

Court Story

By Megan Lupo

A 44-year-old man was sentenced to life in prison without the possibility of parole on Friday after being convicted in the 2007 killing of his wife in her Ahwatukee home.

Avtar Grewal was denied the prospect of being released under the conditions of Maricopa County Superior Court Judge Dean Fink's sentence.

The jury found Grewal guilty of first-degree murder in the death of 30-year-old Navneet Kaur on July 15, 2019.

Kaur's family arrived together at the Oct. 11 sentencing, passing along a box of Kleenex while the six members waited in the first row on the right side.

The family flew in from various parts of the world, including Australia, India and Denver.

Sandeep Singh, Kaur's brother, read the victim impact statement on behalf of his family before the court with his tearful mother and brother by his side.

"Most believe that this will never happen to them. I was one of those people until this evil monster murdered my sister. Life will never be the same again for me and my family," Singh said. "She had her whole life to live but unkindly taken by this heartless, evil person on the 29 of March in 2007. We trusted this evil monster to take care of her, not to kill her."

Some of the words Singh described Kaur were compassionate, courageous and empathetic.

Singh concluded his statement, speaking directly to his deceased sibling.

"My dear sister, you are always in my mind and forever in my heart," Singh said.

After Singh read his statement, Prosecutor Juan Martinez, with the permission of the family, showed pictures on a flat screen monitor of a smiling Kaur with her family on vacation, at celebrations and in her home where she was murdered.

“This was an individual who had sworn he would be there for her for a lifetime,” Martinez said, repeating how especially cruel the crime was. “And it turns out it wasn’t very long at all; it was a very short lifetime.”

Grewal sat somber, looking down a few times, during his sentencing.

At the time of the murder, Grewal and Kaur were in a long-distance, tumultuous marriage with Grewal living and working in Canada and Kaur in Arizona, according to court records.

According to prosecution, Grewal strangled Kaur and submerged her face down in a bathtub full of water after she said she wanted a divorce when he flew down to Phoenix.

Then, Grewal left a signed note at the scene stating, ‘I killed this selfish b----h who tortured me for two years and made my life hell. Now I will kill myself.’ He failed several attempts at completing his last assertion, according to court records.

Court records stated Grewal fled to India the next morning, while Kaur’s co-workers called the Phoenix Police Department to conduct a wellness check after she failed to show up for work— that was when police discovered her body.

The Delhi Police apprehended Grewal upon his arrival at the Indira Gandhi International Airport and held him at the Tihar Jail in New Delhi until he was extradited to Arizona in 2011.

For the past eight years, he had been housed at Maricopa County’s Lower Buckeye Jail in the psychiatric unit, according to a letter Grewal's Attorney Jeffrey Kirchler wrote to Fink.

Although Grewal filed a now-rejected motion for a new trial, arguing that he was not treated fairly after the verdict was read back in July, he appeared to accept his fate during his sentencing, even asking for harsher punishment.

“I was no Prince Charming or knight in shining armor,” Grewal said, wishing for either death or life without parole sentence. “I was just an imperfection.”

The prosecution originally sought the death penalty on Jan. 26, 2012 but withdrew the notice if Grewal was convicted of first degree murder on April 23, 2019, according to court records. The reasoning is under a sealed document.

Grewal requested his family not to come to his sentencing or speak on his behalf, yet they still offer love and support of him, hoping he would one day return home to India, according to Kirchler.

Although Kirchler, along with Richard Randall, Grewal’s other attorney, declined to comment after the sentencing, Kirchler asked the judge to impose a life sentence with the possibility of parole, citing the defendant’s family support, time already in custody, lack of intention to kill and mental health issues, including depression and delusion.

At Fink’s order, Kaur’s family received a little over \$23,000 for victim restitution that Grewal did not challenge.

Fink directed his only comments to Kaur’s family once he delivered Grewal’s sentence.

“I know that this is a devastating event in your lives, and I appreciate you being here today,” Fink said. “This has been a long journey for everyone involved.”

After the sentencing, Singh thanked law enforcement and prosecution for their efforts, yet had nothing to say to Grewal for the pain he caused to Kaur’s family for more than 12 years.

“He did the wrong thing. He never showed any remorse in his testimony or in the trial proceedings...You don’t kill someone accidentally,” Singh said. “I think it's just the closure of this case but this thing is going to go with us. I think it might even follow us in our afterlife.”

The family huddled in a circle outside the Maricopa County’s Central Court Building after the sentencing. The stillness of their bodies, arms around each other, juxtaposed the rush of people going in and out of the building. Then, side by side, they walked down the stairs and sidewalk, in silence, and crossed the street.

Sources Cited:

- Sandeep Singh
- Juan Martinez- 602-506-3411; 301 W. Jefferson St., Suite 800, Phoenix, AZ, 85003
- Avtar Grewal
- Jeffrey Kirchler- 602-506-7711; 620 W. Jackson St., Suite 4015, Phoenix, AZ, 85003
- Richard Randall- 620 W. Jackson St., Suite 4015, Phoenix, AZ, 85003
- Dean Fink- 602-506-3776; 201 W. Jefferson St., Suite 12C, Phoenix, AZ, 85003
- Court Records- 602-372-5375; 601 W Jackson St, Phoenix, AZ 85003