

DOWRY SYSTEM: A CURSE FOR THE SOCIETY

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Abstract

Dowry means money, goods or valuable things that a woman brings to their law's house at the time of the wedding. It is a social evil which is spread all over India. In the old days, it used to be just a gift from the bride's father to her daughter but now it has become a way to get money. It is a source of joy and a curse for society. It is a joy for the groom's family as they are getting costly dresses, utensils and other things but a curse for the bride's family as they have to take a loan to satisfy the demand of the groom's family. Their demand does not diminish even after their marriage. When dowry amount is not considered sufficient, the bride is often harassed, abused and tortured. Dowry related violence and bride burning (dowry death) are only peculiar to our country and besides the husband, his kin also joins together in persecuting the bride as the dowry and related customs provide a good excuse to them for humiliating, insulting and even beating up the woman. Dowry prohibition act is established to eradicate these evils. The penalty is placed under this act. Society needs to change their mentality so that this system can be put to an end.

Introduction

The Dowry system is a social evil which is practised in our society. It is a dreadful and unethical practice. If I will say it is common for uneducated people then surely I will be proved wrong because educated people are also involved in this social evil.

Beginning of Dowry system

It is started from the British period. In ancient times giving dowry during marriages was most common. The aristocratic class celebrated their daughter's marriages very grandly giving them lands, jewels, properties, vehicles and large cash. Very rich people can afford to give lands, houses and vehicles as dowry, the Agarwals, in the North and Reddys in Andhra Pradesh had it as their custom to give away large landed property and jewels when they celebrated the marriage of their daughters. Even therefore these communities celebrate their daughter's marriages very grandly to the surprise and jealousy of their neighbours and the people of their localities. The Maharajas celebrated the marriages of their daughters spending lavishly. Ordinary people

wonder at the huge amount spent on marriages and the grand feast for thousands and which include the choicest, food items and choicest liquor. Some years ago in the Gwalior Maharaja's family, a marriage was celebrated so grandly that people all over the country raised their eyebrows in wonder. Gifts to the bride or dowry might have been some palatial houses, the latest model cars, jewellery of the finest variety, silver and gold vessels. It was a display of lavishness. Wealthy people, zamindars and the princely class can spend on marriages as much as they wish. But what about the average, middle class and poor people!

Rituals

India has a wonderful concept called "Kanya Daan". When the daughter marries, her parents have the holy feeling of donating their trusteeship to the husband. With this Kanya Daan, parents also provide some items basically for some reasons:

1. While donating the trusteeship; it is considered a sacred practice to accompany it with some valuables as well. It is a kind of feeling that I am giving my best.
2. Valuables are given to the daughter to provide a feeling of safety & security in difficult times if any. This is to ensure that the daughter faces minimum challenges in her difficult times.

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Purpose

The main purpose to begin is very simple; it is only a way to help a newly married couple. Bride's parents used to give their daughter in the form of money, land and other assets so that their daughter would be independent as well as happy. Today it's become a rule for the society to give dowry at the wedding of their loving daughter.

Effect of dowry system

The lower-class family has not enough to give their daughter a dowry so they took a huge debt for her daughter. When the dowry is lesser than the demand then mental and physical violence against the bride begins to extract more dowries. The violence status from day one with taunting remarks from the father's law and the docile husband also. Many women die every day because of this evil some are harassed and some committed suicide due to their unbearable torture. The

bride is helpless in her new home and physically so powerless that she cannot retaliate against the coercive tactics or actions of other; not many women have the guts to divorce their husbands on the ground of frequent mental or physical torture since they have nothing to fall back upon in a traditionally and poorly developed country like India. As due to this system many fathers lost their daughter. Some of the father also committed suicide because of pressure as they took a huge debt but because of poor condition, they can't return that and committed suicide. Poor parents fail to find a groom for their daughter because of their poor condition. Dowry is becoming a nightmare for Women. The cases of infanticide are increasing. Poor parents do not have any other option. They cannot afford to have a girl child, and hence they are intentionally killing infant girls. More than 10000 women are killed because of Dowry. Because of this dowry system, Increases corrupt attitude among parents.

Traditionally, dowry was provided at will and only items which are considered as Necessary were being provided and that too basis the financial position of the father of the bride. Unfortunately, with time, this became a nuisance and husbands & their families treated this as their right and even started making demands (of what they want in dowry). Many parents develop their corrupt attitude to collect money for paying dowry. They accept all sorts of briberies. They undertake unsocial activities like smuggling or earn by unfair means. Thus, dowry practices force some parents to be corrupt.

Many people consider dowry as a religious obligation due to lack of knowledge. In any of the religion whatever Hindu, Muslim or any other, they did not permit the division of the parental property between the son and daughter. Today, the Dowry system has become the greed of many parents looking at all these things, the government made a law in which daughters have equal right on the parental property.

On the other hand, in our society, the dowry system is not mandatory for girls but also for boys. The dowry rate is fixed for the boys according to their job as a doctor, engineers, peers, teachers etc. The merits of girls do no value. Father of the girls always used to select the only boys who are well settled in life. On the other hand, boys accept only those girls who belong to the well of family, highly educated and earn. Dowry leads to some immoral practices:

How to escape

- To escape from the menace of dowry, some young girls prefer to undertake jobs to earn huge amounts of money to meet the dowry expenses and thereby reduce the dowry tension of their parents. In the process, some innocent girls are carried away by the false promises of the young boys and are often sexually cheated to be made pregnant. Subsequently, such girls are socially defamed and finally, they are forced to commit suicide finding no alternatives.
- At times girls are bound to commit suicide when their in-laws forced them to bring more and more dowry from parents. Even the husband along with his parents or other family members do not hesitate to take away the life of the bride on dowry issues if the dowry is not up to their satisfaction. This accounts for an explosive situation such as bride burning and many other atrocities against women in our society.
- With time, however, laws have been enacted and enforced prohibiting the practice of dowry. Yet nothing has been satisfactorily effective. After all, laws can only restrict people's behaviour but cannot influence their intention. Again, there is nothing more pleasurable to a daughter- burdened father than to be able to get his daughter a husband. Thus, both parties' givers and the takers-have kept this peril practice in vogue.
- Instead of looking for a well-settled groom for her daughter and investing all their financial savings in marriage, people ought to spend on later schooling and make them self-reliant.
- Women ought to proceed to work even after their marriage and focus their energies on the productive issues reasonably than yielding to the sarcastic remarks of the in-laws.
- Women also need to be made conscious of their rights and the way they can be utilized to guard themselves against any type of abuse.
- General equality is likely one of the predominant causes of dowry law.

- From a young age, youngsters ought to be taught that each woman and men have equal rights and usually are not Superior/inferior to one another.
- Also, the campaign ought to be made to sensitize the difficulty and the legal guidelines laid down by the federal government ought to be made extra stringent.
- Despite the legislation being applied by the federal government, the dowry system, however, has a robust maintain in society
- Lack of schooling is likely one of the predominant contributors to social practices like dowry, caste system, and labour.
- People ought to be educated to advertise logical and correct considering so that such evil practices could be instilled.

Lack of Legal Guidelines

While the federal government has made dowry a punishable offence, the legislation has not been strictly enforced. There is not any restriction on the change of items and dowry given throughout marriage.

Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961

They shall come into force on the 2nd day of October 1985 is the date appointed for the coming into force of the Dowry Prohibition (Amendment) Act, 1984 (63 of 1984).

Rules following which lists of presents are to be maintained.-

- (1) The list of presents which are given at the time of the marriage to the bride shall be maintained by the bride.
- (2) The list of presents which are given at the time of marriage to the bridegroom shall be maintained by the bridegroom.
 - (a) shall be prepared at the time of the marriage or as soon as possible after the marriage,

- (b) shall be in writing,
- (c) shall contain
- (i) a brief description of each present;
- (ii) the approximate value of the present;
- (iii) the name of the person who has given the present; and
- (iv) where the person giving the present is related to the bride or bridegroom, a description of such a relationship;
- (d) shall be signed by both the bride and the bridegroom.

Explanation

Where the bride is unable to sign, she may affix her thumb impression instead of her signature after having the list read out to her and obtaining the signature, on the list, of the person who has so read out the particulars contained in the list

Penalties

This legislation provides for a penalty in section 3 if any person gives, takes or abets giving or receiving of dowry. The punishment could be imprisonment for a minimum of 5 years and a fine of more than ₹ 10,000 or the value of the dowry received, whichever is higher.

There are some of the landmark judgements on dowry death in India

- Kamlesh Panjiyar vs. the State of Bihar
- Reema Aggarwal vs. Anupam and ors.
- Paniben vs. the State of Gujarat
- Appasaheb and Anr. vs. State of Maharashtra
- Baldev Singh vs. the State of Punjab
- Dasrath vs. the State of M.P
- Thathamsetty Suresh vs. State of A. P
- Rajala Singh vs. the state of Jharkhand
- Kailash vs. the State of M.P
- So Anil Kumar Gupta vs. State of Uttar Pradesh and ors.

Conclusion

The need of the hour is a social awareness at least among the females. More stringent laws, more awareness, more education of the girls, more self-dependence of the girls and a social awakening can only curb this ever-increasing evil.

Parents are advised to educate their daughters as times have changed. In the present world, education has more value in the employment market and many fields have been opened for women to become entrepreneurs. Amount of dowry may be invested for her secured future.

Girl's parents should help by reporting to the government or concerned authorities about the dowry demands. Marriage with such boys should be discouraged as demand for excessive dowry means they do not want girls but money. This can result in extortion after marriage by torture.

Views

The Dowry system is good unless and until it is considered as a gift given to the bride by her parents. If the groom's parents are demanding money to get married as a "Dowry" then that is completely wrong and illegal. So we should eradicate it from society after the bride's parents live a happy and peaceful life.

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