits was both the cause and the target of attack. Many specifically targeted families had been able to acquire some land over the years through their toil. Care was taken not to harm anyone while ensuring that all properties and means of livelihood were either destroyed or looted. As the marauding mob entered the villages, the women, children and the elderly ran for their lives to the nearby hamlets. The mob stole away the money, jewellery and all other valuables before torching the houses. The vehicles were burnt. The mob also looted a local Dalit temple and 4.5 kilograms of gold were taken away. Many Dalits also lost their important documents like educational documents, land documents etc.

Another reason for the mobilization of mob was the caste based policies of PMK chairman Ramadoss and the public announcements of Kaduvetti Jayankondam Guru, the PMK MLA. About two months before the incident, he announced that inter-caste marriages of Vanniyar girls would not be accepted and the men who lure away Vanniyar girls should be dealt with death penalty. This is deemed to be another cause for the attack on colonies as the case of Ilavarasan and Divya was not the first inter-caste marriage in the locality.

The Dharmapuri incident proves that despite the efforts from government, the violence and discrimination against Dalits continue to occur. The silence of police force during the attack and forewarning of Dalits points to the fact that the police require an immediate revival at local level. The incident also calls for more strict legislations to prevent atrocities against Dalits and to annihilate caste system and the strict enforcement of the same. having married a boy outside her community. The police said it is a case of “honour killing.”

The gruesome killing at Om Sakthi nagar here came to light on Sunday when the district police launched an investigation of the whereabouts of the woman on the orders of the Madurai Bench of Madras High Court on a habeas corpus petition filed by her husband R. Suresh Kumar(24)The court directed the police on March 21 to produce the woman (five months pregnant) before the court, but investigation by the police revealed that the girl was done to death by her family members — her mother, brother and three maternal uncles — on the night of March 17itself. On Sunday, the police exhumed the decomposed body found buried on the Vaigai riverbed at Kuyavankudi near here and arrested R.Venkateswari (41) and R.Vimal Raj (21), mother and brother of the deceased and two of her maternal uncles Janakiraman (37) and Bagyaraj (35) on charges of murder, after registering a case. “It’s a clear case of honour killing,” Superintendent of Police N. M. Mylvahanan told *The Hindu*.<sup>19</sup> The family members hatched the conspiracy and engaged the anti-social elements to execute the murder, the SP said, adding Azhagarsamy, another maternal uncle of the woman, was absconding. The woman’s family, which objected to her marriage with Suresh Kumar belonging to another community, lured her to return home for a patch-up after the couple had gone to Nedukandam in Kerala in September last, fearing threat to their lives. Suresh said he had handed over his wife to her mother Venkateswari at Veerapandi temple in Theni on March 16. She took her daughter home, stating that she would send her back after two days. The woman’s two aunts were also present at the temple, he said.

He was in regular touch with his wife, but her mobile was switched off after he last spoke to her at 9.30 pm on March 17. As he feared danger to his wife’s life, he moved the court on March 20, little realising that she was done to death on the night of March 17 itself. Her maternal uncles had ransacked his room in Madurai and destroyed all his certificates, Suresh alleged. Gokulraj, a 21- years –old Dalit youngster was murdered due to made a friendship with a OBC Konkku Vellalla community girl. He met her at Arthanareesh warar temple on 23<sup>rd</sup> June, 2015. A purposed conversation between the youth’s brother and the girl revealed that when Gokulraj was talking to her, some people came and seized their cell phones. They sent the girl home put Gokulraj in a vehicle, she said after three days, his severed body was found on rail tracks near Erode. Later, a suicide note and a video with Gokulraj saying he committed suicide after failing in love were circulated on social media.

Police said Yuvaraj, his driver Arun and Kumar took Gokulraj to a hillock in Sanlaridurg and short the viedo. He was also made to write the suicide note. Then the trio allegedly took Gokulraj to rail tracks near Erode, where they slit his throat and left the body on the tracks. Later they leaked the viedo on social media with the help of a Yuvaraj’s outfit. Yuvaraj wanted to send a strong message to Dallit youths in relationships with Gounder girls. He organized events where he made Gounder students pledge that they won’t marry in other communities.

The above incidents clearly indicate that it is a matter of women rights violation and female genocide. Honor killing usually claim the lives of the female sex more than men. The male dominant patriarchal feudal system has its deep roots in the Indian Caste System and it has always target the womb of women. It has laid down several codes of conduct and laws of ‘femininity’ to control women.

14th of March, 2016 Shankar was murdered for marrying Kausalya, a girl from the Kallar community in Tamil Nadu. Shankar was a Pallar (a) Devendra kula Vellalar from Kumaralingam village in Udumalpet; Kausalya belongs to an OBC caste with social and political clout in the state. On that day, both of them were attacked by a group of 5 men armed with weapons. Shankar died on the spot succumbing to the injuries<sup>20</sup>. Kausalya’s father surrendered to the local police, and confessed to the murder. In a strongest ever verdict against honour killing in Tamil Nadu is only acceptable and justified the dharma against the honour killings. The Thiruppur District and Sessions Court sentenced death penalty for six among eleven, the other five were

given life and one was acquitted. The Court ordered a total compensation of Rs 11.95 lakh to the girl and Shankar's family. Accused and punishment: A1-Kausalya's father Chinnasamy (death), A2- Kausalya's mother Annalakhshmi(not guilty), A3-Kausalya's maternal uncle Pandi Durai(not guilty), A4- Jegadeesan(death), A5-Manikandan(death), A6-Selvakuamr(death), A7- Kalai Tamilvaanan(death), A8- Madan(a)Michel(death), A9-Stephen Dhanraj(death), A10- Kausalya's 16 year-old relative(not guilty), A11- Manikandan (five years rigorous imprisonment)<sup>21</sup>.

Women denied of their rights to choose their life partner. The feudal lords and other dominant forces were afraid of losing their family wealth to an 'outsider'. Especially they could not let the family wealth being taken away by a 'low caste' person/ family. The history tells us that the child marriage and denial of 'Love' marriage etc has been a result of wanting to retain the 'wealth' within their family. The Brahminical Hindutvas laid them as rules by their Manu Smriti and other sutras and puranas which have proven to be of greater influence in the society, not only among the dominant caste but even within the Dalit Community.

### CONCLUSION:

Honour killing are encounter in many societies in the world. Tamil society has regressed to the Dark Ages. It is very distressing to note in the times when the people Chatting via 3 G technology. It indicates that all societies should act together to curb honour killings. Criminal laws should require that honour killers should be punished severely. The Government of Tamil Nadu must prevent the notorious acts of castiest groups. The Left Party members stressed in the Assembly that so far 71, persons were killed for love affairs, but the Finance Minister O. Panneerselvam rejected the claim. The rulling and ruled parties are silent on this issue for begging votes, not only in these issues, but also atrocities against Dalilts in Tamil Nadu including Thirunal Kondacherry incident recently in Nagapattinam District Some political parties publically acted against inter caste marriage. It is a scheme on Periyar lilved Tamil Nadu, so cultural systems should be discouraged and individual rights should be prioritized. Hence, the law is only an instrument and it must be effectively used. Besides, we must need an effective social reform movement towards changes their psyche.

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