

Death of honour

One of the major reasons behind this ever-increasing crime is the ease with which culprits slip away from the clutches of law

In the year 2003, 1,261 cases of 'honour killings' were reported in Pakistan and the incidents of crimes against women went up by 50 per cent. Other than the fact that hundreds of women made way to the country's Parliament, there was no let-up in the miseries of women who are killed in the name of honour — *Karo Kari* is the term used for such a killing in Sindh, *Sia Kari* in Balochistan, *Kali Kari* in the Punjab and *Tor Tora* in the NWFP.

One of the major reasons behind this ever-increasing crime is the ease with which the culprits slip away from the clutches of law. Under the Pakistan Penal Code, honour killings are treated as murder but the law of the land states that the family of the victim is allowed to compromise with the killer, who is usually a close relative.

Though the purpose is the same, methods of carrying out honour killings vary across the country. In Sindh, the victim is hacked to death, often with the involvement of the community. In NWFP and Balochistan, the victim can be hacked, stabbed, burnt or shot. Whereas in Punjab, the killings — usually by shooting — are mostly based on individual decisions and carried out in private. And in most of the cases, husbands, fathers or brothers of the women concerned perpetrate the murders.

The most tragic part of the story is that those accused under *karo kari* charges are never given an opportunity to give their version of events. And the very making of the allegation alone is enough to make a man blood-thirsty and justified in killing the woman in question.

In a study of 631 cases where women had to die in the name of honour killings, an NGO came out with findings that husbands were killers in

247 cases, brothers in 112, fathers 54, sons 25 and uncles two. In the other cases, there was no mention of who carried out the killing.

Out of the hundreds of cases, a brief mention of a few would be enough to highlight the need of putting an end to such practices and giving the right to live to the women of this country.

People involved in such acts can go to any extent. One is shocked to hear that in Gujrani in Sindh, a man killed his 85-year-old mother as *kari* in 1992 and obtained Rs 25,000 from the man he declared the *karo*.

In another show of cruelty, in March 1999, a 16-year-old mentally retarded girl was killed for no fault of hers. She was reportedly raped by a junior clerk of the local government of agriculture who took her to a hotel in Parachinar, NWFP. The girl's uncle filed a report about the incident with police who apprehended the accused but handed over the girl to her tribe, in the Kurram Agency, a tribal area which has its own legal and judicial system under provisions of the Constitution. A jirga of Pushtun tribesmen decided that she had brought shame to her tribe and that its honour could only be restored by her death. She was shot dead in front of a tribal gathering.

One of the most disturbing cases in the recent past was that of Samia Sarwar, who was murdered in Lahore for trying to escape an abusive marriage. At the instigation of her own parents, the 36-year-old woman was shot dead in her lawyer's office in Lahore on April 6, 1999. Although the circumstances of her death are well known, the case was never brought to court.

Similarly, Afsheen Musarrat, a computer science graduate, reportedly wanted to marry her maternal cousin and class-

mate Hassan Mustafa. Afsheen and Hassan allegedly had married before Afsheen's parents purportedly married her forcibly to her paternal cousin Nauman, a GD pilot of the Pakistan Air Force based in Shorkot. Afsheen allegedly eloped with Hassan on November 1, 2003, and took refuge with a family friend in Rawalpindi. Relatives managed to bring her back on November 8 after assuring the family with which she had been staying that her will would be honoured and she would be not be harmed.

On November 10, Afsheen died in her father's house in Gulshan-i-Mehar Colony in Multan. Her family buried her the next day in the ancestral village of Marri Sahu in Kabirwala tehsil in Khanewal District, declaring her death to be by natural causes. A post-mortem conducted on the body of Afsheen after her exhumation on November 24 confirmed that she been tortured and strangled.

In another incident, a woman and two men were killed in two separate incidents on the pretext of *karo-kari*, in Mirpur Mathelo and Daharki on December 22, 2003.

In yet another incident, a man killed his wife and one-year-old daughter in Deh Shadiwala, Daharki, on January 18, 2004. The accused, Mohammad Alam Banglani, suspected that his wife, Heer, 30, had an illicit relationship with Phullo Samejo.

The story does not end here. *Karis* remain dishonoured even after their death. Their bodies are thrown in rivers or buried in special hidden *kari* graveyards. Nobody mourns for them or remembers them. In some cases, they are taken to the bank of the river where they are shot or slaughtered with an axe, and thrown in the water.

—TNS Report



Scarred for life: A woman whose husband cut off her nose.