



Love and Honour?

Marriage for Peace

David Evans

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David D E Evans

for
Topsy Evans

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Foreword

1999. Hindu Amitava Kumar tells how India and Pakistan were engaged in a bitter war in the snowfields of Kargil, Kashmir, when he married Pakistani Muslim Mona Ali. Kumar travelled from Canada to Pakistan to meet his new in-laws for the first time. News of the day was of Indian fighter planes being shot down by the Pakistani army. Entering the house of his new in-laws, Kumar was conscious the two countries were at war and people were being killed.

Cricket news was of India beating Pakistan in the World Cup cricket match at Old Trafford in Manchester. A spectator held up a sign *Cricket for Peace*. Watching on television with his in-laws, Kumar thought, "I should be wearing a sign *Marriage for Peace*". Kumar's book *Husband of a Fanatic*¹ highlights many of the difficulties encountered in achieving good relationships across a cultural divide.

This book is about marriage for peace; the ultimate goal in laying a path of stepping stones to the enjoyment of good relations across the abyss of modern day *Romeo and Juliet* style romance tragedy.

¹ Kumar, A. 2005, *Husband of a Fanatic: A Personal Journey through India, Pakistan, Love, and Hate*. The New Press, New York

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anti-caste website reports of gross violence against
marrying couples

The Times of India for their ongoing reports

Preface

It was 1993. A newspaper reporting of an Indian man, urged on by a crowd of villagers, who hanged his son in front of the village temple because of an illicit romance offending traditional Hindu law, commanded my attention. The question – *Why would parents kill their own children?* – would not go away. My wondering about honour killing of eloping couples in India began at this point.

In a different country with a different culture, the sniper shooting of Admira Ismić, a Muslim Bosniak girl, and her Serb sweetheart Boško Brkić at the time of the Balkan Wars,² focused my interest. The lovers had attempted to leave the besieged city of Sarajevo after receiving permission from both sides of the conflict. They were killed together by sniper fire whilst attempting to cross the Vrbanja Bridge, now colloquially called the “Romeo and Juliet Bridge.”

Later, I saw a BBC documentary of a Hindu family who, for 10 years, tried to prevent their daughter marrying a Muslim. They eventually gave in. The father’s final words were, “We will not see them again but we will not become violent.”

More and more present-day stories are being reported to the wider world. They can be bizarre but illustrate virtually all aspects of romance tragedy, echoing themes found in legendary stories, such as betrayal by family members.

In parts of Northern India, the tension between federal

² Reuters 1993, Kurt Schork’s signature dispatch from siege of Sarajevo. Reuters, viewed 28 April 2012, <http://www.ksmemorial.com/romeo.htm>

laws and village decrees is increasing. In 2010, the first capital punishment judgement against those involved with killing eloping couples was handed down by the High Court.³ This gives us a conflicting scenario where village councils impose death sentences on eloping couples to deter the young, while the federal government approves death sentences for those who fulfil these decrees. However, the judgement of 2010 has been revoked in favour of life imprisonment. It may well be that no death sentences issued by the courts are carried out. On a more positive note, 2011 saw the introduction of safe houses for eloping lovers who had nowhere safe to go.

One can say that Eros and Karma are alive and well, shooting their darts across cultural divides and social standings, leading to conflict, family and social embarrassment, and sometimes tragedy. Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1908–1961), in his treatise *The Phenomenology of Perception*,⁴ asks us to accept phenomena as “realities” of humanity; as starting points without further question or analysis. Romance tragedy, where death is preferable to separation from the lover, is the phenomenon in question.

This book is about acceptable progress: about young people challenging religious and social tradition; about those willing to die rather than surrender their love. It seriously questions:

³ Kanoon 2012, *Lata Singh vs State Of U.P. & Another on 7 July 2006*. Kanoon, viewed 4 May 2012, <http://indiankanoon.org/doc/1364215/>

⁴ Merleau-Ponty, M 1991, *Phenomenology of Perception* (Transl Colin Smith), Routledge, London, 2005

Do murder and suicide need to continue?

Is nonviolence a satisfactory endpoint?

Will elopers continue to shame their families and have to forfeit family blessing?

How do we view progress?

Reality

- Every culture has wonderful legendary romantic stories.
- Every culture has its marital taboos.
- Romance is unconditional.
- Human rights are allowed or withheld by the society or family within which a person lives.

Stepping stones on the path of progress

- Nonviolence is the first acceptable end point.
- Effective law and order is imperative.
- Family estrangement remains a legal option.
- Reconciliation is good and can happen at any time.
- Acceptance, which may involve surrendering previously held convictions, is very good.
- Welcome and celebration is ideal.

OUR RESPONSIBILITY:

Tell the stories and spread the word

The Doli Cart

Caste Endogamy and Village Exogamy were unfamiliar words to me. Temple priests interpreting the Hindu *Dharmastra* in their own local tradition, together with the Khap Panchayat village elders, have insisted members of their community marry partners of the same caste and from another village. All those in the same village are regarded as kin and marriage among them is prohibited. Relatively small numbers of conservative Indian villages remain today where severe penalties are enacted for not observing the local rules. Many of these villages are in the Haryana area of Northern India. Their local rules persist in spite of the Constitution of India that came into effect on 26 January 1950,⁵ ruling that all Indians are free to choose marital partners apart from specified close family relationships.

Parents in India commonly advertise for partners for their children in weekly newspapers. Some children are able to influence parents regarding their preferred choice. However, with little warning, a daughter may be told to dress for her wedding because the 'Doli cart'⁶ will be coming soon to take her to live with the chosen groom in a distant place.

⁵ Foreign affairs 1950, *India's democratic constitution*, Foreign Affairs, viewed 8 August 2012 <http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/70826/sri-ram-sharma/indias-democratic-constitution#>

⁶ See Folk love stories of Pakistan 2007, *Sohni Mahiwal*. Folk love stories of Pakistan, viewed 2 August 2012, <https://sites.google.com/site/folkstalesofpakistan/sohni-mahiwal>

A Punjabi Love Legend

Mirza Sahiban

Mirza Sahiban, Heer Ranjha, Sohni Mahiwal and Sassi Punnun⁷ are four popular tragic romance legends of the Punjab. I enjoy asking Indian taxi drivers which is their favourite love story. Oft-times it is *Mirza Sahiban*.⁸ They are happy to talk about the story, puzzled and pleased that I am interested. Sahiban, Heer, Sohni and Sassi are the heroines of these four stories; Mirza, Ranja, Mahiwal and Punnun the heroes. All die seeking fulfilment for their love. Usually the heroine's name comes first in the title but Sahiban's dilemma in causing their deaths may be the reason for this exception.

Women of the Punjab are said to love singing songs about romance tragedy with great emotion and feeling. They pay homage to, and celebrate, the conviction in the lovers' hearts, firmly believing that the soil of the Punjab has been blessed and God has blessed the lovers too. Death is seen as a blessing in disguise – the blessing of immortality – their names and lives never to be forgotten.

Waris Shah, telling the tale of Heer Ranjha in his celebrated work *Heer*, elevates mortal love to the same pedestal as spiritual love for God, saying “when you start the subject of love, first offer your invocation to God”. Mortal love is then enshrined as the spirit of love.

⁷ Punjabi World 2007, *Love Legends in History of Punjab*. Punjabi World, viewed 28 August 2012, <http://punjabiworld.com/Creative-Punjab/Legends-of-Punjab/love-legends-of-punjab.html>

⁸ Ayesha Word Press 2006, *Mirza-Sahiban another love legend*. Ayesha Word Press, viewed 29 August 2012, <http://ayasha.wordpress.com/2006/05/08/mirza-sahiban-another-folk-legend/>

Storyline

As Sahiban stepped out with a lungi tied around her waist, the nine angels died on seeing her beauty and God started counting his last breath.

Mirza and Sahiban belonged to the Syal Tribe. They were cousins, childhood classmates and playmates, and fell in love. Mirza was the son of Wanjhal Khan, a land baron of the Kharal Jatt tribe. Mirza was sent to his relatives' house in Khivan to study. When, later in life, Sahiban is to be wedded to Taha Khan of the Chander family by arrangement of her parents, she sends a taunting message to Mirza in the village of Danabad through a Brahmin, saying, *'You must come and decorate Sahiban's hand with the marriage henna. This is the time you have to protect your self respect and love, keep your promises, and sacrifice your life for truth.'* Mirza, a young full-blooded man and a famed archer, arrives in haste, sits Sahiban on his horse and rides away with her.

Later they rest. As Mirza is lying under the shade of a tree, those following on horseback with swords in their hands catch up. Sahiban, a virtuous and beautiful soul, does not want bloodshed to mar the one she loves. She thinks Mirza cannot miss his target and if he strikes her brothers will surely die. Before waking up Mirza, Sahiban hides his quiver in the tree. She presumes that on seeing her, her brothers will feel sorry, forgive Mirza and accept him. The brothers attack Mirza and kill him. Sahiban takes a sword and kills herself.

One of many legends

Mirza Sahiban is the special focus of a series of articles by the *Hri Institute for Southasian Research and Exchange*

examining the phenomenon of *Love Legends of Southasia*. *Hri* affirms that tales of overwhelming love thwarted by the forces of societal constraint and circumstance are a staple across Southasia. They contain a wealth of information on the cultural norms and compulsions of the times; laws of inheritance; the societal view of outsiders; the nature of the people's relation with their rulers; and societal community and familial hierarchies of the times among other issues. Prohibitions based on ethnicity, faith, geographical origin, class or caste of the two characters tell of societal priorities and prejudices. Such a study is crucial to understanding the region outside the political framework.

Balladeers – Peelu and Hafiz Barkhurdar

Ancient folk lore legends were handed down through the generations by balladeers using the oral tradition to spread the word. *Hri* journalist Sohail Abid tells us Peelu was the first to compose the legend of *Mirza Sahiban* in verse. Peelu was a poet who lived in the first half of the 17th century (an English version was first documented around 1880 by Richard Carnac Temple, a Captain of the British Army in India). With its treatment of love as a plainly secular phenomenon rather than being mythical, Peelu's *Mirza Sahiban* is important as a realistic account of life in Punjab. The *kissa* is incomplete – what happens to *Sahiban* is missing – but from his story we know that:

- Sahiban was born in the house of the chief of Kheiwa and Mirza at Danabad in the house of Wanjhal Khan, the chief of the Kharal tribe.
- They study at a mosque. Sahiban learnt her letters and Mirza read the Quran. They fell in love in the school, so the whole world knew.
- Mirza was sent back to his village. Peelu doesn't tell us why. Possibly Mirza had completed his studies or

perhaps their love had become public.

- Sahiban's father betrothed her to a man from the Chadhar clan.
- Sahiban then sent Mirza a message asking him to save her from the wedding she did not want.
- Before Mirza could leave for Kheiwa, close members of his family entreated him to abandon his trip:

Sister: *My advice, Mirza, is to come back and stay at home. Sit on thy couch and arrange for my marriage.*

Mother: *Evil are the dealings of the Siyals (the tribe to which Sahiban belonged); Evil the way to the Siyals; Evil the women of the Siyals; be not bewitched by them. They will take out thy liver and eat it; lay not this trouble upon me.*

Father: *Evil is love for women, foolish are their ways. Smiling they make love and weeping they tell it abroad.*

- Mirza ignored them all and left. In Kheiwa, he met Sahiban and they eloped to Danabad, more than 100 miles away. They were followed by her brothers and their companions.
- Mirza was so confident about his abilities as an archer as well as the speed of his mare Bakki, that he planned to take a nap, despite Sahiban's consistent warnings of danger.

Mirza: *The angels fear Bakki and God fears me! She can penetrate into Hell and fly into Heaven.*

Sahiban: *The love of Mirza and Sahiban are not hidden in the world. Take me to Danabad, this life irks me. Arise, O Jatt sleeping under the acacia tree and be on thy guard.*

Mirza: *Let me sleep this hour, we will enter Danabad the next.*

- A small arrow pierced Mirza. As his soul was about to leave him under the acacia tree, he said, *Thou didst practice deceit on me, Sahiban, and were joined to the Siyals.* She replied, *A bowman made the shaft and a cunning workman made the tip. It hath gone through thee by no deceit of Sahiban.*
- Peelu doesn't tell us what happened to Sahiban (or maybe he did, but the account is lost in time) and ends the legend saying:
Partly the Lord of Death and partly pride slew Mirza.

Sohail Abid adds that Hafiz Barkhurdar's *Sahiban* is the most celebrated of the various renditions of the story and is beautifully composed. The Punjabi poet Barkhurdar lived around the 1630s-1700s and was a *hafiz* of the Quran (he had memorized the entire holy book and spent his life as a religious scholar). Barkhurdar acknowledges Peelu's narration, referring to him in a rather dramatic manner, saying Sahiban's spiritual self asked a crow to propagate her story in the world: *Tell those who'd understand my pain, let my story be heard.* The crow goes to Peelu who redirects him to Barkhurdar with the appeal to narrate the legend well. Barkhurdar makes sure he does not miss any important event, even going into conversations the two lovers might have had with others before their fatal end.

- Sahiban asks Mirza: *O Mirza, how come you are not afraid of dying?*
- Mirza replies: *Sahiban, lovers are never afraid of dying. Fighting is to lovers what Karbala (Battle of Karbala 680 AD) is to martyrs.*
- Sahiban: *When you'll be gone, people will accuse me. Neither shall I be living, nor dead. But what can we do, this (love) is God's will.*
- Mirza: *Sahiban, life's as temporal as a dream. But*

those who die for love are remembered. Laila, Sassi and Heer are now revered. Let's pray before God to give our love a pleasant end.

Barkhurdar, unlike Peelu, draws a detailed picture of Sahiban's death and poses a scene where Sahiban is asked the "why" question.

- Sultan: *Sahiban, what have you done, left a comfortable bed at home to be found at Sandal Bar. Tell me what should I do to you?*
- Sahiban: *Listen Sultan, I love Mirza. What do you know of love, you ignoramus. I belong to Mirza, no matter where you send me.* Sahiban calls for Mirza, weeping bitterly. Her brother, hearing this, goes mad. They strangle her with his shoulder scarf.

Sohail Abid states this tale is especially revered in the Jhang and Montgomery Districts. The elopement and killing of Sahiban and Mirza led to tribal feuds. The Kharals attacked the Siyals and the Chadhars, defeated them, and recovered the corpses of Mirza and Sahiban, whom they buried at Danabad. The feud has lingered on. Indeed, it is considered unlucky to give birth to daughters, thus leading to extensive female infanticide by strangulation. The Siyals still resent a reference to Sahiban as they do to Heer, the heroine of the tale of Heer and Ranjha (Heer, too, was a Siyal woman). Journalist Wasim Ahmad Qadri, writing for *Daily Times*, reports that people living in the villages surrounding Sahiban's hometown do not let their women visit the mausoleum of Mirza and Sahiban, fearing they may follow in those footsteps. A number of eloping incidents have taken place around the mausoleum. The daughter of the caretaker, Peelu Mirasi, eloped with her friend. On hearing the news, the caretaker died. His cemetery is situated near Mirza-Sahiban's shrine.

This legendary story is believed to have occurred in the Mughal Emperor Shah Jehan's era, when a child was born in the clan of Kharral Jatts in the region of Danabad. Mirza Jatt has become the *greatest legendary character among the race of his people known as Jatts*.

Reenactment

Hri writer Haroon Khalid tells of a present day story of two of friends, calling them anonymously Salman and Ayesha. At the start of the story, it seems the relationship is heading somewhere. They were together for two years but the future was uncertain. Ayesha's family was eager to get her married. She was 23 and had completed her graduation. Salman, also 23, was planning to leave for his Masters degree, with marriage not fitting his plan. However, now that it dawned upon Salman he would be moving away for two years, he realized how much he would miss Ayesha. He was finally getting serious about her and was thinking of talking to her mother about their relationship.

The families, neighbours in the highly secluded army housing in Islamabad, knew each other well. Salman's father was a general when he was murdered by the Taliban. Ayesha's father was a serving general. Ayesha's mother was looking for suitable suitors in other army families. Ayesha had also decided that it was time her mother was told about her relationship so that she could help convince her father. Ayesha was making plans with Salman over the phone when her mother walked in and overheard the conversation. All hell broke loose. She told her husband. They decided that Ayesha must be married off as soon as possible. In their eyes, a son of a fellow general living in Australia and working in an accountancy firm seemed like a perfect fit. Ayesha had not even seen his picture. When she refused, her mother threatened to

commit suicide. Her father told her that he would kill her if she ever talked to, or met, Salman again. They took away her phone and barred her from leaving the house. She was ordered to quit her job in a couple of months; a job she had recently taken up and loved.

The next day, Ayesha was taken to the house of the Australian boy and engaged to him in his absence. She would be marrying him in December and moving to Australia; the first time she would ever be leaving the country and living away from home. She still hadn't seen his picture. The love story of Salman and Ayesha came to an end.

Khalid reflects, saying the most amazing part of this true story is not the forced marriage. Growing up in Pakistan, he knows that such practices are somewhat of a norm. What is intriguing, however, is why Ayesha couldn't be married to Salman. He was also from an army background, lived in the same vicinity and his family enjoyed the same social, economic and political status as Ayesha's. The answer came to Khalid in a 1947 Pakistani movie – *Mirza-Sahiban*. The movie (one of many) depicts the love story of Mirza and Sahiban growing up together, falling in love and wanting to marry. In the film, the union is opposed by Sahiban's brother and mother, even though the father is sympathetic. They want Sahiban to marry another cousin, who happens to be the nephew of Sahiban's mother. The objection they have is not with Mirza but with the audacity to fall in love outside wedlock. Being from Muslim families, these cousins were eligible to marry each other but that could not happen once society found out about their love story. That made the relationship illegitimate. This is where the question of honour comes in. Had Sahiban's brother not found out about his sister's love affair with Mirza, would he have

still objected to their marriage? Expressed love without prior family approval, it would seem, is an unforgivable sin. For love to be acceptable, it has to remain a secret.

Applying this to the situation of his friends Salman and Ayesha, Khalid wonders what the reaction of Ayesha's parents would have been had her mother never found out about her daughter's relationship. Would the family have reacted the same way and refused to allow Ayesha to marry Salman? There are reasons to doubt. Ayesha's mother might have reacted differently had Ayesha told her about Salman instead of her mother finding out. She may well have agreed for them to marry and promise to help convince the father.

Social pressures

It is amazing how a love legend composed generations ago still has resonance with the realities of the lovers in the Pakistan of today. The issues raised in these stories plague Pakistani society. Ill-defined concepts of honour and dignity are played out on the woman's body, where a simple act of falling in love is seen as an act of trespass against the patriarch. Despite all claims of "enlightenment" and "modernity", Pakistanis still uphold "traditional," "moral" standards that were used to oppress individuals centuries ago.

The stepping stone

A recent 2016 report from Associated Press,⁹ headed "Pakistan's lawmakers toughen penalty for 'honor' killings", identifies a new focus on enforcing Pakistani law against those committing these atrocities after statistics revealed more than 1,000 women were known

⁹ http://hosted2.ap.org/APDEFAULT/cae69a7523db45408eeb2b3a98c0c9c5/Article_2016-10-06-AS--Pakistan-Honor%20Killing/id87c7cba848404b8da4a7611ece4cc969

to have been murdered by family members in 2015 for meeting with, sitting with, or marrying a man not chosen by her family. Although this stepping stone is likely to crumble under pressure from hardline traditionalists who argue that “the law is bringing Western-style independence for women”, this new stance is at least, for now, a step toward progress.

India's Romeo and Juliet

Amreen and Lokesh

India's Romeo and Juliet tragedy was the title given by BBC News reporter Sanjoy Majumder to the story of *Amreen and Lokesh* in 2009.¹⁰

Storyline

Amreen and Lokesh chose suicide by poisoning when they were told they would have to annul their marriage or be killed because their match was unacceptable to the community. Achan Singh, head of the “panchayat” (village council), affirmed:

At a gathering of elders from the two families, the boy and girl were told that their marriage would not be allowed. They would have to leave each other or else they would be killed.

Singh sympathized with the couple but said they had made a fatal mistake:

You see, they fell in love and then ran away to get married. They should have stayed away and lived in the city. In our village, Hindus marry Hindus and Muslims marry Muslims. It's very sad what happened, but what can you expect? The pressure on their families was enormous. They were being disgraced and dishonoured.

Social pressures

Salim, Amreen's father, kept buffalo and sold milk for a living. Lokesh would come every morning to buy milk. Amreen and Lokesh fell in love.

¹⁰ BBC News 2009, *India, India's Romeo and Juliet tragedy*. BBC News, viewed 11 June 2012, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/8109805.stm>

Denying pressure from the panchayat, Salim said:

We were dishonoured in the community. Neither family wanted them to marry. But no-one threatened them either.

The girl's aunt Syeda, said:

She was a lovely girl, very innocent and always used to read the Koran. God knows what madness prompted her to run away with that boy.

Police superintendent Sharad Sachan said:

The young couple were legally married and therefore entitled to live together. Their parents and the villagers had no right to put pressure on them and force them to commit suicide. They are guilty of a crime and we will do all we can to build a case against them.

The story was buried in the middle of the Indian newspapers, reporting that police had charged the entire panchayat with abetting suicide, but without result.

BBC News reporter Sanjoy Majumder commented:

As we headed back to Delhi, it was clear that with a wall of secrecy descending around the whole incident, the police were going to have their work cut out. They may have the law on their side but the villagers are defending ancient codes and traditions that remain untouched by modernity. And they will fight to keep it that way.

In saying that the eloping couple should have stayed away and lived in the city, village leader Mr Singh indicates an ideological step toward nonviolence, contrasting with families who send sons to chase the couple and bring them back for marriage annulment or death.

The Romeo and Juliet theme

Alluding to *Romeo and Juliet* to help Westerners understand the universality of romance tragedy, poet cuttlefish has taken Amreen and Lokesh's story and parodied Shakespeare's prologue to his famous play:

*Two households, alike save for belief
In fair Phaphunda, where our scene is set,
Where Hindu-Muslim tensions lead to grief
And faiths, in conflict, evil will abet.
Amreen, a Muslim, and her love Lokesh,
A Hindu man who loved her more than life;
Two faiths the village elders would not mesh,
Though legally the two were man and wife.
They fell in love because the two would meet
Where Amreen's father sold the family's milk;
The panchayat—the governing elite—
Decreed they could not sully ilk with ilk.
The Hindu man and lovely Muslim bride
Chose poison over panchayat ... and died.*

The stepping stone

The last line of the original prologue ends with a mandate for working toward nonviolence and peace in relation to “forbidden” love and marriage. Shakespeare says, “What here shall miss our toil shall strive to mend.”

The stepping stone alluded to in the story of Amreen and Lokesh is estrangement. In the words of the village elder, “they should have stayed away.” However, while the concept of elopement and having to leave the community

with no hope of reconciliation is theoretically nonviolent, it remains as psychological violence and is acknowledged as such by law as “aiding and abetting suicide.”

A BBC Reporting

Ujjala and Asad

Ujjala and Asad's story entitled *India: Modern love versus old taboo*, presented by BBC World News in 2004¹¹ in their series *World Weddings*, poignantly clarifies the concept of withholding violence as a stepping stone on the path of progress involving generational change to achieve marriage for peace.

Storyline

Ashok's Hindu family tried for 10 years to prevent Ujjala marrying Asad, a Muslim man. For Ashok, one of his worst fears had always been for his daughter to marry a Muslim. Ujjala and Asad met at college. Ujjala's parents were liberal in their attitudes and happy their daughter had friends of both sexes and many religions. They knew Asad was a Muslim and he was welcome in their home as a friend, but in secret love blossomed between the pair. When Ujjala's father, Ashok, found out the true nature of their relationship, he was devastated: "My feeling at the time was that if I had died, it would have been better."

Ujjala's parents virtually imprisoned her at home for 18 months in an attempt to put an end to her relationship with Asad. They arranged a marriage for Ujjala to a Hindu man, which ended disastrously, with Ujjala claiming she was abused by her new husband and in-laws. Ten months after the marriage, Ujjala returned home to her parents. Since then, she and her father have barely spoken a word to each other. Asad was still waiting for her and the secret romance was resumed. Her parents reluctantly accepted her decision but refused to come to

¹¹ BBC News 2004, *Modern love versus old taboo*. BBC News, viewed 4 May 2012, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/programmes/this_world/3732343.stm

the wedding.

Ashok and his wife were so shamed by her marriage they were talking of moving away to live somewhere where no-one knew about the marriage. Their fears were not unfounded. Ujjala's uncle and his wife and children moved out of the joint family home. They accused Ujjala of damaging the marriage prospects of their two daughters, asking who would be willing to marry into a family where the cousin had married a Muslim. There was talk of splitting the family business.

For Asad and Ujjala, their wedding was bittersweet. They were happy to be together and convinced all the heartache had been worthwhile. But the price was the disintegration of Ujjala's family, some of whom she might never see again.

Social pressures

In directing and producing this feature story for the BBC, Shabnam Grewal emphasized:

The need for secrecy in love. Ujjala and Asad met as often as possible for nearly a decade, always in secret and never alone. Like many in love, they wanted to marry, have children and build a home together.

After centuries of violence and hostility, Hindus and Muslims in India view each other with intense suspicion. Of the 14 million people presently living side by side in Calcutta, one in five is Muslim yet very few Hindus and Muslims intermarry. The Indian state of West Bengal has relatively little of the communal violence seen in Gujarat or Bombay (Mumbai), where thousands have died in religious riots, but there remains considerable mistrust between the two communities. Many Muslims are fearful of being persecuted by the Hindu majority while Hindus remain angry at the thought of their ancestors who were

forced to convert to Islam in the times of the Moghul emperors.

During British colonial rule, divisions between Hindus and Muslims were encouraged. After India gained its independence in 1947, the two communities turned on each other in bloody riots. Both Hindus and Muslims remember the violence of India's Partition, when more than a million people were slaughtered. Ujjala's father Ashok says, "There is hatred – particularly among Hindus ... there's a long history between us."

Ujjala lived as part of an extended family with her parents, two brothers, her father's brother, his wife and daughters, and her grandmother. They are all faithful Hindus returning every year to the big family temple at their ancestral village for three days of puja, or worship. It is possible for inter-faith couples to marry in India and for them to retain their own religion. But this was not an option for Asad and Ujjala. Asad's family were devout Muslims and would never accept Ujjala unless she converted.

Ujjala knew if she married Asad her family would be shamed. No one in their large, extended family had ever married a Muslim. It was inconceivable. The price of becoming Asad's wife would be losing her beloved parents and family. For nine years, Ujjala and Asad were trapped between the desire to marry and the desire to please both sets of parents. Aged 29 and 31 respectively, they felt time was slipping away, so they finally told their parents they wanted to marry. Ujjala would become a Muslim, marry Asad and move into his family home with his parents, grandmother and three siblings.

The stepping stone

Ujjala's father Ashok is mentioned here ahead of Ujjala and Asad because the writer regards him as a hero, heralding progression toward tolerance within his community, although coming at the cost of social estrangement. Ashok said, "We don't want it, we won't attend the marriage, but we won't become violent." The stepping stone here is eschewing violence, the first step on the path of progress toward marriage for peace.

A High Court Judgement

Lata Singh and Bramha Nand Gupta

The judgement comments and facts of the case of Lata Singh (and Bramha Nand Gupta) ¹² represented here vindicate the standing of federal law in regard to inter-caste marriage; law that remains in need of implementation since adoption of the new democratic constitution in 1950.

Supreme Court of India Judgement information System

CASE NO.: Writ Petition (crl.) 208 of 2002

PETITIONER: Lata Singh

DATE OF JUDGMENT: 07/07/2006

BENCH: Ashok Bhan & Markandey Katju

JUDGMENT: MARKANDEY KATJU, J.

In the circumstances, the writ petition (for protection) is allowed ... The warrants against the accused are also quashed. We further direct that in view of the allegations in the petition, criminal proceedings shall be instituted forthwith by the concerned authorities against the petitioner's brothers and others involved, in accordance with law. Petition allowed.

Storyline

At the time of the court report in July 2006, Lata Singh was a young woman aged about 27. Due to the sudden death of her parents, she was living with one of her brothers. On 2 November 2000, she left her brother's house of her own free will and married Bramha Nand

¹² Kanoon 2012, *Lata Singh vs State Of U.P. & Another on 7 July 2006*. Kanoon, viewed 4 May 2012, <http://indiankanoon.org/doc/1364215/>

Gupta. They have a child born of this wedlock.

Two days after Lata Singh left, her brothers lodged a false police report against the petitioner's husband and his relatives at Police Station Sarojini Nagar, Lucknow, alleging kidnapping of the petitioner. Consequently, the police arrested two of the petitioner's husband's sisters and one of his cousins, along with one of the sister's husbands, and detained them in Locknow jail. It is further alleged that the petitioner's brothers were furious because the petitioner underwent an inter-caste marriage. They went to the petitioner's husband's paternal residence and beat up her husband's mother and uncle, threw luggage, furniture, utensils etc. from the house and locked it with their own locks. One of the petitioner's husband's brothers was allegedly locked in a room for four or five days without meals and water. The petitioner's brothers also allegedly slashed her husband's crop and sold it, forcibly took possession of his agricultural field and illegally took possession of his shop ("Gupta Helmet Shop") at Badan Singh Market, Rangpuri. It is further alleged that the petitioner's brothers are threatening to kill the petitioner's husband and his relatives, and kidnap and kill her also.

Judgement comments

This case reveals a shocking state of affairs. There is no dispute that the petitioner is a major and was at all relevant times a major. Hence she is free to marry anyone she likes or live with anyone she likes. There is no bar to an inter-caste marriage under the Hindu Marriage Act or any other law. Hence, we cannot see what offence was committed by the petitioner, her husband or her husband's relatives. We are of the opinion that no offence was committed by any of the accused and the whole criminal case in question is an

abuse of the process of the Court as well as of the administrative machinery at the instance of the petitioner's brothers who were only furious because the petitioner married outside her caste Since several such instances are coming to our knowledge of harassment, threats and violence against young men and women who marry outside their caste, we feel it necessary to make some general comments on the matter. The nation is passing through a crucial transitional period in our history, and this Court cannot remain silent in matters of great public concern, such as the present one. The caste system is a curse on the nation and the sooner it is destroyed the better. In fact, it is dividing the nation at a time when we have to be united to face the challenges before the nation. Hence, inter-caste marriages are in fact in the national interest as they will result in destroying the caste system. However, disturbing news are coming from several parts of the country that young men and women who undergo inter-caste marriage, are threatened with violence, or violence is actually committed on them. In our opinion, such acts of violence or threats or harassment are wholly illegal and those who commit them must be severely punished. This is a free and democratic country, and once a person becomes a major he or she can marry whosoever he/she likes. If the parents of the boy or girl do not approve of such inter-caste or inter-religious marriage the maximum they can do is that they can cut off social relations with the son or the daughter

Social pressures

The storyline is typical of eloping couples in Northern India. Realizing they could not stay at home, the couple eloped, married and had a baby. Angry on several counts, including the marriage being inter-caste and a rebuttal of the patrilineal authority of her brothers, bringing shame

on them within their village, the brothers lodged a case of kidnapping with the police and the couple were sought out, abused and threatened with murder. Whereas in other instances there may be no recourse for action, Lata Singh took the matter to court and received a favorable hearing, even though it took six years for a definitive decision with no apparent possibility of reconciliation.

The stepping stone

Once again, the stepping stone, as suggested by the Court, is estrangement. Coupled with this is persistence and determination to bring about change. It took Lata Singh a long time to achieve legal protection according to India's democratic constitution. The incident, with its continuing consequences, began in the year 2000. Lata Singh's (and Bramha Nand Gupta) writ petition for protection was submitted in 2002. The judgement was given in favour of the petition in 2006.

2010: Manoj and Babli

Capital punishment is awarded by The High Court in India for the “rarest of rare” category of “intolerable murder.” The first sentence of this kind related to the killing of eloping couples was handed down in 2010 for the murder of Manoj and Babli.¹³ Further capital sentences were awarded in 2011 and 2012. However, the Manoj and Babli judgement has now been commuted to life imprisonment. It is expected that other sentences of this kind will be commuted as appeals are repeatedly brought to court until judges more sympathetic to tradition are found.

The Manoj and Babli case in Haryana has become a prime instance for public scrutiny. Manoj and Babli belonged to the Banwala gotra, a Jat community, and therefore were considered siblings despite not being directly related. As a result, their union was invalid and incestuous according to local interpretation of *The Dharmashtra*. The brutality of the double murder shocked the court.

Storyline

Manoj and Babli married on 18 May 2010 and sought the court’s protection. The court directed the Kaithal police to provide them with security. Furious with the marriage, Babli’s family lodged a complaint of kidnapping with the police and asked for intervention from the local Khap Panchayat, which annulled the marriage. The Khap also announced a social boycott on Manoj’s family. Anyone who kept ties with them would be fined Rs25,000.

The couple appeared in a court at Kaithal on 15 June

¹³ The Hindu 2012, *Death sentence commuted in Manoj-Babli case*. The Hindu, viewed 5 September 2013,

<http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/article1529740.ece>

2010 and gave their statements. The First Information Report (FIR) registered against Manoj was cancelled. After appearing in court, the couple left for Chandigarh in a police vehicle. The police left them at Pipli and slipped away. Suspecting foul play, Manoj and Babli did not head toward Chandigarh but boarded a bus for Karnal. Relatives of Babli, who had been following, kidnapped the couple after intercepting the bus on the national highway. Babli was forced to consume poison while four other family members strangled her husband with a rope in front of her. In the aftermath, supporters of Babli's family members who executed the killings said, "We will raise money to fight their cases in court, they are heroes."

Social pressures

Manoj's mother Chandrapati, a widow who lives with her mother and daughter, continues to be ostracized. No one can sell flour to the family. A retired army man in the village said, "The social boycott is inhuman. Even though most of the people in the village condemn the murder, they are afraid to speak up."

The Jat Mahasabha, a body representing the interests of Jats, and which is most active during election time, is firmly behind Babli's family and holds strong views on social issues. In a statement to a Hindi newspaper, the Karnal Jat Mahasabha leadership extended its support to Babli's family, stating that the couple had erred by getting married and the murder was inevitable because they had left the accused with little choice.

Chandrapati, with the help of the Haryana wing of the All India Democratic Women's Association (AIDWA), urged police action against the accused killers. There was counter-pressure for her to drop the case but the courts recently awarded her some financial compensation. There has been relative silence from the major political

parties in relation to the Manoj-Babli case, reflecting the importance politicians attach to caste support and “gotra politics.” However, questions have been raised in Parliament as to whether a new law for perpetrators of honour killings is necessary or whether perpetrators can be charged under laws related to murder.

In spite of an increasing number of couples obtaining police protection, the protection itself is precarious. It may be impossible for the police to prevent kidnapping and violence toward an eloping couple. At the time of mob violence that led to the lynching of Ved Pal when he came looking for his bride (another *Times of India* report of honour killing from 2011), the police stood by, unable to exert their authority whether they wished to or not. It seems the power of the regional Khap Panchayats, who convened a meeting in 2007 where 200 representatives discussed their strategy in the face of new criticism and penalties imposed against them, remains undiminished. They demanded the government declare marriages within the same sub-caste or gotra illegal, and asked that the Hindu Marriage Law be amended to implement this recommendation. “We can’t let our traditions get diluted. We have to uphold them,” said Bhola Ram Baniwal, President of the Jat Maha Sangh.

The stepping stone

In the case of Manoj and Babli, there appears to be no stepping stone. While having courts and police uphold the law and offer protection appear to be a step, their ineffectiveness in the face of social pressure question whether they can be seen as legitimate stepping stones.

2012: Mumtaz Khan and Mohsin Khan

Storyline

The 2012 case of Mumtaz Khan and Mohsin Khan,¹⁴ reported in the *Tribune News Service*, is interesting for its counselling component and the awarding of protection by the police. Mumtaz Khan and Mohsin Khan were a runaway couple who tied the knot against the wishes of their parents. Acting on the couple's petition, the Punjab and Haryana High Court provided them with security cover. Justice Alok Singh directed the senior superintendent of police to depute two police officials for Mumtaz and Mohsin's safe travel to Faridabad, where they were born. Mumtaz Khan had earlier moved the high court, seeking protection for her life and liberty, and that of her husband, Mohsin Khan, a resident of Faridabad. Mumtaz was apprehending threats from her family for marrying Mohsin against their wishes. Around 40 youngsters and family, including Mumtaz Khan's father, were present in court. The court asked the father and daughter to talk it out in the judge's chamber.

Social pressures

Intense pressure from family to uphold traditional marriage laws and family honour, in the form of threats of violence to both Mumtaz and Mohsin Khan, led to Mumtaz seeking court protection.

The stepping stone

In contrast to the case of Manoj and Babli, counselling and communication in the case of Mumtaz and Mohsin Khan are steps toward family reconciliation and peace.

¹⁴ Tribune News Service 2012, *Couple gets protection*, Tribune News Service, viewed 6 September 2012,

<http://www.tribuneindia.com/2011/20110607/cth2.htm#7>

Whether or not these steps have been successful is not known.

2015: Jairam Manjhi and Parvati Kumari

The blog site *anti-caste* has published a collection of media reported stories suggesting that incidences of “honour” crimes in India may have peaked in 2012, a year in which 37 such reports were made. However, new reports continue.

Storyline

In May 2015, for example, in an article entitled *Romeo and Juliet: Brutally beaten to death and burned before a mob in India*, Dr. Phyllis Chesler documents the killing of an Indian man, Jairam Manjhi, and his lover Parvati Kumari, a 16-year-old girl related to his wife. They were kidnapped by the girl’s family and brutally beaten to death, after which the girls’ family publicly burned their corpses while 100 villagers stood by and watched the entire grisly episode. Both were members of the same caste. The teenaged Parvati was related through marriage to her alleged lover. She was the niece of her lover’s wife, who was therefore possibly her paternal aunt. Shockingly, the mob who beat the couple to death was composed of more women than men. The police have arrested six members of Parvati’s family, including her aunt, Baby Devi.

Social pressures

The women in this story epitomize the extreme social pressures at play in this so called “honour killing.” They blamed the girl for her death and that of her lover, saying she “had brought disgrace to the society.”

The stepping stone?

It is somewhat discouraging that this incident occurred in 2015 and that there is no apparent stepping stone on the path of progress toward marriage for peace. The legal system’s action in arresting the murderers can be seen as

social progress but the outcome, again, is unknown.

Nepal

My first close contact with Hindu people was in Nepal while I was performing voluntary pathology work in Kathmandu at the Patan Hospital. Nepal is noted as a country of religious tolerance, with the majority Hindu population coexisting peacefully with Buddhists and other minor religions. Marriage liaisons, however, have been strictly controlled, just as they are in India. The following three Nepalese stories are like a “Gospel in a Nutshell,” illustrating the stepping stones of violence, estrangement, acceptance and celebration on the path of social progress.

An incident – Parbati Raut and Jagadish Khadki

The love affair between Jagadish Khadki, a dalit youth of Bishanpur VDC, and Parbati Raut, a girl from the upper caste in the same VDC, culminated in marriage on December 31 (2003). This step not only hurled them into a quagmire but also dragged some 12 Dalit families into the mess, thanks to the ire of the upper caste people.

This first example is about village persecution and vandalism. Mirroring examples from India, it was reported in the *Kathmandu Post* in February 2004 and taken up by The Asian Human Rights Commission (AHRC). The girl’s relatives kidnapped the couple, and 200 upper class villagers attacked the community of 80 Dalit people and forced them to leave the village. Their property was taken or destroyed.

An interview – Mamata and Prateek

The second story is one of forbidden romance, elopement, estrangement and reconciliation. The author was privileged to stay with Mamata and Prateek in November 2005 at their home in Kathmandu. At the time, their son Patrick was 12 years old. My wife and I were

invited to visit Mamata's parents in their home. The visit was most cordial. It was only later when I mentioned that I was beginning a study in romance tragedy that they said, "You had better interview us."

In summary, Mamata and Prateek fell in love at college. Mamata is a Brahmin and Prateek a Newar. Prateek approached Mamata's parents and was told to wait until he had finished all his studies. However, as he pressed his case further, he was refused. Mamata was at first kept at home but eventually was allowed out and eloped. A two-year estrangement followed but Mamata was allowed to visit home when she was ill. Reconciliation occurred after the birth of Mamata and Prateek's son. Having experienced goodwill as a visitor from both the parents and from Mamata and Prateek, I was left with the feeling that the parents' two-year disownment was a necessary step in the family's social environment.

An opinion

The third story comes from the national newspaper, *The Kathmandu Post*. Entitled "New Faces", it is an example of acceptance and celebration. The reporter says:

Recently, I got an invitation to attend the wedding party for my friend's sister. It was going to be an inter-caste marriage. The bride was Newar and the bridegroom a Brahmin. I knew that inter-caste marriage was being accepted in today's society. But I didn't know that even the parents have started taking it normally...some years back, parents would accept the marriage only if...done in a temple so that many people wouldn't know about it. All human beings are made of flesh and bones and the red blood flows through their veins. However, it took years for people to understand this when it came to marriage. So, why did they fail to understand this simple stuff? ... the

reason could be the fear of losing one's culture or the fear of acculturation...the parents wouldn't want their sons/daughters to forget their culture and embrace another's. But fortunately in this case, their parents realized that if there is something called 'love' then it's possible to make a good difference. But it's sad to come across murder cases because of inter-caste marriage or love affairs in our neighbouring countries who claim themselves to be living in a postmodern age. Even in some parts of Nepal, there have been cases of suicide because a high-caste girl falls in love with a low-caste guy, or vice versa. It is not at all a sin to love a person just because s/he comes from a 'so called' high/low caste. And it is a real sad case to see people still being apathetic towards their own children's emotions. Maybe the parents need more than enough examples of successful inter-caste marriages or maybe the people should themselves move ahead to change the face of society.

The stepping stones

This trio of events all happening within a close period of time in Nepal shows an exciting and positive progression in responses to a cultural phenomenon of traditional disapproval of free choice of marital partner. Beginning with community and family violence, persecution and destruction, and progressing through estrangement to family acceptance and celebration, the sequence points to the theme of the study on which this book is based; "The Path of Progress" in relation to romance tragedy.

Aotearoa

Hinemoa and Tutanekai

The real life Maori legend Hinemoa and Tutanekai from Aotearoa (New Zealand) is an important one to be told. It has a happy ending. It is a brilliant example of what may be required for a peaceful resolution to family conflict related to romance. Hinemoa's chieftain father was opposed to her marrying Tutanekai, but after her elopement he accepted the situation and they lived happily thereafter. It is a key Maori legend of the Arawa people, preserved through oral history. Today, a number of their 2000 or more proud descendants are tour guides to Mokoia Island where marriages can be arranged and formalized.



Lake Rotorua and Mokoia Island (Blomfield, Charles 1848-1926)¹⁵

The Ngati Whakaue Tribal Lands Incorporation tells us Whakaue, the father of Tutanekai, was an eighth

¹⁵ Image Blomfield, Charles 1848–1926, courtesy Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand

generation descendant of Tamatekapua and his compatriots who brought the canoe Te Arawa from distant Hawaiki and settled in Ateoroa (c AD800). The Polynesian pacific islanders came seeking to “find a place where they may die a peaceful death.” The occupation of Mokoia Island by Whakaue and his descendants continued into the era of his favoured son Tutanekai who wooed Hinemoa to Mokoia Island. The painting shown here (courtesy Turnbull Library in Wellington New Zealand) depicts Lake Rotorua with Mokoia Island in the background.

Storyline

Hinemoa was born a princess and lived in a special house with female attendants in the Village of Owkata on the shore of Lake Rotorua, a meeting place of tribes living around the lake. Hinemaru was her mother. Te Umukaria, her father, likened her beauty to the morning sun. He intended she marry a *rangitira* (chieftain) of greater mara (renown) than the sons of Whakauekaipapa who lived on Mokoia Island in the centre of the lake. Tutanekai was the illegitimate son of Rangiuru and lived with her and Whakauekaipapa and his stepbrothers. Tuwharetoa, Tutanekai's biological father, was a rangitira from Kawerau. He was an ancestor of the Ngati Tuwharetoa tribe of Taupo district and high priest of Te Arawa. However, Rangiuru and Whakauekaipapa had become reconciled and Whakauekaipapa became very fond of his stepson. This led to jealousies between Tutanekai and his three step brothers, who were all angry that Tutanekai had the love of Hinemoa. The two tribes exchanged social visits and this is how Hinemoa was able to meet Tutanekai. There followed a mutual declaration of affection but, with a need for discretion, no more than clandestine hand holding ensued. Although Tutanekai was admired by

Hinemoa's father, he was refused as a suitor. Hinemoa's relatives, suspecting that Hinemoa had fallen in love with Tutanekai, beached the waka (canoes) high away from the water so that she could not use them by herself. Tutanekai expressed his wish to his parents but was told "no." Tutanekai built an *atamira* (platform) behind his step-father's pa (house), which was on a hillside overlooking the lake and where Tutanekai and Tiki (Tutanekai's flute playing friend, and the one who first pointed out the beautiful *puhi* Hinemoa to Tutanekai) played their *putorinos* (flutes). A gentle breeze wafted the sounds across the lake to Hinemoa who would go to a lakeside rock called Iriirikapau and listen for the sound of the flute in the evenings.

One evening, on hearing the sounds of the flute while standing at the water's edge at Wairerewai, Hinemoa could bear it no longer and decided she would swim across the lake to Tutanekai. She disrobed, attached several hollow gourds under each arm and began her swim, guided by the sound of the flute. Arriving cold, naked, and exhausted but joyful, she warmed herself in the hot pool Waikimihia, now called "Hinemoa's bath." Tutanekai's slave came down from the hut to fetch water. Hinemoa imitated a man's voice and asked who the water was for. "*I am the slave of Tutanekai, the water is for my master,*" was the reply. Hinemoa said, "*Give it to me,*" and broke his calabash (canister) against the rocks. This happened several times until Tutanekai took his mere (club) to fight the intruder who had infringed his tapu (honour), saying, "*I will make a cut from his skull.*" Hinemoa hid at first but then revealed herself and Tutanekai took her to his home. Under Maori law, if a man takes a woman to his home they must marry. They slept late. Whakauekaipapa's slave was sent to find Tutanekai and reported back, "*There are four feet in the*

bed, not two." The union was acclaimed. Great waka were seen approaching and they expected war. However, the union was accepted and celebrations ensued. It is said, "*The clear waters of Waitemata (Lake Rotorua) had never given back such a clear image.*"¹⁶

The stepping stones

The stepping stones in this story are clearly acceptance and celebration. Looking into Aotearoa's (New Zealand) history, it can be said that the marriage of Hinemoa and Tutanekai, which was finally approved by both Whakaue and Umukaria, cemented a strong bond and association between these two groupings that could not be broken until as late as the 1800 battle at Te Puia.

¹⁶ Love story of *Hinemoa and Tutanekai*, viewed 22 June 2012, <http://www.maoriweddings.co.nz/hinemoa.html>

A Pathway to Peace

Challenging honour and tradition

In the context of honour killing, it is difficult to talk positively about honour and tradition. In raising this question in conversation, I was referred to the English Guiding and Scouting Movements whose honours include the Queen's Guide and Queen's Scout awards. Lord Baden Powell compiled *Scouts Laws*, which include, "A Scout's honour is to be trusted" and "A Scout obeys orders of his parents, Patrol Leader or Scoutmaster without question." The link between honour and blind obedience in these *Laws* has parallels with adherence to the traditional social laws that have seen so much killing in the name of honour. Social emergence, regardless of the era, involves questioning authorities' opinions and rulings.

A personal comment from Dilawar Chetsingh regarding the positive role of the Khap Panchayat provides some understanding of people's willingness to obey its laws.

Khaps and their panchayats have been the traditional bodies to decide things and exercise authority in these Haryana villages. The positive features have been their providing cohesion, defence and stability to the village communities in times of difficulty, such as the repeated invasions over the centuries and skirmishes and disputes with other neighbouring groups/communities. Khap members will have come to the help of fellow Khap members under attack. This area was on the route various Muslim invaders from central Asia took in going towards Delhi or Agra. The positive side of the village communities being regarded as one brotherhood definitely helped in such times and circumstances. It also needs to be appreciated that the

Jats are an agricultural people and land is everything to them. They have a great bond with their land and will fight for it.

It is not difficult to see a link between English Scouts promising to obey orders of their parents, and Indian youth acting on behalf of family and village elders, preserving brotherhood and honour with war-like determination. In a patriarchal society, it is generally the men who carry out what is deemed necessary, but it must be remembered that many women are partisan to the actions taken to preserve village honour. However, Dilawar Chetsingh adds that the Khaps know change is coming and are gradually allowing the young women of their villages more freedoms.

Honour and freedom are life and death issues. Eloping couples who need to escape family fury share a compelling bond – a personal honour and commitment to each other – evidenced by situations where boy and girl each choose death rather than separation. In a different scenario, Shan Sa, in her award-winning book *The Girl Who Played Go*, portrays a Japanese mother saying to her son who is going to fight in the Japan-Chinese war in Manchuria, “If it is a question of honour or death, choose death.” Violent murder-suicide is chosen in a dramatic love scene as this story comes to a climax.

Social shame and social pride

Shame is the antithesis of honour. Rather late in my study, I realized what its prime focus might be – shame. Aristotle makes clear to us that shame is felt in relation to people we admire or by whom we wish to be admired. Donald Nathanson’s writings in *Compass of Shame* gives four natural responses: withdrawal; attack other; attack self; and avoidance. What is so highly relevant to

romance tragedy is the inability of those concerned to face the underlying issues, leading to murder (attack other), suicide (attack self), surrendering to pressure (withdrawal) and cutting ties (avoidance). Social pride is shown by those opposing social change being proud to have taken part in the killings; proud to cleanse the village of the “social disgrace.”

Rights to options and rights to roots

Globalization brings awareness of what other people do and what may be possible. Media and education help young people, especially young women, become aware of the possibility of achievement and new ideologies. The plus side of globalization is more options. The downside includes capitalistic exploitation. A simplistic attitude is that money allows a person to do exactly what they like and enjoy full social rights. The reality is that while money may come for people joining the international community, it may come at the price of cutting social ties and forfeiting family and social privileges. Globalization brings a threat to cultural identity and integrity. Community leaders need great wisdom to preserve what is good alongside inevitable evolutionary social progress.

Law and social progress

Constitutional rights have become legal rights for young people in India since the nation adopted a democratic constitution in 1950. These rights are being implemented now. Abuse of these rights has only recently come to public attention. Outspoken individuals and human rights organizations are insisting that the Government of India take adequate steps to enforce constitutional rights for all Indian people.

Implicit in my exploration of romance tragedy is an acceptable ethical position. Questions regarding the death penalty, a just war and the duty to protect remain

on my agenda. Boaventura de Sousa Santos, in his treatise *Toward a New Legal Common Sense: Law, Globalization, and Emancipation*,¹⁷ suggested a present-day paradigm, “prudent knowledge for a decent life.” Acceptable, implementable laws are necessary but the change of heart has to come from the populace in question. There may always be rogue individuals who violate society according to their own desires and are proud of doing so. Thus, an acceptable justice system remains a necessity of social living.

Tribute must be paid to those working for social progress. Paramount amongst these are individuals who take action in the face of persecution and Human Rights Organizations such as the All India Democratic Women's Association (AIDWA). Jagmati Sangwan, the “articulate and spunky president” of the Haryana wing of AIDWA, has been leading the fight against Khap Panchayats and honour crimes in Haryana. She rightly claims, “Haryana women have done the most to fight khaps.”

A paradigm of hope

The way forward in relation to forbidden love is from preventive coercion by family and/or local authority and persecution if the relationship proceeds – to nonviolence with estrangement – to reconciliation – to acceptance with reservations – to unreserved welcome and celebration. “An opinion” in the chapter titled “Nepal” is the ideal, with the reporting of an inter-caste marriage which was openly welcomed and celebrated.

Artistic genius in literature, art and music gives us a lead. Eastern, Western and Pacific cultural legends have

¹⁷ Santos, B de S 2002, *Toward a New Legal Common Sense: Law, Globalization, and Emancipation*, 2nd Edition, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 592 pages

always been popular with ordinary people. They share compelling expressions of love with hopeful fulfilment, even though so often fate intervenes and the stories end in tragedy. The bittersweet combination of joy and sorrow leaves us with an imperative to make things better for those concerned. It is with a feeling of hope that we join with Shakespeare and say, "What here shall miss, our toil shall strive to mend."

Steps to peace

Peace is the enjoyment of good relationships.

The burden of my work has been to look for social progress in relation to romance tragedy and define the steps necessary to work from violence to acceptance and celebration. Australasian universities have an annual event called the "Three-minute Ph.D. competition." The idea is to present a brief, focused account of a thesis. I end this book with the summary to my three-minute thesis presentation in the hope it will help you consider your own role in social progress.

How do we view progress?

- Every culture has wonderful legendary romantic stories.
- Every culture has its marital taboos.
- Romance is unconditional.
- Human rights are allowed or withheld by the society or family within which a person lives.
- Nonviolence is the first acceptable end point.
- Effective law and order is imperative.
- Family estrangement remains a legal option.
- Reconciliation is good and can happen at any time.
- Acceptance which may involve surrendering previously held convictions is very good.
- Welcome and celebration is ideal.

OUR RESPONSIBILITY:

Tell the stories and spread the word.

Conclusion

I have always been fascinated by expressions of humanity in other cultures. Looking into a different culture requires a mentor, a minder. My great debt is to the late Dilawar Chetsingh, a beautifully bicultural person with an English mother and an Indian father, living out his life in Delhi. Dilawar took my hand, helped enormously with material and answered my queries. He pointed out it is only in certain localities of India, especially northern India, that village leaders continue to ignore India's constitutional laws and deny rights to their community members.

In relation to choice of marital partner, the saga of the conflict between local and national ideologies has been working itself out in India since 1993. The reported tragedies peaked in 2012. The story is one of increasing public outrage, with insistence on action from the nation's leaders. The saga, albeit a micro history, will be seen in the future as an important part of India's social emergence; one that will assist, and lead to, progress with other issues of social reform. National and international reporting in the media has led to change. Previously, the issues were regarded as local and family matters, and could be ignored.

Romance is a prime mover. It is unconditional. Forbidden love is a social phenomenon that will remain, leading to more tragedies. Lovers who refuse to accept the social constraints of family or community may contemplate immediate and permanent separation from home and friends, or suicide. It has been said that martyrdom is only recognized and awarded to the last person making the sacrifice. Like the mausoleums of the legendary characters, there could be one for the last Indian

romantic couple murdered by family or community.

The process of reform currently being worked out in India will be re-enacted in other cultures where there are severe restrictions on personal freedoms.

Leading reform requires huge personal sacrifice.

About the Author

David D E Evans lives in Adelaide, South Australia, with keen interests in family, the Oriental Game of GO, Real (Royal) Tennis, Barbershop Singing and the Quaker way of life.

In retirement, after a working life in Medicine specializing in Pathology and Sexual Health Medicine, David studied Humanities with the University of New England, Armidale, Australia.

In 2015, he presented the core article of his thesis on romance tragedy with a special focus on Northern India and Nepal after 1993 at the Asia Pacific Peace Research Association (APPRA) conference in Kathmandu, which was warmly received.

