

# The Real Stories behind Honour Killing



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By

Shahnaz Shoro

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**The Book is dedicated to**

Roger Witts, whose insight, valuable suggestions and categorical support enabled me to let the world hear the stories of the unheard and unsung individuals who are victimized by the erroneous connotation of ‘honour’.



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My heart cries for the eighteen-year-old participant who pleaded with me to take her photograph as she was unsure about the safety of her life. Her words still make me sad: '*Baji, take my photo and keep it with you so that when these cruel people kill me my image should remind you that I was also alive once*'. I wish I could have taken her photo but the ethical convention which I had signed with the University of York prevented me from doing so. She, like all of the other interviewees, is constantly in my thoughts.

Being unjudgemental and unbiased, I would like to thank my participants for their trust in me, and for giving their time to share their life stories with me. I was a stranger to them but they respected me by answering most of my questions eloquently. I went to them with honesty and they enriched my understanding with such detailed data that at one point my supervisor Professor Stevi Jackson said that she had not seen such strong data throughout her research career. That was the time when I considered myself a selfish person who had made an unfair bargain. That was the time when I vowed to myself that I would write every single word which they had uttered and let the world hear the plight which affected their lives. I am grateful that I have been given enough time to fulfil my duty and my obligation to them.

I am extremely grateful and indebted to my husband Akbar Laghari and our children Zaryab and Sophia, without their unconditional love and support, I would have given up a long time ago. They always respected my passion for learning and assisted me to comprehend what the meaning, value and strength of a family is.



## FOREWORD

Courage comes in many forms. This book is a remarkable testament both to the courage of many women who have survived the most terrifying ordeals and whose future is still uncertain, and to the courage of many men who are prepared to speak openly to a stranger about what they have experienced. It is also a stark and horrifying presentation of unspeakable cruelty, vicious dishonesty, greed and corruption. Dr Shoro lets the people on both sides of the phenomenon of honour killing describe their experiences, justify their actions and pour out their hopes with compassion, empathy and vivid clarity but without commenting on, analysing or judging any of the experiences which she relates. There are no heroes, no heroines in the stories which are told in this book: the men who proudly describe the murders which they have committed, the children who grow up with no access to education, the men who are falsely accused of the most appalling murders, the young girls who are forced into loveless marriages, the women who are bullied, abused, slaughtered and sold, and the forces of authority which ignore, condone, even encourage murder, slavery and corruption – they are all victims of a society in which there is no honour at all. It is also a society which knows no boundaries: although the interviews took place in Upper Sindh, newspaper headlines in countries across the world tell of honour killings but rarely explore the social background to them as deeply as Dr Shoro does in this book. The courage which Dr Shoro needed in tracking down her interviewees, meeting them and listening to their stories is admirable and the restraint which she shows in letting the voices be heard unfiltered by analysis means that the reader will be shocked not only by the stories which are told, but also by the acceptance shown, even by the victims themselves, that this is the way that things are. Anyone who reads this book will be deeply affected by the experiences which are related and by the descriptions of the everyday ordinariness of the environment in which the most extraordinary crimes are committed.

Roger Witts  
*October 2018*



## PREFACE

The purpose of this book is to let the world comprehend the phenomenon of honour-related violence and crimes and the cultural tradition of killing. The study was conducted in the northern divisions of Sindh, the second largest of the four provinces of Pakistan. The principal question which guided my research was ‘What is the relationship between honour and killing?’ This research was inspired by a need to investigate whether honour killing is happening to punish supposed wayward women in order to maintain cultural values and a social system, or whether acting in the name of honour implies attempting to achieve some hidden objective. I gathered the experiences of those involved in honour killings through informal, semi-structured, open-ended, in-depth interviews, conducted under the framework of the qualitative research method. The aim of my study was to present the data which I collected without any meddling in the name of analysis so that readers can explore the tradition of honour killing and to let the versions of the affected people be heard. The interviews were held with three different groups of people; women who had been threatened with death were interviewed in three different shelters, convicted killers were interviewed inside two jails and killers who were not in jail were interviewed in carefully selected locations. This book presents the divergent accounts of thirteen men and thirteen women about how they had been affected by the tradition of honour killing and their experience of living in a society which has very strict honour-related norms. In these case studies, women who have been accused of being *karis* speak out and reveal the motives behind the allegations and killings in the name of honour. The male killers, whom I met inside and outside the jails, justify their acts of killing in the name of honour, culture, tradition and religion. Their accounts reveal their childhood and education, their financial and social conditions and the impacts of these on their lives, thoughts and actions. By viewing the rise in honour killings in Sindh over the last three decades as a suspicious change, I argue that there are some notable features, such as Pakistani law, gender discrimination in every walk of life, the social and economic situation, and cultural and religious interpretations of notions about honour killing, all revealed in the interviewees’ accounts. Although this was a small-scale study in a limited geographical area, its findings can be generalized more widely and can help

to make recommendations for future research into this controversial and disturbing subject.

## INTRODUCTION

Of all the most heinous crimes against humanity, a major crime committed in the name of culture is known as ‘honour killing’ and is, unfortunately, still regarded by many people as an honourable act. Honour killing as a traditional norm or cultural practice to restore tarnished honour because of the perceived misconduct of a kinswoman has been widely accepted as an honourable act in many societies and legislative systems. However, it is regarded by many researchers in the field of gender-based violence that honour killings are one of the most psychologically complex, sociologically complicated, morally distressing and legally challenging violent crimes against humanity. Hanmer (1996:12-13) explained that violence of this kind, regardless of cultural borders, includes the torture of women by men for a number of reasons such as marriage, pregnancy, the birth of children and simply to get rid of their wives, and the sexual, physical and emotional attacks and traumas which are inflicted on victims can continue for several years. If they complain, women are often told by their confidants that ‘you should not make a fuss because married women are always hit’: “This is especially important in understanding how much violence has been accepted, condoned, normalized and ignored by both individuals and institutions. It has been seen as a private matter” (Hearn, 1996:24).

Honour killing is not a recent phenomenon; such crimes in the name of honour have been happening throughout history all over the world in many communities, countries and cultures. The feudal and tribal concept of *karo-kari* in Pakistan is that if a man sees any of his female relatives in a compromising position with any man other than her husband, it becomes his moral obligation to kill both of them. It is affirmed that most tribal areas have no other substitutable punishment than murder for a woman who, in their view, is adulterous. Honour-related crimes against women are linked to a patriarchal society. Before the male-controlled, strong patriarchal culture existed, there are no records of such killings in the name of honour. Durant (1935), however, wrote that before the beginning of patriarchal society, the position of women was superior to that of men and that the matriarchal period lasted for 9,290,000 years of the known human history of 30 million years. Lerner (1986) stated that the patriarchal

structure consistently excluded women from all creative and scientific progress but added that “patriarchy was not imposed as a single event but the subjugation, exploitation and commodification of women are ancient and widespread”. Jafri (2008:27) suggested that the history of human civilization bears witness to the fact that women have been humiliated and treated brutally certainly since the rise of city-states.

It was the beginning of an agricultural society which gave birth to the patriarchal philosophy which changed the comparatively prestigious position of women. The new ideology chained women and reduced their status to that of slaves in several respects. This system began to treat a woman as a thing, a commodity or a property and denied her an identity to the level that eventually she became an easy target in the hands of opportunists, mainly because of her weaker physique, because the agricultural society was based on physical strength rather than intellectual capabilities, mental skills or the ability to give birth. As a result, women’s position was reduced to a weaker being and the man-made society created its own ethical and moral masculine norms. These norms had their own male-oriented rules which were clearly visible in the way that they were made and imposed in every social written and unwritten contract, whether it was a law or a religious tenet. The physical power of men pushed aside the intellectual and artistic capabilities of women and the two genders became divided on a basis of deep inequality. Out of so many other concepts and terms, the word ‘honour’ also came to be used as a means of restricting the free will of women. The concepts and meanings which they associated with the word ‘honour’ gave the dominant males a free hand to punish, control, abuse, torture or even kill if, in their opinion, women violated the very notion of what they saw as honour. Baker *et al.* (1999:165) pointed out that “the concept of honour used to rationalize killing is founded on the notion that a person’s honour depends on the behaviour of others and that behaviour therefore must be controlled”. In many societies, ‘the other’ whose behaviour can cause shame and damage to the widely held concept of honour is ‘female’. In honour killings, the victims are mostly women and the murderers are mostly men; fathers, uncles, brothers, husbands or sons.

In this Introduction, my aim is to investigate the significance of the word ‘honour’ in both its broad and its narrow terms from the eastern and the western perspectives. Interestingly the meaning of ‘honour’ fluctuates when different sources define women’s honour, which undoubtedly supports the notion of hierarchy. Samuel Johnson in his *A Dictionary of the English Language* (1755) defined honour as “nobility of soul, scorn of

meanness, reputation, fame and privileges of rank or birth". The *Chambers Encyclopaedic English Dictionary* (1994) states that honour is "a source of fame, glory, great respect, distinction, pleasure and privilege, a high reward and high standard of moral behaviour". From these very respectable sources, it can be seen that from the very high level to the common level, the concept of honour derives from the personal human conditions of dignity, worthy characteristics, moral conduct, and a sense of obligation to the ethical excellence which sets the rank of nobility.

Honour, although it seems a simple word from these two definitions, nevertheless sets two different responsibilities and practices for men and for women. For example, the *Chambers Encyclopaedic English Dictionary* includes among its definitions of honour that it is "a woman's chastity or her reputation", and Johnson's *Dictionary* states that honour, "in connection to women is chastity or virginity or in case of a married woman fidelity/loyalty". The classical notion of honour has obtained greater value in terms of man's superiority, which makes woman an instrument for maintaining and purifying honour and, in the case of ruining honour, she has to be punished. The notion that honour is hidden in men's dignity and women's chastity has been accepted generally all over the world.

Interestingly, the treatment of honour expands to include in eastern values the same connotations as shown in the western definitions above. Hussain (1999) stated that "the whole concept of honour is based on a tribal, pre-Islamic world view in which woman is considered as a chattel with no mind or will of her own", and therefore men have to set boundaries and limit women's actions in order to keep their family's honour safe. This concept of honour made male family members responsible for regulating and guarding not only their family's female members' moral and sexual behaviour, but also extended to their dress codes and social conduct. Because of its abstracted and multi-faceted implications related to the two gendered divisions among human beings, honour codes vary from culture to culture, group to group and person to person, and it is this concept which has nurtured and developed the culture of honour-related violence.

Research into honour killings has suggested that the history of honour killing goes back as far as 1200 BCE and was practised under the rule of Hammurabi and in other Assyrian tribes (Khouri, 2003). Goldstein (2002:12) found its roots in ancient Rome where, for the first time in history, women's sexual conduct became subject to legislation during the reign of Augustus (27 BCE to 14 CE). According to the law, the husband

and father of an adulteress were given the right to kill her to preserve the sexual purity of a woman as a way of keeping her kinsmen's level of honour high. Laws which associated insult, shame and honour with the actions of women were certainly not limited to the Roman Empire; in medieval Europe, early Jewish law mandated death by stoning for an adulterous wife and her partner (Cantarella, 1991). Under Ottoman rule, a killer would "sprinkle his victim's blood on his clothes and parade through the streets displaying the bloody murder weapon to increase his honour" (Kressel, 1981:143). In Arab societies, if a woman has caused shame to the family, a man or men must react accordingly otherwise they would be the cause of adding disgrace (Giant, 1979, cited in Baker *et al.*, 1999). This brief historical overview confirms that the concept and the ritual act of honour killing with legislative backing is very old and is not limited to any specific part of the world (Khan, 2006; Welchman & Hossain, 2005).

On 7 December 1995, the widely watched news channel CNN broadcast an intensive report entitled 'Honour Killing: a Brutal Tribal Custom'. The documentary was a compilation of data about the Muslim Arab communities residing in Israeli and Palestinian territories. That documentary made honour-related crimes and killings the topic of debate all over the world and numerous western television channels, as well as the print media, began to reveal the countries where honour killing is still rife, despite a serious horrified reaction from very many directions. The greatest numbers of reports about honour killings appeared principally in Central Asia and in Islamic countries such as Pakistan, Jordan, Bangladesh and Palestine. Jafri (2008:27) commented that "This led to the belief in the popular imagination that honour killing is somehow related to Islam". Khan (2006), however, named two Islamic countries, Malaysia and Mauritius, where honour-related killings have never occurred. Cases of honour killings have been reported all around the world; the statistics show that honour killings take place in India, in the Middle East, in Latin America, in Europe and in North America. However, more than 90% of the reported cases are either in Islamic countries or within Muslim families which have emigrated to other countries (Shoro, 2017).

Pakistan is one of the eight South Asian countries which have been in the news for their high numbers of honour-killing cases. The Islamic Republic of Pakistan comprises four mainly Muslim-dominated provinces with a population of approximately 176 million. All of the provinces have their own distinctive cultures, as their names show. For example, Punjab has Panjabi culture, Balochistan has Balochi culture, Sindh has Sindhi culture and Khyber Pakhtunkhuwah has Pakhtun/Pashtun culture. Underneath

these cultures there are a number of sub-cultures which each have their own different moral and traditional values. The Pakistani community is divided into urban and rural classes; the urban population is much more privileged than the rural population. The women who live in the cities enjoy better work opportunities, education and freedom than those who live in rural villages. Khan (2011) stated that “For the past many years, families belonging to the *wadera* (feudal) classes have been ruling the country, whereas the poor and oppressed people are deprived of their basic rights. The country’s fundamentalist forces and the Army Generals are the protectors of this medieval feudal system; therefore, they are against those who speak against oppression” (Khan, *On-line magazine*, 2 March 2011).

In this patriarchal culture, the significant influences on women’s lives are education, class differences, the rural/urban division, tribal and feudal norms and uneven socio-economic conditions. Except for a few influential, elite groups of women, the social set-up begins with unwritten slavery for women and ends abruptly at the authoritative attitude of men. Despite some attempts made by various democratic governments to elevate the status of women in rural Sindh, the situation is not promising and there is an urgent need for a multi-dimensional change in order for ordinary women’s lives to be made better. Khan (2007:94) pointed out that “Women are considered the property of the males in their family. The concept of ownership has turned women into a commodity which can be exchanged, bought and sold and killed”. Hearn (1996) commented that “Men’s day-to-day domination was routinely reinforced by the state, for example, in the avoidance of intervention in ‘marital disputes’ by the police. The position of women was also generally weak in terms of divorce proceedings and the award and receipt of maintenance” (Hearn, 1996:25).

Today, Pakistan has a high number of honour killings, both reported and unreported. Even so, it is interesting to note that from the country’s creation in 1947 to the late 1980s there was no terminology such as ‘killing in the name of honour’ or ‘honour killing’ known or used by the common people. For the last four decades, the rising number of honour killings has been primarily interlinked with changes in the secular law of Pakistan introduced by the military regime of the dictator General Zia-ul-Haq,<sup>1</sup> who came to power through an overnight military coup and

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<sup>1</sup> General Muhammad Zia-ul-Haq was the sixth President of Pakistan from 1977 until his death in 1988, having declared martial law for the third time in the country's history in 1977. He was Pakistan's longest-serving head of state, ruling

promptly imprisoned the very first democratically elected prime minister<sup>2</sup> of Pakistan.

“Upon independence in 1947, Pakistan inherited the common law and criminal justice system modelled after the English legal system” (Irfan, 2008:8). It was the British Penal Code (1860) which became the formal legal system (statute, secular state law) of Pakistan. According to that Code, the laws defining murder stipulated two distinct aspects. First, *mens rea*,<sup>3</sup> which means that if the intention of killing is there but the act is not performed, then there is no offence. Second, *actus reus*,<sup>4</sup> which means that if the act is performed without intention, it is *khata*<sup>5</sup> but not an offence. Under this law, if someone intentionally kills a person (on any pretext) it could be considered a murder.

However, in order to make Pakistan an Islamic state by incorporating Sharia<sup>6</sup> law into the country’s legal system, in 1978, General Zia established “Shariat Appellate Benches, grafted onto Pakistan’s four High Courts” (Hussain, 2005:400) to determine cases based on the teachings of the Qur’an and the *Sunnah*.<sup>7</sup> A *Sharia* council was appointed to bring the

for eleven years. He is most noted for his efforts to bring religion into mainstream society within Pakistan and in foreign policy, for his close relationship with the United States and support for the so-called Afghan Mujahedeen resistance against the Soviets in Afghanistan.

<sup>2</sup> Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto, a social, secular political leader of Pakistan, served as President of Pakistan from 1971 to 1973 and as Prime Minister from 1973 to 1977. In 1977, he was ousted in a military coup mounted by General Muhammed Zia-ul-Haq and was arrested. He was hanged on 4 April 1979 for allegedly ordering the murder of a political opponent in 1974.

<sup>3</sup> Latin: ‘mental guilt’, an ‘intention’.

<sup>4</sup> Latin: ‘a criminal act’.

<sup>5</sup> ‘an accident’.

<sup>6</sup> Islamic religion-based law is called *Sharia*. These laws are derived from the Qur’an, *Sunnah* (the practices of the Prophet) and *Hadith* (sayings of the Prophet). The modern forms of *Sharia* law have been derived from various schools of legal interpretations created by four religious scholars in different periods of early Muslim history and in the context of different socio-economic and political systems, Hanafi (699-767CE), Maliki (713-795CE), Shafi (767-820CE) and Hanbali (780-813CE). In Pakistan, the state derives dominantly from the Hanafi school of thought, which is Sunni ideology (the dominant group of Muslims in Pakistan) (Khan, 2006: 229).

<sup>7</sup> *Sunnah*, (plural *Sunan*) is the verbally transmitted record of the teachings, deeds and sayings of the prophet Muhammad (peace be upon Him) defined as a path, a way and a manner of life.

state's legal statutes into alignment with Islamic doctrine (Hussain, 2007). The purpose of creating a *Shariat* Appellate Bench of the Supreme Court was to give it status as the final authority in *Sharia* cases.

In his bid to run the country by *Sharia* law, whatever ordinances General Zia implanted into the constitution of Pakistan caused great damage to women's already inferior position to that of men. To strengthen patriarchy, the far-reaching repercussions of the misogynist legal acts put women into miserable conditions where their lives were at the mercy of their male relatives. These ordinances ran contrary to human rights and totally undermined the efforts of the very first elected secular democratic political party to empower women in the newly created state.

The most controversial of the new ordinances were the *Hudood*<sup>8</sup> Ordinance (1979) and the *Qanun-e-Amna*<sup>9</sup> Order (1984). These ordinances added new criminal offences of adultery and fornication to Pakistani law and new punishments of whipping, amputation and stoning to death (Lau, 2007). The provisions relating to *zina*<sup>10</sup> were replaced by an ordinance with punishments of a flogging of 100 lashes for unmarried offenders (women and men found guilty of having extra-marital relations) and stoning to death for married offenders (Heng & Liew, 2010).

"More worrisome for human rights and women's rights advocates, some lawyers and politicians, was the incarceration of thousands of rape victims on charges of *zina*" (Heng & Liew, 2010:360). All of these *hudood* punishments were dependent on Islamic *hudd*<sup>11</sup> proof. This proof requires

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<sup>8</sup> *Hudood* means 'limits' or 'restrictions', as in limits of acceptable behaviour in Islamic law.

<sup>9</sup> This is 'blasphemy', the act of insulting or showing contempt for God or for religious or holy persons, or towards something considered sacred, with penalties ranging from a fine to death. From 1987 to 2014, over 1300 people were accused of blasphemy, mostly from non-Muslim religious minorities. The vast majority of the accusations were lodged for desecration of the Qur'an (BBC News, 6 November 2014).

<sup>10</sup> The Arabic word *zina* means all sexual intercourse between a man and a woman who are not married to one another through a *nikah* (marriage contract). It includes extra-marital and pre-marital sex. "According to Islam, 'zina' constituted social suicide – an entire society commits suicide over time if it allows fornication and adultery to go unpunished in the Islamic style" (Mirza, 2008). *Hudood* Ordinances are laws in Pakistan which were enacted in 1979. They replaced parts of the secular, British-era Pakistan Penal Code. Before the implementation of the *Hudood* Ordinances, the state had nothing to do with *zina*.

<sup>11</sup> 'The limit'.

four Muslim men of good repute to testify as witnesses to the crime in question. In practice, uncorroborated testimony by women was inadmissible in *hudood* crimes (Hussain, 2005). So in cases of rape, victims were sometimes charged with fornication and jailed whereas their rapists were freed because the women could not comply with the *hudd* requirement of having four reputable Muslim men testifying to the rape.

The irony of the situation is this: how can a raped woman produce ‘four truthful’ and ‘abstaining from major sins’ eyewitnesses as section 8 (b) of the ordinance demands? And they all “must have witnessed the penetration” (Jafri, 2008; Khan, 2006; Warraich, 2005). As a result, women preferred to keep silent even when they had been gang-raped. These ordinances were not the only discriminatory acts which paved the way for extreme violence against women in order to push them to the state of segregation in Pakistan. According to Shah (1998:56), “statutory law under the *Zina* Ordinance does not strictly differentiate between rape and fornication either; in fact, if a raped woman cannot prove that she did not consent to intercourse, she is considered to have committed *zina*, fornication, which attracts severe punishments. It does not dishonour the rapist”. Both of these laws have had a devastating effect on the rights of women: “Girls as young as twelve were also sometimes jailed and prosecuted for having extra-marital intercourse because the ordinance abolished Pakistan’s statutory rape law” (*Human Rights Watch*, 1999:18). The incorporation of the *Sharia* laws into the legal and judicial system of Pakistan actually authorized men to control the actions of their kinswomen with the backing of the state. After the death of General Zia in 1988, inconsistency and instability has prevailed in Pakistani laws. In fact, his death was not the end of his era. The greatest example of this was the promulgation of *Qisas*<sup>12</sup> and *Diyat*<sup>13</sup> Ordinances in September 1990 by his

<sup>12</sup> *Qisas* is an Islamic term meaning retaliation or retribution in kind, or revenge, an eye for an eye, nemesis or retributive justice. It is a category of crimes in Islamic jurisprudence in which *Sharia* allows equal retaliation as the punishment. The *Qisas* principle is available against the accused, to the victim or victim's heirs, when a Muslim is murdered, suffers bodily injury or suffers property damage. In the case of murder, *Qisas* means the right of a murder victim's nearest relative or *wali* (legal guardian) to, if the court approves, take the life of the killer (Encyclopaedia Britannica).

<sup>13</sup> In Islamic *Sharia* law, *Diyat* is the financial compensation paid to the victim or heirs of a victim in the cases of murder, bodily harm or property damage. It is an alternative punishment to *Qisas* (equal retaliation). In Arabic, the word means both blood money and ransom, and it is spelled sometimes as *Diya*, *Diyah* or *Diyeh* (Spevack, 2015:81). *Diyat* compensation rates, under *Sharia* law, have historically

successor as president, Saeed Ishaq Khan (Shoro, 2017). The term was defined by section 299, sub-section (k):

*Qisas* means punishment by causing similar hurt in the same part of the body of the convict as he has caused to the victim or by causing his death if he has committed *qatl-e-amd* in exercise of the right of the victim or a *wali*.<sup>14</sup>

- a: In the case of *qatl-e-amd*, an adult sane *wali* may, at any time and without any compensation, waive his right of *qisas* (Section 309-1).
- b: In the case of *qatl-e-amd*, an adult sane *wali* may, at any time on accepting *badl-e-sulh*,<sup>15</sup> waive his right of *qisas* (Section 310 -1).

The meaning of *qisas* with reference to honour killing has two components. One is that if there is sufficient evidence of *qatl-e-amd*, it carries the death penalty. The second is that it is the right of a victim or his/her *wali* that the death penalty be awarded to the murderer. Murder is not prohibited in all the major religions but no state in the modern world allows or condones the murder of anyone on any pretext. The punishment for murder is also prescribed everywhere in the world. Thus, this ordinance has deep and far-reaching implications. It is interpreted to mean that if the legal heir of the deceased does not want to exercise his right, the death penalty cannot be awarded. And if the legal heirs of the deceased reach a compromise with the killer, they can withdraw their right of *qisas* and therefore there is no death penalty. Hence, the law has been codified in the following two sections of the Pakistan Penal Code (PPC) *Qisas and Diyat Ordinance*. In addition to this, in section 300 of the PPC, there is an exemption of “grave and sudden provocation”, defined as unintentional murder: “A male relative can also kill a woman on the pretext of ‘sudden provocation’ or ‘fit of anger’ or ‘heat of passion’” (Khan, 2006:175). Thus, the ordinance proved a fatal blow to the already poor status of women. Hussaini (2009:112) reported that it had been confirmed by Government of Pakistan that between 1998 and 2003, 4,101 people were killed in honour-related crimes. *Human Rights Watch*, the *Human Rights*

varied based on the gender and religion of the victim. Muslim women victims have typically been compensated at half the rate of Muslim male victims, whilst non-Muslims’ compensation rates have varied between 1/16th to half of a Muslim, for an equivalent case (Terrill, 2012:559).

<sup>14</sup> An adult legal heir.

<sup>15</sup> ‘In lieu of peace’. Compoundable offences are those in which the parties to a dispute can reach a compromise and proven killers can seek or buy pardon from the victim’s family.

*Commission of Pakistan* (HRCP) and *Amnesty International* all produced annual reports on the statistics of killings on the pretext of honour throughout the 1990s and onwards all reported a constant rise in which, according to a representative of the HRCP (2014), 70% of the victims of honour killings were women and 30% were men.

I conducted the fieldwork for my PhD study of honour killing in northern Sindh, the hub of honour killing, where it is referred to as *karo-kari*.<sup>16</sup> The term *karo* is used to describe the man involved in an act of adultery whereas *kari* defines an immoral and adulterous woman. On the other hand, this term shows racist discrimination too because in the Sindhi language, *karo* literally means the colour black. This term indeed is a symbol of inferiority (Hoodbai, 2000:25). As I have discussed earlier, the word ‘honour’ and the meanings attached to it are largely misogynistic and anyone is free to adapt it to fit their cultural norm. The specific meaning attached to the word honour, which affects both the social and personal standing of an individual or a community, is unique in the context of the northern part of Sindh.

In general, men in the area of my research need to have control and possession over the social and sexual conduct of their female relatives. The term ‘honour’ is linked largely with female behaviour in this region. This division creates a kind of hurdle to family relations because it prevents family members, whether male or female, from being able to earn respect on equal footings. In this patriarchal culture, if a woman wants to be an honourable woman, she must conform to the masculine definition of honour and she should also even maintain a vigilance over the other female members of her family and go against them when the male expectation requires it.

The centre of my research was Sindh, one of the four provinces of Pakistan, which has a fascinating history of civilization. Throughout the centuries it has remained a land of poets, mystics, intellectuals, aesthetes, lovers and secular writers. The history of Sindh provides fertile ground for researchers to investigate what it was that introduced such appalling crimes in a land of peace.

Changes occurred in Sindh’s geography and social life as a result of various invasions and migrations of people (Fredunbeg, 1900; Durant,

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<sup>16</sup> *Karo-kari* is an act of murder in which a person or maybe two are killed for his or her actual or perceived immoral behaviour.

1935; Lambrick, 1986; LeBlanc, 2013; Wright, 2009). Hence, Lashari (1992:32) considered “*karo-kari* an immoral perception of honour” and showed his surprise by asking “how has this norm taken place on the soil of love, brotherhood and tolerance?”<sup>17</sup>

In today’s Sindh, honour killing is one of many persistent social evils. “According to a women’s organization in Sindh, in 1996 alone, 148 women were killed in the name of honour and more than 300 cases of *karo-kari* occurred. Another organization based in Sindh reported that during three months of 1999, 132 cases of *karo-kari* were registered” (Khan, 2006:150-151). A report by the Aurat foundation in Karachi (19 July 2012) stated that “A total of 8,539 cases of violence against women were reported in the country during 2011, which was roughly 6.74% higher than the number of cases reported during the previous year. The largest number (133) of cases of violence against women in Sindh was reported in Sukkur, closely followed by Jacobabad (132) and Ghotki (121)”. Nonetheless, almost every research body has stated that the numbers of recorded cases of honour killing are far fewer than those of unreported or unrecorded cases.

Previous studies have suggested that honour killing is acceptable in societies which have a gender-biased structure and in which men guard women’s sexual and moral actions. Along with this generalised definition of honour killing, some stereotypes which are believed to be the main reasons for honour killing have been listed as choice of marriage, refusal of an arranged marriage, choosing a marriage partner against the wishes of the family, seeking divorce from a husband, being a victim of sexual assault or rape, committing adultery and having illicit relations, getting rid of a wife or any other woman of the family, desiring a second marriage, property saving, or if a wife gives birth to a female child, brings a small dowry or maybe even presents an unsweetened cup of tea to her husband. A woman can be killed under the plea of honour if she serves food late, goes to her parents’ home without seeking the permission of her husband, or interrupts or refuses any small thing to her husband. Who can stop men from killing a woman? (Thebo, 2000; Khokhar, 2002).<sup>18</sup> Another common trend which was identified by Noor (2000:68) is that after the first night of marriage, the next morning could be a decisive time for the future of the bride. If the newly-wed groom confirms her virginity, she will survive, but if he does not for one reason or another, she can be murdered as *kari*. In

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<sup>17</sup> My translation.

<sup>18</sup> My translation.

this kind of murder, the bride's brothers and father sometimes also take part.<sup>19</sup> Honour killings may be carried out for other less usual reasons which may have not clearly been depicted, such as planned killings for the sake of money, personal gain or personal enmity. Some murders have strange but thought-provoking reasons. For example, Hina (2000:21) stated that "a man killed his wife as he claimed he had seen her committing adultery in a dream".<sup>20</sup> In another case, Shaikh (2000:62) explained how a man found a young stranger offering a prayer in a graveyard. Because the stranger was standing near the grave of the man's recently dead wife, he caught him and claimed that he must have been *karo* with his wife otherwise why would he be offering a prayer over her grave? "The stranger was taken to the landowner for a decision in *jirga*, and there he was fined heavily in order to avoid being killed; he paid the money and thus saved his life."<sup>21</sup>

As I was researching and writing about the reasons for such killings, a Sindhi newspaper, *Kawish*, published details of three cases of honour killing in which two women were killed and a third was brutally tortured. In the first case, reported on 5 January 2012, a 35-year-old woman, a mother of seven, was killed by her brother and nephew for her second marriage after the death of her first husband. Her second husband had also divorced her two days before, after receiving death threats and the registration of a fake case of abduction by her brother. She went back to her parents where bullets killed her and her body was not received by any of her relatives. She was from Ghotki in Sindh. In the second case, in Hyderabad in Sindh, a 35-year-old woman, a mother of eight children, was tortured for about two hours by local *waderas* by calling her *kari*. Her clothes were ripped off by villagers and she had lain helpless on a road for ten hours. Later, the police took her to a hospital. This case reveals that the licence to beat and kill women had been assumed not only by the family's male members but also by the local landlords. On 6 January 2012, another woman from Ghotki was murdered on a charge of *kari*. She was at her parents' home when her husband, along with a few armed men, burst in and, calling her *kari*, tried to kill her. In an attempt to escape, she hid under the bed; they dragged her out and opened fire on her. Her younger brother and her mother, holding the Qur'an in an attempt to plead for the life of her daughter, were tortured. The dead woman's brother registered a case against his sister's husband and stated that it was because of sexual

<sup>19</sup> My translation.

<sup>20</sup> My translation.

<sup>21</sup> My translation.

abuse by her father-in-law that she had come to them and that she was not *kari*. No-one from the village interfered.

Many examples show that in a state of fighting or peace, enmity or friendship, ultimately women suffer. For example, a brother killed his sister after accusing her of being *kari* with his enemy in order to deny her the right to some property. Thus, his two purposes were served: the property remained his and an opponent was also killed. If a man's proposal of marriage is refused by a family, he kills one of her family's women and then kills any man of the family which refused his proposal in order to take revenge. In offences of this type, usually a *jirga*<sup>22</sup> decides that one woman from the family of a man who has been murdered as *karo* must be given to the murderer (the person who killed in order to save his honour) to restore peace. Money is given to the *kari*'s husband or, if she was unmarried, then to her father, but the lion's share is taken by the members of the *jirgas*. In all situations of this kind, it is the women who suffer.

The principal question which I had to address was how to carry out research on such a sensitive subject in order to open up new dimensions on the issue. I had seen research theses and papers in which data were collected from those who were directly or indirectly involved in honour killing, including the relatives of the accused, an adulterer and adulteress, the members of the investigation team, the police and the community, eye-witnesses to honour killing and the members of the *jirgas*. For me, the most important thing was to reach those who have been directly affected by a killing in the name of honour so that the circumstances of their involvement might be heard. How do they see the tradition? What does a killer think about and then kill someone or a few people? How do those who evade a killing by chance see the issue and what do they expect of life in the future? Do women who have been threatened with death have any secure future? What are the reasons behind these killings? Most importantly, I wanted the answers to these crucial questions to come either from the killers themselves or from women who had been threatened with death in order to understand the phenomenon of honour killing. The data collected in this way were analysed but the analysis could be subject to bias as in such analyses the researcher or researchers have to scrutinise and

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<sup>22</sup> The *jirga* is a local customary tribal court. It is an illegal local law-enforcing and decision-making assembly or tribal council. The informal law system which runs parallel to the state's formal law is tribal law (village courts). Its judgments come through *jirga* and are implemented by tribal/feudal leaders and their henchmen.

evaluate the findings in their own way, according to their own understanding of the issue, the culture, tradition, internalization and socialization. No matter how hard researchers endeavour to maintain the highest level of neutrality and impartiality, they have to explore the data and interpret and explain it in their own way. At this point, the researcher becomes responsible for data and the data loses its originality. The original data, in every research study, becomes of secondary importance and it is the analysis which takes the major place. The purpose of this book is to let the reader go through the original data which I gathered ... every single word of the interviews which I held can be heard by the readers and by future researchers in order for them to comprehend the actual and basic motivations, objectives and consequences of honour killing.

Cottle (1978) insisted that one of the extensively acknowledged aims of feminist research is to allow people to speak for themselves ... and in return to communicate to them, in conversation as well as in writing, that it is their words which I am seeking and not material for the generation of something which will ultimately transcend their words and hence their lives (Cottle, 1978:xii).

In terms of planning and designing an appropriate research method, Mason (1996:7) described "how researchers might determine what their research is 'really about', and what is its 'intellectual puzzle'". The main purpose of my research and, to my understanding, the intellectual puzzle of the subject being researched is the most crucial issue to be considered. It requires a passionate and careful strategy for sorting out the challenges of the topic. The intellectual puzzle for me is why the menace of honour killing exists on such a large scale but has still not been understood, and why, despite so much research on this subject, controlling and ending honour killing seems to be so difficult. My intellectual puzzle is how these elements are embedded in the lives of the women who are threatened with death and the men who kill women in the name of honour. It was vital for me to let people speak out as much as they could. In order to enable them to open their hearts, I needed the best possible research methodology. For me in this situation, informal, semi-structured, open-ended, long interviews seemed the perfect solution.

I chose to conduct qualitative research because it is a flexible and contextual technique: Mason (1996:3) stated that qualitative research does not characterise a set of techniques or philosophies but is instead the result of "a wide range of intellectual and disciplinary traditions" and that "social studies rely quite heavily on qualitative ways of knowing". About the use

of qualitative in-depth interviews, Letherby (2003:84) commented that this approach is not only viewed by many as “politically correct” and “morally responsible”, but is also clearly “very relevant in terms of the development of an approach which is grounded in the experience of women”. Qualitative research relies on four methods, as suggested by Marshal and Rossman (2006:97): interviewing as a researcher, direct observation, in-depth interviewing and data analysis. In my book *Honour Killing in the Second Decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, I followed the method which Creswell (2003:xxiv) suggested: “collecting of open ended data, analysing of text, representation of information and personal interpretation of the findings, and report writing differ from the traditional, quantitative approach, and all inform the qualitative procedure”. Along with this guideline, I was further steered by a suggestion made by Silverman (2001:11) who stated that “The four major methods used by qualitative researchers are observation, analysing texts and documents, interviews and recording and transcribing”.

On preparing the framework for designing a research methodology, Creswell (2003:xxiii) advised that “This requires identifying the research problem or issue, framing the problem within the existing literature, pointing out deficiencies in the literature, and targeting the study for an audience”. When I was designing the fieldwork, I visualized the whole picture of the set-up of the honour-killing cases, the perpetrators and the women survivors who had been threatened with death. Finding interview participants was one of my major concerns, along with the methodological concerns and ethical issues involved in conducting feminist research, as well as some reflections on data collection and analysis. Although some of the data which I acquired was used in the analysis and writing-up process, the untouched, unused and unanalysed data (accounts and interviews) are still there for readers to analyse and comprehend for themselves without the intervention of any researcher.

Deciding who my participants and interviewees should be was the first task. I intended to gather information from those who were directly affected by honour-related crimes. For that purpose, I thought of the two groups which, in my opinion, would be the best people to talk with: women who had been threatened with death, and perpetrators and killers. I decided that the location of the data collection was to be upper and northern Sindh, mainly the cities of Larkana and Jacobabad, the most notorious area in regard to the number of honour killings. My fieldwork research confirmed that accused women could be found in shelters provided for them (such a refuge is called a *darulaman*), and that convicted killers could be found in the jails, so my second reason for

choosing districts in northern Sindh was that Larkana and Sukkur both have refuges and Sukkur and Jacobabad have jails, and these refuges and jails were where I needed to conduct the interviews. To access the shelters, the jails and the killers, I had to seek the co-operation of two trusted local intermediaries in the relevant districts of upper Sindh. Their meetings with the higher authorities of the shelters and jails to arrange and confirm a visit made my access possible. It was also equally important for me to speak with and record the accounts of killers convicted of honour killings outside the jails who had either never been arrested or had been imprisoned for only a short period and then set free. When the intermediaries contacted them with the help of their friends' network, many showed their willingness to talk to me about their honour killing experience.

I was aware of the norms of the qualitative methods which a researcher has to think about and plan in great detail in terms of the steps and the research issues, and the need to be flexible and open to change. In general, a qualitative researcher does not develop hypotheses or presuppositions and cannot anticipate all the potential issues and problems in advance, but must let the data do the explaining. "Hypotheses, measurements, samples and instruments are the wrong guidelines. Instead you need to learn about a world you understand by encountering it first hand and making some sense out of it" (Agar, 1986:12). How to devise an interview theme was a significant task. My greatest responsibility as a researcher was to focus on people's perceptions and the feelings which they expressed in order to study how the participants understood themselves and their world. For searching and researching the lives of people, interviews are regarded as the most useful method. Kvæle (1996:6) stated that in order to research the lives of interviewees with respect and sensitivity, the technique of face-to-face interviewing has been widely adopted by feminist researchers.

## The Interview Themes

In order to understand the circumstances behind the killings, I designed my interview questions in a flexible way, structured to be informal and open-ended so that I might cover nearly all aspects of my interviewees' lives. When I was designing the questions for the women who had been labelled as *karis* and were in protective custody in refuges, my idea was to explore the domestic and social situations which had eventually forced them to seek refuge. My questions for the women were designed to explore their lives from their childhood and their life before marriage to