Honour Killing - Kevin Murder Case, Kerala

Why in news?

10 persons convicted of abducting and murdering 23-year-old Dalit Kevin P. Joseph were awarded double life imprisonment and imposed a fine by the principal sessions court in Kottayam.

What is the case about?

- Two days before the death, Kevin and Ms. Neenu Chacko had filed a joint application for marriage.
- As per the case, a gang led by Shyanu Chacko, brother of Ms. Neenu, abducted Kevin, chased him to a stream, and drowned him.
- The court had accepted the prosecution's argument that racial prejudice was the motive behind the youth's murder.
- The court ruled that it was an 'honour killing', based on Neenu's testimony that her family was vehemently against the marriage as Kevin was a Dalit.
- The convicts were awarded the sentence under IPC Sections 364 A for abduction and 302 for murder.

Why is this case significant?

- The term 'honour killing' describes the class of murders that family members commit, to impose the idea of 'marriages within community'.
- The Supreme Court has been intervening repeatedly to preserve the freedom of marital choice of individuals.
- Various judgments have highlighted the need to take action on such crimes, as well as the social structures that keep such a communal outlook alive.
- The use of murderous violence in the name of imagined threats to family or community honour is an unfortunate reality in most parts of the country.
- It is disquieting that the 'honour killing' phenomenon persists in highly literate societies too.
- Discrimination against Dalits is not limited to Hindu communities listed as Scheduled Castes.
- It extends to those who have converted to other religions too.
- The Kottayam court judgement makes it the first-ever case of 'honour killing' to be reported in the State of Kerala.
- Moreover, the investigation and trial into the case have been notably fast,

which is a good precedent.

What lies ahead?

- Caste groups have become politically organised, and caste associations attract the young and the educated.
- Given this, there is a need for a redoubled effort to eliminate the evils of a stratified society.
- In particular, administrators must give full effect to the various preventive, remedial and punitive measures recommended by the Supreme Court.
- The Centre may also examine the need for a comprehensive law to curb honour killings and prohibit interference in matrimonial choice of individuals.

Source: The Hindu

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