Killing in the name of “honour”: The South Asian Community in the Canadian Context

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Saima Ishaq, August 2010, Concordia University

Abstract

“Honour Killing” is defined as the act of killing a person, usually a female relative (i.e. daughter, wife), who is taught to have brought dishonour to the family by engaging in “unacceptable” sexual behaviours. Studies have shown that those who commit this homicidal act are generally blood related to the victim (i.e. fathers, brothers, cousins, and sometimes other female relatives such as mothers have also been documented as being supporters). Most research and studies on “honour killings” have been conducted in the Middle East and South Asia and just recently in the U.K., Sweden, and Norway. However, little is known about this new social phenomenon in Canada. In this regards, with the help of the existing literature and the five Canadian case studies, this essay is an initial attempt at 1) exploring the phenomenon of “honour killing” occurring within the South Asian communities living in Canada, 2) analyse or pre-assess the social contributing factors or social conditions that enable the sacrifice of girls and women for honour’ sake within the Canadian context, and 3) assist policymakers, community and religious leaders, and other social organizations in the implementation of new legislations, and adequate strategies for preventing and eliminating honour-based violence against women and girls. One of the main goals is to dissociate honour killings from a particular religious belief system and locate it on a continuum of patriarchal patterns of violence against women.

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1 I am extremely grateful to Professor Homa Hoodfar for guiding and supporting this project. Without her expertise in women’s rights in Islam and her intellectual insights, this document would have not been possible. I would equally like to thank Professor Katja Neves for her ongoing support throughout my graduate studies and for always being there in times of despair. I am also thankful to Professor Penny Pasdermajian for accompanying me through my undergraduate and graduate studies and always provided me with great confidence and strength.
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“Violence against women is a manifestation of historically unequal power relations between men and women, which have led to domination over and discrimination against women by men to the prevention of the full advancement of women…”

(The United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women²)

Introduction

What makes a father, brother, and mother kill a close female kin for honour’s sake? Why do women have to be killed or sent on exile for choosing their own lifestyles and partners? How can a brother, whom should be the protector, becomes the killer of his own sister? Understanding the emotions involved in killing a close female kin is one of the most difficult task. I have always been astonished about the fact that some people, who claim to be (or culturally expected to be) the protector, ends up cold-bloodedly murdering the woman they loved the most. The murder of Jaswinder Kaur Sidhu disturbed me very much when I had just turned eighteen. Her death became a world-wide case of an Indo-Canadian murdered for marrying a poor rickshaw driver in spite of family refusal. A few years later, Amandeep Atwal, another Indo-Canadian, was stabbed to death by her father. Both cases were discussed as being simply murders. Little or no reference was made of them being murdered for honour. However, my soul was left with no peace when the Canadian media referred to Aqsa Parvez’s death as a potential “honour killing”. Aqsa’s case became a “hot topic” and it was the first time the Canadians heard of such term.

For years Canadians including scholars, researchers, and policy makers have ignored or overlooked abuses of minority women, especially the issues surrounding violence and crimes perpetrated in the name of honour. Whenever addressed, it has led to stereotypes of cultures, misrepresentations of minority cultural groups and anti-immigrant agendas (Dustin and Phillips, 2008). The best example of this is how the Parvez case was handled. Rather than properly addressing and resolving the matter involved, the Western media, and the public discourse associated the crime with the “Muslim” and “South Asian culture”. The debates over the Parvez case led to serious

² http://www1.umn.edu/humanrts/instree/women/engl-wmn.html#devaw
misrepresentations, stereotypes, and discrimination of particular communities, particularly South Asians and Muslim minorities in North America and Diaspora around the world. This new development also had an important implication for women of the community who now felt even more restricted to report the abuses against them within their household as they may be accused of dishonouring their community by playing in the hand of stereotype of violent Muslim community.

My motivation force for writing this essay was first the inaction on behalf of the Canadian research community in attempting to properly address and resolve these crimes despite its rise in the last few years. Second, as a member of the community, I would like to try to understand the phenomenon of honour killing for myself and also for many other young women who face similar situation. Thirdly, the ill-treatment of such crimes both by the Western media and the public discourse—is another motivation force for analyzing and exploring the phenomenon of honour killing in Canada. Finally, I would like to explore and possibly suggest avenues for eliminating this kind of crimes against women perpetrated in the name of “honour”.

The Scope of the Problem in Canada

The incidences of honour killings have been associated or attributed to a particular ethnic group: namely South Asians. While the South Asian community compose one of the largest growing populations in Canada (Tran, Kaddatz and Allard 2005; Lindsay 2001; Chard and Renaud 1999, and Israel 1987), it remains largely ignored by research literature, mainly surrounding the phenomenon of honour killing. According to Statistics Canada, by 2017, about 20% of Canada’s population could be visible minorities, or anywhere from 6.3 million to 8.5 million people. Close to half are projected to be South Asian and Chinese. The highest growth rates are projected for West Asian, Korean and Arab groups, whose populations could more than double by 2017, but remain small relative to the South Asian, Chinese and African populations.

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3 Even though there is no consensus, in the community literature, on defining the concept of community, like Etzioni I refer to community as a combination of two elements: a) “a web of affect-laden relationships among a group of individuals, relationships that often crisscross and reinforce one another (rather than merely one-on-one or chainlike individual relationships”; b) “a measure of commitment to a set of shared values, norms, and meanings, and a shared history and identity-in short, to a particular culture” (Etzioni, 2000: 188).
In order to eliminate gender-based violence among immigrants, especially within South Asian immigrant communities, we must first understand that no religion condones the killing of women in the name of honour. Indeed, there is no doubt that a minority of people do kill their womenfolk by using the religious and cultural justifications. For instance, similar to some people belonging to another ethnic culture, some South Asians do kill their women for breaking the family and community's boundaries and norms but it does not mean that the religion to which they belong condones such crimes. To believe this, is to miss the whole point. I'm a Canadian of Pakistani origin and I know of many similar cases where daughters broke the supposedly gender and honour norms both here and in Pakistan but no one suggested honour killing or anything close to it. Then the question has been for me what is really behind such cases of honour killing particularly in Canada.

The Goal of the Essay

The threefold purpose of this essay is, first, to explore the phenomenon of honour killing occurring within South Asian communities, second, to analyze the social contributing factors that enable and promote the murdering of girls and young women for honour' sake. Third equally important purpose of this essay represents a step, however small to assist policy makers, community and religious members, along with other social organizations in the implementation of new legislations, and proper tools and mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating programmes and policy reforms in order to eliminate honour-based violence against women and girls. Most specifically, I would like to contribute to the works conducted by various women rights’ activists, scholars, and experts on issues of violence against women perpetrated in the name of honour.

In this essay, I will be addressing questions such as what are “crimes of honour”, what are “honour killings, are honour killings specific to Islam, how is it different from ordinary domestic violence and crimes of passion which are/were rampant in many Western cultures, although today we know them differently, what is the meaning of honour and shame among South Asians, what are the social contributing factors that enable such crimes to occur within the Canadian context, and finally, how can such crimes be eliminated and reduced in Canada. That is, I examine the possible solution
through the Canadian policies to eradicate this form of violence against women particularly against young women. Most importantly, I also try to look at various strategies that can be adopted by the community activists to counteract these forms of crimes from within the community as I believe these maybe more effective strategies particularly if it is supported by the policies and the national level.

Sources of Data

To this end, the works surrounding the topic of honour killing conducted by various scholars, researchers, human right activists, and non-governmental agencies have been analyzed. In another words, the essay will canvas the literature and debates around these issues with the reference to the cases that I have chosen as examples. The scholarly and peer-reviewed articles implemented were obtained from Academic Search Premier (EBSCO), Sociological Abstracts on CSA, Encyclopedia of Diasporas, ProQuest Dissertations and Theses - Full Text, and A SAGE Full-Text Collection through Concordia University Libraries. Additionally, Middle Eastern, South Asian, and European literature has also been examined. The following key words have been utilized to obtain peer reviewed and scholarly articles implemented in this essay: honour killing, honour crimes, crimes of honour, karo-kari, crimes of passion, domestic violence among the South Asians, South Asian communities, family homicides, and family violence.

Organization of the Essay

I begin the essay by analyzing the South Asian community living in Canada due to the rise in the number of “honour killings” cases occurring among the community. In this section, I discuss the historical development of this group. The section is followed by a discussion of five “honour killing” cases that occurred among the community rather or not identified as such by the Western media. The following segments will attempt at answering the above mentioned questions. In another words, after analyzing the case studies along with the help of the existing literature, we will be looking at the characteristics of honour killing. This segment will then be followed by illustrating that honour killings and other forms of crimes of honour are not a Muslim pedigree as often
depicted by the Western media and public discourse. Afterwards, we will be looking at the debates about whether crimes of honour are distinct or similar to other forms of crimes, particularly crimes of passion and domestic violence.

The essay will also tackle the honour and shame complex within the South Asian community in order to establish a causal relation with the incidence of honour killings and other crimes of honour. Literature review illustrates how both concepts have a direct link with such crimes against women—that is, honour and shame have become the mechanisms through which patriarchy is maintained especially within traditional societies and communities such as the South Asians. The following section will provide a preliminary analysis of the social contributing factors that enable honour killings to occur within the Canadian context. I specifically suggest that we should focus on the inter-relatedness of various societal influences (i.e. intergenerational conflicts, communal segregation along with patriarchal customs, traditions and beliefs) in appropriately understanding the crimes of honour against South Asian women living in Canada.

The last segment of the essay will include a list of recommendations on what both the Canadian government and the communities may do in their attempts to prevent such honour crimes. In this regards, I particularly examine what reforms the Canadian government has adopted as its response to this new social problem. Consequently, I suggest that the Canadian governments, policy makers, community and religious leaders, scholars and researchers, and various human and women’s rights organizations should collaborate and work together to combat all forms of gender-based violence, including the so-called honour crimes among various communities.

I am hoping to understand the relationship between these kinds of honour and patriarchal power, which is based on disempowering women, particularly through marriage practices. My main goal is therefore to examine the extent that “honour killings” maybe are specific crimes and a revived traditional method of disempowering and controlling women. Besides increasing our knowledge on the phenomenon of honour killing, another equally important purpose is to dissociate honour-based crimes from Islam or any other religion and place it on the continuum of patriarchal belief
system. Before I begin, I believe it is essential to clear what are honour crimes, particularly known as ‘crimes of honour’.

**Part I: What are ‘Crimes of Honour’?**

The United Nations estimates that five thousand women and girls are murdered each year in the name of honour (Parrot and Cummings, 2006: 173). ‘Crimes of honour’ have been seen primarily as the ‘violence against women’ (sometimes men) and a ‘violation of human rights’ (Welchman and Hossain, 2005). Depending on the exact circumstances, ‘honour crimes’ may “violate rights to life, liberty and bodily integrity, the prohibition on torture or other cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment; the prohibition on slavery; the right to freedom from gendered-based discrimination and sexual abuse and exploitation; the right to privacy, to marry and found a family; the duty to modify customs that discriminate against women; and the right to an effective remedy” (Welchman and Hossain, 2005). Research suggests that ‘crimes of honour’ refers to a variety of forms of violence against women such as ‘honour killings’, assault, confinement or incarceration, and interference with choice of marriage (Welchman and Hossain, 2005: 4). The term ‘crimes of honour’ is generally used to refer to a type of violence against women categorized by ‘motivation’ rather than by perpetrator or form of manifestation (Welchman and Hossain, 2005). Although, women remain the majority of victims, men also run the risk of being subjected to such crimes (Welchman and Hossain, 2005).

Although such crimes, including honour killings occur in various parts of the globe, most take place in the Global South or Developing World, in particular Pakistan in which 200 to 300 women in this country alone are victims of honour crimes each year, and justifying the inordinate amount of attention focused on this area (Yurdakul, 2001). In comparison, it is reported that Jordan, Egypt and Amman each record about 25 to 30 honour killings a year (Yurdakul, 2001). However, it is critical to acknowledge that these numbers may not represent the reality given the high number of unreported cases⁴. Radhika Coomaraswamy, a United Nations Special Rapporteur on violence against women, states that the incidence of ‘honour crimes’ have been traced to several

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⁴ “Shame” is a documentary on ‘honour killings’ in the rural region of Pakistan, Sindh. According to the producer, Sindh is the area where most honour killings are taking place compared to other regions in the world. The documentary could be accessed through www.wluml.org
countries in the world, including but not limited to Brazil, Egypt, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Morocco, Pakistan, India, Qatar, Syria, Turkey, and Yemen (Welchman and Hossain, 2005). Although honour killings are common in these countries, they have also been reported in immigrant host countries such as UK, Norway, Sweden, The Netherlands, United States, and more recently in Canada.

Now that we have examined the notion of ‘crimes of honour’, let us now explore the community in which such crimes have been documented. In another sense, the next section looks at the South Asian community and its historical and demographic developments within Canada.

**Part II: Who are the South Asians?**

A South Asian is defined as “any person who reports an ethnicity associated with the southern part of Asia or who self-identifies as part of the South Asian Visible minority group” (Tran, Kaddatz and Allard, 2005). In other words, the term refers to people coming from a great diversity of ethnic backgrounds including India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, and Sri Lanka (Israel, 1987). Some scholars and researchers tend to also include people from Afghanistan. Besides being identified by their cultural and ethnic ancestry and place of birth, South Asians can also be defined as by the birth place of parents, as well as by the visual minority status (Tran, Kaddatz and Allard, 2005). Despite its diversity, the South Asian community is united through common values and attitudes toward family, community, and social networks, as well as the preservation of ethnic customs, traditions and heritage languages. It is a very strong community with lots of pride and strong sense of belonging to homeland. The rampant every day form of racism that particularly the first generation face which prevent them from socially and economically integrating in the wider society has made the idea of identity and tradition of the homeland even stronger. Like any other ethnic group, members of the South Asian community place significant value to their ethnic customs and traditions. According to South Asian literature, the number of settlement years in a foreign land does not impact the community’s perceptions toward their ethnic customs, traditions, and religion (Tran, Kaddatz and Allard, 2005).

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5 [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/South_Asia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/South_Asia)
Whilst South Asian emigration around the globe began in 1834 and later promoted by the complete colonization of the continent by the British (1757-1947), it was only during the twentieth Century that North America opened its doors. The South Asian settlement in Canada began between the periods of 1900’s (Rangaswamy, 2005). The first South Asians to migrate were Sikhs from the Punjab who entered British Columbia in early years of the century (Israel, 1987). In the earlier years their numbers were small, they came in search of better financial conditions and many viewed this as temporary measure. Most were labourers, illiterate and unskilled workers. After the removal of racial and discriminatory restrictions from the immigration regulations in the 1960s, South Asian migration considerably increased. The early 60s wave of South Asian immigration was very diverse: its new arrivals were from various parts of India (not just Punjab) and Pakistan. Most of them were professionals (i.e. doctors, scientists, professors, and teachers), highly educated, fluent in English, and modern who were attracted by the existence of freedom of expression and democracy. They came not just to make money and return to their countries, but also to establish themselves in North America (Khan, 2006). Furthermore, the Immigration Act of 1967 was again modified to accommodate the needs of the Canadian market. This change in the immigration laws resulted in a further dramatic increase in South Asian immigration. This third wave of South Asian immigration brought mostly middle-class, semi-skilled workers (i.e. mechanics, cooks, factory workers, and so on) mostly from India, Pakistan, but also from other immigrant host countries.

According to Statistics Canada, a substantial majority of the population with South Asian origin living in Canada was born outside the country. In 2001, 68% of Canadians who reported a South Asian origin were born outside of Canada, compared with 18% of the overall population. The majority of immigrants of South Asian origin arrived in Canada relatively recently. In 2001, 53% of immigrants of South Asian origin had arrived in the previous decade, while another 22% came to Canada between 1981 and 1990. In contrast, only 5% had arrived in the 1960s, while less than 1% had come to Canada before 1961. The large majority of the Canadian population of South Asian

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origin is concentrated in Ontario and British Columbia. In 2001, Ontario was home to 62% of all Canadians of South Asian origin, while another 22% lived in British Columbia. At the same time, 8% lived in Alberta and 6% lived in Quebec. Overall, almost 600,000 people of South Asian origin lived in Ontario that year, while 210,000 lived in British Columbia, 72,000 lived in Alberta and 63,000 were Quebec residents. People of South Asian origin also account for relatively large shares of the populations in both Ontario and British Columbia. In 2001, Canadians of South Asian origin represented just over 5% of the populations of both Ontario and British Columbia, while they represented over 2% of Alberta residents, and close to 1% of the total populations of Quebec, Manitoba and the Yukon. Canadians of South Asian origin are almost equally divided among the Sikh, Hindu and Muslim faith groups. In 2001, 28% of South Asians reported they were Sikh, 28% said they were Hindu and 22% were Muslim. At the same time, another 16% reported that they were Christian.

Furthermore, in 2001, almost one million people of South Asian origin lived in Canada, representing about 3% of the total Canadian population (Lindsay, 2001). The number of people in Canada of South Asian origin, as defined by Statistics Canada, is growing considerably faster than the overall population. Between 1996 and 2001, for example, the number of people who reported a South Asian origin rose by 33%, while the overall population grew by only 4%. As pointed out, Canadians of South Asian origins come from a number of different ethnic or cultural origins. In the 2001 Census, 74% said they were East Indian, while 8% were Pakistani, 6% were Sri Lankan, 5% were Punjabi, and 4% were Tamil. The large majority of Canadians of South Asian roots reported only one ethnic origin.

**Part III: How many have died for honour’ sake in Canada? The Canadian Case Studies**

Even though according to Aruna Papp (2010), a social worker and family councillor in York Toronto, there has been around fifteen honour killing incidents since 2002, it is nevertheless difficult to tell exactly how many young women and girls have died for honour’ sake in Canadian households. In this section, I have chosen to discuss five honour killings cases that have attracted both national and international focus. The information of the cases has been obtained from various media sources, mainly CBC
news website, the National Post, the Ontario Court of Justice as well as the Supreme Court of British Columbia.

Case 1: Jaswinder Kaur Sidhu

The beautiful young woman known as Jaswinder Kaur Sidhu or Jassi was born in August 4, 1975 in Maple Ridge, British Columbia and brutally died on June 8, 2000 in India. Her family settled in Canada in the early 70’s and soon became owners of a farming land. Like many Sikhs who settled at that time, Jassi’s parents also settled in British Columbia for economic advancement and better future for their children. They were illiterate and had been farmers back home in India. Upon their arrival, they remained within the family profession. Like most immigrants, Jassi’s parents also worked on low-paying jobs upon their arrival. With time and hard work, they slowly became owners of a Blueberry farm. Today, the family is known as one of the richest Sikh families in British Columbia.

Jassi was born and raised in B.C. Like Fadime Sahindal, Jassi’s behaviour was closely watched by her family. She had a time curfew and was expected to be home soon after her cosmetic classes—that she was taking at the time. The story begins in 1995 when Jassi travels with her family to her maternal aunt and uncle, Surit Singh Badesha in India. It was love at first sight, when Jassi met Mittoo, a poor rickshaw driver. They met in private and took oaths of living and dying together. Between the years of 1995-99, both exchanged love letters, through the help of a friend, and from time to time also arranged to speak on the phone. After four years of long-distance relationship, Jassi returns to India. Jassi was well aware that her family would never approve of Mittoo, so on March 15, 1999, they secretly marry at a temple in Ludhiana in the Punjab and spend their honeymoon in a hotel. Before returning to Canada, Jassi registers the marriage in India.

Rumours begin to spread about the secret wedding but Jassi denies the story. On June 1999, the family finds solid proof that their daughter has ‘disgraced’ them by marrying a poor man. Furious and full of rage, Jassi’s mother and maternal uncle beat

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7 http://www.cbc.ca/fifth/murderedbride/
8 Fadime Sahindal, a Norwegian woman of Turkish origin, was murdered in 2002 by her father. For more details refer to In Honor of Fadime: Murder and Shame by Unni Wikan (2008).
her red and blue and orders her that she must divorce Mittoo. They forced her to sign a blank piece of paper, which was later used by the uncle to set false allegations against Mittoo for kidnapping and marrying Jassi at gunpoint. On February 23, 2000, the Indian police arrests Mittoo and his friends for the alleged crime. Jassi sends a fax to the Indian police refuting the story of her kidnapping. On April 3, 2000, Jassi goes to the RCMP in Maple Ridge, B.C., after being threatened and hit by her family. Mittoo was fighting for his love and life in India, so was Jassi in Canada. Jassi’s mother, stone-hearted, locks her daughter in her room and guards her under strict supervision. Jassi manages to call the RCMP and is escorted out of her family residence. When a South Asian girl marries, she leaves the house with her parents’ love and blessings. Jassi’s faith was something else. As she was leaving, the family members scorned at her and cursed her that she will never be happy for the rest of her life.

On April 13, 2000, Jassi leaves to India for good. The beautiful bride was too naive and unaware of what her faiths await. Upon her arrival, Mittoo is granted bail and is released from jail. The couple seeks refuge in the home of Mittoo’s grandparents. The love birds are soon traced. Jassi’s mother calls there and speaks to both Jassi and Mittoo. The innocent bride believed the call to be peacemaking and tells her mother about their plans for the next few days. The newlywed couple thought troubles to be over for good. But their happiness did not last. The next day, on the evening of June 8, 2000, the couple was surprisingly attacked by group of men said to be appointed by Jassi’s mother and uncle. The men kidnapped Jassi, and left Mittoo to die. Some villagers had taken Mittoo to a Ludhiana hospital. Jassi was taken to a farmhouse, outside Ludhiana and spoke to her mother for the last time. Jassi pleads her mother for forgiveness. The mother, who gave life to her daughter, orders death for her daughter. Her last words were “you are dead for us, death!”. This time Jassi cried and begged the men for sparing her life. But, the killers had received an “order from Canada”, and slit Jassi’s throat. Her body was recovered next morning in an irrigation ditch. Jassi’s husband and her in-laws arranged for her funerals. No one from her family attended the ceremony. On October 21, 2005, nearly five years later, seven men were convicted for kidnapping and killing Jassi, the men were given life in prison. But Jassi’s mother and
uncle got away with the murder. Her mother and uncle are still freely living their luxurious lives as respectful Sikhs of Maple Ridge, B.C.

Case 2: Amandeep Atwal

Jassi’s case was still ongoing in India when again, in 2003, another Canadian girl of South Asian, particularly of Indian and Sikh origin was killed by her close relatives\(^9\). This time it was the tragic and gruesome death of seventeen year old Amandeep Atwal, also resident of British Columbia. According to the court records obtained from the Supreme Court of British Columbia, Mr. Rajinder Atwal killed his daughter on motives related solely to her having begun to make her choices at such a young age that conflicted clearly with his 'cultural conservatism'\(^10\). Like Jassi’s family, Mr. Atwal and his wife were from the Punjab region of India. Her father immigrated to Canada at the age of 17, about thirty years before the time of the murder, ample time for him to have revised some of his values and attitude. Mr. Atwal had a Grade nine education and spoke no English. He worked in the Victoria B.C. for five years, after which he moved to Kitimat, a small community in northern B.C.

Based on the court evidence, the beautiful, charming and generous of spirit Amandeep was born and raised in Kitimat. She was 15 when like many teenagers she romantically fell in love with a young man of her age, Todd McIsaac, an English Canadian. She met Todd at the high school they attended in Kitimat. Todd lived with his father, Dan McIsaac, who worked at the Alcan Smelter with Mr. Atwal. During the trial, it was mentioned that Mr. Atwal did not approve of his daughter’s relationship with Todd. As result, the couple concealed their relationship. Two years later, due to a car accident involving Amandeep and Todd, Mr. Atwal became aware that not only the relationship continued but that it had become serious. Mr. Atwal told the court that his daughter was a total disgrace to his family and he had wished she had died in the car accident. In spite of family refusal, Amandeep kept her relationship with Todd. Upon their graduation, the couple decided to move together to Prince George where the two intended to find work. Before moving, Amandeep decides to go on a family vacation in

\(^9\) [http://www.cbc.ca/canada/british-columbia/story/2005/03/04/bc-atwal20050305.html#ixzz0pSHeEXW4](http://www.cbc.ca/canada/british-columbia/story/2005/03/04/bc-atwal20050305.html#ixzz0pSHeEXW4)

B.C. for a period of two weeks, something they had done every year. While on the trip and within just a few days, Amandeep tell her parents that she was to return to Prince George to live with Todd. Mr. Atwal offers her to give her ride back; a decision that cost her life.

Mr. Atwal and Amandeep left on the early hours of July 30, 2003. At around 3:00 p.m., Mr. Atwal arrived at the emergency department of Langley Memorial Hospital with Amandeep’s dead body with multiple stab wounds. Mr. Atwal told the hospital staff that Amandeep had stabbed herself due to recent family conflicts. The autopsy results revealed that Amandeep had been stabbed 17 times with a knife of “considerable size”. Furthermore, according to a pathologist who testified at trial, four of the stab wounds were very deep—one of which could have resulted in her death. Amandeep’s face had also a stab wound that was inflicted after her death. Within hours, Mr. Atwal was arrested and was later charged with the second degree murder. According to the trial judge there was no evidence that the offence entailed planning and deliberation. Therefore, the judge convicts the father to imprisonment for life with no eligibility to apply for parole for a period of 16 years for the murder of his daughter.

During the trial, it was pointed out that Mr. Atwal regularly attended the Sikh Gurdwara. He regularly participated and got involved in the cultural activities of the Sikh community. The court records of the Atwal case also revealed that about sixty letters of reference were filed at the hearing in support of Mr. Atwal. The members of the community and family kept supporting Mr. Atwal despite the horrific crime he had committed. After pronouncing on the sentence of Mr. Atwal, the Crown stated:

Amandeep was Mr. Atwal’s child. It is difficult to conceive of a position of greater trust and authority. On that day near Cache Creek, Amandeep was in the company of the person who, above all others in her life, should be expected to protect her and keep her safe from harm. It was because he occupied the highest position of trust and authority that she allowed him to drive her to Prince George that day. This was a cold, brutal and sober attack on his completely defenceless young daughter, carried out with the intention to cause her death. Amandeep remained in the car throughout the attack, still secured by her seatbelt. Her final moments in life must have been terrifying.

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11 According to the Criminal Code of Canada, a second-degree murder is defined as the death of a human being without planning and premeditation. The penalty of such offence varies from 16-25 years of imprisonment. For more information please refer to the following website: [http://laws.justice.gc.ca/](http://laws.justice.gc.ca/).

The Crown referred to Amandeep’s killing as “a violent and brutal murder of a child by her father” and as “a selfish act of the highest order, beyond the comprehension of any reasonable person”. Amandeep’s death was surely another Canadian tragedy but as you may have noticed no reference was made to concepts such as “honour”, “crime of honour”, “dishonour” or “honour killing”. Let us now look at the next case in which the Judge directly makes reference to these terms and even call upon experts to get their opinion on the issue of “honour” within that particular ethnic group to which the victims and perpetrator belonged.

Case 3: Khatera Sadiqi and Feroz Mangal

The case of Hasibullah (Hasib) Sadiqi was heard at the Ontario Superior Court of Justice in 2009. The facts of this case were therefore obtained from the hearing court. Mr. Sadiqi was charged for the first degree murder of his younger sister Khatera and her fiancé Feroz Mangal. They were both shot while in their car in a shopping mall parking lot in east Ottawa shortly after midnight on September 19, 2006. Similar to the Atwal case, the court analyzed the cultural and ethnic background of the victims and perpetrator involved. But, I believe it did with a greater degree, perhaps because it involved a “Muslim” offender and victims. Or perhaps, the intervening years much had been discussed on these issues both in the countries or origins and in home countries.

According to the trial records, the Sadiqi and Mangal families are from Afghanistan. It was further mentioned that the Sadiqi’s are Tajik in their tribal ancestry while the Mangal’s are Pashtun. Hasib’s parents had divorced a couple of years of a go. Due to his father’s abusive behaviour, his mother divorced and went on living in the west coast while the father remained in Ottawa with the three children; Hasib, Khatera and their younger sister Aurezo. Khatera and Feroz had developed a romantic relationship and decided to get married. It was written in the court record that:

According to the cultural norms of their Afghani background, Feroz or his family should have approached Khatera’s father and sought his approval and permission for an

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14 Under the Criminal Code of Canada, a first-degree murder refers to the death of a human being as a result of clear planning and deliberation. The punishment for such offence is 25 years of imprisonment. For additional information, please refer to the following website: http://laws.justice.gc.ca/.
engagement, and then marriage. Instead, Khatera approached her mother, introduced Feroz to her, and subsequently persuaded Feroz’s family to make overtures to her mother for approval to become engaged.\(^\text{15}\)

Although Khatera was living with her mother, according to the cultural practices it is the father that has the full authority to marry his daughter and not the mother. It is important to make note of the power of the father over his daughter’s marriage is based on traditional practices rather than Islam particularly the Hanafi school of Muslim law to which most Afghanis and especially the Tajiks belong, as it is adhered to in Afghanistan. Although, once a woman is at the age of maturity, according to the Muslim tradition of Hanifa, where the majority of Afghans (Tajik and Pashtun) belong to she would not need permission of her father. According to the facts, after her engagement, Khatera moved into Feroz’s family home. Hasib had made it clear that he did not approve of their engagement. The trial Judge stated that “in their Afghani culture, unless rectified, this was a matter casting dishonour or disrespect on the Sadiqi family, lowering its reputation in the community.”\(^\text{16}\) It was mentioned that it was clear that the crime was premeditated. According to the court records, there was evidence that Hasib told his friends that he was going to ‘get them’ for their misbehaviour. Hasib specified that he had met the couple a few minutes prior to their killing in order to ‘rectify’ the problem. When the couple returned to their car after the meeting, Hasib followed them and subsequently killed them both at a close range with a 44 magnum revolver he had in his car. After expert scholar advice received from Dr. Shahrzad Mojab, professor at U of T, the court specified that the killing involved was an “honour killing”.

Dr. Mojab was called upon to pronounce on the relationship between culture, religion, patriarchy and violence against women in the Middle East and Diasporas around the world, particularly regarding the issues related to the phenomenon known as “honour killing”. The court records specified that Dr. Mojab had been studying Kurdish women in Diasporas and Afghanistan specifically involving violence against women and was one of the very few scholars studying “honour killing” at the time of the events. When asked what experts are saying worldwide on the subject of honour killing, Dr. Mojab responded:

\(^{16}\) R v. Sadiqi. Date: 2009/04/09, Court file no.: 06-410.
There are a few, but it’s a very specialized area of knowledge in terms of the violence against women. It is been recognized as a particular form of violence against women. So, there are scholars, mainly in Europe, as well as again feminist and women’s scholars the Middle East who are writing on this. And because of the different aspects that one can write on this issue, there are many who write on overall the area of violence against women, but not that many who will focus in particular on honour killing.\textsuperscript{17}

Furthermore, when asked whether this expert knowledge applies to the Afghan culture as well, Dr. Mojab stated that it not does apply to Afghan culture but also to the Middle East, Western Asia, Pakistan, and even to some regions in India due to the shared fundamental principles social values, social norms, and the patriarchal belief system that operate within these cultures. The court records also mentioned that according to Dr. Mojab “honour killing” as a particular form of violence against women and “the certain features or characteristics of it is the dominance of male power over female members of the family, being wife, daughters or even sometimes mothers, because the act of honour killing can be done by fathers, brothers, uncles, so male members of the family”. She further adds that it is based on the notion of the control of women’s bodies, especially women’s sexuality, and the control of “overall women’s relationship to the outside world”. She also stated that:

It is part of the desire for preserving culture, for preserving a distinct and unique identity within the host-land, and especially, again, women represent that culture. So, the more control of women, it means that the purer and better represented the community is. So that is that – that’s the reason.\textsuperscript{18}

It was specified that Dr. Mojab did not know the parties involved in the case. She was simply asked to inform the jury of this socio-cultural phenomenon. According to the Crown attorney, Ms. Cunningham “\textit{without the evidence of Dr. Mojab, some jurors may find it antithetical that a loving brother could commit a planned and deliberate killing of his sister simply because she refused to seek their father’s permission to be engaged}.”

Finally, based on the facts of the events and after hearing the expert scholar advice from Dr. Mojab, the Crown convicts Hasib on two counts alleged planning and killing. The Crown attorney characterizes the killing of the couple as an \textit{honour killing}. Why Amandeep’s killing was not characterized as such? It surely involved “honour”. Mr.

\textsuperscript{17} \textit{R v. Sadiqi}, p. 9., Date: 2009/04/09, Court file no.: 06-410.

\textsuperscript{18} \textit{R v. Sadiqi}, p. 12., Date: 2009/04/09, Court file no.: 06-410.
Atwal had made it clear that his daughter had ‘disgraced’ him and his family through unacceptable behaviour—that of having a relationship with a non-Sikh man and moving with him despite his opposition. Then, why the Supreme Court of British Columbia did not view Amandeep’s murder as an honour-related crime? Why was the first case viewed as an individual offence while the other was seen as a “cultural” offence? Why did not the Court ask for expert advice at Mr. Atwal’s hearing? Perhaps, it came to be in part due to the events of September 11, 2001. May be, as the defence argued, the Court was tending to legitimatize Canada’s support for the “war on terror” in Afghanistan. As it has been argued by some scholars, the post 9/11 era has put some minority groups, particularly those of South Asian and Muslim origin at greater risks for experiencing discrimination at the hands of the larger society (Razack, 2004). As the Court stated, Hasib’s act of killing was surely an ‘honour killing’, but to view it as such simply because it involves Muslim parties seems discriminatory, unjust and erroneous.

Let us now look at another case that is similar to all cases discussed above, but particularly with Amandeep’s case. Although, the Amandeep case and the next (Aqsa) case were very similar in circumstances, they were (again) treated differently.

**Case 4: Aqsa Parvez**

On December 10, 2007, the sixteen year old Aqsa Parvez was strangled to death in her residential home in Mississauga, Ontario, by her father and brother. While I was working on this article, the Brampton Court pronounced the sentence of the father, Muhammad Parvez, and brother, Waqas Parvez on June 15, 2010\(^\text{19}\). The Court convicted both to second-degree murder facing automatic life imprisonment. As I had pointed out earlier in this essay, the Aqsa case had become a “hot topic” both nationally and internationally involving issues of the “Muslim Culture”, *hijab*, and the consequences of Muslim immigration to the West. Aqsa was just 11 when she emigrated from Pakistan to Canada with her parents and seven of her siblings. Mr. Parvez was not highly educated and could only speak functional English. Like most Pakistanis living in Toronto and Mississauga, Mr. Parvez occupied a cab driver employment and managed to buy a house in Mississauga, Ontario.

Similar to Mr. Atwal, Mr. Parvez did not approve of his daughter’s independent behaviour. The court records revealed that when Aqsa entered her teen years, she began rebelling against her father’s strict rules. Like Amandeep, Aqsa also started to make her own decisions about her life. Due to this behaviour of hers, Aqsa was in constant argument and disagreement with her father, mother, and siblings. The Court had mentioned that Aqsa was “experiencing conflict at home over cultural differences between living in Canada and back [in Pakistan]”. It was also mentioned that Aqsa told her father that she did not wish to wear the hijab anymore and that she wanted to dress in ‘Western’ clothes just like her friends. Aqsa’s friends testified that apart from the hijab, Aqsa had domestic disputes over many other issues: she had to be home after school; she could not go anywhere alone; she was not allowed to have ‘certain’ friends; and was supposed to dress in a certain manner.

Aqsa’s friends also mentioned that after numerous discussions with her father, she realized that he was hard to change. She decided to leave the family residence; a step that all ‘honour killing’ victims took before they were brutally killed. Like Jassi, Amandeep, and Khatera, Aqsa also decided to leave the family to live her way. She sought refuge in the Muslim Women center in Toronto—the only social service center available to Muslim women in need. During the fall of 2007, Aqsa sheltered between friends’ houses and youth shelters. On the morning of December 10, as Aqsa and her friend were waiting at a bus stop, Waqas, showed up. He said that their father was very sick and she should come home to at least see him. Aqsa hesitated but her love for her father got her into the car. Upon her arrival, the usual family quarrel started. In less than an hour, the local police received a phone call from her father saying that he had killed his daughter. The police and paramedics arrived within minutes. The teen was found not breathing. She was rushed to Credit Valley Hospital. A few hours later, she was transferred to SickKids and put on life support. Sadly, she died later in that same evening. The father and brother were taken into custody.

Initially, it was believed that Mr. Parvez had killed Aqsa, but during the trial, it was revealed that it was Waqas who actually strangled his younger sister to death; his DNA was found beneath his sister’s fingernails. While the father ‘ordered’ the killing, the brother executed it. The court records also showed that Aqsa’s murder was also
planned. It was mentioned that “the plan was in play at least two or three days before it happened”\(^20\). In an interview with police, Aqsa’s mother told that her husband told that he killed their youngest daughter because “this is my insult. My community will say, ‘You have not been able to control your daughter.’ This is my insult. She is making me named.” The mother further mentioned that if they were to be in Pakistan, he would have killed her there too.

Both Amandeep and Aqsa were teenagers struggling to reconcile the generational and cultural gap that separated them from their parents. According to their relatives, both had broken the moral code of honour, which could only be restored through their blood. If this was the case, why Amandeep’s killing was not viewed as restoring the lost honour? Again, Aqsa’s case involved Muslim parties like that of Khatera’s case. We will now move on to another case that was again identified as a crime of honour.

**Case 5: The Shafia Sisters**

The death of the three Shafia sisters and their step-mother was another so-called ‘honour killing' which attracted national focus\(^21\). On June 30\(^{th}\), 2009, the bodies of 19 year-old Zainab, 17 year-old Sahari, and 13 year-old Geeti, along with 50 year-old Rona Amir Mohammad were discovered in a submerged car in Kingston Mills\(^22\). Within a few days later, three family members of the victims, father, brother, and mother, were arrested at the Montreal’s Pierre Elliot Trudeau International Airport.

On June 30\(^{th}\), the Shafia family was returning from a family vacation from Niagara Falls when they decide to stop for the night in a Kingston motel. The family was said to be travelling in two cars. The father said they drove back to Montreal the next morning believing that the girls might have left a little earlier. The victim’s car was discovered on June 30, 9:30am. Around 12:30pm of that day, Mohammad Shafia, his wife and son walked into Kingston police headquarters to report that their daughters and the Nissan are missing. On July 3\(^{rd}\), the father and mother said to reporters in their Montreal residence that their eldest daughter, Zainab, might have taken the car with her.


\(^{21}\) The court records for this case have not been obtained due to a band on publication.

sisters and aunt, even though she did not have a driver’s license. After the family’s testimony, the police became suspicious of the deaths. Five days later, on July 5th, the victims were laid to rest in an Islamic cemetery in Laval. Police was still investigating when a woman claiming to be Ms. Rona’s sister claimed the accident to be an honour-based crime. It was then revealed that Rona was in fact Mohammad Shafia’s first wife. Finally, on July 23, police arrests Mr. Shafia, his wife, Yhaya, and their son Hamid Mohammad Shafia with four counts each of first-degree murder and conspiracy to commit murder.

According to Sun Media, Zainab had planned to announce her engagement with 27 year-old Hussain Hyderi, on July 1st to the rest of her family\(^2\). Hussain said he had spoken with Zainab while she was on the family trip to Niagara Falls and Toronto. Mina Barak, a close friend of the couple, mentioned to Sun Media that this would have been Zainab’s second marriage. She mentioned that her good friend, Ammar Waheed, secretly performed *Nikah*\(^2\) with Zainab a few months ago but did not register due to family disapproval. Sun Media also reports that this story was later confirmed by relatives of Rona in Europe. Her relatives said that Zainab “deeply offended her strict Afghan father by marrying a young Pakistani man”\(^2\). Rona’s sister, Diba Masoomi, wrote in an email sent to Kingston’s Police that “It is likely this was a crime...designed to return honour...to the family tainted by the hidden marriage”. Barak also revealed to Sun Media that Waheed’s family as well did not approve the marriage and thus did not attend the ceremony.

Like Khatera and Feroz Mangal’s family, the Shafia family also belonged to the Afghan culture. Unlike other cases, the perpetrators involved in this case were financially well off and could barely spoke English. The Kingston Court of Justice constantly calls upon translators for the accused. The father, Mr. Shafia, was a successful business man and had recently settled with his family in Montreal, Quebec. As mentioned before, the woman who was killed with the girls was Mr. Shafia’s first

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\(^2\) *Nikah* is known as an Islamic marriage ceremony.

wife; if not legally, they were still islamically married. The sister of the first wife had revealed that Mr. Shafia had re-married due to the failure of having children with her.

Unlike the Jassi and Amandeep’s cases, the last three were characterized both by the Western media and the Canadian criminal justice system as crimes of honour or honour killings while the former as simply murders. Like Khatera, Aqsa, and the Shafia sisters, Jassi and Amandeep were also killed for restoring the family and community’s honour. It is not because the last three involved Muslim victims and perpetrators that the crimes involved are clearly ‘honour crimes’. Upholding such beliefs and statements have led to the stereotyping and discrimination of minorities (Phillips, 2007). As a result, it is now widely held that “crimes of honour” are a religious and cultural practice among the Muslims around the globe. As we will see in the upcoming paragraphs, honour killings are not specific to Islam or any other religion. We will be examining the historical roots of honour killings and how they cut across cultures, religions, and race.

Part IV: What are the Characteristics of Honour Killings?

Although there is no consensus on what really constitutes “honour killings”, most researchers, women’s rights activists, non-governmental agencies, and policymakers view it as a form of honour-based crime in which a person is murdered by members of the family for restoring the lost family and community honour (Wikan 2008; Gill 2009; Jafri 2009; and Jafri 2003). It is considered to be a global phenomenon of the most extreme form of sexual violence against women (Abdo, 2006). Menon (2006) points out that these killings may be carried out in public with the active involvement of community elders and village council, or in private by family members alone. As Dr. Mojab, who acted as the expert witness on women in the Middle East, argues it is a specific form of violence having particular characteristics and features. The literature review and the cases analyzed above reveal the following characteristics of intrafamily murder (Kressel, 1981) for the sake of family honour:

1. Although men have also been killed for honour’s sake, most of the victims tend to be women—that is, daughters, wives, and or mothers. Furthermore,
the perpetrators of “honour killings” are usually male members of the victim—that is, the father, brother, cousin, husband, and or uncles (Manar 2002). Even though male relatives are more likely to commit honour killings, it has also been reported that women also tend to directly or indirectly participate in such criminal acts (Kressel, 1981). In sum, the killer is someone close to the victim, someone to which she shares a blood relation.

2. As Wikan argues, honour killings require “the approval of a supportive audience, ready to reward murder with honor.” (Wikan 2008: 73). According to the available literature, the perpetrator is usually not alone (Patel and Gadit 2008; Kressel, 1981). The killer is either accompanied or supported by family and members of the community. The phenomenon is based on “a normative set of rules” and is basically viewed neither as an act of revenge nor as a taboo or sin among these communities (Kressel, 1981: 12).

3. Although most argue that honour killings are planned or premeditated (Wikan 2008; Kressel 1981; Jafri 2004; Manar 2002), others have pointed out that this characterization, however, does not fit all the cases of honour killings in Diasporas around the world. Some have argued that there is little evidence of premeditation (Phillips, 2007). While for most premeditation is an essential categorisation, for some “the really distinctive characteristic of the cases described as honour killings is not that they are premeditated or condoned by a minority cultural community but that men kill what they view as sexually wayward sisters, cousins, or daughters” (Phillips, 2007). Furthermore, according to Manar (2002), honour killings are often masked as accidents, suicides, and sometimes as woman gone missing.

4. My analysis of the Canadian case studies reveals that victims are given no opportunity to make-up for “their mistakes”. In another sense, the attackers give no chance to the victim to repentance or ask for forgiveness. It is argued that once the dishonour of the family is publically known, regardless of the facts, it is only washed away with the bloodshed of the ‘guilty party’.

5. Honour killings are undertaken due to “an allegation, suspicion, or proof of sexual ‘impropriety’ of the victim (Sev’er and Yurdakul, 2001: 2). What constitutes ‘sexual impropriety’ varies enormously, ranging from going to the movies without approval, kissing, holding hands, dating, or engaging in sexual relationships with someone who is not one’s legally or culturally sanctioned husband (Sev’er and Yurdakul, 2001). Additionally, killings may also be through the Shimla case of Desh Raj and his wife Nirmala. Raj and Nirmala had been in relationship for three years before they eloped and married—which cost them their lives. Their marriage was disapproved by both sides because they belonged to the same clan. According to the clan, man and woman of the same tribe are like “brothers and sisters” (74). The newlywed couple was haunted down and Nirmala was taken away by her family. Raj was ordered to go in exile for five years. Upon refusal, the village council ordered that both were to be killed to protect the honour of the collective and ensure that such incidence does not occur again (75).
carried out in cases of eloping with a lover even if the woman may have legally married the man (remember the Jassi and Amandeep cases?). In Canada, honour killings have taken place because women have chosen to act on their love but not with permissible norms or because women had transgressed their communities and families altogether by marrying or dating outside their religion, ethnicity, class or by adopting western lifestyles or for committing adultery. In Pakistan and other parts of the globe, killings may also take place after a rape. Most researchers illustrate that whatever the reason or provocation, honour killings prove that there is a patriarchal consensus around the violent ‘resolution’ (Menon, 2006). In sum, premarital sex, forbidden sexual association, adultery, rape, increased women’s freedom have been most of the common factors leading to their killing (Kressel, 1981).

6. Honour killings are the only visible way of restoring family honour. In another sense, the act of killing should be publicly known if honour is to be restored. Women’s killings have also been viewed as acts to hide the ‘disgrace’ and protect honour (Manar, 2002).

7. The decision to kill a female kin is also based on the extent to which her “degrading act” is publicly known.

**Part V: Are Honour Killings Specific to Islam?**

Now that we have examined what are honour killings, it is crucial to further examine whether such acts are specific to Islam. In the last few years, the Western media has been widely reporting on the incidence of honour killings that have been taking place within the South Asian Muslim communities living in the Diasporas around the globe. This focus has led to the popular assumptions that honour killings are somehow related to Islam and Islamic traditions. As I have argued earlier, if certain Muslims have committed honour killings, it does not necessarily mean that their religion sanctions, condones, or supports such practices. The custom of honour killing has been prevalent in many societies and is not confined to, as sometimes misunderstood, to Muslim societies (Wikan 2008; Jafri 2004; Abdo 2004; Manar 2002). Indeed, such practice is more associated with various ancient Mediterranean cultures. In fact, as we will see later in this section, some believe that it is through Spanish culture that such traditions have spread into Mexico, Brazil, Spain and many other regions of the world. For many researchers, honour killing predate Islam and are not consistent with the Quran (Sev’er and Yurdakul, 2001). Within Muslim societies, honour killings are viewed as man-made customs and practices which directly go against the teachings of the
Prophet of Islam, who is generally viewed as having a sensitive, balanced, positive attitude towards sexuality (Ilkkaracan, 2000).

Jasvinder Sanghera (2007) provides a personal account of the struggle against honour-based violence. Her account illustrates how such incidents are unrelated to Islam or any other religion. She refers to honour-based violence as emotional realities to preserve ‘traditional’ values of the communities. She shows that honour-based crimes, including honour killings, are the results of when traditional conformist parents retain strong cultural roots, whilst their children lean towards Western norms and culturally liberal lifestyles. She further argues that honour crimes exemplify the dangerous generational gap that is arising today from South Asian migration in the Western worlds. Furthermore, Ritu Menon (2006) analyzed this honour-based violence in India and came to conclude that killing women to restore honour has no Muslim genealogy. She argues that these “dishonourable” killings exist across “caste and creed: Hindu, Sikh and Muslim, touchable and ‘untouchable’” (2006: 1).

Moreover, literature evidence suggests that honour killing happens among many groups, societies, cultures, religions, and places (Wikan 2008; Welchman and Hossain 2005; Parrot and Cummings 2006; Jafri 2004; Abdo 2004). That is it happens among various faiths and non-believers (Wikan, 2008). Although women in Muslim societies are certainly killed to uphold the family and community honour, we should not forget that the same exists in other religions and faiths as well (Wikan, 2008). Wikan (2008) states that honour killings “happens among Christians, Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, and others, as well as among people who confess to no particular religion or have no religious beliefs”28. Similarly, Jafri (2004) points out that honour killings not only happen among Muslims, but also in other communities such as the Brazilians, Spanish, and Mexican. He further adds that discrimination and commodification of women is an ancient and world-wide phenomenon and therefore cannot be attributed to one particular society or culture. For instance, he states that “the history of human civilization bears witness that women have been humiliated and treated brutally since the rise of the city-states” (Jafri 2004: 43). He further adds that “women have been viewed as the embodiment of sin, misfortune, disgrace, and shame, and in most

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28 In Honour of Fadime: Murder and Shame, by Unni Wikan, p.70.
societies had hardly any rights or social position” (Jafri 2004: 43).

Historically, the phenomenon of sexual torture and murder of women existed in various forms (Abdo, 2004). That is, the roots of honour killing have been traced back to ancient Roman times when the father (known as the *pater familias*) or the senior male member of a household was given the right to kill an adulterous wife or an unmarried sexually active daughter. It was around the 1800s that such killings within Rome were legalized. In another sense, killings of women under the pretext of honour first emerged within the ancient Roman empires, particularly among Christians and Jewish who punished the ‘dishonourable’ by stoning. For instance, Bettiga-Boukerbout (2005) argues that historically, women in Italy were often killed by male family members for being ‘dishonourable’ to their families. The Roman law did not impose any punishment on a father or husband who murdered their daughter or wife and their seducer in the name of honour (Bettiga-Boukerbout, 2005: 234). Similar to most societies where honour killings are now most prevalent, the Italian society also did not view perpetrators of honour killings as ‘socially dangerous’. They were viewed as simply individuals who reacted to an ‘offence’ committed by the victim who had broken the societal norms of morality (Bettiga-Boukerbout, 2005: 234). Under the Roman law, the perpetrators of honour crimes could only be the victim’s husband, parent, or sibling; and the victim to be the daughter, wife, or sister of the perpetrator (Bettiga-Boukerbout, 2005: 234).

Furthermore, anthropological and sociological evidence reveals that practice of killing women for honour has also been identified among Latin American, Caribbean, and especially Brazilian communities. Like most regions in the Global South and some parts of the Mediterranean, Latin America also permits the murdering of women in the name of honour (Pimentel, Pandijarjian and Belloque, 2005). In Latin America, honour related crimes are a result of the legislature system permitting the use of the ‘honour defence’ or ‘heat of passion’ to justify the crime, blame the victim, and allowing the perpetrator, mostly husbands, partners or boyfriends, escape sentence (Pimentel, Pandijarjian and Belloque, 2005).

Although some states have worked hard to bring legislature changes for eliminating honour-based crimes against women, some states, especially the Brazilian

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29 [http://www.jihadwatch.org/2008/01/more-evidence-that-the-dallas-murders-were-honor-killings.html](http://www.jihadwatch.org/2008/01/more-evidence-that-the-dallas-murders-were-honor-killings.html)
states still maintain some provisions allowing such crimes against women. That is, some Latin American legal context still today continues to allow gender-based discriminatory practices, especially honour-based violence. For instance, while a wife viewed as ‘adulterous’ is liable to a prison term between six months to three years, for a similar offence, but only if it is publicly known, a husband could be imprisoned between three to eighteen months (Pimentel, Pandijarjian and Belloque, 2005). Husbands, partners, or boyfriends who have killed a female partner for adultery, sexual infidelity, and or because of the desire of the woman to separate, invoked the notion of ‘conjugal honour’ or the ‘honour of the accused’ as ‘legitimate defence of honour’ in an attempt to justify the crime and thus escape harsher sentences (Pimentel, Pandijarjian and Belloque, 2005: 248). For instance, in 2003, the Argentinian court reduced a life sentence to a twenty-two years’ imprisonment in the case of a man convicted of killing his wife to protect his honour. According to the Argentinian newspaper, the victim was brutally strangled and burned alive after asking a divorce (Pimentel, Pandijarjian and Belloque, 2005: 248).

Similarly, the Mexican courts continue to reduce sentences of husbands convicted of killing their wives for honour motives. According to Pimentel, Pandijarjian, and Belloque (2005) homicides for ‘honour’ in Mexico, also known as the ‘heat of passion’ “guarantees a lesser punishment to individuals who kill their spouses on the ground of seeing him/her in sexual intercourse or close to its consummation”. Moreover, researchers have also pointed out that Brazil is among the countries in Latin America with the “longest and most extensive history of judicial decisions accepting the legitimate defence of ‘honour’ in crimes of homicide and violence against women by their partners or ex-partners, despite the absence of any specific legislative provision to this effect” (Pimentel, Pandijarjian and Belloque, 2005: 251). Therefore, the ‘legitimate defence of honour’ among Latin American states is seen as a legal defence that seeks to alleviate the punishment of husbands, ex or current partners, brothers, and or fathers who kill their female relatives, wives, sisters, daughters, ex or current female partners for male, family, or conjugal honour.

Finally, similar to the above mentioned authors, Nahla Abdo (2004) also reveals how the sexual torture and murder of women is neither an Arab custom nor it is rooted
in the Islam religion or culture (2004: 57). Abdo illustrates how violence and killings of women, in both Israeli Jews and Palestinian (Arab) citizens, has been an equally serious problem (2004: 64) in Israel. She extensively criticizes the Israeli State for turning its back on the violence perpetrated against women (both of Jewish and Palestinian background) and particularly crimes that are said to be committed in the name of “family honour”. According to her, crimes of family honour have been on the rise since 1992, mostly among the Jewish populations, but also among Palestinian citizens (Abdo 2004: 66). Her study reveals that most of the women murdered on the basis of honour in Israel are Jewish (Abdo 2004: 66). For instance, based on her results, from 1992 to 2001, among 100 hundred victims murdered under the pretext of honour in Israel, 41.62% of them were Jewish women compared to 22.34% who were Arab and Druze (Abdo, 2004: 66). She further warns her readers to be critical to these numbers since many go underreported or unrecorded. Abdo specifies that regardless of the seriousness of the problem among the Israeli Jewish community, the issue of honour killing is viewed exclusively as an “Arab/Muslim” phenomenon (2004: 68).

In sum, based on the literature review, honour homicides are not specifically linked with Islam or “Muslim culture”. Instead, as it has been illustrated, the murdering of an unmarried sexually active daughter and or an adulterous wife is rooted in the Roman law, under which the perpetrators went unpunished. We have also seen how historically the killing of women in the name of honour existed and still continues to exist in various societies and communities but are now known and referred by different names and forms.

**Part VI: Are Honour Killings Similar to “Crimes of Passion” and Domestic Violence?**

Similar to the literature of most social phenomena, the literature on honour killing is not homogenous. Whilst there is no consensus on the definition of honour killings, there seems to be no conformity on whether such crimes are specific in kind and nature or similar to other crimes against women. Most scholars studying the instances of honour killing occurring both in the Western and non-Western cultures hold on to the belief that in order to better understand and prevent such phenomenon, it is fundamental to not confuse honour related crimes to what are known to be “crimes of
passion” (Welchman and Hossain, 2005) and other forms of domestic violence. For instance, Mojab Shahrzad, Unni Wikan and many other experts have stressed on the distinctiveness and uniqueness of such crimes. This group of scholars avert that notwithstanding in all three instances (generally) a male relative kills a female kin for the control of women’s identity and bodily mobility, all three phenomena are distinct.

First, it is argued that the relationship between the perpetrator and his victim differs in honour, passion, and domestic related crimes (Wikan 2008, Welchman and Hossain 2005). The “crimes of passion” are generally referred as crimes committed by one partner (mostly husband) against the (current or ex) female spouse as an “emotional or passionate” reply, argues Wikan (2008). Furthermore, this group further asserts that unlike honour killings, in ordinary domestic violence, which has been mainly described as the intimate partner violence (IPV), that cut across cultures, it is generally the husband or cohabiting partner that psychologically, physically, sexually, and economically abuses his wife or female partner and sometimes even infants and or young children (Innocenti Digests, 2000). The opposite is also true: although it is rare, in certain cases women have also been reported for abusing their husbands and young infants or children (Innocenti Digests, 2000). It is often argued that while child abuse is very common in domestic related crimes, it is very rare to find parents killing their teenage or young adolescent daughters for dating, coming home late, dressing up in a

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30 Crimes of passion, which are undoubtedly common in the West, are defined as the instance in which a husband kills his wife instantly upon discovering or finding her in bed or in the act of having sexual intercourse with someone else. Crimes of passion have occupied and they still do in some societies a special status under the legal codes. Under such law, the sentence of the husband who killed his adulterous wife was reduced to the minimum sentence. Such legal recognition has been traced back to the Napoleonic Code and the 1875 French Penal Code.

31 Psychological abuse is defined as the “behaviour that is intended to intimate and persecute, and takes the form of threats of abandonment or abuse, confinement to the home, surveillance, threats to take away the custody of the children, destruction of objects, isolation, verbal aggression and constant humiliation” (Innocenti Digests, 2000: 2).

32 Physical abuse includes “slapping, beating, arm twisting, stabbing, strangling, burning, choking, kicking, threats with an object or weapon, and murder. It also includes traditional practices such as female genital mutilation and wife inheritance (the practice of passing a widow, and her property, to her dead husband’s brother)” (Innocenti Digests, 2000: 2).

33 Sexual abuse is referred to as “coerced sex through threats, intimidation or physical force, forcing unwanted sexual acts or forcing sex with others” (Innocenti Digests, 2000: 2).

34 Economic abuse has been defined as acts including “denial of funds, refusal to contribute financially, denial of food and basic needs, and controlling access to health care, employment, etc.” (Innocenti Digests, 2000: 2).
certain fashion, or for being sexually active at a non-permissible age. On the other hand, honour killing is an act of taking the life of (generally) female kin in order to wash away shame and restore honour of the family and community (Wikan, 2008: 15). As we have viewed earlier in the essay, the perpetrator is often the father, brother, cousin, uncle, along with the support of other family members such as the mother. Therefore, as it has been pointed out whereas the perpetrators in crimes of passion and domestic abuse often act alone, those involved in honour related crimes are often supported by other family members. In sum, “[t]he difference here lies in the murder of women by those who are or have been their sexual intimates (husbands, lovers) and those who have not been (Welchman and Hossain, 2005: 11).

Secondly, another major difference between these crimes that is commonly raised is that unlike honour killing—which are generally planned and premeditated (Wikan, 2008), the murder in passion and domestic related cases is often (or expected to be) unplanned and spontaneous. It is widely believed that because women who are killed for “passion” are often killed in a “sudden fit of rage” and jealousy (Statistics Canada, 2001), it is hard to determine whether the murder was planned and structured prior to the incidence. Similar argument is applied to murders in domestic cases. Finally, as most emphasize another major difference between honour killing and crimes of passion and domestic violence is that the former requires an approving community, an audience or a group of people who will reward the murder with honour. This is what, argues Wikan differentiates honour killings from crimes of passion or motivated by jealousy (2008: 15).

Moreover, some other researchers and particularly South Asian and other minority women activists have argued differently. For instance, the Southall Black Sisters (SBS), a non-profit women’s organization established in London in 1979 to meet the needs of Black and South Asian women, state that while honour killings are serious murders, they do not assert that honour crimes are unique in nature and indeed different from other crimes perpetrated against women. According this group, “domestic violence is often justified in the name of honour”, and that “honour” is the reason why women in minority communities are unable to leave abusive situations” (Siddiqui, 2005). Siddiqui (2005) has emphasised that for years, SBS have been facing the challenge of
how to include the issues of honour killing and forced marriage into the conventional debate of domestic violence (Siddiqui, 2005). In other words, how to demonstrate that honour killings and the issue of force marriage among the minorities are forms of domestic violence. For years, the SBS have criticized the concept of domestic violence utilized in the UK provisions. They argue that domestic violence is a narrow and Western notion that ignores or fails to account a number of problems affecting black and minority women. They further avert that when we think of “domestic violence”, we only think of intimate partner violence and parents abusing their children as it is the case in the West. According to SBS and other South Asian women’s organizations, by separating honour killings from other forms of domestic violence, we tend to single out minority cultures as more barbaric, patriarchal, and cruel leading to differential and racist treatment from the state and the mainstream community (Siddiqui, 2005: 276).

In another sense, it is argued that by separating honour-related murders from the larger framework of domestic violence, we not only place it on the debate of race (—as a result, leading to the stigmatization and discrimination of certain communities and cultures, and therefore legitimizing the “control” of certain communities and cultures) but we also fail to properly investigate the problem (Siddiqui, 2005: 277). Finally, they suggest that by including honour crimes within the wider framework of domestic violence, we can ensure best response from service providers to “tackle the problem of domestic violence, forced marriage and all other forms of violence against women” without overt racism and discrimination (Siddiqui, 2005: 278).

I do not wish to take a position on this matter, but I would certainly like to argue that regardless of whether these honour, passion, and domestic related crimes are different or similar in context, the purpose or motive behind the killing remains the same: controlling and disempowering women. Passion, domestic and honour-related crimes are the by-products of the patriarchal system that we live in. All three are forms of femicide exercised for the maintenance of patriarchy (Welchman and Hossain, 2005).
At least in the Western world, honour-based crimes have often been linked with women’s increasing independence and emancipation. Similarly, the victims of crimes of passion are often working women, whose partners cannot tolerate their economic independence and freedom (Besse, 2001: 4). Research suggests that historically, whenever women strived for emancipation they have been killed, tortured and humiliated. Violence against women exits in all cultures and societies: they just take different forms and names. To associate honour killings, crimes of passion, and even ordinary domestic violence to a specific culture or society would mean to ignore the broader issue of violence against women (Wikan 2008; Welchman and Hossain 2005).

Allow me now to lay out the honour and shame context that exists within Eastern and South Asian cultures. According to several studies, understanding the concepts of honour and shame of certain communities is an important step towards understanding the incidences of honour killing. As we will see, honour and shame are mechanisms through which particular communities (i.e. South Asians) control women’s sexuality and bodily mobility.

**Part VII: What is the Ideology of Honour and Shame within the South Asian Communities?**

The maintenance of personal and family honour and the avoidance of shame are of particular interests to South Asian communities (George, 2006). While sons are preferred by South Asians, when the question of family honour is raised, women (especially daughters and wives) are placed to the forefront. That is, women’s bodies are considered to be the carriers of family, particularly male izzat or ghairat (honour in Urdu). Similar to the Mediterranean and Arab cultures, South Asian communities place significant pressure on males to closely control the (sexual) behaviours and action of the female members of their families. Honourable men are said to be those whose

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35 Among South Asian communities, sons are more valued because they are considered to be the bread earners and caregivers of their parents (especially when they grow old). Women, on the other hand, are viewed as less important since they are given away in marriage—she is believed to be the real member of her husband’s family.

36 In the Arab world, the meaning of honour is closely linked with the sexual conduct of women. Like a South Asian woman, an Arab woman who brings shame on her family by her sexual misconduct, she also brings shame and dishonour on all her kin. For more information please refer to Honour and Shame: Women in Modern Iraq by Sana al-Khayyat, published in 1990 by Saqi Books.
female members are controlled and kept away from the *mard ki duniya* (world of men). Most specifically, an honourable man is the one who can control the sexual behaviours or conducts of his women (Manar, 2002). On the other hand, an honourable woman is the one who is obedient to her elders, loyal to her husband and his family, and never discusses private matters with outsiders\(^{37}\). Thus, an honourable woman is ready to sacrifice her life for the honour of her family and husband (Mishra, 2000). *Izzat* in the South Asian context is priceless and must be maintained under any circumstances. A man with no or damaged *izzat* is a man with no face and dignity, especially if he fails to restore it (King, 2008). The man, who kills to safeguard and restore honour, is seen as *gairatman* (man possession honour), the real victim and therefore is morally supported by families and communities. *Izzat* within South Asians has become the norm of culture for controlling women. Therefore, the codes of honour within these communities serve to clarify and construct what it means to be both a woman and a man (George 2006; Sen 2005, Coombe 1990).

According to Purna Sen (2005) and Hannana Siddiqui (2005) the codes of honour applies to both sexes. They argue that while honour is used to control female sexuality, to some extend men are also pressured to conform to ascribed male roles such as being a good and dutiful son to preserve the good reputation of the family. They also point to the fact that societies in which women’s sexuality is at the heart of concerns are the ones that mostly condones and permits the killing of both men and women suspected of dishonouring their family and their social groupings (Sen 2005; Siddiqui, 2005). Like men, women are also expected to ensure that women hold on to the gender norms. Sen (2005) argues that the women’s behaviours that uphold honour are their “modest sexual behaviour, fidelity in marriage, no pre- or extramarital relationships with men, no unchaperoned rendezvous with men outside the family, meeting motherly obligations to children, meeting wifely obligations to husband, meeting daughter’s obligation to parents, meeting daughter-in-law obligations to parents-in-law, and so on” (Sen, 2005: 47). Siddiqui (2005) also maintains that honour has become the

\(^{37}\)In most honour-based cultures, this meant that the woman could not enjoy the support of the community for her legitimate grievances. It is argued that in pre-modern times, women in honour-based societies were more open the community and other female members.
reason why many women in minority communities (particularly South Asian communities) remain in abusive relationships. As she points out, women in such communities are not just afraid of bringing shame to their families, communities and onto themselves, but also fear for further social isolation and harassment (Siddiqui, 2005).

Similarly, studying the concepts of honour and masculinities among a group of working class men and women of Mumbai, India, Annie George (2006) argues that the term honour within the South Asian context refers to “zealously sought qualities of prestige and status, rank and esteem, respect and self-respect” which are obtained through achieving “tangible wealth, unimpeachable piety, success in competition and, critically, the conduct of the women of the family” (2006: 3). She further highlights that according to Mendelbaum (1998), the social and public opinion are the elements that measure the honour of a family. For instance, she states that it is the general perception or opinion of a family held in the eyes of the kinsmen, neighbours, and members of their community. Moreover, she maintains that among South Asian communities, honour is believed to reside primarily, but not exclusively, in women’s bodies and is safeguarded through “female chastity, virtue, and subdued body language, dress, and demeanor (George, 2006). Individual honour, she holds, is not separate from family, religious, or caste community honour, which is also in return maintained through restricting the women’s actions, behaviours, opportunities and life choices (George, 2006: 4).

According to Raheja and Gold (1996), argues George (2006), women usually conform to these codes of honour not because of their inferior status but due to the concerns for the feelings of honour and shame. According to George (2006), like men South Asian women are also accountable for their status by preserving a system of inequality since honour is “clearly a part of an ideology that contributes to the power of men over women” (George, 2006).

The perceptions and beliefs of the South Asian communities regarding the discourse of honour and shame are similar to the Middle Eastern literature. For instance Kressel (1981) demonstrates that in Arab Muslim societies, the honour of the “patrilineal group” is closely attached to the “sex organs of its daughters, and a specific term, combines the two” (2). Alike other researchers, Kressel (1981) further adds that the
group honour is maintained through the ongoing supervision over daughters’ movements and ensuring that they do not leave the house as frequently as possible (even when they do, they should be fully covered and companied by family members). Similar to the South Asian cultures, the “Arab cultures” further requires daughters to be married as soon as possible for honour’ sake—ensuring that they remain virgin until their marriage (Kressel, 1981). Kressel (1981) further argues that this immune and modest behaviour of women is expected to remains stable during the course of her life, even after marriage. Therefore, in many Mediterranean communities honour refers to the manliness of a man and the (sexual) shame of women (Coombe, 1990).

Writing in 1965, J. G. Peristiany maintains that all societies have rules of conduct, “indeed the terms ‘society’ and ‘social regulations’ are coterminous” (1965: 9). According to him, every society has specific ways to sanction the norms of conduct and misconduct. Each society has its specific internal systems to reward those who conform and punish those who disobey. He adds that “honour and shame are social evaluations and thus participate of the nature of sanctions, the more monolithic the jury, the more trenchant the judgement” (1965: 9). He argues that honour and shame are two poles of an assessment. Peristiany states that “they are the reflection of the social personality in the mirror of social ideals” (1965: 9). His analysis leads to the conclusion that all societies evaluate conduct by comparing it to ideal standards of action, and thus all societies have their own forms of honour and shame. Peristiany uses the case study of the Mediterranean people to analyze the concepts of honour and shame in order to assess their own conduct and that of their counterparts (1965: 10). After analyzing six different Mediterranean societies, Peristiany found that honour and shame are “the constant preoccupation of individuals in small scale, exclusive societies where face to face personal, as opposed to anonymous, relations are of paramount importance and where the social personality of the actor is as significant as his office” (Peristiany 1965: 11). Furthermore, Peristiany defines “honour” as the value of a person in his own eyes, but also in the eyes of others, mainly his society. He adds that “it is his estimation of his own worth, his claim to pride, but it is also the acknowledgement of that claim, his excellence recognized by society, his right to pride” (1965: 21). Additionally, the right to
pride is the right to status, and status is established through the recognition of a certain social identity argues Peristiany (1965: 22).

Moreover, the author further examines how the honour of the individual is related to social solidarities. He argues that social groups have a communal or collective honour within which their members participate. Thus, the ‘dishonourable’ behaviour of one affects the honour of all (1965: 35). Honour, argues Peristiany, is applicable to social groups of any size, “from the nuclear family whose head is responsible for the honour of all its members to the nation whose members’ honour is bound up with their fidelity to their sovereign” (1975: 36). According to him, generally within a family or monarchy, the communal or family honour is vested on a single or particular group of individuals (1965: 36). That single person or group of individuals owe obedience to the family and or community. Later in his analysis, Peristiany refers to “shame” as the “sensitivity to the opinion of others and this includes a consciousness of the public opinion and the judgement of the whole community (1965: 52).

Furthermore, Baker et al (1999), repeatedly cite the work of Schneider who suggests that honour, in the context of social relations, can be understood as “the ideology of the (power) holding group which struggles to define enlarge and protect its patrimony in a competitive arena” (1999: 3). They further add that honour, which works as the functioning standpoint of power-holding groups who rely on the behaviour of others, has been repeatedly described in many traditional patriarchal societies. Baker et al (1999) further argue that the status within a traditional society is based on clan or family honour—an honour that largely rests on the behaviour of its female members. They further assert that women in traditional societies do not have or cannot claim an individual honour distinct from the family or collective honour. Their behaviours and actions as individual can harm or bring dishonour to the family as a whole, particularly through sexual misconduct. They further state that “women are vested with immense negative power because any misbehaviour on their part can bring shame and dishonour to the male members of a whole community, lineage of family” (1999: 3). Female chastity and modesty are considered essential components of the family’s honour. Finally, they argue that honour concepts are but another way of understanding the
operative of patriarchy, which refers to a subcategory of male dominance stemming from the authority of the father or male household need.

Thus far, my reading and analysis of the honour and shame literature reveals that there is certainly a link between such belief systems and the subjugation, discrimination, and violence against girls and women within South Asian communities. As we have seen through this section, most scholars have argued that it is usually traditional and small scale societies or communities that particularly value the notions of shame and honour such as the South Asian communities living in Canada. Although the South Asian community is a growing Canadian community which is mostly dispersed in large urban settings such as Toronto, Vancouver and Montreal, it nonetheless remains small, excluded and isolated from the host society. For such a community, ‘face to face’ relations become very important for its members and a means of survival. ‘Face to face’ relations among the members of the community further enforces individuals to protect their “cultural identity” from the invasion of the West by tightly holding on to such honour and shame complex systems or code of honour. Finally, as we have seen, according to most scholars such codes of honour are means through which patriarchal systems are held and further enforced leading to gender inequality and discrimination.

The next section presents a preliminary analysis of the social contributing factors that seems to enable the killing of women in the name of honour within Canada.

**Part VIII: What are the Social Contributing Factors or Social Conditions that enable such Crimes to occur within the Canadian Context?**

In this section, I will attempt at theorizing the social contributing factors that enable honour crimes to occur within the Canadian context. It is important to note that the information contained within this segment has not been tested or is not based on any collected data. Rather, these assumptions are based on the five cases studies discussed above along with the help of some studies conducted by other researchers. In order to diagnose the social problem of honour killing, we need to carefully examine the social contributing factors that directly or indirectly enable violence or crimes against women in the name of honour. Most specifically, I strongly believe that we must focus
on the inter-relatedness of various social factors to improve our understanding of the problem within cultural frameworks.

According to the Middle Eastern and Global South literature only a combination of several complex social factors along with the patriarchal system of belief could explain the phenomenon of honour killing. In Pakistan, Turkey, Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan, and other Middle Eastern and South Asian societies, honour related crimes have been documented to be high in rural, small-scale traditional communities which operate based on a tribal system such as the jirga and panchayats. For instance, many researchers such as Sev’er and Yurdakul (2001), after investigating honour killing in rural Turkey, came to the conclusion that although such crimes also occur in urban settings, they are more prevalent among the rural populations where people tend to be a lot more traditional, patriarchal, those who marry at a relatively young age, and illiterate or uneducated. Further in their analysis, Sev’er and Yurdakul (2001) assert that regardless of the settings in which such crimes occur, violence and honour crimes against women are mechanisms or forces against the improvement or modernization of women’s status. Similarly, the study conducted by Patel & Gadit (2008) in Pakistan suggests that although honour killings happen in all communities, they mostly occur in tribal regions of the country: Punjab, NWFP (North West Frontier Province), Baluchistan, and Sindh. According to their findings, most of these tribal communities function on an informal legal system based on feudal principles such as “forced domestic labour and custodial violence” (9). They mostly emphasized on the patriarchal system that operates within these communities.

Furthermore, according to Amnesty International (September 1999), while honour crimes mostly occur in rural areas, they have also been recorded in urban populations. Thus, unlike other researchers, the report stressed on the fact that honour killings are not confined to rural, illiterate, and poor populations. For instance, according to the report, social influences such as education and social class of the perpetrator and the victim have little resonance in explaining honour crimes occurring in Pakistan and other Muslim states. The report uses the famous murder of Samia Sarwar to support their claim. Samia was murdered in April 1999 in her attorney's office by a gunman appointed by her mother (a doctor). Samia’s behaviour of filling a divorce against her
abusive husband was seen as breaching the code of family honour. Therefore, according to the findings of the Amnesty International (1999), the social factor of being recognized as a traditional honour-based society is mostly linked with the phenomenon of honour killing, regardless of the socio-economic and educational factors. However, can these social influences, identified by the Middle-Eastern and Global South literature, be applied to the study of honour-based violence among the South Asian community living in Canada?

After careful analysis and initial assessment of the five Canadian case studies (Jaswinder, Amandeep, Khatera, Aqsa, and Zainab and her sisters) discussed earlier in the essay, I have come to conclude that although the social factors identified by the Eastern and Global South literature can be applicable, it is a) increasing generational gap between the first and second generations that is arising today from South Asian immigration to Canada, and b) communal segregation as a result of social disintegration, discrimination, and the community’s will to maintain and preserve a separate identity are the most significant social factors that foster the killing of women in the name of honour within the Canadian context. The following is a detailed analysis of each factor identified above.

A. Generational Gap

According to the cases studies, the increasing level of conflicts and struggles between the older member of the family (particularly the parents—first generation), and younger ones (especially daughters—the second generation) seem to be linked with the incidents of honour killing among the Canadians of South Asian origin. More precisely, it seems that along with other social factors, the dangerous generational gap that is arising today from South Asian immigration to Canada could explain honour crimes. While the first South Asian generation strongly hold on to traditional and cultural values, their children tend to incline towards Western values and more liberal and autonomous lifestyles (Sanghera, 2007).

Like most young Indo-Canadian women, Jaswinder was supposed to be married off to a stranger that her family would have selected. She was arranged to be married with a successful business man, much older in age, and a close family friend. Instead,
Jaswinder's increasing individualistic mind set forced her to choose her own destiny and life partner, which eventually resulted in her murder. The practice of arranged marriage has long been a common traditional practise of such family-oriented communities. In contrast to marriage in Western cultures (which is understood to be the consequence of a couple’s feelings or romantic love), in many Eastern and South Asian cultures marriage is viewed as the “alliance between two families” (Lalonde & al., 2004: 3).

Additionally, according to Lalonde & al (2004) “although children’s approval of an arranged marriage partner is desirable, because of the importance of group and family ties in collectivistic culture such as India, obligations and duties are seen as more important than personal preferences” (2004: 3). They further assert that “adolescents and young adults are thus expected to respect their parents’ desires regarding the choice of a spouse, and not surprisingly, love may be better conceptualized as a state that follows marriage rather than one that precedes it” (2004: 3). Nevertheless, some South Asian youths, either raised or born within Canada or other Western communities, tend to least support such customary practice, including myself (If research is conducted, this proportion might be higher as expected since more South Asian adolescents and young adults are now entering or have entered the marital age). As a result, the first generation, namely the parents and other older members of the family, reveal extreme stringency regarding the youngsters, particularly women for choosing their own partners. As we have seen in Jaswinder’s case, this often leads to serious generational conflicts, sometimes even murders when concealed relationships are later discovered. The same facts can also be custom by secretly dating a non-Sikh young man. According to the societal perspective, her crime was even greater in nature compared to Jaswinder. Amandeep not just went against her family and culture by choosing her own life partner, but she also intended to start cohabiting with him without even being legally married to him. For a South Asian parent there is nothing more disgraceful.

Furthermore, besides the conflict between the parents and youngsters over marriage and heterosexual relationships, the increasing individualistic behaviour of the second generations versus the communal culture of the first generation also leads to further intergenerational tensions. According to the case studies (and my personal experience),
unlike the first generation, the second generation tend to develop a more individualistic behaviour due to their separate social settings and social upbringings—as it is clearly the state in the Aqsa Parvez case. The first generation is generally culturally well grounded before migrating to a foreign country or society. For instance, as Lalonde et al (2004) state “they have experienced their heritage both sociostructurally (schools, language, media) and interpersonally (family, peers, partners), and their self-concept is well rooted in this culture” (2004: 4). On the other hand, according to Lalonde et al (2004), while the second generation “experience most of their heritage culture through their families”, “much of their social structure and the majority of their peers belong to the host culture” (2004: 4). Therefore, as these authors argue, it is not surprising to find the second generation immigrants “experience internal conflict that has a cultural basis” (Lalonde & al, 2004: 4).

Moreover, as second generation immigrants are socialized by both opposing cultures, they tend to develop a “dual identity” or become “bicultural individuals” (Lalonde et al, 2004). These specific types of individuals are said to have access to two different set of cultures. It is generally the social setting (for instance school, work or home) that determines which culture of the bicultural individual become more significant (Lalonde & al, 2004). Lalonde & al (2004) further add that:

Clément and Noels (1992) have referred to this later phenomenon as a situated identity. A conflict between the two sets of cultural norms of the bicultural individual, therefore, is more likely to evidenced when these norms are in opposition and when both social identities are salient (these are not independent events). The realm of close relationships is one area where there is the potential for cultural conflict in bicultural individuals, particularly when one culture is rooted in an Eastern tradition (i.e., with traditional values) and the other in a Western tradition (i.e., with modern-industrial values). Indeed, a recent review of the literature on immigrant families has indicated that the issue of dating and relationships is often associated with considerable tension, particularly for the daughters of immigrants (Hynie, 1996). For second generation Eastern immigrants in a Western culture, close relationships are typically associated with two distinct, and often contradictory, sets of norms (see Tang & Dion, 1999). (2004:5)

In another words, as the authors emphasize a second generation immigrant usually carries a bicultural identity, which in some contexts can lead to conflicts with the first generation immigrants. As they point out, it is generally dating and heterosexual relationships of the second generation immigrant women that become the arena for serious conflicts since greater socializing pressure is put on daughters compared to sons (Lalonde & al, 2004). As a result, as this study suggests, the relationship between
the second generation (youths, adolescents, and younger adults), and first generation (mothers, especially fathers and other male relatives) is a contested one, often leading to serious negative consequences for both groups. As argued earlier, more research between these two groups could reveal greater discrepancy and intergenerational conflicts based on issues of dating and marriage\(^{38}\).

**B. Communal Segregation**

Communal segregation or social isolation, as a consequence of social disintegration and discrimination processes that South Asian immigrants go through within Canada, is another pertinent societal influence that is somehow linked with the abuses of South Asian women. This discussion will in turn lead us in exploring why the notions of community and culture become a form of social capital—a means for survival for isolated immigrants, particularly of South Asian origin living in Canada.

Canada is not simply known for its huge beautiful landscapes, harsh winters, and prosperity but also as a country of immigrants (Biles, Burstein & Frideres, 2008). Although throughout history Canada received and still today continues to welcome thousands of immigrants coming from all corners of the world, the issue of integration of the newcomers has always been a major challenge. Based on the social literature, Canadian diversity is largely a product of human decision-making (Biles, Burstein & Frideres, 2008). Prior to 1960's, Canadian immigration policies and laws were of discriminatory and racists character. While the country violently tried to assimilate the Natives, it did everything else to discourage non-European immigrants—principally those coming from Asia and Africa. That is, Europeans were the only source of immigration of the country. It was only during the periods of later 60s and 70s that a substantial change to the Canadian immigration policies eradicated discriminatory criteria based on the ethnicity and country of origin of the newcomers (Ghosh, 1994). This transformation of the policies was mainly due to the country’s ever growing need

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\(^{38}\) Although various studies regarding the intergenerational conflicts and generational differences of South Asian immigrants are available in the United States and U.K., in Canada, however, there are only a few studies on the subject matter. Most of the studies available in Canada are outdated. As a result, due to the changes and events that have taken place in the last decade, more research is mandatory if we are to understand this community that is the second largest growing community in Canada.
for workers, particularly to compete with the increasingly globalized world (Frideres, 2008).

As some argues, despite the eradication of outright legal discriminatory and racist practices, and the introduction of multicultural policy in response to the massive and varied immigration and of perceived need to define a unique Canadian society (Israel, 1987), everyday forms of racism has continued and provide an obstacle for the minority ethnic groups to be fully integrated in the mainstream either socially or economically. In fact, much celebrated multicultural policies have done little to improve the lot of immigrants as full citizens of the country (Ghosh, 1994). In another words, while Canada promoted itself as being a “just society”, that is equality before the law regardless of race and ethnicity, it did little to resolve “either the existing basic conflicts in society (racism, discrimination) or changing the system of inequality built into social institutions (institutional discrimination and racism) (Ghosh, 1994: 8-9). As Ratna Ghosh (1994) argues, although many organizations from the dominant group became the socializing force for isolated South Asians, it did not change their social relations with the mainstream culture.

While the earlier European immigrants faced similar challenges and difficulties of adjustments (Israel, 1986), those coming from the Global South have had to face the same issues but with a greater degree. The variety and depth of cultural and religious differences of the South Asians have been identified as some of the main obstacles to their full participation and inclusion to the majority culture. However, apart from these and other social differences (culture, values, language, tradition, and clothing style), the major discomfort experienced by the immigrants is due to the stigmatization of being labelled as “visible minorities” or “others”—that is, distinctiveness principally based on race (Tafarodi, Kang & Milne, 2002). Policy analysts have identified systematic discrimination as being one of the barriers to successful integration (Frideres, 2008).

Moreover, while the host society adjusted itself through social separation as a result of massive immigration, the South Asians and other visible minorities in turn have adjusted themselves by further self-segregating themselves into distinct neighbourhoods, thus, leading to residential ethnic segregation and social isolation. In another sense, along with the discrimination and rejection on behalf of the host society,
the inability of the immigrants to adapt to the dominant society has also been identified as another barrier to their full integration (Frideres, 2008). It is important to note that although Canada did implement programs to help visible minority groups to intermingle measures. For instance, language classes were provided for the newcomers in order to teach them the Canadian values and norms, and particularly as a means to economic integration. Furthermore, the “citizenship approach” (Poppelaares & Scholten, 2008), which has been just recently adopted by the Europeans, have been another mechanisms for immigrant integration and inclusiveness in Canada since the 1970s. Even though the intent is integration and social inclusion, especially a means to develop a sense of belonging, national identity and pride, it has been criticized by many scholars as being not fully effective in addressing immigration integration (Poppelaares & Scholten, 2008). According to Wikan (2008) “integration is all about networks and relationships” (2008: 238). She argues that integration is not about just getting jobs, although it matters, “it is about instilling respect for the value and worth of the individual and the right of each one of us to lead our own life” (2008: 239). Integration, she argues, must mean that people are given equal rights and opportunities but are also made to understand their social obligations (2008: 239).

Furthermore, this distinctiveness based on race or the visible minority status has been viewed as very detrimental to the full acceptance and inclusion within the dominant culture of South Asians and other visible minorities. The absence of any real avenues for inclusion into the dominant culture forces South Asians to develop a sense of separation from the dominant majority by sharpening their contact and conformity to the minority. Additionally, they develop a stronger sense towards their tradition, culture and community. Many scholars have noted that due to the constant fear of losing their identity and to preserve their culture and tradition in a foreign country, immigrants sometimes renegotiate or re-invent them. For instance, Wikan (2008) specifies that like many other Swedish Kurdish immigrants, Fadime’s parents also invented their own rules to both preserve their Kurdish identity and particularly to control the behaviours of their female folks. The attachment to ones culture and community, therefore, become

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39 According to Anne Phillips (2007), a culture is “made up of people” (33) and is “that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits required
forms of social capital for the disintegrated South Asians. In another words, the outcome that arrives from deviating from the majority culture or due to the disintegration process the concepts such as culture and community become a form of social capital.

Social capital is a concept that first emerged in community studies. Like the word “community”, “social capital” has also been given various definitions. According to Zadeh and Ahmed (2009), social capital is seen as an important means of survival and functioning of city neighbourhoods of particular communities. They define social capital as “the networks of strong, crosscutting personal relationships developed over time that provide the basis for trust, cooperation, and collective action in such communities” (Zadeh & Ahmed, 2009: 2). While for some social capital is referred as the “community-level public good”, for others it is viewed as a means to achieve personal objectives (Zadeh & Ahmed, 2009). Therefore, social capital becomes a mechanism of community survival and functioning by preserving strong sense of shared identity, ethnicity, and traditional values and norms.

As seen earlier in the essay, Eastern traditional values and norms among the South Asians are generally maintained by the male head of the family, especially through the honour and shame complex. Although Communal segregation negatively affects other members of the community, it is immigrant women who mainly suffer from this social problem due to their continued vulnerable, dependent and inferior status. For instance, as observed earlier, the honour and shame complex is one such traditional method through which women’s movements, actions, and most specifically their sexuality is controlled. Language barrier is another societal influence that further fosters sustained vulnerability of South Asian women (Merali, 2009). It is estimated that about one third of sponsored women coming from South Asia have little or no knowledge of either of the two official languages of Canada (Merali, 2009). The study conducted by Merali (2009) not just reveals how language barrier adds to women’s vulnerability to
maltreatment but also how it represents multiple barriers to women’s integration within the host culture.

As a result, communal segregation in various ways enforces South Asian communities and families to preserve and hold on to a patriarchal belief system as a way to preserve culture (Papp, 2010)—therefore, empowering men and subjugating women and particularly normalizing the victimization of the later. It is noteworthy to acknowledge that when immigrants are not provided a chance to fully integrate or if they resist socializing within the dominant culture, they tend to further isolate themselves by sharpening their male traditional values—which is mostly achieved through controlling and suppressing women.

In sum, a single factor cannot explain violence against women in the name of honour. It is the combination or the inter-relatedness of several complex factors that can lead us to carefully analyze and examine the phenomenon of honour killing within a Canadian perspective. As we have seen, it is institutionalized patriarchy (within the society, culture, and family), honour and shame values in traditional societies (i.e. the control over female sexuality), intergenerational conflicts, communal segregation (due to social disintegration, discrimination, and communities’ willingness to preserve separate identities), and finally the isolation of women in their families and communities are the key factors that enable the murdering of women for honour in Canada.

Part IX: How to Combat Honour Killings within Canada?

Finally, in this section, I have included a list of possible recommendations for Canadian policy makers on how to properly address and combat violence against minority women, particularly honour killing among the Canadians of South Asian origin. I also suggest some significant measures that could be initiated at the community level in identifying and raising awareness of such crimes. However, before we do so, it is noteworthy to examine how the Canadian government so far has dealt with the incidences of honour killing taking place at home.

On July 13, 2010, Rona Ambrose, the minister responsible for the status of women, at a news conference at the Punjabi Community Health Service center in Toronto said that Canadian government has zero tolerance against such “barbaric
cultural practices”. She added that honour killings are “heinous abuses” which have “no place in Canadian society”. She further stated that the federal government is taking gender-based violence “very seriously” and that the Canadian law provides no specific place for pleading one’s cultural background as a defence to a criminal charge. Ambrose specified that the federal government will continue as it did in the past to take significant measures in overcoming the incidents of honour killing. Last fall, as noted by the minister, the federal government launched its revised version of the Canadian citizenship guide for newcomers to Canada which explicitly condemned “barbaric cultural practices” such as honour killings. Besides this, she stated that in the years to come the federal government is “looking at” launching government-funded programs on local and national television as a way to communicate the consequences of such violence and abuses. She further mentioned that the government is “planning” to add honour killing as a separate charge to the Criminal Code.

Indeed there is no doubt that much development and improvement has taken place compared to a decade ago where both the Canadian media and the Canadian government either ignored or overlooked the abuses of minority women, especially of South Asian origin. Jassi’s case is a perfect example of this. Her case was not heard off at the time it took place. It was due to the government’s inability and failure to prosecute the killers and the strong public demand that the Canadian media, particularly CBC news, took the initiative to create awareness of this particular violence affecting South Asian women. Similar circumstances took place around Amandeep’s killing—that is, not much attention was given to the arising new social problem. It was only after the events of September 11 and the alleged “war on terror” pioneered by the United States, that both the Canadian media and Canadian government began its interest on the issues affecting immigrant, especially South Asian and Muslim women. Their interests became more apparent following the death of Aqsa and other South Asian Muslim girls. Although it is a positive sign that the media and the Canadian government are now highlighting the different dimensions of violence against women, as you may have felt the process has become discriminating and stigmatising to minority groups. Although it is a good beginning, much more needs to be done both at the government and
community level. The following is a list of recommendations that I think are crucial to eradicate violence against women in the name of honour.

1. Rejecting the view that violence against women is a “cultural practice”

The first and most simple measure to combat honour-based violence and other forms of violence against South Asian women is to investigate the crime regardless of cultural or racial background of the perpetrators and victims (Siddiqui, 2005). In another sense, as it is argued by various experts of honour killing, states need to refrain from invoking or referring such crimes as “cultural” or “traditional practices”, if they are to properly diagnose, prevent, and eliminate honour killings within their country. By explicitly making reference to such crimes as cultural or religious in kind, as did the Canadian minister of women’s status, it creates the impression that certain cultures are more barbaric, inhumane, and violent than Western cultures. Furthermore, as stated by Yakin Ertürk, UN Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women:

> Today, culture is used as a tool of new forms of oppression of women, whether in its orientalist or occidentalist guise. Such approaches present culture as static, homogeneous and apolitical, overlooking its diverse and ever-changing character. I emphasized that compromising women’s rights is not an option; the challenge before us is to respect our diverse cultures while developing strategies to resist oppressive practices in the name of culture and to uphold universal human rights standards while rejecting ethnocentric rulings.

In other words, as the UN Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women argues culture is now used as a new method of women’s oppression and such perspectives misguidedly leads to view cultures as homogenous entities, therefore, ignoring its internal diversity and leading to ethnocentrism. As it is often argued states must first understand that cultural justifications are only used to excuse the crime and that it is a minority of some wayward individual members and not their culture or “group” that perpetrate this type of violence against their female folks. Overall, the first (possible) strategy required on behalf of the Canadian government and media is to reject

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patriarchal oppressions or violence against women as “cultural practices”. To facilitate the dissociation of honour killing as a cultural practice and therefore to adequately respond to honour-based violence, the media must avoid sensationalizing the cases of honour killings and should be more careful in representing a particular community. As Risvi (2005) said:

The media has an influential and powerful role in society. The media to some extent is the court of public opinion and in media the limits between ‘good’ and ‘bad’, ‘us’ and ‘them’, ‘acceptable’ and ‘not acceptable’, are established, challenged and at times even changed. In other words, media in certain respects sets the agenda for society and contributes to shaping a national identity. The media’s coverage in reference to the debate on honour killings may also be an underlying factor for the authorities and their work, and the media also chooses the different voices in the debate. (2005: 218)

Because the media strongly influences the larger society, including legal authorities, it is fundamental that it represents the facts of reality in the proper context. In another sense, the media should properly do its homework instead of pushing their own political agendas. Finally, according to the UN report it is generally “cultural relativists” that accept such crimes as perpetrated by the “cultural norms” of the “group”. Finally, as the report emphasizes “women’s rights are seriously threatened when cultural relativist positions become the basis of policies or laws”41. Finally, as mentioned by Siddiqui (2005), focusing on the cultural or ethnic aspects of the crime, only leads to racist and inadequate response on the part of service providers as well as law enforcers.

2. Government Intervention through criminalization and implementation of new legislative reforms

The second strategy is two folded: first, it requires the Canadian governments (mainly the federal) to intervene through the criminalization of all forms of violence against women and girls perpetrated in the name of honour. Additionally, those committing, participating, and encouraging crimes of honour should all be brought to justice. As it is suggested by the UN Secretary-General “[a]ll reports of violence against women committed in the name of honour should be promptly, impartially and thoroughly

investigated; documented; and effectively prosecuted”\textsuperscript{42}. Moreover, Canada should continue to prosecute honour killings like any other serious offence (i.e. assault and murder) under the Criminal Code.

Second, both governments (the federal and municipal) should cooperate and work together in order to implement new legislative reforms that would help prevent, protect, and detect or identify “at risk” families, communities, groups, and or individuals. The later method should be viewed more as a municipal obligation. Most specifically, municipalities should create a wide range of social services and programmes to those seeking refuge from close relatives and other family members. An example of such social intervention series would be to create a group of individuals to be more vigilant about honour-related crimes. The members of the group could be volunteers of the neighbourhood or members of the community whose primary responsibilities would be to detect any forms of violence against women committed in the name of honour and thus be encouraged to contact authorities. Finally, due to the rapidly growing population of South Asians, there is a growing need to for more shelters for South Asian women.

3. Implementing a “community discourse” approach

The term “community discourse” was first introduced by Abdullahi Ahmed An-na’Im (2005) as one strategy among many in combating crimes of honour. He refers to the “community discourse” as a process through which community level (private and public) discussion regarding every aspect of honour-related crimes are initiated. In another sense, it represents a wide range of methods, activities, opportunities, and debates in which the communities engage in for eliminating violence against women on the basis of family honour. Abdullahi An-na’Im (2005) says that:

\begin{quote}
I maintain that this approach is an essential component of several complementary strategies to combat ‘crimes of honour’. Though it can never be sufficient in itself to either present these crimes or punish their perpetrators, community discourse against ‘crimes of honour’ can be an effective means of denying them support. This internal discourse can also play a critical role in the socializing of children into totally rejecting any proffered rationale for these crimes. At another level, community discourse helps generate and sustain the political will to allocate resources and
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\textsuperscript{42} United Nations General Assembly, Fifty-seventh session (July 2002). “Working towards the elimination of crimes against women committed in the name of honour”. Item 104 of the provincial agenda, Advancement of Women.
implement policies for combating ‘crimes of honour’, to punish perpetrators, and to deny them any moral or material benefit from their crimes. It is also a vital component in the process of transforming the institutional culture, and setting the priorities, of policymakers, police, public prosecutors, judges, prison officials and other authorities concerned with the social consequences of these crimes”. (2005: 65)

Additionally, as he points, this approach is based on an uncoerced participation of the communities involved. In that regards, like Abdullahi An-na’Im, I suggest that a “community discourse” approach should also be implemented among the South Asian communities as another means for elimination honour-based crimes within Canada. In that respect, the South Asian communities should be freely encouraged to take part in the national campaign to eradicate violence against women, but should also be assisted in breaking the “community-wide conspiracy of silence regarding the abuse of girls and women” (Papp, 2010: 8).

Community information and education programmes concerning the nature and unacceptability of honour crimes should be implemented as essential components of the “community discourse”. For instance, while such strategies help the communities to publicly condone such crimes, they also assist them in creating more awareness about the occurrences and consequences of the crime on community members. I will also add that such an approach will allow communities to support its female members and provide them an opportunity to express their concerns regarding issues that affects them the most. In addition, this internal approach should also allow religious leaders to pronounce on the religious views regarding the respect for women and overall gender equality. As often highlighted by certain researchers, religious leaders should re-examine religious texts that results in the violation of women’s human rights (Innocenti Digest, 2000). Most importantly, I think this method could also allow community groups to challenge, educate, and assist men on changing norms that are deemed abusive and discriminatory towards women. Finally, as argued by Abdullahi An-na’Im (2005), I strongly believe that the “community discourse” can also generate various services and resources for community members seeking help, refuge or counselling. In that regards, men who report or who are identified as at risks for violent behaviours should be provided counselling services. Similar services should also be offered in cases of parent-children conflicts or as discussed earlier in the essay in intergenerational conflict
situations, especially based on issues of dating and forced marriage of South Asian daughters.

4. Training of professionals, community workers and social service providers

Finally, due to the wide-spread misrepresentations and discrimination of the South Asian communities, it is crucial to ensure that those implicated in the process such as police officers, judges, community workers, and social service providers are specifically trained to adequately respond to the cases of honour killing without prejudice. Most specifically, because honour killing is a new and recent phenomenon, it is necessary to train individuals, either professionals or non-professionals, who come in contact with the victim-survivors to understand gender-based violence regardless of their cultural and ethnic background as well as to collect proper data or evidence of each case for criminal procedures. In the process of training and learning the law professionals, community workers, and service providers, experts and scholars on crimes of honour should also be occasionally called upon to share their expertise and knowledge. Through training and educating specific groups of individuals and organizations, we can be better armed and prepared at the national level for preventing and eliminating honour crimes among various immigrant communities, particularly among communities of South Asian origin. For instance, by training police officers and providing them enough background knowledge related to issues of honour crimes, they can find proper solutions to assist those seeking help and refuge without turning them down and putting them more in danger—that is, to properly tackle the problem. Finally, this can also foster to bridge the gap that exists between law enforcers and community members—putting both groups at ease to comfortably and without fear discuss issues affecting their lives.

Part X: Conclusion

In conclusion, I must re-admit my inability of digesting the incidence of understanding honour crimes, particularly in Canada. No doubt, the theories of honour crimes are informative and sensible; perhaps I simply need more time to really internalize the slaughtering or sacrifice of a loved one on the basis of family and
community honour. Nonetheless, as mentioned at the very beginning of the essay, the purpose of this study, both for personal and professional motives, was first to explore and understand the phenomenon of honour killing occurring among the South Asian communities living in Canada. The second purpose was to analyze the social contributing factors that promote the killing of young daughters and wives within a Canadian context through the help of the chosen case studies and existing literature. Thirdly, the essay was also intended to provide a list of recommendations that policymakers, law enforcers, community members, and various social organizations can consider as efforts in combating honour-related crimes within Canada. In that regards, the questions that were addressed were: what are “crimes of honour”, what are “honour killings, are honour killings specific to Islam, how is it different from ordinary domestic violence and crimes of passion, what is the meaning of honour and shame among the South Asian communities, what are the social contributing factors that enable such crimes to occur within the Canadian context, and finally, how can such crimes be eliminated and reduced within Canada.

Throughout the essay, we have seen that honour killings are specific forms of violence mainly against women perpetrated by family members such as fathers, brothers, and other relatives. The essay also pointed out how all forms of violence including the so-called honour killings are patriarchal and traditional methods of disempowering and subjugating women. As the essay demonstrated, honour killings are not specific to Islam or “Muslim culture” as it is widely misunderstood and represented by the Western media. For instance, as Wikan’s (2008) research illustrated, honour killings and other honour-related crimes exist across various cultures and religions. She specified that such crimes have been traced to various faiths such as Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, and Sikhism. Similarly, as the study of Pimentel, Pandjjarjian & Belloque (2005) revealed, such code of honour have also been traced to Mediterranean and several Latin American societies where crimes of passion are rampant. In that regards, we also looked at both sides of the debate surrounding whether honour killings are specific or similar to other crimes such as crimes of passion and domestic violence. For instance, we looked at that while most argued that for adequately understanding the phenomenon in question honour killings must be specified and separated from other
forms of violence, others maintain that by separating or specifying we risk of demonising particular immigrant communities and cultures, mainly the South Asians and Muslims, therefore resulting in “culture talk” logics and “immigrant control” agendas rather than focusing on the actual problem.

Furthermore, after having analyzed the five case studies, I came to conclude that a careful review of various inter-related social factors is primordial in understanding why honour killings are being witnessed in immigrant host countries, including Canada. As it was argued, although other factors might be at work, it is primarily the increasing intergenerational conflict between the first (parents and mainly older male members) and second generation (specifically young women or daughters based on issues of dating and heterosexual relationships) and communal segregation (as a result of social disintegration, discrimination, and unwillingness on the part of the immigrants to integrate) that are the main social conditions that support violence against women on the basis of family honour. I concluded the essay by suggesting a multi-layered strategy as the best approach to combat honour-related crimes within our country. That is, through the use of various methods such as a) rejecting the view that violence against women is a “cultural practice”, b) government intervention through criminalization and implementation of new legislative reforms, c) implementing a “community discourse” approach, and d) educating and training of professionals, community workers and social service providers we can effectively understand, prevent, and eliminate honour killings within South Asian communities living in Canada.

Notwithstanding the remarkable achievements in the advancement of women and the international struggle to eliminate all forms of violence against women, recent events reveals that there is still much structural work to be done in order to achieve gender equality and most specifically to recognize women as human beings rather than mere commodities. While at the international level many studies are been conducted, a lot remains to be done in Canada, specifically regarding several issues including “honour killing” that is affecting the lives of immigrant women. Through future research exploring the social representations, perceptions, and attitudes of immigrant communities, especially the South Asian community surrounding honour killings may help implementing awareness campaigns and more effective intervention among the
community. By further exploring the mindsets of the perpetrators of honour killing, Canada can perhaps contribute in the global campaign eradicating honour crimes against women and be best positioned at responding, preventing, and eliminating this new social phenomenon known as “honour killing” that seems to be negatively impacting every sphere of the society. Furthermore, exploring the issues of family dynamics, forced marriage practices, and domestic violence among the Canadian women of South Asian origin may help to further complete the larger puzzle of the honour killing phenomenon occurring within some Canadian households.

As a final note, I would like to add that no matter how much effort is put in place women first and most importantly need to recognize themselves as individuals, instead of simply seeing themselves as mothers, sisters, and or daughters—which is often the case among the South Asian women. A ‘women for women’ approach needs to be implemented among these communities. In another sense, older women should provide a social support system to younger ones or other women. By working together, women not just benefit from the social support system but also develop a stronger sense of self-confidence and empowerment. In short, they must embrace the value of womanhood.

Change in social structures is also crucial to social change. In this regards, the mindset of the individuals needs to be changed, especially those of South Asian men and boys regarding gender discrimination. The most effective way is the early socialization of South Asian children—they must be taught the equal value of boys and girls. Finally, it is important to end gender segregation within these communities. To this end, ‘inclusion’ instead of ‘exclusion’ of women is necessary for social change to take place. These and many other little steps both at the micro and macro level of the society are necessary for achieving gender equality and women’s empowerment. Finally, you may also do something personally to work toward combating violence against women, even the so-called “honour killings”.

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