DOWRY SYSTEM IN INDIA
AN ANNOTATED SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY

SUBMITTED IN
PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR
THE AWARD OF THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF LIBRARY SCIENCE
1980-81

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Certified that Miss Saleema Parveen compiled her dissertation under my guidance and supervision and that to the best of my knowledge the work is of an original nature.

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INTRODUCTION

Marriage is controlled by customs. Though religious authorities tried to establish a uniform kind of marriage, no nation even with decent culture and history, has ever been able to enforce it. In India the custom of giving something either in cash or kind or both before and after wedding, to a bride and the groom out of affection is not something of recent origin. But during the last three or four decades its association with the prestige of a family has made the custom a slur for our society. Marriage, whether a religious or a civil contract, has become plain buying and selling of grooms.

By offering heavy dowries the parents of the girls, who are not beautiful or educated or are even physically deformed, can get their daughters married to handsome as well as to well educated boys. Sometimes it helps the newly married couples in establishing their homes.

The lust for money and getting the social status for one's family has given birth to the social evils that become the root cause of suicides and murders of the brides. Bride burning for want of dowry has become a way of life.

Social reformers and other leaders including the legislators had tried to bring about a uniform type of marriage, but have failed in their efforts even through legislation.
Different communities have different marriage customs, but the custom of giving dowry is shared by all the communities. However, its grip on the majority community, i.e. the Hindus is tighter. Keeping this in view the word Hindu has not been included while assigning the subject headings.

The present work has been divided into two parts. Part one is descriptive and gives not only the origin, causes and effects of the dowry but also a bird's eye view of the custom throughout the country. It also covers the steps taken in eradicating the evil at different levels.

Part two contains a list of periodicals and composite books documented, a list of subject headings under which the bibliography has been arranged, a list of abbreviations and the main bibliography with annotations. Title and author index has been given separately.

**SCOPE:** The bibliography includes 220 entries covering all the aspects of the system selectively.

**SOURCE OF COMPILATION:** Bibliography is mainly based on original sources and no secondary source has been consulted in its compilation. Annotations given cover essential points stressed by the author's in the articles.

**STANDARDS FOLLOWED:** As far as possible the Indian standard recommendations for bibliographical reference (IS: 2381-1963) have been followed. But in certain cases, such as indexing
services in the country have been adopted.

ARRANGEMENT: Efforts have been made to arrange the entries under an extensive subject headings. For this purpose a comprehensive list of subject headings was compiled which is given as Chapter 2 of part two. Although there is always scope for difference of opinion on my issue, the list of subject headings will generally be found following a logically helpful sequence.

Under each specific subject headings the entries have been arranged alphabetically by author or by title in case entry has been made under title.

The entries are serially numbered. The following items of information are contained in the various types of entries:

**Periodical Articles:**

- a) Serial number
- b) Name of author
- c) Title of contribution
- d) Title of the periodical in original or abbreviated form
- e) Volume number
- f) Issue number
- g) Year
- h) Inclusive pages containing the contribution.

**Specimen Entry:**

**Contribution to composite book:**

a) Serial number  
b) Name of author  
c) Title of contribution  
d) Name of the author or the editor or compiler of host document.  
e) Title of host document.  
f) Volume number  
g) Edition number  
h) Year of publication  
i) Name of the publisher  
j) Place of publication  
k) Inclusive pages containing the host document.

**Specimen Entry:**


**Newspaper article:**

a) Serial number  
b) Author  
c) Title  
d) Abbreviated or full name of the newspaper.  
e) Date, month, year.  
f) Page and columns.

The Roman smalls a to h have been used, following the practice of Indian press Index, to indicate columns 1 to 8 on the page of a newspaper.

**Specimen Entry:**

WADHWA (P R). Dowry Deaths. H T. 8 July 81; 9e.
DOWRY SYSTEM IN INDIA

Dowry is a term denoting the property, whether realty or personalty that a wife brings to her husband on marriage. In primitive societies husbands make a payment to their father-in-laws, and the wife is often, in effect bought from her father. The idea of dowry is fundamentally different, namely that the bride or her father makes a payment to her husband to help him to discharge the responsibilities he assumes on marriage. But the institution of dowry, performing these simple and elemental functions in relation to ordinary marriages, has played an important part in building the power and wealth of great families and even in determining the policies of states. The importance of dowry in the framing of dynastic policies is epitomized by the epigram Alli bella gerunt: tu, felix Austria, nube ("others wage wars: you happy Austria, get married"); and the practice of performing marriage to wars of conquest was not confined to Austria.

Dowry has been conveniently defined as money, goods or estates, which a woman brings to her husband in marriage. Max Radu has said that "ordinarily dowry is the property which a man receives when he marries, either from his wife

*Encyclopaedia Britannica
or her family*. Under Dowry Prohibition Act 1961, Dowry has been defined as any property or valuable security, which might be given directly or indirectly by one party in marriage to the other party in marriage, either by themselves or through parents or through any other person. Such a presentation can be either before marriage or at the time of marriage or after that.

As such dowry system is very old so far Hindu society is concerned. It is a widely accepted and socially recognised institution. It is quite prevalent, though in these days due to excessive dowry it has created many social problems. One finds that even in Vedic Age dowry system was in vogue and dowry was used as a means for attracting good boys. This theme is retained even today. During Epic Age too dowry system was in practice though the concept of dowry had changed by then. It was believed that a girl has some right on the property of her parents and that some part of that need go to girl at the time of marriage, because she had no right of inheritance. The dowry was not claimed as a matter of right. It was only the will of parents who gave it according to their resources, capacity and also desire. With the passage of time the concept of the dowry has changed and has become an integral part of marriage; both are inseparable.
ORIGIN: To G.R. Nair it started as an innocent custom, a symbol of love from the loving parents to their daughters. But to Nalini Singh it was introduced as a NAZRANA - a unilateral transfer of sources by a girl's family at her marriage to groom's family in recognition of the latter's generosity in inviting an amputated human to their home permanently. To Gippy Goyal it is closely related to family property or to desire of acquiring it, unearned or otherwise.

Historically it owes its origin to:

1- Father's wish to give his daughter a fair share in his worldly wealth, which could not be done through normal inheritance, since the sons inherited everything.

2- Dowry took the form of insurance against the evil days when the girl's husband died and left her without support.

3- Every father wished to show his love for his daughter.

Each of these reasons is deeply rooted in man's nature and we can affirm the concept that dowry had its origin in goodwill and affection.

In course of time it was accepted as a social custom and religious sanction was granted to it. According to
Kumar Ramchandani dowry as streedhan bestowed on the bridge by her parents before she is handed over to her husband's family, can serve as a source of genuine reassurance and protection to the young women. All communities irrespective of caste, creed or colour accepted the custom but no body claimed it.

Society is ever changing and the customs as part and parcel of the society go on changing too. They also take new definitions and new dimensions. New meanings are given that suits the society which has agreed it or is living with. Dowry was no exception. It too took a new meaning. Marriage, a social or religious contract, became plain buying and selling due to this new concept of dowry. Society sanctioned it as no body had to say anything against it at that time. The idea of status and dowry became synonymous. This idea too was shared by all communities with equal vigour. Attempts were made by lower castes (Indian society is still based on class structure) to attain social approval and have an upward social movement, and the easy way open to them was to offer huge dowries to the boys of the higher castes. Good education, lucrative appointment and a good footing in a learned profession improved the social and economic position of a youth and made him immensely attractive as a son-in-law. This market developed as both giver as well as taker
existed and continue to exist because of society's approval. **CAUSES:** Why Dowry was accepted by society without questioning its validity, because of the factors:

1- Desire of marrying daughter in higher-status families.

2- Affluent son-in-law was considered a status symbol and dowry was used to attract boys having education - formal or professional.

3- Show of dowry improved the social status of the family.

4- Our society is corrupt and black money has not been checked so far, this money provided impetus to the dowry.

5- Woman was perceived to be less worthy than man, hence the family that accepts her in marriage is perceived to be burdened with "a net economic liability".

6- To induce groom to come and be the permanent member of the bride's family.

7- It provided economic stability to the newly married couple.

8- Education was not given to the girl and the amount thus saved was used at the time of marriage.

9- Man's unbridled avarice and greed.
Thus we may say that social, economic and educational factors, all helped in the development and the continuance of the dowry.

As the customs continued, it had an inevitable impact over the marriage. Since dowry entered the state where the groom's family began to claim for it, the groom's worth began to be determined in terms of cash and kind. When with the spread of education, general and technical, the number of doctors, engineers, lawyers etc. increased, their price too increased in the marriage market. We can say that they brought good fortune not for themselves only but for other family members also. An Indian bride is expected to bring gifts with her for every member of the family of her-in-laws and even for her husband's other relations who are deemed to be close to the family i.e. uncle, aunt etc.

In search of status and the family (because of its prime importance) and not the groom the size and the contents of the dowry often became the matter of dispute, and pressure was always exerted on the bride's family to give as much as they could. Society bowed before the custom, nourished it and by now it has become a slur on our society. Shame not for our society but for the humanity on the whole.

EVIL EFFECTS: Since the custom became rigid, assumed new meaning and its association with prestige, individual as well as social, it gave rise to sociological as well as psychological problems. It caused frustration not
only to the brides but to their parents as well.

Parents try to buy their daughter's so called happiness, but once it starts it never ends. Those who cannot give huge dowries, marriages in such cases are delayed, postponed and even broken. As such it overshadows the very concept of marriage and divides the society on economic basis. Families where brides come with less dowry become hell for them on this earth. Dowry which was once given to the bride to ensure her comfort in case any misfortune might befall her, is no longer the property on which she can claim any right. She has no jurisdiction over its use. It becomes the property of the in-laws and they alone can use it as they please. In most of the cases the bride has to depend on her parents when her sari is torn and the parents have to give a new one to her, but cannot ask for a new one which she has brought with her at the time of marriage.

Marriage a religious sacrament, turned into a social contract between the families. The buying of the bridegroom like a commodity from the marriage market and the bargaining, has reduced marriage to commercial transactions than the spiritual covenants. A family is always in search of a boy having good market value either due to his high caste
or his professional qualification, who will add prestige to the family. If the bride's parents are wealthy enough they can induce him to the extent that he becomes a permanent member of the family and thus can have a sigh of relief as the groom in such cases has to look after them sooner or later. Among the affluent the son-in-law is as much a status symbol as an imported car.

The groom's family too is not interested in a bride who will be beautiful or educated, but the one who is able to bring with her all those comforts that are considered to be useful in a modern family. If the dowry which she has brought with her is short of any item, she will be rebuked and dishonoured at every step. If she is humiliated and exploited to the extent that it becomes unbearable for her to cope up with the circumstances then the easy thing for her to get rid of all this is to put an end to her miserable life. Thus she can free herself from the fetters by which the society has bounded her. It proves the miserable social and economic degeneration of our society which brings about the down fall of a bride even when bridal robes have not been changed. Returning to the parents home is totally ruled out because of social stigma. In most of the cases brides have been murdered even before their parents had cleared
the debts incurred on the marriage. In case she comes back to her parents they feel themselves helpless, try their best to have a fresh agreement with her in-laws to avoid any humiliation at the hands of society. They at this stage cannot imagine the fatal fate which is awaiting their daughter with his stomach empty enough to be filled by the dowry which she brings whenever she comes back from her parental house to the in-laws.

The argument that the father of a son has every right to expect as well as the demand dowry because he has spent a lot on his education and has enabled him to gain social status is not morally sound. It is morally unjustifiable to expect the bride or her parents to repay along with interest the money spent on the education of the groom.

Why people forget or overlook the fact that the person on whose education they have spent money is no other than their own son whom they have given birth and whom they expect to be the only consolation in the old age? Have they no claim on him? Why they ignore the fact that on the bride's education too money has been spent?

As the years roll on, the grip of dowry becomes lighter. It has become blemish on our culture and a disease which is eating into the fabric of our social life. It has left thousands of young girls with tears in their eyes which
are exuding out base like a great cyclone.

How a young girl is exploited and humiliated in our society has been described as under:

"Behind her hangs her degree certificate, on her right is the cake she has learned to bake in her cookery class and in between the folds of her sari peeps discreet little tag, announcing the buyer will get for lifting the good".

It is this price tag that has flamed the traditional signal for a pervasive low mood on the arrival of a female child and has made her an economic liability for her parents.

The lust for money has made our young folk to bow before the monster of dowry who is sucking the blood of the unfortunate parents and of their daughters. The wrong values attached to the material wealth and the fear of losing prestige compells the fathers to spend much more than they can afford which makes them slaves alongwith their male children of the person from whom they might have borrowed it. The slavery it is said has never been practised in India but in out times it is practised in every family. Bride is the slave of her in-laws and her parents too look to be born slaves.

Showy weddings and magnificent dowry is the only means to get social recognition for ones family. As an occasion it provides the best opportunity to make a show of
one's wealth. "Khandan ki Izzat" is paraded for public appraisal and yet the fear remains that too much may not be enough. This is the time which affords best opportunity to the groom and his family and its proper use can make their life as prestigious as they are able to make out of it. Here they can buy social approval for their family. The parents of a bride who cannot spend too much, the thrust of gaining or retaining traditional prestige is costly to them but at the same time desirable also. Mostly, the marriages are delayed, postponed and even broken for want of dowry. The system persists unabated. Dowry deaths have by now become so common that it no longer makes a hot news. The gap between the precept and the practice is the root cause of its continuance. Wise people talk of socio-religious sanction behind this custom. But is there any religion in this world which sanctions the burning of a wife because of inadequate dowry?

Change is inherent in a society because of its dynamic nature. We may or may not try to change it but it will change. We plan simply to have a desired change. So far this system is concerned we have not tried to make any desired change in it. When the concept of marriage to be understood in terms of dowry, we remained silent. Now the
natural calamity has over-taken us. It is the reason for what we had noble at one time, has become a horror at present. It has taken the shape of a ghost which haunts everywhere. We feel by now that it is a blemish on our culture and a disease which is eating into the fabric of our social life. We claim that our society is a civilized one, free and independent, but this pride falls itself when we come across a distressed father and a deserted lady. The parents rejoice, when a baby is born and the wrinkles on their foreheads are quite visible when the new comer is a female one. The reason is that a lady is a net economic liability whereas a boy is a check that can be cashed at any time. There is no place for Madame de steale who says that Genius has no sex.

The women's movements have gained momentum from time to time for attacking the old customs and for regaining their status. They have succeeded in certain aspects but this custom is so deeprooted that it will still take time to root it up because both giver as well as the benefiter live in our society. The forces that discriminate against lady from cradle to grave are within her family also. Her unrecognised childhood is followed by thankless wifehood and self-annihilating motherhood. As such she has
to tolerate much more than her fair share.

It affirms the fact that one's gender determines one's worth. Dowry is the most permanent additive. Education and employment make no difference but place a double burden on the girl's shoulders - she has to cope up with her job and to fulfill the duties of her house also. Her earnings also are of little value for her because the in-law claims their right on everything that belongs to her.

Gandhiji had said that "if parents were to educate their daughters as they educate their sons, so as to enable them to earn an independent living, they won't have to worry themselves over the selection of the husbands for their daughters". But when Gandhiji saw the educated ones are also humiliated in one or other way he said that, "there is something radically wrong in the system of education that fails to arm girls and boys to fight against social or other evils. That education alone is of value which draws out the faculties of a student so as to enable him/her to solve correctly the problems of life in every department". His message to the nation was that as long as the birth of a girl does not receive the same welcome as that of a boy, so long we should know that India is suffering from partial paralysis.
Those who claim to be followers of Gandhi know very well what was his message but how far they follow him is quite clear.

When Manu the great Hindu law givers said that a woman has to be under her Father during childhood, under her son during old age, nevertheless balanced the statement by saying that a society in which the woman is not honoured will be condemned to damnation.

Cormach(m) has said, "Never has man dug a deeper pit for himself than did the Hindu when he worshipped goddesses and degraded women, when he adored the mother and slighted the wife.

When we boast of our civilized society we mean that we live in a society were men and women respect each other; where the family is a symbol of love and paragon of heaven; where man and woman share the responsibilities equally in every walk of life.

We should not forget that there is no society which is free of social evils. These evils are eradicated by different personalities at different levels in different degrees. Since the origin of the social evils concerning woman different movements have been launched from time to time. The notion that woman is concerned with duties and not with rights has been changed now. The saying that home and children
for her and politics and war for man are now the things of the past. A change has come and we see ladies participat­ing and working with man in every walk of life. She is now her co-partner. But this change has not been sensed in the society as a whole but only in few families whom we may call enlightened ones.

Higher education helps one to develop one's mental and moral capabilities. It is the chiselling of finer instincts by finer and sharper instruments. The more educated person, the finer and deeper will be his moral and mental instincts. But has our young folk been able to achieve this after going through it. Had it been so, it would have been easier to overpower the demon of dowry who has not been satisfied by human tears and sighs but has started demanding human blood. The victims of this devil are not illiterates alone but also those who claim to be educated. What we mean by education is quite different. By education we mean a person who knows reading, writing a skill which enables him to earn for his livelihood. If he has attained the professional education it will help him to claim a status in a society. He is prestigious member of the society and the beating heart of the family but will maintain discreet silence when his parents claim his pound of flesh in kind at the time of marriage. His
education is of no use to the society on the whole. He becomes deaf and dumb to the cries of the society on whose breast he has suckled and has got the nourishment. He expects everything from society but does not hesitate while crushing the innermost emotions of that society of which he is a member. This sort of education we may say is no education but rightly a skill, a source of livelihood. By gaining the status he tries his level best to be an attractive son-in-law, induces the family involved to die an unnatural death by his unsatisfied agreed for money, attaching an altogether artificial dowry value upon his so-called education.

Dowry system has poisoned and polluted our society. The child which is a nature's gift and an object of joy and happiness is transformed into an object of tremendous worries for the parents. They suffer, lost the last bit of their solace and comfort due her birth as they are well aware of the fact that not only the child but they too will be humiliated and exploited in the marriage market. The birth of a son is just the opposite of it, and still we boast of living in a civilized society having equal rights and prohibiting discrimination. Ours is a society which is safe guarding the its weaker sections and providing full facilities to the individuals to develop their
personalities. If a social purpose is against the individual's purpose, then society must certainly provide for some form of protest from the individual. The problem, both for individual and society, is to achieve a compromise without necessarily wrecking the values cherished by either. But this is all theoretically, in practical life these things are far away from truth.

To achieve something in the practical field leaders and the reformers come to the forefront and their efforts make a society what it claims to be. For the eradication of social evils they have to prescribe first the proper remedy and then work hard for the cure. The evils cannot be rooted out merely by holding conventions and passing resolutions. So far as the dowry is concerned efforts should be made not only to find the villains and the victims but the cause that has given birth to it. All the movements in this direction have not achieved the goal until now.

One of the reasons may be that reform movements have lost the vigour because social work has become far less important than the political one. Those who start the former loose no chance in joining the latter. It is the reason why the painful scenes of women's position in India are seen even after three decades of independence.
SOCIAL EVILS AND REFORM MOVEMENTS: We know that social evils are hard to die because of their deep roots in tradition but we should not forget that extreme situations need drastic solution. The ineffectiveness of the reform movements led Sheikh Abdullah to say that "it is indeed very difficult to change one's heart when there are prospects of immediate profit at the cost of others. That cannot be done unless it is enforced by law without fear or favour." The demand for its eradication is a demand for prosperity, safer living and all-round peace. Keeping this in view Gandhiji has said that "Any young man who makes dowry a condition for marriage descends his education and his country and dishonours womanhood. Youngman who soil their fingers with such ill-gotten gold should be excommunicated from the society."

As such all the organizations old and new, political and religious, should unite once again to launch a struggle on women's issue in general and dowry system in particular, because there is a close relationship between the women and the state of economic and social development of a country. Reformers and other leaders should try to inspire these movements as legal and administrative steps have not been effective in this regard. Struggle on radical lines should be started and the creation of public opinion in favour of
the movement can only be of immense help. We should not overlook the fact that charity begins at home. Reform movements too should be started from there. First the family members who are faithful to the traditions should be educated. Reformers should set an example before the people by arranging dowryless marriages of their sons and daughters and of those who come within their fold. Why our reform movements have failed to curb the evil is simply because there has been a big gap between what they preach and what they practise. Thus we can at least stop the concerous growth of this evil. Whole hearted public cooperation is needed. We have to make people conscious of what is good and bad for them, then allow them to take decisions freely that are of their concern. Then we can see the change for which we have been waiting since long.

Mass media can also be helpful role in creating public opinion against the social evils. Anti-dowry programmes may be arranged and the young generation from different communities should invited to participate in these programmes. The dowry mongers who pose to be pillers of the society if not the social reformers should be exposed without any favour or fear. Evil effects should be highlightened every now and then. Here we do not need any special qualification or plenty of leisure. Once the work in this direction is
started the spark of happiness that has been extinguished will be kindled once more.

The Religious leaders - those persons who are supposed to enlighten the moral and spiritual instincts of a person should perform their duties as is expected from them. There grip on certain sections of the society is really tighter than that of politicians or other reformers. By giving spiritual and moral lessons they can help in eradicating these social evils. Is there any religion that sanctions the sacrifice of a young bride for want of dowry? Certainly the answer will be in the negative. Then why are the religious leaders silent spectators? The cow slaughter can bring a nation-wide revolution but the bride burning will not make them to awake and help the distressed.

Tragic side of the picture is not that reformers and other leaders have been silent spectators, but women themselves, consciously or unconsciously have helped in spreading the evil. Because women are more traditionalists. Women have full authority over her son, but takes active part in humiliating and exploiting the young bride if she comes with inadequate dowry. Woman as mother-in-law tries her best to bring disaster to the family involved and takes a sigh of relief when the bride embraces the flames. The part of villain of the Shakespearen tragedy and that of mother-in
law are not very distinct, the only difference is that the Shakespearean Villan is moto less where as mother-in-law is in search of prey who can bring more and more to her family. How an affectionate mother turns into a cruel mother-in-law is a mystery unsolved so far.

The educated girls disappear from the public life as soon as they are discharged from schools and college. The sole aim after marriage, before them, is to dedicate themselves to serve their man alone, (if they are lucky enough to have such opportunity), but ignore the sisters who are less fortunate than them.

Girls should refuse to marry a man who has abnormal claims. Women have to fight for their share if they have to live honorably in this male-adominated society. They should free themselves of the chains by which they have been chained since centuries. If she comes to know that her husband loves the property and has lust for money she should return to her parental house and without any hesitation, break down the marriage ties. Though society will not allow it, but when a woman has prepared her mind to fight for her due and to achieve what has been taken from her she can definitely find herself in better position.
She should feel that she too is a respectable member of the society and has every right to live as freely as her co-partner. How far can a society deny her, her due when she will be armed with vigour and has a definite goal to achieve. If a woman wants to belong to herself, how far can she be pushed before she strikes back. Then the organisations which are concerned with the welfare of the woman at different levels can be of help to her. They will definitely nourish her revolutionary ideas and her actions. She should remember that first she is a human being then a lady. Those who are in the parliament should do their best to make the laws, that guard the interest of the woman more strictly. Educated folk can shatter the artificial barriers of caste and creed. Simple and dowryless marriages should be encouraged. Showy ones should be discouraged at all the levels. Woman organisations should act as watchdogs in exposing the persons who are behind these showy marriages.

The current resurgence of women's organizations in the country, represented by organisations in Delhi, is centred around dowry, rape and sati. The activist organisations in vanguard of this movement defined the bottom limits of tolerance and endurance by concentrating on stark injustices. This is a major gain. It is equally important
however to evaluate their activism in the context of fundamental transformations required. (H.T. 8 March 81).

However, such organisations should act along a planned action and should keep an ideal before them. They should not link themselves with political or religious institutions. They should try to set free the woman from the traditional fetters and ensure her place in home as well as in society. Within a family she should have her share of parental affection, and should have a right to take free decision in personal matters. In society she should be treated first as human being then as a lady; restoring man to humanity will mean ensuring her place in society. Personal motives should be sacrificed for the good of the humanity. Often the persons having selfish motives dominate these organisations and use them as tools for attaining their goals. The organisations should keep vigilant that such persons are not coming within the organisation. Empty slogans should be replaced by decisive movements which should do their best in mobilising the public opinion against the heinous crimes against woman. Social, moral and economic factors which are responsible for the discrimination of woman should be found out and remedial measures thought of.
**STEPS TAKEN BY THE GOVERNMENT AND THE SOCIETY'S RESPOND**

The woman is fully protected in our statute book. Many of the laws that have been passed in recent decades to bring dignity and provide justice to the woman in India are still awaiting full implementation. Drawing room discussions and the mere passing of the laws are not enough. The laws should be tailored to suit the urgent needs of the society. Courts are unable to help the victims because of the loopholes in these laws. The demand for more rational and effective laws against dowry has been hanging fire. The laws existing are being violated by all the classes at all the levels. The very act for which the women had fought is multiplied with imputing. Literally the women are roasted and the courts are helpless and still the laws adorn the statute book. Both public and the law makers are guilty of violating them.

India was fortunate enough in that the freedom struggle of its people was also a struggle of women for their rights and legitimate place in society. Since the days of Raja Ram Mohan Roy the women's movements have been backed by enlightened personalities which resulted in Acts like Marriage Act 1955, Property Act and Dowry prohibition Act 1961. They had a sigh of relief when these
laws entered the statute book and were thus the guarantee for the women's protection. A number of other laws to guard women economically, social as well as politically have been passed so far. The leaders thought that the women constitute one-half of the country's population and are the backbone of domestic life and of social harmony.

Let a man be careful to honour his wife, for he owes to her all the blessings of his house. *Talmud*

The womanhood in the vedic period had its heights and depths, its brighter and darker spots. Woman was regarded with due respect in every sphere of life, and she was not subject to any merciless law of an unsympathetic society. Even when she overstepped moral laws she was judged with sympathy. Spinning and weaving and practising medicine assured the woman of India economic independence while philosophy and theology gave her confidence and poise when she stood in the general assembly debating abstruse points with the greatest mind's of the age. Her status could have been envoy of her sisters anywhere in the world but at present the position is exactly the reverse. How she is treated from cradle to grave is a dark spot not on the face of India alone but on that of humanity as a whole. In shastraic times masculine and priestly dominance began to take root and prevail.
There was a time when woman was adorned and treated as co-partner of her man. No religious function was ever complete till she was not by the side of her husband. Even today the presence of women in religious ceremonies is essential. Mostly the sources of inspiration were not the Gods but the Goddesses. In epics we read how heroines are made to weep and with tearful eyes plead the goddess for the welfare of the knights. Woman as a mother was most widely respected and had acknowledged power, as daughter she was loved much more than her brother and keen interest was taken about her education etc, her innermost feelings and desires were respected. Socially she was equal to man. The saying was there that where women are honoured Gods are pleased.

Life came from food. Food came from soil, man came from woman, woman gave life. All her gifts of care, nursing and begetting led logically enough to the concept of woman as SHAKTI - the strength of man and his household.

Time rolls on, leaves the great impressions too deep to be eradicated and the historian records it for future generation. The above concept of womanhood appears to us now just like a dream which the historians may have dreamt like Kubla Khan by Coleridge.

Once again we find that woman lost her position. The marriage of the girl and the rituals prescribed became too complicated as well as an essential bitter doze
of medicine to a serious patient. Woman gave up the vedic studies. It helped the man to develop his own personality and he started dictating terms to the lady who came to her possession. He took her as a commodity from her parental house. Her parents too used her as a source for improving their financial position. What they received was known as bride-price and is still practised in tribal world. They justify it by saying that the groom takes something, so he should give something. Another justification for practising it is that since the parents household loses one helper and have to suffer economically, thus it is proper for them to be adequately compensated. Among certain tribal areas the groom has to undergo strong physical torture before receiving or gaining the bride. In other areas he has to beg even though he is a healthy person to ensure to the parents of the bride that he can keep her, even though he may have to beg. It is here that the woman was reduced to a commodity and was an immediate source of fortune for her parents. Customs and usage present her with the daily tyranny of child-bearing kitchen and servitude. She became to depend first on her parents and then on her husband. As such her freedom was restricted and her opinion was not sought in matters like marriage though these were of her concern
alone. Since man had purchased her, he had full authority over her. At times he sold her and she could not interrupt.

A time came that man thought her to be a net economic liability. He sought the help of her parents for keeping her. Since she could not inherit anything from the property of her parents, parents out of affection started to give some gifts to the bride at the time departure. They felt it their ethical duty also. All these worked together and developed to such an extent that the girl became the victim of the custom. The humiliation and the exploitation of the parents as well as of the daughter in the marriage market compelled their parents to do away with the female child and these practices were prevalent even when Britishers came to India. Women of our times are not weak, but have been made so by these heinous customs.

Today she has proved that she can become best administrator, a good lawyer etc and can work in any field as efficiently as man. She came out from the four walls and has proved that she is no more a weaker sex. She has proved her worth in economic, political, social and educational fields. But this change has not been there on radical lines. This change is evident only in few families. Had it not been so then INDIRA GANDHI would not have said that "Lower status for women hampers the growth of the human race. She made
the statement in 1975. It affirms the concept that the equal status ensured to woman by the statute Book has not been honoured so far.

The discrimination and exploitation of the woman has not become the things of the past. She has not been liberated even though she worked hand in hand with man for the freedom of her beloved country. The word "equality" has become a term full of confusion. There is growing violence and dehumanisation which has led the human dimension and the spirit of man to diminish.

Marriage has remained the only destiny of the woman and it has nourished the offensive customs like bride-price and dowry. The hardships and the humiliation at every step have crushed her. Every function and every festival that precedes or follows her wedding brings a drastic change in the economic position of her parental house. They think that costly gifts are the only things that can ensure her happiness. She is used now a source of prosperity by her-in-laws, whose empty stomach remains as it is even if she may bring with her all the comforts expected in a modern family.

Whether there may be the custom of bride price or of dowry in every case woman is a source of prosperity either for her parents or for her in-laws. She is really LAKSHMI
for either of them, gaining nothing but losing something at every step.

As social progress came to be linked with the position of the woman in the society attempts were made to raise her status. The society which ignores the progress of the woman folk remains ignorant. Plato had said that to educate a man is to educate an individual but to educate a woman is to educate the whole nation. To Karl Marx "Social progress can be measured precisely by the social position of the fair sex". All these notions worked together and the laws were passed to do away with the customs that had become the slur on the face of humanity. Orthodox section of the society vehemently opposed these laws but the reform movement got the upper hand. The latest to find the place in statute book was Dowry Prohibition Act. when the Act entered the statute book in 1961 millions breathed a sigh of relief that at last this evil practice was ending.

The ludspeakers that echoed with fervour the great hopes of freedom from bondage were still urging, when people started receiving dowry through backdoor. It is hard to believe but a sad truth that parents even today freely quote the figures demanded of them and the young groom respects his life partner in terms of money she brings with her. Women are still crying in the silence when they see their parents struggling to buy husbands for them. They suffer and some are driven to desperation and suicides when their
parents are unable to comply with demands of dowry. Neither their worth as human beings, nor their education, nor their ability as individuals seem to end this evil. (Soc Wel 1969)

All this is going on inspite of the Act and inspite of equality of sex of which one boast.

The love and respect which she expects remains a myth for her. The Act has no meaning either for her or for her parents. Social legislation put into force by social reformers at one time has not been effective as it was thought. The Act has remained a dead letter and a judicial ornament. Though at least two dowry deaths are reported in Delhi alone every day but not a single victim is helped or relieved. The number of prosecutions under the law is really shameful. It strengthens the notion that any decision can be implemented only when it is welcomed by the society. When M.K. Sahni approached people to get their support for its abolition the reply from young boys was, "Did you not accept dowry? If yes, how can you expect us to leave"? and from young girls "you want us to go unmarried" and from their parents "who will marry our daughters if we do not give dowry"(192). It is quite evident that people have compromised and have accepted their fate as it has come to them. Everything in our society even the death of a bride has become a way of life.
Keeping the ineffectiveness of the law in view Suri (AS) came to the conclusion that society not the law is responsible for the malady. Both are to be blamed. Had law been implemented strictly since 1961, and had it been amended from time to time as per the needs of the society then the position would have been quite different.

If on one hand strict enforcement of the laws and the necessary amendments from time to time are required to curb the evil, social awareness and the severe punishment for dowry mongers may also be of help on the other. Laws should ensure the regulation of human behaviour within an organised social structure. Positive laws definitely guard the weaker groups and society too accepts them. Prohibition Act failed because of the loopholes.

Bride burning has become so common that if the Guiners Book of World Rewards" lists India as the only country where largest number of brides are burnt alive and the Indians as the most sadistic creatures in the world we should not be surprised. Beastly crimes demand beastly punishments. Laws have been drafted to deal with the consequences. The tradition and the causes that bring about the consequence have not been taken into account. Difference between the dowry and the gift being vogue, it is one of the causes why the act has failed. Under the Act gifts will not be treated as dowry.
Whether there is an agreement over the issue of dowry or not both parties are well aware of the fact that what is to be done, or what comes next. The doses have been prescribed and every one is expected to have it without any hesitation. No one can question whether the prescription can kill or cure him. Law sanctions the dowry giving and taking when it provides for "dowry to be for the benefit of the wife or her heirs". It says that the person who has received dowry should transfer it to the woman within one year after the date of marriage, or within one year after its receipt if received after marriage and if the woman is a minor, then within one year after she has attained the age of 18 years. What can one infer from such a law? Is the law not sanctioning the giving or taking of dowry at the time of wedding, before and after it? It is paradoxical that after all this the law prescribes the punishment or fine or both.

A distressed father with tears in his eyes and the burned dead body of his daughter in his arms, with a broken home is neither helped by law nor by society. No one is there to denounce those dowry deaths. Parents rationalise by glossing over the dowry and say, "why to accuse the in-laws"? Instead, society goes on: "Samaj tho aisa hi hai. (This is how the society is)". (171).

Society the world over loves a male, but the Indian tradition makes a god of him and a masochist of a woman. She
is expected to enjoy being ill-treated, as her tormentor is her lord. Remark the line of Sage Kanwa's Advice to Shakuntala ".....should thy wedded Lord Treat thee with harshness, thou must never be Harsh in return, but patient and submissive."

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*Here is the Survey of the dowry as seen in 1976 in some of the states:

DELI: "The evil of dowry is a part and parcel of the low status of the women in this country" says a college lecturer. She adds that "unless the Government makes a concerted effort to bring forward legislation the give more financial security to women, it will be difficult to eradicate the evil". What probably started as a form of monetary security for women has now degenerated into a practice through which money is forcibly extracted from bride's parents by the groom and his family. The dowry is related to the prospective bridegroom's income and in the marriage market and IAS officer fetches quite a handsome price.

Here a woman from Calcutta, when asked for views on dowry says "when I married nearly 20 years ago my parents gave me some jewellery which my mother-in-law kept with her. When my husband died leaving me with two small children she turned me out of the house and refused to give me back my jewellery. I was forced to leave my young children with my mother and came to Delhi to look for my work".

Although many young girls feel rather strangely against dowry as they feel humiliated that their fathers have to find money to get them married. Many young men look forward to a dowry at the time of marriage.

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*Statesman 9th Feb 1976.
PUNJAB AND HARYANA:

The Green revolution made the people in Punjab and Haryana rich within a short time. One way to show how rich they are they started to spend lavishly and ostentatiously at the wedding of their daughters and boast of dowry they could pay for each of them. So for middle class the choice is often between financial ruin or spinsterhood of their daughters. There is fixed "price" for particular categories of grooms and dowry varies from family to family. (Dowry Prohibition Act has been passed in 1976).

H.P: Dowry does not play any significant role except in towns where wealthy may mahajans live.

UTTAR PRADESH:

Here social status of the groom fixes his price, and the practice is the same in all communities. Horrible tales of dowry victims are heard every now and then.

JAMMU AND KASHMIR:

The system has assumed heinous proportions in Urban areas but now the rural areas are also becoming dowry conscious. Dowry is a must even if the bride is a doctor, engineer, professor or otherwise, employed.

MADHYA PRADESH:

Ahe old evil of dowry exists and preference is in kind. The groom in urban areas expects a dowry of 50,000 to 1 lakh if he is a member of all India service. Anti dowry movement is yet to make an impact and it is doubtful if na a backward
tradition bound state like Madhya Pradesh it ever will.

**ANDHRA PRADESH:**

The Dowry Prohibition Act of 1961 has not achieved the desired result. Giving and taking of dowry takes place with the mutual consent. Young women oppose dowry but opinion is sharply divided among the young-men.

Sociologists are of the view that as long as Indian women are governed by different personal laws—a uniform civil code prohibiting dowry will not work.

**TAMIL NADU:**

If both groom and bride are educated dowry is absent in other cases dowry giving depends upon the capacity of the giver and is of course, negotiable. In days when girls were ineligible for a share of family property the dowry system was instituted for transfer to a girl of the her due share under another name. That practice degenerated into a barbarous one.

**MAHARASHTRA:**

Dowry system prevailed three or four centuries ago. Dowry is now generally taken in the form of gold ornaments. Educated girls with jobs have a better chance of getting married than others.

**KARNATAKA:**

Bridegroom's parents demand dowry in cash or kind from the bride's parents, which is stated to be 10,000 for lower in-come group and goes up to one lakh. Dowry demands vary accord-
ing to the groom's qualification and position held.

**KERALA:**

Available evidence suggests that the dowry evil, far from being eradicated, has grown worse in recent past. No dowry movement. Only "love marriages" are free of evil.

**WEST BENGAL:**

It is widespread here with the only difference that cash has more or less been replaced by kind. A sociologists says that a Muslim Jotedar in Deganga, refuses even to see girl's parents if the knows they would not be able to pay a dowry of Rs 15,000 for this college going son. Dowry amounts depends mainly on the status of the boy.

**ORISSA:**

To escape penal provisions of the dowry Prohibition Act of 1961 dowry system prevails in a veiled form among caste Hindus. The prevalence of the dowry system in the state is age old and barring some exceptions, there has been hardly any change in recent times despite anti-dowry laws. Marriages by registration is looked dw upon even in enligutened families.

**GUJARAT:** IT is prevalent in all communities. Doctors, engineers, architects are very much in demand and fetch a good dowry. No movement at present exists against dowry because it no longer affects the majority of the population in the state.
BIHAR: Dowry system is an accepted evil and is interrelated with corruption. It is found even among rickshaw pullers who expect to get a watch and a bicycle in their marriage. Dowry in kind is mostly preferred.
MARRIAGE IN ISLAM

Islam succeeded in effecting a gigantic transformation by liberating woman from physical disability and moral bondage, from intellectual isolation and spiritual restriction. It has raised the position of woman by restoring her, her real worth and value. As a woman she is free, co-sharer and a true partner of man. As a minor girl she enjoys the protection and care of her parents and is as independent as her brother. As a wife she is a queen in her home having her own individuality. She has a share in the property of her parents and in the inheritance of her relations. She enjoys intellectual liberty, social freedom, moral purity and spiritual superiority.

"As a moral reformer Muhammad has to his credit the abolition of infanticide which was commonly practised in Arabia in the case of female child". M.H. Zaidi position of woman in Islam.

A daughter at the age of puberty is at once as free as a man. Nothing is to be done for her without her consent and consultation especially in marriage.

"Do no harm" he says "to a woman; he who does her harm is a very wicked man". He further says that "the best of you is one who is best in his dealing with his wife". Economic independence was first given to woman by Islam "Divorce shakes the throne of God". The great law-giver saw in marriage only
a civil contract which the testimony of two witnesses made complete but which a woman, like her husband could annul on grounds of immoral and general bad character.

Islam regards marriage as a most sacred institution. The safeguard the economic position of women after the marriage, Islam has made it legally obligatory on the husband to pay her a reasonable amount as dower. The amount to be fixed depends on the agreement between the two parties, but, in any case, the object is to strengthen the financial position of the wife, so that she is not prevented, for lack of money, from defending her rights. The Qur'an says:

And give woman their dowries as a free gift, but if they themselves be pleased to give up to you a portion of it, then eat it with enjoyment and with whitesome result.

No marriage can be regarded as legally valid according to Islam, for which dowry has not been stipulated. The amount of dowry is not fixed. The wife is entitled to proper dowry (Mahr-e-misl), even if the marriage was contracted on the express condition that she should not claim any dowry. The amount generally is settled by the the father of the bride. The wife may remit the whole or part of dowry. Such remission is valid though made without consideration. Freedom of choosing one's partner for life has been extended both to men and woman. No marriage in Islam can be valid without the consent of either partner.
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   Bapu incites us to rebel not only against
   the tyranny of male expectations but also against
   those we impose on ourselves. Economic independence
   drove women to work in the field and she proved
   what men can do, women could do equally better and
   well. But in this process women was saddled with
   double burden - to cope with a home as well as a
   job. Men utilises this phenomenon for their own
   benefit but a women must bring dowry and be a work­
   ing girl as well. Thus the so called economic inde­
   pendence has gained men, not women.

   -DISCRIMINATION AND OPPRESSION

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   reform in India. Soc Wel. 22, 8; 1975; 31-2.

   Eradication of social evils and outdated
   traditional customs is equally urgent as eradication
   of women's illiteracy. Women feel themselves more
   silent, more passive and more neglected because of
   the existence of a host of social evils and tra­
   ditional customs which subjugate them subjectively.
Despite progressive legislation and improved educational and professional opportunities, a big gap remains between the status that the Indian women enjoys in theory and what she has in practice.

The male is still regarded as more desirable than and qualitative superior to the female. Traditionally a son is the potential wage-earner, the builder of family prestige and prosperity, for the brings a dowry into home and continues to be a member of the family after marriage.

-DICTIONARY AND RELIGIOUS STUDY


Dowry system has cast gloom over the family. It is so deep rooted that even inspite of a very great propaganda against this evil practice it exists in our modern society too, where the form of dowry has changed from cash to kind. Now the parents of the bride-groom demand car, and cash money for providing advanced study to their son.


In the higher castes property and wealth are the deciding factors of marriage relationship. Working folk imitates the higher ups and bring sorrow
and sufferings to themselves and to young daughter-in-law. If the bride cannot bring what her father has promised, to her in-laws she will be taunted every now and then.

-REFORM MOVEMENTS


From 1919 which really marked the beginning of the revolutionary movement under Gandhi upto Independence in 1947, the women's movement as such gained momentum first by attacking old customs, working for women's education, and later on all aspects of legal reform. Various organisations were established and are still functioning. These not only launch into international activity in the UN Commission on status of women, but also concentrate on many thorny problems such as dowry, women's employment and the Hindu Code Bill.

- WOMEN, ROLE OF

7. RAJANI KANTH(T). Frailty, thy name is not women. I_E. 22 Nov, 81; 6a.

History shows that women in India as elsewhere have always been in the forefront of movements for social change. Women actively participated in the national movement, in agrarian struggles and in student movements after independence. They did raise their own specific issues. But as the movements subsided, women's issues where pushed into the back-
ground. Why women did not protest against an age-old problem - Dowry?

Wake up women! Frailty is not your name.

-LIB

8. MISRA (Chetra). Women's lib and Gandhiji. NIP 27 Sept 81; Mag Sec 3 f-h.

Women's lib in modern revolutionary sense is a crescendo of protest against male superiority and dominance but what does it mean to Gandhiji. He believed that democracy is not real if gap exists between men and women. He put self-reliance and endurance in his prescription for women suffering from neglect and social ills. Gandhian call for women's liberation is not from the dominance of men but from prejudice, ignorance and social evils.

-LAW REFORM


Every Law has been passed in the country in connection with the emancipation and protection of women since the days of Raja Rammohan Roy. Many of the laws concerning women, lie idle in the statute book and are often ignored. The social evils such as giving of large dowries still persist, despite of Dowry Prohibition Act.

There has been a good deal of controversy over the status of women in India. Women all over India are protesting against violence, domination and humiliation they have to face despite the equality provision under the constitution. The committee on status of women has dealt at length the issue of law reforms. The problem of women need different treatment. The dowry system is an oppressive burden on women. Newspaper reports show how helpless are the young brides who commit suicide, but fail to stand this onslaught of dowry.

-INEFFECTIVENESS


Women form half of the world but in an unequal world they remain dependent and discriminated against. In developing countries there is a growing awareness that the status of women is key factor in the development of any nation. Despite constitutional guarantees women continue to suffer. Women organisations are protesting against social evils such as dowry and bride burning. Unlike other social evils like Sati and child marriage, dowry the cause for commercialisation of marriage is more difficult to eradicate since it materially benefits the guilty party.
THE DOWRY system: wanted a humanist approach: Discussion. The Radical humanist. 39, 8; 1975; 31.

Social evils like dowry system have their origins in our traditional beliefs. Though majority of young men are against it yet they are accepting it because it has become a way of life with us. Dowry system is still with us because of lack of humanist outlook on the part of groom and his family.

DUTTA(KL). Dowry benefits. HT. 24 Nov 74; 7o-d.

Two categories of people who want the system to be done away with are: those who cannot afford to give but are compelled to do so, those who can afford but do not want to give it. Dowry provides parents with a practical means of substantially compensating their daughters for permanent loss of their inheritance rights. It is admittedly criminal to force poor parents to give dowry - more criminal for parents who can afford but avoid to give it.

FIGHTING THE unbeatable foe ... Eve's Wkly. 34, 51; 1980; 11.

Law depends so much on interpretation and the way judge looks at a problem. This attitude is not just prevalent in judges but also in educated women themselves who otherwise believe that women should be treated as equals. The status of a new bride in
a new home, they feel, is determined by the dowry she brings.

15. KAMLESHWAR. Confrontations: defying dowry. Imprint. 20, 1; 1980; 69-75.

Dowry is legally banned in the country but certain traditions in society are stronger than the laws. Some people are prepared to put a stop to dowry. Some think it is a security for the girl and others are unwilling to break with the tradition. But often in a way it tends to become a trade.

The success of life will mean the end of dowry.


Before making Dowry Prohibition Act stringent, it is imperative to look objectively at the whole issue - circumstances in which the lady died - her arrogance, ill-manners and her wifely duties. Dowry has been prevalent in our society from times imme-

17. MAHALAKSHMI. When will the Dowry issue be resolved. Femina. 16, 12; 1975; 11.

Dowry becomes an evil only when it is extorted from parents who are unable or unwilling to pay. What objection can there be where dowry is given in cash or kind, absolutely voluntarily and as a token of love
of parents towards their daughters. As per Dr. Sarojini Mahishi, the line between a dowry and a gift of love is rather thin.


Dowry system has reduced the institutions of marriage to a barter. All monetary transactions in marriage reduces marriage to a sale in disguise. It is an irony that this atrocious custom is still accepted as something normal all over the country. Dowry is a custom not only inimical to women, but a disgrace to entire Indian womanhood.


Despite legislation against dowry, mammons of our society would not content without squeezing the last bit of their victims. And who could be their easiest prey than the young brides, the in-laws of their sons and nephews.

The most staggering aspect of the question of violence against women is the way that the women too are involved in these acts.


The pattern of dowry giving has changed and the pattern of demanding dowry has changed — from giving or asking for "Stridhan" in the form of linen, vessels etc., to a lac of rupees in fluid capital is, surely, a marked change?
The main focus of most dowry reporting has been on those individuals and organizations who are attempting to fight it.


The bulk of retail gold transactions is for the purpose of dowry, which despite legislation and sporadic social movements, has so far proved to be a deep rooted and widespread social evil. The given extent of social value attached to it, the inclusion of gold in the dowry, is as aspiration nevertheless, that generally transcends socio-economic barriers. Gold cannot be replaced by anything else and as long as giving and taking of dowry continues, there will always be a demand for it.

22. SUNDARAM (Meera). The bridal torture chamber. Imprint. 21; 3; 1981; 6-10.

Dowry is not plain buying and selling, neither can it be waved away in simplest terms. It has the sanction of a society and is a visible symptom of a deep malaise in society, inextricably knotted up with individual esteem, social pride and prejudice. The idea of status and dowry has become synonymous. It has two objectives one to corner at whatever price a well educated and well placed son-in-law to ensure good and comfortable life to the girl and other to induce some one to marry a girl who is physically handicapped or less educated.
-WORKING WOMEN


Gone are the days when women were treated as "girl Swamini" whose duty was to look after the kitchen. Parents spend a large amount on their education. They are working in all fields at par with men. The elders looking for a bride for their son must consider that parents of the girls have already given "dowry" to their daughter by way of expenditure on education which secured her employment which would bring dowry every month to the "in-laws" of the girl.

-URBAN


The financial burden of the dowry is one of the main reasons that daughters are less welcome than sons on birth. Original agreements about the amount of dowry are sometimes changed and the prospective in-laws make a series of claims on the girl's family which they cannot refuse since the girl is the one who suffers the onus of public opinion if the marriage is not carried through.

-RURAL

25. MUKHI (H R). Indian society and social institution. Surjeet book depot, Delhi, 1974; Chap 17.

In villages and rural areas industries have been set up. It has added to the living standard of
the family. The control and grip of mother-in-law is not so tight as it was. Young women have desire to enjoy more freedom. Ladies help in earning wages for the family, thus the age old dowry system is being influenced by industrialisation in the villages.

Dowry in Indian system is very much connected with marriage system. The wage earners have realised that it is difficult for them to pull on with limited resources, less to talk about giving high dowries for their daughters.

—RAJPUTS AND JATS


Among the lower rungs of the Rajputs and Jats, dowry plays as extremely important role in marriage negotiations. The women are like pawns, to be played carefully in the game of status building. Because girl belongs to the lower group, her incorporation into the husband's group (conscious of his higher status) is done by giving her huge dowry. Boys are persuaded to marry these girls by the inducement of this huge dowry.

BENGAL-SOCIAL PROBLEMS-MARRIAGE-CUSTOMS AND RITES-DOWRY

27. GANGULY(Piyas). Marriage are made in bureaux. Statesman. 5 Ma; 81; 5 b-d.

There are at least seven established marriage bureaux in the city of Bengal which keep detailed
application forms to the minutest details of the boys and girls who approach them: when on the one hand doctors, engineers or chartered accountants and gazetted officers are the most sought after products a working girl from middle class income group poses no problem on the other. In Bengal many girls now refuse to marry where cash dowry is involved. The young man do not press for dowry but maintain a discreet silence when their parents demand their pound of flesh in kind.

-LUCKNOW


Marriage by exchange is not uncommon among the Sindhis of Lucknow and it sometimes minimises the dowry. Instances of love marriages and arranged marriages with non-Sindhi boys have come to light and the probable reason here is simply the parents' inability to pay the demanded dowry. Sindhi boys stick to the norm of being married to the girl of their own community because the charm of dowry is always there.

-RAJASTHAN


Dowry is live a killer disease from which there seems to be no relief. Countless fathers sweat and save every paisa they can to provide. decent dowry for their daughters. Dowery is a dirty business game played by all those who want to 'get rid' of
their girls. In rural areas a parent spends money only on son's education and saves money for a daughter's dowry.

-ASSAM-TRIPUR-MANIPUR-CHAKMA


Tucked away in the hill tracts Assam, Tripura and Manipur, Chakmas continue to nurture the traditions laid down for the tribe. The Chakma daughter is given away in marriage and sometimes a bride-price is paid for the girl. This price varies and depends on the financial status of the groom. He also gives rice, pigs, goats etc and the ornaments to the bride. Here the marriage rights, the women is at part with man.

-JAMMU AND KASHMIR-DOGRAS


Dowry system is in vogue in whole of the society irrespective of caste, creed or colour. In all communities in spite of social and legal restrictions the demand of dowry is on increase. In some cases it has gone to lakhs. The system starts when the girl side requests (Aakha) and when the relationship matures (Thaka), then the Shagoon of betrothal and then the dowry on marriage.
The practice of giving dowry in ancient India is clear from the Aphsad stone inscription of Adityasena of the family of the Guptas of Magadho. Here it says that while Damodaragupta was king he gave away in marriage a hundred daughters of virtuous Brahmanas, endowed with many ornaments and with youth and dowered with agrahora grants. Sometimes the bride's father adorned his daughter with ornaments and gave her away to the bride groom after the completion of necessary rites.

Dowry the last hundred years, several castes and communities have attempted a kind of upward social movement, described as Sanskritisation. By this process lower castes seek to improve their status in society by adopting the customs of upper castes. The age at marriage is lowered and the dowry goes up. By imitating the traditional customs they lead to restriction rather than freedom of women.
Dowry had its origin in goodwill and affection. Somewhere along the way, it has become a dirty word that has destroyed the harmony in many families. Indian woman accepts everything thrust upon her in silence. The mere implicit acceptance of the lower status has degraded the position of women.

-Causes

It all started as an innocent custom, a system, of love from the loving parents to their daughters. The custom and religion sanctified the practice of dowry. In course of time brides became the victims of the in-laws wrath because of inadequate dowry.

Dowry and bride-burning are symptoms of a deeper malaise, namely social corruption and man's unbridled avarice. In a society, where human status emanates from money power, illgotten or otherwise, the evil of dowry is bound to stay put.

Inspite of the Anti-Dowry Act of 1961 and other anti-dowry legislation by various states, the problem of dowry is still grave and needs immediate attention of planners, social thinkers and researchers. Social compulsion is the main reason for dowry followed by the desire of marrying daughters in higher-status families.
Black money provides an impetus for the increase of dowry. Majority of the people follow dowry system not due to traditional and religious values attached to it but out of social compulsion.


During the last fifty or sixty years the dowry has assumed scandalous proportions. A good education, a lucrative appointment or a good footing in a learned profession improved enormously the social and economic position of a youth, and made him immensely attractive as a son-in-law. He naturally acquired a high price in the marriage market. The custom is really as heinous as the counter custom of bride-price which has been vehemently condemned by our culture.


Of our women are not liberated it is their own fault, as they, by and large take things lying down. How do the women react to the burning of brides in India, the curse of dowry system. Why the violence against women continue, to flourish? It is because women take all humiliations quietly. If only the women of India rise up as one "Man" and refuse to accept the situation they can wipe out the over-lordship of men and in-laws.


When dowry deaths keep occurring, we blame state and say that something is wrong with our law. We place the blame everywhere, except where it rests most— with
When dowry deaths keep occurring, we blame state and say that something is wrong with our law. We place the blame everywhere, except where it rests most – with us, ourselves, the people. Dowry requires a giver and taker. This market has developed as both giver and taker exist and continue to exist because it has social sanction.

Though the evils of dowry are under discussion for quite some time in the past, nothing practicable has ever been thought collectively to eradicate this evil from our lives. People who claim themselves to be the champions of the cause, had to close their eyes when they married their own sons and daughters and accept every penny as dowry which comes to them.

In North India, the prevailing high-caste practice is to give dowry to the daughter's husband's family at marriage. Some feeling against this customs has been expressed by educated Hindus, but the practice has increased, spreading even to lower castes anxious to move up the social ladder.
Like any social evil the dowry system is almost like a contagious social evil and, as such, it needs proper analysis of its past history so that we find its cause and prescribe a remedy for its prevention. When society was divided in the past the lower class had a tendency to join the class of "Khandanis" and money was the sole consideration for joining the so-called higher class. By this the bid of dowry increased and those who could afford it could get better grooms.

Though the dowry system was in vogue even in vedic age yet it was not claimed as a matter of right. Today it is widely accepted and socially recognised. The status of an individual is now judged by the wealth which he possesses. Social prestige is attained by the family which pays a very big dowry. In spite of the fact that the system has been condemned and efforts are being made to root it out as early as possible yet the system is in vogue in Indian society specially in Hindu society.

In traditional Hindu family marriage of a girl is a serious headache to her father, with the result
that the birth of a daughter is not desired. This attitude links boys with the ancestral home, with an increase of wealth to it through the doweries of their brides as well as through their earning power. On the other hand girl takes away something from home - taking away of girl herself and property in the form of dowry. Thus the girl is economically a great burden.


There is an old saying in Tamil, "Even if a prince gets five daughters, he will also become a pauper".

For getting a good groom and to see that girl goes to a good family, the parents have no choice but to meet the demands of groom's party. But by the time sun sets and the guests depart after a sumptuous feast, the bride's father is reduced to object penury.


A woman is perceived to be less worthy than man, hence the family that accepts her in marriage is perceived to be burdened with "a net economic liability". The tragedy lies in the fact that the young bride is, in many instances, so convinced of her own lack of self-worth that she willingly yields to self-abnegation and total obedience to the familial diktat. If she is spunky enough to resist "the flag-bearers
of patriarchal authority", she becomes a prime candidate for the kind of brutal treatment that has been meted out to so many of her sisters.

47. NALINI SINGH. Why dowry spells death. I E. 1 Nov 81; 1a-h.

Is dowry a natural law? Why is it so durable? Is ill-treatment of girls due to dowry increasing? Who gets burnt—strong or submissive?

There is no evidence to suggest that dowry was introduced as a voluntary gift, a symbol of filial affection for a daughter who was leaving home at marriage. But there is evidence to show that it was introduced as a NAZRANA a unilateral transfer of sources by a girl's family at her marriage to the groom's family in recognition of the latter's generosity in inviting amputated human to their home permanently. Thus we can summarise that society perceives women as economically less productive than man.


While I have every sympathy for the victims of brutal ill-treatment by greedy and authoritarian in-laws, but dowry as streehan bestowed on the bride by her parents before she is handed over to her husband's family, can serve as a source of genuine reassurance and protection to the young women—a financial resource to cushion her and her family in times of adversity or to give a measure of independence should she choose to exercise it.
49. SUNDARAM (Satya). The status of Indian Women. The radical humanist. 39, 6, 1975; 17-20.

The dowry practice is a social problem. It is said that dowry provides financial stability to the newly married couple. But this argument does not hold water. One must earn money only through hard work. Another argument is that since the parents spend a lot on their son's education, they have a right to demand dowry. If parents think so, then they should demand the amount spent on his education from him and not from the bride's parents.

- EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

50. CHATTERJEE (Atreyi). Impediments to marriage in India. Soc Wel. 22, 6-7; 1975; 46-47.

Educational attainment, instead of having a sober impact on the system of dowry, only helped to strength and perpetuate it. The marriage market emerged in Indian society on a decisive basis. The educational attainment together with economic status of boy dowry system conveniently serves as a barri­cade between the two groups making marriage a diffi­cult proposition for the young girl.

- SOCIAL


In modern times, the rich but low Biswa rank marry their daughters either to those rich as well as high on the Biswa rank(b) poor but high on Biswa
rank and rich but equal on Biswa rank. The transaction of dowry gifts becomes the emphatic theme of such marriages; the greater the size of dowry available the lesser are the objections, it is generally contended, against incorporating a lower Biswa family into a higher one.

-VALUE DETERMINATION


Despite the occasional brave statements and the actions of state governments, the system of dowry continues to persist in most parts of the country. With the spread of education, general and technical, the number of doctors, lawyers, engineers etc. increased and their price in the marriage market has automatically increased.

Dowry system perpetuates class difference between the rich and the poor. Any national effort to promote social justice is thwarted by this system, and promotes the social evils like bribery, corruption etc.

53. ATTAR CHAND. Use and abuse of marriage. Soc Wel. 18, 3; 1971; p 19 and 31.

The primitive tribal laws still haunt our lives and against which we have every reason to rebel, but we do not because of our veneration for tradition and parental authority. While looking for a groom the family is counted first and the boy comes next. The terms of marriage, the dowry in
Cash or ornaments are settled. If the groom is educated his price may run into tens of thousands rupees and if a dullard, he will still fetch half that amount if he is pure blooded according to caste standard.


It is well known that Doctors, lawyers and other Government officials have different monetary values. It is a phenomenon of bridegroom-barter based upon the fear in the minds of girl's parents that she may not be acceptable or be left upon their hands.


Many efforts are being made to outlaw doweries, for they have become a bridegroom price; a son being virtually held in the marriage market place as an eligible bachelor with a price on his head.

The amount demanded by the boy's family depends upon his position and earning. The middle-class father has to face the problem of meeting the demands on the marriage of his daughters, by what he can recovery on the marriage of his sons. This ugly part of social custom, linked with marginal economic, continues though lanes have been made to abolish it.

56. INDIA, Information and Broadcasting, (Ministry of) India social structure. 1969 Chap 3.

Traditional marriage is more the concern of
two groups of kindred than of two individuals. Among the higher castes especially Brahmins, the parents of girl go in search of the groom and dowry if often paid to the bridegroom. The amount of money spent varies according to income, caste, region and extent, of Westernization. In some parts of the country there is a "tariff" for grooms based on education, the kind of job held, and the amount of ancestral wealth.

57. JACOBSON(Doranne) and WADLEY(Susen S). Women in India, two perspectives. 1977. Manohar, New Delhi. P 49.

Discussions of dowry are important in marriage negotiations in India. The parents of a highly educated boy may demand a large dowry. The areas where dowry is not very important expensive gifts are presented to a groom.

58. JAYA LAKSHMI. Brides for sale. Patriot, 20 Jul 80; 3 a-h.

The rate and amount of dowry, in cash and kind, in proportion to the education parents provide to their son is fixed. Their profit in the deal is manifold. Parents not only retain their right over their son whom they have sold but also get a most obedient and faithful servant in the form of daughter-in-law.


The amount of the dowry is generally regulated by the social and economic status of the bridegroom's father and the educational qualifications of the bridegroom. Education, instead of mitigating the evil, has worsened it to a scandalous proportion.
The social prestige attached to a family which pays a big dowry is encouraging the practice.


The financial aspect of marriage is the most concrete and measurable factor. Dowry, or no dowry, it is the man's earning capacity that largely decides how beautiful, how educated, how talented his wife and influential his father-in-law shall be. Man feels he has got his "Money's worth" and women happy to have struck a good bargain. But both have a naging suspicion, that other person may have extracted more benefits than otherwise.


The dowry system is becoming widespread, while fathers agonise over paying money they do not have, to a groom. Youths know that college education, much land, or some other desired quality will give them a dowry for the asking. Dowry system is now so widespread that any excuse seems to be an ideal euphemism.

-SOUTHERN


In South India Brahmins have economic power in addition to their position as the heads of caste hierarchy. They are landowers and were first to sense
advantages of western education, their sons became first teachers, officials, lawyers, doctors and judges. Their position in the social system was strategic and had a near monopoly of all the higher posts. Gradually the expenses of higher education paved the way for costly weddings and dowry system attained its roots deep and it is now very difficult to eradicate it completely.

-MYSORE


Over seventy years ago, the institution of bride-price seems to have prevailed among some sections of Mysore Brahmins. But with westernization, and the demand it created for educated boys who had good jobs, dowry became popular. The better educated a boy, the larger the dowry his parents demand for him.

INDIA-SOCIAL PROBLEM-MARRIAGE-CUSTOMS
AND RITES-DOWRY-EVIL EFFECTS

64. SHANANI(M S). Dowry menace. I E. 29 June 79; 6 b-c.

It is not clear what socio-religious sanctions there are behind the custom of payment of dowry. When persons are approached, they shake their heads and think that they will be excommunicated from society. False sense of prestige works behind the custom. Government should introduce legislation for compulsory registration of marriage furnishing details of expenditure incurred on each marriage.
65. RASTOGI (S C). Legal checks on display of dowry. The H T. xlviii, 49; 19 Feb 1971; 7a.

The cause of dowry in many sections of Hindu society has crossed all the limits of humanity and morality. Rates of dowry are on increase. Countless men and women have lost their lives because they cannot provide the desired dowry. There are parties which stand for socialism, democracy, protection of cows and Hinduism but is there any party which stands for the protection of countless men and women from the demon of dowry.


The major power struggle within a family is almost always between the daughter-in-law and the mother-in-law. Traditionally critical and frequently mean. A new bride has to be kept in her place, nothing is ever right if she comes of a poor family and with meagre dowry.


Generally in India, marriage involves transfer of property. Major among these is the dowry - the gift which the bride's parents send with her to her conjugal home - which is characteristic of the relatively wealthy, rather than the poor. It is often said that the parents dread the burden of many daughters because of the financial demands their marriages involve, and indeed, the size and the contents of the dowry are often matters which are
disputed by the parties involved in marriage. The pressure is always on the bride's family to give as much as they can—and the fear is always that, if they fail, the bride will be ill-received in her husband's home.


As years roll on, the society is falling in the tighter grip of dowry, a social menace. From the feudal rank it has crept into the lowest strata of society. All bow before this demon, no matter how much they dislike it. Dowry has indeed become a slur on our society.

-SOCIAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL


The custom of giving presents at the time of marriage is a universal phenomenon and of ancient origin. But in course of time the custom has become rigid and has assumed new meaning and purpose. Nowadays it has become associated with social status and family prestige. Dowry has become dysfunctional for the present social system. It gives rise to psychological and socio maladjustment which causes frustration not only to the brides but also to their parents.
MARITAL PROBLEMS

70. MARSHALL(Tyler). Dowries dirty deals. I.E. 29 July 79; 2 Mag Sec.

Dowry has become a serious social problem for middle class India. Prolonged disputes over dowries are now considered a major cause of marriage breakdown. It has become a real social evil in last 20 to 30 years and is a product of India's affluence says Mrs. Suman Krishnan Kant, who heads the anti-dowry committee called Women's Vigilance Committee.

The more prestigious the bridegroom's job, education and social standing, the more money and goods he will bring in for his family. Parents try to buy their daughter's happiness, but once it starts it never ends.

71. SARAN(Shalini). The marriage menders. Imprint. 20, 4; 1980; 69-77.

Dowry has assumed criminal proportions. Indian man's divided loyalty to parents has given low position to wife in his list of priorities. These two aspects of marriage are the root of most marital problems in the middle classes.

CLASS STRUCTURE

72. DOWRY: TAKE it and bow to her majesty's command. Radiance. 11, 13; 1973; 4.

Dowry clouds the happiness of a marriage. It is a curse which we should realise and try to put end to such a trend and save our community before it is too late.
It has divided our society on economic basis and has fixed the market value of young men of our society according to their education, profession etc. Ask for dowry and be flame all your life or no dowry and you will have a happy home.

-BUSINESS CONTRACT


The most precious of things in world is a virtuous wife. But how tragic it is that a person in greed for wealth is searching not a good wife but wealth which she will bring with her. The evil of dowry is rampant in our country.

It is mean thing to marry a woman with the intention of acquiring her wealth. By doing so the parents of the women look down upon their son-in-law as an article purchased at a price.

Dowry system has left thousands of young girls with tears in their eyes which are eroding our base like a great cyclone.

74. AGARWAL(C S). Acute and abuse: Marriages the and now. T I. 29 May 81; 8g-h.

In most Hindu marriages today there is neither love nor valour. Hindu marriages have become cruder and more explosive with the spread of modern education. If the bride was bought in ancient societies as an extra hand to serve the family, the groom is bought today as an investment or as an item of furniture.

Among the affluent the son-in-law is as much a status symbol as an imported car.
Family has been variously described as "haven of rest", "retreat from the hostilities and confusion of a work-a-day world" and the nursery of all virtues. In our days we come across a large number of families which, in place of being heaven of rest become just the opposite. The concept of marriage being a 'sacrament' and indissoluble is gradually giving way to its being a "contract" and one that can be dissolved if the parties of the marriage agree to do so. The people have become habituated to endure whatever comes to their share, without making conscious efforts to overcome or eliminate the cause.

Dowry is a curse but its idea is still strong even though the custom is changing from time to time. A girl has to have a lot of money to get married. The dowry is used in bidding for the boy, and he uses it. In most of the cases it becomes the property of the husband's family and the girl never has any jurisdiction over its use. Dowry is settled at the time of betrothals, which is a business contract between the families.

It is strange that in India today when many women are in the forefront of political and economic life, the birth of a son is still hailed with joy.
not to be compared with the arrival of a baby girl. Instead of law against taking and giving of dowries the procedure persists making a girl feel guilty as time for her marriage draws near and the parents are not too economically solvent. The treatment meted out to the daughter-in-law depends upon the amount of cash or kind she has brought with her to her new home.


In other countries dowry is a settlement of property or money consequent on marriage according to the affluence of the bride's father. In India it is an extraction from bride's father ending in unwilling and unavoidable payment. It is is not given by him marriage will not take place.

It is a custom that has developed in Hindu communities. It has no Sastric sanction. Manu - a great law-giver, provides only against the demand by the greedy fathers of the brides.


Change is constant in every surviving society, a stagnant society may end in extinction.

Marriage was more a religious sacrament than a social ceremony and contract for marriage was not between the individuals but between the parents of the two. Though given education of equal social status the bride-to-be is still being considered as a silent
speculator. She is being exhibited and offered by her parents as a doll in a showcase, with a doery slip tagged, and bargained and rejected like a commodity in market.

80. SHAKUNTALA. Wedding Trap. _H_T_. Weekly Sunday. 4 May; 1969; 3 f-h.

Everyone has a right to get married and this is the divine right of human beings. At the wedding one would imagine the bride and bridegroom to be most important individuals. Nothing is farther from truth. They are mere tools in the higher powers. The movement the idea of wedding is mooted the wheels begin to move. Atomic pib is set to motion. Dowry is the factor of supreme importance. The parents of the groom try their level best to raise the figure, those of bride to bring it down.

--FEMALE HUMILIATION

81. GIRIJA(P L T). Women's dignity. _I_E_. 23 May 81; 6g-h.

The concept of women as commodities, lacking all human dignity is becoming increasingly acceptable in our society. The saddest part is that women themselves are getting brainwashed into accepting a "commodity status" in the name of modernity. Women-kind loses its human status in the community.

82. KAMATH(Gurudutt R). Marriage are made on earth. _I_E_. 1 Feb 1981; Mag Sec.2.

Immense amount of money are squandered on Indian marriages every year. Fantastic doweries are
paid: women are bartered over like marketable commodities. It used to be said that marriages were made in heaven but in India at least, the title of this article indicates something nearer to the truth.

83. GOKHALE(Shanta). Marriage is a cure-all. *Femina*. 16, 9; 1975; 31.

The way a girl is draped in the shop window of the marriage market is humiliating. Behind her hangs her degree certificate, on her right is the cake she has learned to bake in her cookery class and in between the folds of her sari peeps a discreet little tag, announcing the price the buyer will get for lifting the goods.

-EXPLIOTATION AND HUMILATION-


The birth of a girl is the instant traditional signal for a pervasive low mood in the family which persists. The evil spirit for all ill-disguised grudge towards the female child lies in the whole thought-pattern that the girl is going to another household, involving transactions and transfer of wealth—cash and kind. On one hand a girl is a liability—a sort of millstone round the neck: and on other hand as a daughter-in-law she is a "rain cheque" (stretch and squeeze as much as you can). The girls continue to be weighed as a commodity in the marriage market. Voluntary gifts have assumed scandalous proportions—taking precedence over emotional alliance of the partners in marriage.
85. DOWRY-HUNGRY "Groom-running" father on the prowl. Koshur Samachar. 15, 10; 1980; 12.

A new type of menace, more deadly and dangerous — a WOLF would perhaps be the apt description— is now on the prowl. It is not a young imposter but an elderly man who is on the llo-out for a match for his son, a worthless "show-piece" without a conscience of his own, who even in this century lacks courage to revolt against the injustice done to a girl and her parents at the hands of his parents. This is all for lust of money, gold and dowry, at a time when whole society and Government is up-in-arms to fight this evil.

86. KADIRIVI(Rashid Khan). Dowry as an evil. Radiance. 15, 8-9; 1979; 4.

Matrimonial deal destroys the very pride and prestige of the parents of nubile daughters and humbles them to the lower degree. It appears as if the parents of the girls are born slaves and indebted to their "in-laws" from their womb to tomb. To curb the evil, what is required is change of heart and fear of God. Married women commit suicide due to the unlimited greed of their inlaws. It is indeed a blot and stigma on the Indian society as a whole.

—FALSE PRESTIGE AND INDEBTEDNESS


There is no social evil that cannot be eradiated and there is hardly any society in the world which is without some social evils. Dowry as such
was unknown to Ancient India. During vedic times time the birth of a girl was considered as an auspicious occasion. The position is reverse now.

Wrong values are attached to material wealth. The social status of the family is judged by the amount of dowry the brides father can afford to give. Dowry as social evil has been included in the list since long. Inprisocment or fine or both seem to be best solution to check the growing evil of dowry.

88. JACOB (Jessica). Wedding bills are ringing. H.T. 22 Nov 81; 1 a-b.

Wedding in India have always been a public occasion, an arrangement between elders rather than a matting of individuals, an occasion to make a show of your wealth and status..... the 'Khandan Ki Izzat' is paraded for public appraisal, and yet the fear remains that too much may not be enough.

No one questions the basic injustice of giving to a daughter and taking for a son, the imbalance, the exploitation and discrimination built into division. The girl has no dowry value. Solid worldly goods are widely perceived as the only security for girl's future, though the most laden brides are also mistreated, returned like defective goods.

89. KUSUM KUMAR. Austerity. At all times, at all levels. H.T. 3 Nov 81; 7a-b.

The fear of losing prestige compels us to spend much more than we can afford, though it may take years to repay the debts incurred on a marriage. The various measures adopted to stop dowry system
have not met with much success. The number of persons demanding dowry may have decreased but the number of those expecting dowry remains same.

-FEMALE OPPRESSION


An enraged husband throws acid on the face of his wife and disfigures her permanently. A young bride is burnt to death by her husband and his mother. Each instance has its own background or cause. Husband suspects the wife of infidelity and the bride has not brought in enough dowry. The men who commit these crimes are people who live with us having good reputation. Reports of dowry death invariably show a conspiracy between the mother and the son against the new bride, because men retain the esteem of their mothers only by the renunciation.

91. SC ORDER to produce tortured bride. T.I. 24 June 81; 1 a-b-

The supreme court today ordered production before it the bride who has been harassed by her in-laws for allegedly not having brought dowry. The in-laws had told her mother that they are not interested in dowry. A good match was their concern. But soon after marriage they started harassing and beating her up for not bringing any dowry.
The practice of paying dowry has deteriorated into loathsome bargaining on the part of bridegroom's family leading to various degrees of suffering and torture of girl at the hands of husband's family.

Spending on her education is considered wasteful as she will be given dowry and their education would be of little use to her.

-MURDER AND SUICIDE

Among the three evils that mar the face of Indian matrimony the dowry stands foremost. The other two being incompatibility and ruinous expenses. The system has rather become a crippling constraint in our kind of society.

Expenditure involved on dowry has no limits. The demands for more goods and cash leads to the harassment of the bride by the groom's relation, results in the disturbance of household peace and in most cases the women are either murdered or driven to suicide.

Bride burning by dowry seekers has become this country's curse, like at rocities on Harijans. Significantly among those who perish by fire before the
age of 14, the number of boys and girls is roughly equal. But in the 15–24 age-group when girls are nubile, the proportion of women victims begins to rise fast. In the 25–45 age, twice as many women are consumed by the flames as men in Delhi alone.

Brutal killings by those dissatisfied with dowries brought by daughter-in-law is the reason behind these killings.

95. DOWRY TAKES yet another life. Patroit. 4 June,81; 10e–f.

When a newly married bride returned to her in-laws house after negotiations she was harassed there and driven to death. Ever-since the marriage the girl was continuously harassed for getting more dowry—at her least six thousand rupees.

96. KAPOOR(Jyotsana). Comp. Accident or dowry death? Femina. 21, 18; 1980; 15.

In our society, a girl and her parents are still so helpless that they suffer all indignities silently. Parents cannot keep a girl at home once she is married, even when they know she is unhappy. The result is that either she is burnt or driven to suicide.


The parents period of our history is of unrest and social ferment. The cases of dacoity, robbery and growing atrocities of various forms on women are rampant in various parts of the country. The scourage of dowry is claiming lives of young married women. These are symptoms of the total degradation of our social and moral ferment.

A large number of married women are so unhappy that they prefer death even at that young age when normally life should hold so much pleasure and promise for them. It is because of the abuse, beating and worse, they face in new families, and can end it only one way—suicide. Returning to their parents' home is ruled out because of the social stigma.

PREGNANT WOMAN is latest 'dowry victim'. *IE.* 4 July 81; 3 b-c.

A lady was married about eight months ago to a shop keeper on the condition that he and his parents will not ask for anything after marriage. But after only one month her in-law started taunting her because there was no TV, refrigerator or washing machine in dowry. Though the father of the lady had promised them that at the birth of his grandchild he will give them a TV yet the lady was burnt before she had given birth to the child.

WOMEN: Social values need a change. *Link.* 22, 47; 1980; 37.

Why do young married women commit suicide, driven to death or killed. One overriding fact that has obscure malignant influence on their fateful lives is dowry. In today's society money is respected more than a person's honour and identity. It is considered most suitable time to demand a large sum of money from the bride's parents and the quickest and easiest way to make money at the time of marriage. The custom of dowry is deeply rooted in our society, and a women is still considered part of her husband's property.
The dowry giving parents generally look for a bridegroom, higher than their own family, hoping to buy their daughter a comfortable future and social approval for their family. This sets the more-and-more ball rolling. As the in-law's property the bride may be tortured when she is of no future use to her husband's family, she may be killed or be driven to kill herself.

A young bride was set on fire when she failed to fulfill the demand of her in-laws for a chain and a bicycle. The death brought the harassment to an end which she suffered at the hands of her in-laws for bringing inadequate dowry.

A lady was driven to suicide by burning herself due to ill-treatment and beatings at the hands of her husband and in-laws. Her in-laws were dissatisfied, with the money and presents she brought after her brother's wedding. This led to severe beatings. As she could not stand the cruelties of her in-laws any more she burnt herself to death.

Five months after marriage Basanti (a college Librarian) wrote to her father and complained of physical torture by her in-laws. Father sent a letter to
his father in-law to treat her as his daughter and another letter to his daughter asking her to adjust to the circumstances. At the marriage of her sister-in-law her father could not satisfy her in-laws by fulfilling their demands. She was tortured and beaten now and then on the issue of dowry and at last her in-laws did away with her by a tin of kerosene.

105. **LIFE TERMS for burning wife over dowry.** _T.I._ 27 July 81; 1a-.

  The husbands who burn their wives for their lust for money, are enemies of society and such culprits did not deserve any leniency and ought to be awarded extreme penalty of death provided under the law. The statement was given by S C Jain(sessions Judge) while holding a man (J L Malhotra) guilty of murdering his wife. He said that such offences are a disgrace to civilized society.

106. **BRIDE BURNING for dowry.** _Link._ 22, 47; 1980; 36-37.

  Bride burning in North India has become so frequent that it no longer makes a hot news. The women led by the NFIW held a big protest demonstration at the Boat Club on June 19 to attract the attention of Parliament to these heinous crimes. Moreover, the culprits get away, allegedly with the connivance of police.
DOWRY: The prohibition act fails. Link. 14, 52; 1971; 39.

Women are sent back to their parents with babes in arm as further instalments of due dowry remain unpaid on the stipulated dates. The cause of increasing number of suicides among women is that their parents were not in a position to provide the requisite dowry. Even a highly educated and well employed girl has to be the victim of dowry.

NINE WOMEN get burnt per month in Allahabad. N I P. 24 Oct 81; 5 a.

As many as 81 women have been admitted to M L N Hospital SKN Hospital and T B Sapru Hospital during last nine months.

These cases can neither be described as those of mere accidental burns or of attempted suicide. Is it that only newly-wed women catch fire while cooking is a question which the society should answer.

FALSE PRESTIGE AND INDEBTEDNESS

If a rich man spends on dowry gifts it is traditionally commendable. If a poor man incurs debt to arrange for the demand dowry items, he is putting himself to economic strain but is gaining traditional position. To him, the latter is costly but desirable.

The rates of dowry increase in relation to ancestral property that a groom is likely to inherit.
Muslim society in Kashmir is a prisoner of outdated and obnoxious customs. People who are religious minded perform these customs knowing fully well that they are un-Islamic. Educated people observe these customs despite their adverse repercussions. Birth of daughter is unpleasant news, for parents visualise the complexity of problems which will come in future at the time of marriage.

Dowry system persists unabated. It is obligatory in the village to give the dowry. Marriages are delayed, postponed and even broken for want of dowry. Hence, some people are forced to sell their property in order to offer it. There is a gap between precept and practice. The changes discernible are certainly peripheral and not fundamental.

The tales of woes of dowry victims in India surpass the limits of illtreatment despite Anti-dowry Act. A lady, Savitri, was harrased by her husband be-
cause she could not get ₹2,000. Her husband Pravat Chaudhry told her that if she created trouble she will lose her life and he would marry again and get dowry worth ₹40,000.

INDIA, SOCIAL PROBLEM-MARRIAGE-CUSTOMS AND RITES DOWRY- EVIL EFFECTS-CAUSES-SOCIAL PARTY

113. VAID(Sudesh). Dowry deaths. I.E. 19 June 79; 6a.

Dowry deaths in country have become a nightmare for young brides and their parents. Everyday we hear of more and more incidents of this type and we are sensed, weighed with a sense of shame. Wise persons talk of socio-religious sanctions behind this custom. But is there any religion in this world which sanctions the burning of a wife because of inadequate dowry.

-FEMALE REVOLT

114. APTE(J S). Marathi - speaking girl's views on their future bridegrooms. Soc Wel. 17, 7; 70; 22.

The girls when interviewed clearly expressed their reaction against attitude towards men who demand a dowry. The boy however educated or rich he may be, should not demand dowry from the bride's side in any form-cash, ornament, cloths etc. They feel with indignation that the rates of dowry look as if fixed. No amount of anti-dowry legislation will lessen this demand unless there is a radical change in attitudes of boys and their parents towards money and marriage expenses.
115. JACOB(Jessica). The woman who "burnt" her husband. *Eve's Wkly.* 25, 43; 81; 49,57.

For years now we have been reading about helpless brides being burnt to death for bringing inadequate" dowries. Achale Vij didn't wait to be burnt. She dared to fight back and, instead, burnt her husband's effigy out-side their home, declaring that a man who would so ill-treat his wife was not fit to live in society.

-WOMEN ORGANIZATION


Debating on the possibilities of a dowry-less society in the capital on saturday, in a seminar organisation by the Delhi unit of Indian Federation of Women Lawyers need to do something on this, was felt by participants. They participants explained the duty of social workers in organising public opinion against dowry. They felt that present laws were inadequate to tackle the rising trend in torture of daughter-in-law for dowry demands. The seminar resolved to creats a cell with other social and welfare organisation s to actively promoting investigation of dowry deaths.

117. DEMAND TO treat dowry suicide as murder. *Patroit.* 19 June, 81; 10 g-h.

The Delhi State Mahila Federation met police Commissioner and said that all dowry deaths should be treated as murder and not suicide, even if the dead women had taken their own lives, since "normally no one
chosen to take one's life unless forced by circumstances persons involved in such cases be arrested without delay and no bail be allowed to them".

-PROTESTS AND DEMONSTRATIONS

118. DOWRY SYSTEM and bride burning: protest rally in Delhi. Statesman. 26 March 81; 3d.

"Hang the dowry greedy and we want justice from the police were the slogans by more than a hundred men and women who took part in an anti-dowry, demonstration in Delhi. The organization not only the need to do away with the dowry system but also the, injustice implicit in the police refusal to register cases against the culprits. The attitude of courts is also disappointing.

119. SHARMA(Sarla). New bride-burning blaze. Patriot. 22 June 81; 5 f-h.

Demonstrations are not fun, nor a postime. It needs a will to set a wrong thing right to take yourself under the sun for hours. Mahila Federation members held the demonstrations and met the Police Commissioner urging him to take serious and effective action in the cases where women are burnt for insufficient dowry. Further they demanded that dowry deaths be treated as murder and not suicide because no one normally chooses to die; either they are murdered or driven to death which is another name of murder.

It is our misfortune that the sordidness of exacting a price for marrying a girl is not regarded as a decided disqualification. An altogether artificial value is put upon English College education. It covers a multitude of sins. If the definition of 'Accomplishment' was more sensible than it has become among the classes whose educated young men exact a price for accepting marriage proposals on behalf of girls, the difficulty of selecting suitable matches for girls would be much lessened, if not entirely removed.

121. HALDER (Arun K). The defence of the dowry system. The radical humanist. 39, 7; 1975; 25.

The dowry has often provided valuable support to the daughter in time of distress and calamity. But if it has proved to be a cancerous growth of our society, it will turn no less poisonous to the body, if removed by executive surgery alone. Its abolition may be phased out and kept to the tune of the prevailing character of the society.

122. LIFE TERM for all three in dowry murder case. I E. 23 Dec 79; 1 o-f.

Dowry is a social evil from several centuries. Human tears have failed to satisfy this devil and now it has started demanding human blood. It is high time that this evil may be fought at a social plane as well as by the state and a final death blow may be given before it completely eats away the vitality of society.

With a view to curtailing expenditure on marriages, civil marriages in courts or marriages solemnised in community halls should be encouraged. Special courts or family courts may be set up to try cases arising out of murders and suicides on account of the evils of dowry.

124. SHAHNAZ BEGUM. Demand dowry and damn your life. Radiance. 11, 17; 73; 5.

We are fully aware of the fact that dowry system has poisoned and polluted our society. The child who is the object of happiness to the parents is transformed into an object of tremendous worries. The girls cannot bear the sight of their frustrated parents, their sorrow reaches to such a climax that they are forced to follow the easier way out, i.e. the way of suicide.

Let us introduce dowry-less marriage to restore peace, wipe off the tears and save lives of hundreds of parents and of their daughters.

125. SHARMA (Baldev). What if we abolish marriage. The radical humanist. 39, 2; 75; 6.

The bargaining about dowry which often becomes extortion and impoverishes the parents of a girl is a feature which gives marriage the status of crime. "Love marriage" and "abolition of dowry" are said to be the remedies. But the domination by either partner is always cause of disharmony.
TORTURE IN first 5 years can be 'dowry offence'.
*H.T.* 17 July 81; 5 b-c.

Young married women tortured, insulted or deprived of their martial rights during first five years of their marriage should be treated as victims of dowry offences. The offenders should be punished with Jail and fine. In Madhya Pradesh at least two women commit suicide and one is murdered for dowry. Everyday but their deaths are seldom treated or investigated as dowry deaths. Out of 408 deaths registered by police 114 suicides and several murders were attributed to domestic feuds.

Every death of a bride should be investigated by the CBI without anybody asking for it. There should be no time limit because daughters-in-law have been burnt even after twelve years of married life.

Cases of bride-burning should be tried in special courts for expeditious disposal.

*REFORM MOVEMENTS*

The mammoth convention was held by Virat Hindu Samaj in New Delhi wherein the president of the Samaj, Dr.Karan Singh said in his address, that the convention will mark the starting point of a radical reform in Hindu Society. Its main function will be to find the villains and victims rather than eradicate the customs and attitudes which give birth to evils like dowry system and untouchability.
Words are not strong enough to describe the enormity of the crime that is dowry. One wonders what has happened to all those youthful zealots who were busy taking vows and organising public opinion against the institution of dowry during the Emergency. Surely, no one needs power or position to organise a social climate against dowry.

Our society, to begin with was free of social evils. With the passage of time evil of dowry system along with other evils crept up in our society. These evils continued to hollow our sound social system, and when it became intolerable social reformers decided to reform society. To a large extent their labour bore fruit but the society is so much socially rotten that the impact of these reforms has been partially felt. The efforts are still being continued to relieve the society from the evils but the task is heavy, difficult and complex.

Worse things than child marriages are happening in the country. Everyday we read about young women burnt alive or driven to suicide by dowry ghouls, rape and purchase of women, and a variety of other monstrosities unheard of in a civilized society. Even the news of a stray Sati or a case of human sacrifice somewhere in the country does not cause such excitement.
Most important reason - is the waning and virtual collapse of the reform movement in India after independence.

132. SHAKUNTALA LAL. Jewellery - root cause of all Evils. Patriot. XVII, 28, 4 Nov 81; Mag Sec. 4 c b-c.

The anti-dowry movement has been in India for decades because many families have been victims of dowry system. There is atleast one suicide a day on account of dowry and jewellery forms the major part of dowry, the tradition of possessing wealth in the form of gold is very primitive, has become root of all evils in our country.

133. S V. Women: Keeping the home fires burning. Eco and pol Wkly. 14, 25; 79; 1038.

Practice of dowry is increasing and now catching on from the urban to the rural areas.

Unless all the organisations(old and new) are able to effectively launch struggle on women's issues women's will continue to be victim of the social and economic conditions in our country.

-SOCIAL AWARENESS AND CHANGE

134. RAVINDRA NATH. No reform without tears. I E. 26 Oct 81; 6 b-e.

The inspiration for new movements has always come from individuals. No doubt after Mahatma Gandhi- the state - the secular state-took over the business of purifying Hindu society. It introduced many progressive laws. But by now we have learnt that social evils cannot be legislated away.
The challenge can be met by youth. Revolution is not a tea party. Untouchability and dowry killers is not distributing prasad. Social inequities involve economic injustice, the struggle will necessarily have to be on radical lines. If an organisation fights, regardless of consequences, the struggle will provide its own inspiration.

135. BANSAL(Satinder). Who will curb dowry. H T. 13 Aug 81; 9 e-f.

The rich should try by all means to suppress their lust, satisfaction of which is inherent in the prevalence of the dowry system. They are real sources of infection. The middle class and other unfortunate people, subjected to the infection, need to wage a strong fight against this menace. Legal remedies are useless if not sanctioned by the public.


Any young man who makes dowry a condition of marriage discredits his education and his country and dishonours womanhood. A strong public opinion should be created in condemnation of the degrading practice of dowry and young men who soil their fingers with such ill-gotten gold should be excommunicated from society.

137. GARI(H A). The dowry system. The Radical Humanist. 40, 2; 1976; 32-33.

The dowry system has been accepted as a social custom and cannot be eradicated by mere force of law. We have to change the psychology of people and supplement legal efforts by educational activities to change the attitude of the people. This pernicious system can be eradicated by creating widespread social awareness.

Dowry system is a matter of shame for our society in general and for the "educated" who are responsible for this practice and who call themselves (advanced) in particulars.

This system cannot be completely prohibited by the law unless this unhealthy practice is given up by the whole society willingly.

139. KUKREJA(H S). Are they dowry deaths. H.T. 1 July 81; 9 e-f.

Men who allow themselves to be offered for "sale" are so dazzled by the money offered in dowry, that they forget that tomorrow they will have to "buy" a husband for their sisters or a daughter at a higher rate (inflation 1), and the same ill-treatment may be mated out to their daughters sisters also.

Dowry is such a chronic malady that the efforts of the Government alone to eradicate it cannot succeed. Whole hearted public co-operation is needed.

140. PINKY. Who will curb dowry. H.T. 13 Aug 81; 9o-d.

Daily we hear about dowry and expenditure on marriages. Legislation is of no use. Tradition can change with strictness or with boldness of the young generation which has to face none other but their own parents. The author thinks that it is better not to marry than to marry a person who does not want a wife, a life partner, but needs dowry and a "dan" (Kanyadan) and has not got the guts to face the society and make his own home by himself.
The contributors of Tehzib Niswan, a weekly journal started in 1896, living in the remote districts of the country, ardently wrote against the dowry system, useless customs and expensive ceremonies. These problems were shared by all Indian Women.

Although many people have expressed their resentment against the dowry system it will die hard. Marriages in this country are arranged by parents and dowry is a part of this arrangement.

No piece of legislation can be effectively implemented unless it is backed by a strong public opinion.

One of the problems regarding marriages in India is commercial aspect of the marriage. By it we mean dowry system. It needs no mention with what evils the system is fraught. The father of the girl commits suicide because he has not been able to manage for the dowry demanded by the parents of the boy. Girls too commit suicide on that occasion. After realizing the evils of the system Dowry Prohibition Act was brought to statute book. But it will not be able to achieve its purpose unless public opinion is aroused against the system.
144. EAN ON pompous marriage telecasts demanded. **H.T.** 2 Dec 81; 6 d-e.

Televising pompous marriages could have the effect of glorifying the dowry system, as such, these programmes should be banned. Such marriages should be decried. The programmes which highlight the evil of dowry system should be telecasted every now and then. Facilities should be given to students and new talents to participate in anti-dowry programmes.

145. GULABANI(S K). Dowry-mongers. **I_E.** 13 July 79; 6 e-f.

One way of tackling this evil effectively is sustained propaganda at the governmental level that the police will firmly handle all complaints against dowry mongers. The press, too, can render great help by exposing thoroughly all persons, irrespective of their status, guilty of dowry crimes. Most of the dowry mongers pass themselves as pillars of society, if not as social reformers.

146. TV Programmes on evil of dowry. **Patrika.** 3 Dec 81; 4 d.

Eminent individuals are invited for TV programmes and these highlight the pros and cons of a particular system. Facilities may be given to the students and new talents to participate in anti-dowry programmes.

The radio and TV programmes took the form of special audience programmes, women and youth programmes etc. People from different sections of the society should be called to participate in these programmes.
REFORMERS, ROLE OF EVIL EFFECTS


The education and plenty of leisure are not the absolute qualifications for those who wish to serve the society. The woman should do her best to spread happiness in the lives of those who are less fortunate than herself. The problems and urging measures to stop the cruel treatment meted out to them due to dowry system should be put forward.


In order to secure a better legal status for the Indian women, the activity of social reformers has been directed towards the abolition of social evils through legislation. But legislation cannot by itself change society. The Dowry Act of 1961, which has failed to register its impact, presents a glaring example. The lacunae in other legislation affecting women need to be bridged so as to make laws more effective.

RELIGIOUS LEADERS, ROLE OF

149. KAMLESH (S). Suicidal dowries. I_E. 19 Aug 79; 6a.

It is refreshing to note that there is considerable resistance even from some Brahmin families, who unfortunately are minority and who constitute the supposed lower middle-class.
When will this vicious circle end? What is the remedy open to us? One wishes that if not the political leaders, at least the religious leaders took up the cause and stopped the rot.

-WOMEN, LEADERS, ROLE OF


Dowry has nothing to do with the economic status or education of the family involved. If the girls feels that there is a protective force behind them, they would perhaps feel more able to fight the injustice. We want women to fight against social evils and create consciousness among them for their rights and responsibilities.


Majority of girls disappear from public life as soon as they are discharged from schools and colleges, and dedicate themselves to service of one man instead of national.

Girls should know what parvati did and is adorned today because of her unheard of tapasya(penance).

There is hateful custom of dowry and the author expects that the girls should resist this evil custom and look for a partner who will not be in thirst of money, fame etc. but a person of matchless qualities which go to make good character.

The dowry and gold ornaments are claimed both by boy and his parents. In future interest of their daughter the parents agree to comply with the wishes of the boy and of his parents. If these practices are to be stopped, the girls should refuse to marry a man who has abnormal claims than her parents can afford as gifts.

153. GROVER(V M; S). Dowry deaths. H_T. 14 July 81; 9 e.

Women have to face a double evil, dowry and society dominated by men. The men not only exonerate themselves of forcing women to the point of committing suicide, but also blame women for burning themselves with the sole aim of torturing men. Though slavery was never prevalent in India, but is practised in every home in India. Dowry is a social evil and women will have to fight the society to free themselves of the shackles.

154. KAUL, N K. Frailty, thy name is not women. I_E. 22 Nov 81; 6a.

Press reports about bride burning have become so routine that these hardly evoke popular indignation any more. Behind each sordid story of inhuman torture resulting in macabre death, the insatiable greed of both the husband and and his parents is very much evident. But how long the dowry will continue to take a heavy toll of innocent lives.
As social evils can never be effectively eradicated by legislation, women themselves must spearhead and sustain a nation-wide movement with the courage of their convictions so as to turn the tide which threatens to immerse them.

155. SARASWATHI(T S), and RAHEJA(Shashi). Women's Lib: just a facade. Sol Wel. 26, 12; 1980; 1.

Perhaps the worst enemy of women is women herself. She herself perpetuates many of the traditional evils she has been heir to.

If a bride is not able to bring a hudge dowry she becomes the target of her mother-in-law's aggressiveness. In the incidents of "apparants" suicides by young brides whose promised dowry could not be given by the harassed father, it is the mother-in-law who plays significant role.

156. SINGH(Smita Jai). Women as net economic liability. I.E. 15 Nov 81; 6a.

The only way to beat the dowry game, especially in the big cities where many young women can afford to take a stand, is by refusing to marry into a family which continues to indulge in such outdated customs. If young men can be made to see that young women mean business, perhaps it would lead to more meaningful and less commercial relationships all round.

157. WOMEN: VENERATED, but patently bonded. Link. 23, 40; 81; 19.

Women are most talked of, as she faces physical humiliation on the streets of savage struggle when husband's violence causes a women to flee to her family for protection. Here a woman should break from woman cowards. It is the time for women to stand up and fight for their due.
The efforts of the United Nations in the service of women were preceded by about half a century of international action in this field.

The non-governmental organisations concerned with the promotion of the status of women have a significant role in moulding the public opinion to that end. Here the commission collaborates closely with these specialised Agencies. Since nineteen sixties the efforts are made to put an end to practices such as child-marriage and bride-burning. Such practices are deeply rooted in the indigenous customs derived from nature cultures.

There is a lot of confusion in the minds of the people about dowry, stridhan, property right of women. All this requires a special programme for women, for them to know their rights.

A large number of cases which are really instances of cruelty, torture, murder and suicides all a result of dowry demands. Women's organisations need constant legal advice and should be coordinated into a central committee having statutory powers because quite of ten there has been public opposition to the locus standi of these organisations.
PARLIAMENTARIAN, ROLE OF


Dowry Prohibition Act of 1961 is an extremely important measure to protect families against exploitation by parents of sons, who demand what is often the equivalent of an exorbitant "bridegroom price". The evil of dowry are a constant item on the agenda of reform by social workers and legislators.

As Parliament is the law-making body of the country, women in Parliament have always used office to effect social change and a better deal for women.

PARENTS, ROLE OF

161. GHAI (Lakhpat Rai). Dowry system. H.T. 3 March 71; 7e.

Whatever the parents of girls give at the time of their marriage from them as a token of affection cannot be termed as dowry.

Any demand by the boys or their parents should not be entertained, even if the girls parents are in a position to meet the same. At the same time, the girls parents should also refrain from offering any allurements either publicly or otherwise.

EDUCATION, ROLE OF


The custom is cruel and heartless. Marriage must cease to be a matter of arrangement made by parents for money. The girls or boys or their parents will have to break the bond of caste if the evil is to be
eradicated. This evil can be tackled if there is education of the country. How is it that so many boys and girls who have even passed through colleges are found unable or unwilling to resist the manifestly evil custom which affects their future so intimately as marriage dose.

163. GOY AL(Saraj). Dowty system. H.T. 3 March 71; 7f.

The evil of dowry system is on the increase. But the evil cannot be eradicated by girls by refusing to marry when the parents of the boys demand dowry. If some highly educated girls come to the front but the village girls will not be able to fight this evil. If educated girls and boys decide to marry outside their castes and force their parents to refrain from giving or taking dowry and if the Government bans the display of dowry, the evil system will die a natural death.

-DOWRYLESS MARRIAGES


Dowry is a blemish on our culture - a disease which is eating into the fabric of our social life.

It seems laughable that social reformers launch campaigns against dowry when all needed to stamp out the custom is for people to resolve neither to give nor to take dowry. How can a parent consent to the marriage of a daughter with anyone who wishes to sell himself and how can a girl, self supporting—can agree to marry a man who asks for a dowry.
The practice of marriage is very old. Out of love for the daughter, parents offered some cash or gold ornaments and utensils etc. But in course of time variety as well as quality of the articles increased and marriages are now being bargained. All the girls depart from their parents with dowry. It is suggested that dowry should be reduced to minimum and the ceremony of marriage performed in a simple manner.

Though there has been much hubbub over the issue of dowry yet the system goes on unabated. When even educated people commit such gruesome murders, how can the illiterate be blamed.

The best remedy lies in the abolition of the traditional endowment to a daughter from her parents in marriage. Further, boys and girls should persuade their parents to stop dowry transactions in marriage and pledge to celebrate "dowry-free" marriages.

Dowry is closely related to family property or to the desire of acquiring it, unearned or otherwise. Thus was the origin of dowry. It is only the shadow of the real object, that is property and its manifold later development. Persons who are fasing for hue and cry against dowry are running after the shadow. Dowry
will exist in one form or other, untill and unless the institution of private property is brought under the control of society. Then marriage will become a matter of free choice and the irony tower of caste will come down to the dust with all its whims and fancies.

--FINANCIAL AID-TAMPLE INCOME

168. FINANCIAL AID for marriage. I E. 25 May 81; 5d.

Hindu families borrow heavily for performing the weddings of their children and their indebtedness increases if they yield to the evil of dowry.

To find out an economic solution and also mitigate the evil of dowry - a programme dear to late Sanjay Gandhi - the possibility of utilising temples income will be explored.

--ECONOMIC INCENTIVES, JOB RESERVATION


The crusade against dowry was started by Sanjay Gandhi and should be continued by Rajiv Gandhi. This evil is root of corruption and spreads, the tendency to a mass wealth. It can be fought if dedicated young men vow not to take dowry. Seats should be reserved at central and state level for those who marry without dowry. Merely a law will not solve the problem.
LUCKNOW-SOCIAL PROBLEM-MARRIAGE-CUSTOMS AND RITES-DOWRY-EVIL EFFECTS-STEPS, REMEDIAL-WOMEN ORGANIZATION, ROLE OF

170. DOWRY DEATHS. The 

The suffering of brides for not bringing sufficient dowry at the time of marriage is shamefully on the increase. In Lucknow alone there were as many as 32 dowry deaths, during first three months of this year.

To our collective shame, we feel helpless to do anything about this system. It is not enough to make laws. The role of women's organizations as watch-dogs becomes all the more relevant in this context. The continuation of the institution of dowry is a reflection of our feudal heritage. If we want to line up to our pretentious and aspirations of a modern and just society we must mobilise our social, cultural and government resources and institutions to attack the evil practice of dowry head on.

CALCUTTA-SOCIAL PROBLEMS-MARRIAGE-CUSTOMS AND RITES-DOWRY-EVIL EFFECTS-STEPS, REMEDIAL-INEFFECTIVENESS-CAUSES-SOCIAL APATHY

171. BALASUBRAHMANYAN(Vimal). Dowry deaths: A bride is killed. 

Harassment over dowry and successful suicide leads to demonstrations and protest processions. Finally a public meeting with speeches denouncing the practice of dowry. At the end of all this, there is not the smallest reason to believe that future dowry deaths are going to be prevented. It is true
especially in Calcutta: Marwari families.

There is no evidence of social boycott of those whose daughters-in-law die tragic death. Leading and influential members of marwari community never denounce these dowry deaths. Parents rationalise by glossing over the dowry and say, "why accuse the in-laws"? Instead, society goes on: "Samaj tho aisa hi hai". (This is how the society is).

- STEPS, PREVENTIVE

172. JAUHARI(Rajeev). Dowry menace. N I P. 19 Nov 81; 4c.

Dowry deaths have become common, but all the cases are not registered and registered, follow up action is very slow.

Mere drawing room discussions will not stop the menace and uplift the position of 'women' in our society. A feeling of insecurity has developed among the women-folk. Age-old customs of marriage, the pride of society, has been ruined and dashed to pieces ending in nothingness.

Let our law be tailored to suit the urgent need of society.


Institution of marriage is as old as human civilization. The Indian law givers formulated codes which covered the entire gamut of human needs bestowing better status to women till this day.
Dowry is one of the many problems concerning marriage. It is of very recent origin. The scope for the choice of the bride and the groom within a particular sect tends to encourage dowry. A committee of wise men may be set up who will put forth concrete proposals as to how the bride-groom value is reduced so that the future suicides of community girls and large scale exploitation are averted.

-MARRIAGE ACT, 1961

174. COURT SENDS dowry victim to protective custody. T I. 29 July 81; 2 a-d.

The UP Government has empowered all districts marriages and additional district magistrates to takes action against those found guilty of torturing young married women for more dowry. Five dowry victim complaints have received protection in the district. In case of Mrs. Sushma "dowry victim" the court has gone to the extent of issuing a search warrant to ensure her protection.

-PROHIBITION ACT, 1961

175. GEETA LAL. Quick divorce for whom? N.H. 29 March 81; 1 a-h.

A rally was staged in the capital against the third amendment to the Hindu marriage Act 1955 which does not insist on the continuation of marriage that has stayed separately for three years, the marriage could be annulled at the request of either party. But
the statistics of such cases reveal that the trouble of separation in most of the cases is insufficient dowry. Society is biased against the women. A social worker asked if marriages were ever performed in our society. "It is always a contract".

_UP-STEPS, PREVENTIVE


Despite social legislation, dowry system, either in cash or kind, still persists. The root of the evil practice, go deeper and legislation can help only when the root causes are eliminated.

The Act prohibitions a person giving or taking or abetting the giving or taking of dowry. It also makes any agreement for the giving and taking of dowry as void.

INDIA-SOCIAL PROBLEMS-MARRIAGE-CUSTOMS AND RITES-DOWRY-EVIL EFFECTS-STEPS, PREVENTIVE-PROHIBITION ACT-INEFFECTIVENESS


The report that marriages would be registered compulsorily from April 1982, is to be welcomed. At the same time the Government should also promulgate and order that in the registration queries there should a written query about the dowry given and the marriage expenditures incurred. The marriage without 'dowry' should be felicitated by the Government. Thus the curse of dowry will be checked to a large extent.
178. BERINDRANATH (Dewan). Laws are not for burning. *Democratic World*, 10, 45; 81; 5-6.

We have become so immune to horror around us that even a daylight murder fails to shock us. Courts are unable to help the victims of injustice and crime because the laws are badly or loosely drafted providing enough loopholes for the evaders. The law-makers have not been able to find time to tone them up because they are too busy in the game of power. Thus the demand for a more rational and effective law against dowry has been hanging fire. No conscience is pricked if even according to police records nearly a thousand cases of "dowry crimes" are registered in a place like Delhi alone in the course of one year.

179. BRIDE GROOM for sale. *Statesman*, 17 Feb 76; 1d-e.

It is no longer sociologists alone who are appalled by the dowry system. The political leadership has also decided that it should go; legislation has been passed and it has been planned to ban it or at least to curb it.

Legal remedies for social ills are hard to administer. Anti-dowry movement launched in some parts of the country may prove more effective.


The vital issues that touches women is the dowry system. It is socially a most degrading institution and economically hazardous, making a mockery of both law and human decency. Nevertheless today there is no movement even to stifle it, leave alone exterminate
it. Here is an open and consistent violation of a law by all the classes and at all the levels. The very Act for which women once fought, is multified with impunity. Yet the women remain silent.

181. DOWRY SYSTEM worries parents. H T. 2 June 81; 7c.

According to a survey in Marathwada region the parents of girls are paying dowry depending on the social and educational background of the boys. Despite the anti-dowry laws and the work of social and organisations, dowry still prevails mainly due to mutual understanding between the parties.

182. HARI (Nara C S). Dowry deaths in Delhi. Imprint. 19, 9; 79; 51.

A woman is literally roasted alive every alternate day in the capital, yet her death is passed off or proclaimed an 'accident' or 'suicide' in the courts of law. Dowry Prohibition Act 1961 adorns our statute book, with hardly any infringement cases registered during last 18 years.

Everyone recognises dowry seeking as a social evil, yet none wants to shun it, for, the greed for money is inborn in man.

183. A JUDGEMENT against dowry. Femina. 22, 2; 81; 15.

Dowry: A few pieces of metal, a wad of paper notes and yet, how many daughters are ruined, how many lives lost in the greed of dowry. In 1961, the dowry prohibition Act came into effect, to help prevent
daughters being sold with gifts of cash and kind, but the practice continued. All men all over the country continue to demand heavy brides for the honour they bestow on a girl by marrying her.

184. RAI(Prabha). A dialogue with the soul of Babu. Soc Wel. 16, 7; 69; 5-9.

The women of India agree with you that dowry is the most degrading practice and causes any amount of humiliation and even barbarism. On the statute book we have the Dowry Prohibition Act which lays down that giving and taking of dowry will be legal offence. It is good as far as our resolution goes but in practice the public and the makers of the law are equally guilty of violating it.

185. A ROT that persists. Link. 14, 12; 71; 41.

Although the giving and getting of dowries have become a legal offence, the custom not only continues but, among certain sections, seems to be on increase. The agitation against the dowry system, conducted by the NFIW led to the anti-dowry Bill being in Parliament Society is still a long way off from eradicating this sickening practice. Dowry is a heinous practice and has become a means for money grabbing; the future happiness of the bride depends on the amount of money she has brought. It bads to suicide when the amount is considered inadequate.
186. RITA RAHIMTOOLA. The dowry prohibition Act: Femina. 16, 23; 75; 33.

The gifts of affection are not dowry is the definition given in the Act. No distinction between a gift and dowry, and persons giving or taking dowry are punishable.

It is quite clear that dowry is masquerading as "gifts of affection". The gap between truly voluntary "gifts of affection" and extortionate dowry could be gauged by carrying out a census of gifts made by the bride's parents to couples who have married as a result of love affairs. It would be an eye-opener to see how dry the wells of affection run on such occasions.

187. WOMEN IN perspective. Link. 23, 3; 80; 18-19.

Hardly a day passes when a young bride dying of burns is not reported in the press, while there are many which go unnoticed.

Marriage becoming more and more a commercial deal, parents very often incur debts to "buy" a good husband. In case a girl whose family is unable to give the agreed amount of dowry, the girl is humiliated and insulted at every step. The Dowry Prohibition Act 1961 has been a complete failure as it is very vogue and there is no limit to the presents that can be given.

-GUJARAT

188. ANKLESARIA(Shahnaz). Women in Gujrat. Eve's Wkly. 25, 9; 81; 13.
What makes a man decide to kill the woman he has lived with. Dowry is the single biggest known reason. If she has brought "enough"money, finish her off and get another who will bring more. The Hindu Marriage Act, 1956 makes bigamy a criminal offence in most states. After this Act came into force, killing a wife has become one of the easiest way of circumventing it.

-Causes

189. BADHAN(J S). Foundation of healthy social set up. Soc Wel. 22, 6-7; 75; 108-109.

One of the social evils baffling our women and the society at large is the dowry system. A great deal of concern has been shown by all right-thinking people to put an end to this evil. Status has been promulgated but we have not been able to solve the problem the basic problems. Attempts to solve these problems cannot bring fruit to us unless we are in a position to create proper social climate.


The society, champion of the cause of individual freedom, felt that it was divided between rich and poor and exploitation of the fair sex. Thus social legislation was put into force by social reformers. They felt that the social evils like dowry system, child marriage etc. cannot be eradicated unless legislative measures are taken. Dowry Prohibition Act of 1961 was one of the measures to check the exploitation of women, but it cannot and has not been effective due to our lack of social consciousness.
191. RITA RAHIMTOOLA. The dowry prohibition act. Femina. 16, 7; 75; 33.

The dowry Prohibition Act has remained a deed letter for fourteen years with hardly any a cases of infringement being brought before the courts.... Since the giver, taker and abettor are all held guilty who will initiate the proceedings.


The Government has failed to enforce the law strictly. A political decision can be implemented only when it is welcomed by society. I approach the people to get their support for its abolition but the reply from young boys was "Did you not accept dowry"? If yes, how can you expect us to leave it"? and from young girl's "you want us to go unmarried" and from their parents "who will marry our daughters if we do not give dowry.


The author agrees with R.D.Sharma that the Dowry Prohibition Act 1961 has remained a judicial ornament and has failed to check the increasing number of dowry deaths and failed to provide any relief to its victims. It is society and not the law, responsible for the malady. The bride is certainly not for burning. Giving or taking dowry must be made a cognizable offence.

194. TIME TO pause and ponder. Link. 24, 4; 81; 12-13.

The growing trend of violence against women throws into forefront a pertinent question. What type of civilised society are we building and in which direction
our society is moving. Though a large number of measures
to improve the lot of women have been enacted yet
legislation can help only to a limited extent. The lack
of moral consciousness leads to the reports like-
gruesome murders, merciless burning of brides etc.

-SOCIAL APATHY

195. JAVERI (Maena). Dowry: the burning question. Imprint.
19, 9; 79; 49-61.

Marriages today have become so corrupt with the
lust for dowry that the reputation or honour of the
girl’s family hardly matters. Everything is considered
in the terms of money. Dowry has become one of the
majors wreckers of homes and families. Anti-dowry law
seems to have as much effect on people as statutory
warning has on smokers.

196. SHAHNAZ BEGUM. Dowry system: a curse for the society.
Radiance. 15, 30; 79; 7.

Laws are made to extinguish the fire that flares
higher and higher, but they (laws) are these only to
adorn the pages of statute books. Women witness with
wide eyes members of their own sex crumbling to pieces,
smouldering in the fire of the devlish dowry system,
without making the least movement to extinguish it. The
malady of this evil is so great that no one dares to
to take any practical step to root it out.
OLD VALUES, PRESERVATION


Social legislation strikes at the root of 'exploitation' of one individual by another or by a group of individuals or in any other form. It bridges the gulf between the existing laws and current needs of society.

Regarding the legislative provisions in respect of dowry prohibition — dowry a social evil still continues. Expenditure on marriages still continue to be heavy and wasteful. In matters like marriage ideals, there is an unconscious attempt to preserve the old values. Whatever changes have taken place, therefore, are largely due to the exigencies of time.

STATUTORY AND ADMINISTRATIVE REFORMS

198. AGGARWAL(R C). Women's Lib. in India. Soc Wel. 20, 10; 74; 11.

In order to avoid any discrimination between men and women legislative measures have been enacted to place modern Indian Women legally on the same level as men. Socio-economic interests have duly been safeguarded constitutionally.

But the monstrous evil degrading the position of women in our society is dowry system. Though the Prohibition Act has been passed in 1961 yet the monster is still raising its ugly head. The drive against the dowry system should be carried on cities as well as in villages by social workers.
199. ANTI-DOWRY act to be strengthened. Patriot. 2 Aug 81; 2c.

The Union Law Minister, Mr Shiv Shankar said that the Government was keen on strengthening the Dowry Prevention Act to the remove the evil from society. The question is currently engaging the attention of a joint select committee of parliament, which is collecting evidence from various quarters. "I am almost ashamed to give the number of prosecutions under law he added.

200. ANTI DOWRY Act to be lightened. H T. 8 July 81; 5b-c.

The Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961 will be amended to check crimes against women. The offence will made non-bailable. Through investigation by officers not below the rank of deputy superintendent of police will be made of the cases of attempted suicide or death in suspicious circumstances of young married women during first five years of their marriage.

201. GOSH(Chhabi). Frailty, thy name is not woman. I P. 22 Nov 81; 6a.

There can be little doubt that dowry is an anathema in our society and it will be around long enough to do more mischief. Any movement against the dowry system will not succeed unless we are fully awake to the seriousness of the situation. For instance, severe punishment should be meted out to those who are involved in giving or taking Dowry.
202. DOWRY ACT to be amended. T.I. 7 July 81; 2d.

The Government proposes to amend the Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961 to check crime against women.

The main thrust of the amendment will be on restricting ostentatious marriage, inclusion of gifts in the dowry, making the offence cognisable and non-bailable and enlarging the categories of persons who are entitled to lodge a complaint regarding dowry offences.

203. GOVERNMENT PLANS new law on crimes against women. H.T. 1 July 80; 1a-c.

While legislation and strict enforcement of the laws and rules are some of the measures to safeguard women from exploitation and atrocities of all forms, these measures in themselves cannot provide a complete solution to the problem. What is imperative is that a social awareness should be created. Government is giving top priority to booking anti social elements, including death married woman attributable to the social evil of dowry.

204. H HARR0WIN3 TALE of dowry victim. Patroit. 28 July 81; 4 a-b.

A social worker in Chandigarh demanded that the law dealing with dowry be made more stringent and exemplary after knowing the harassment or torture a young bride had gone at in-laws for more dowry. The social workers asked why such greedy in-laws should not be straight away arrested under MISA, NSA or similar acts; Public should socially boycott such people.
205. SETH(D V). Are they dowry deaths. H_T. 1 July 81; 9c-d.

Why are dowry deaths increasing what is the most prominent change that we find in our society. Has our society became so brute and criminal.

The most prominent change is emancipation and self-sufficiency of women.

In some cases, dowry might have played a role before the success or failure of marriage. But in most cases today it comes to play a role after the failure of marriage. Any law concerning dowry should be made very judicious so that it is not fraught with more dangers.

206. SHARMA(R D). The dowry menace. H_T. 28 July 81; 4 g-h.

Initially, dowry was a means of giving a daughter her share of inheritance. The system persists despite the Hindu Succession Act of 1956. It has degenerated into a social evil. Even Dowry Prohibition Act 1976 has failed to check it. It has become extraction of all kinds of things desired by the boy or his parents from the girl's family at the time of marriage and even after that. We should have a fresh look at Dowry Prohibition Act of 1976 and prevailing system of traditional marriage should be made illegal.

207. MANDHAR(Sujata). Legal status of Indian Women. Soc Wel. 26, 1; 79; 2-3 and 31.

Law regulates human behaviour within an organised social structure and performs the task of bringing about social reforms. Positive laws confer rights on
the weaker groups in society and are accepted by the society without any hesitation. But negative laws are against the social current, meet with far greater resistance and are frequently evaded. Such laws have to be backed by legislation.

Dowry Prohibition Act as its title suggests, prohibits giving or taking dowry but the practice is still continuing. While the society finds existing measures inadequate, the interaction between law and social thinking is bound to generate both legal and social reform.

-PROPOSALS

208. DUTTA(P C). Pulling some teeth in anti-dowry law. Organiser. 31, 6; 79; 5.

Owing to the custom of dowry, daughter would be a financial liability and male child a good financial investment. Moral appeals cannot eradicate the evil. The Government should amend the Dowry Prohibition Act of 1961 and a separate enforcement machinery should be created to implement this measure, keep vigilant watch and bring law-breakers to book.

209. MAHAJAN(Krishnan). The second Bex. H.T. 13 Dec 81; 1a-h.

In Indian laws pertaining to the oppression of women deal only with the consequences of exploitation, not with the actual causes. Dowry cannot be eradicated by legal measures alone, as is obvious now. Legal solution is (a) banning of such practices as feasting, giving and taking of clothes, money or any other thing. (b) and turn marriage into a contract.

Such tragedies as burning of brides have been ascribed to our dowry system. Legal loopholes have encouraged the fiendish elements to play with the lives of our daughters and sisters and escape the culturess of law. A decade age one rarely came across news of bride burning simply because she has not fetched a fat dowry. If the "Guiness Book of World Records" lists Indian as the only country where largest number of brides are burnt alive and Indians as the most sadistic creatures in the world we should not be surprised. There should be change in law to ensure beastly punishments for beastly crimes.

211. SANDHU (G S). Women and marriage law Secular Democracy. 8, 20; 75; 29.

More than half of the women's year is over but no law has been passed so far which may ameliorate the sufferings of this weaker section. Practice of giving and taking dowry has been condemn from times immemorial by reforms but none the less it has been on the increase with advance of education and better social conditions. Demanding Dowry is an offence. U/S 4 of the Dowry Prohibition Act 1961 punishable with imprisonment or with fine or both. But the presents at the time of marriage are not deemed to be dowry as per explanation to section 2. To make the act effective or operative the section 2 should be repeated.
WOMEN, MUSLIMS - SOCIAL RIGHTS

212. FATIMA GHAPoor. Muslim women and their social progress. Radiance, 11, 40; 74; 13.

It Islam says that men as well as women are equal gave woman her due and recognised her legitimate role in the society. Muslim woman should carry forward the society as is expected from her by the Islam. She should come forward and free herself from fetters of ignorance superstitious and indifference which will help in eradicating the social evils like dowry system.

MARRIAGE MUSLIM, SHIAs - CUSTOMS AND RITES - DOWRY


The settlement of Maher is the duty of the guardians of both the parties. The practice has, assumed the shape of a social custom and the amount has been on increase since the earliest period. The consideration that heavy dower is a check against divorce is futile. It is neither reasonable from the point of law and religion nor is it the present law. The prevalence of the extravagant dowry system leads to unsuitable marriages and undesirable actions.

SOUTH WEST PROBLEMS - WOMEN, MARRIAGE - MOPHLAS - CUSTOMS AND RITES - DOWRY

Among the richer sections, since a man, because he stays in his wife's tharavad, virtually forfeits his share of income from his own tharavad, the wife's tharavad has to make ample provision for his economic well being. This is done by a series of dowries.

SOCIAL PROBLEMS—WOMEN, MUSLIMS—CUSTOMS AND RITES—DOWRY


In Gujarat the Mussulman nobility preserve with respect the names and practices of the Rajput chiefs from whom they are descended. The practises the rules that are widely apart from the jurisprudence of Islam. The wise provisions of the law for dowries and the separate maintenance of a wife have been neglected.

—SUNNI SURAT AND VOHRAS—CUSTOMS RITES—DOWRY


The marriage among the muslims in Gujarat does not involve either dowry or bride price or an unnecessary increase in the bride’s trosseau. Marriage are arranged by the parents of girls of higher khandans to the boys of lower khandans who are economically well-to-do and will offer great security for their daughters. Those who belong to lower khandans and are able to help their prospective sons-in-laws in emigrate arrange the marriage of their daughters in higher khandans. Tendencey is to look for social and economic advantage both parties. Question of dowry or bride-price does not arise.

At the time of rukhsati the girl is given dowry which includes items for domestic use, sheep, goats and horses which would have been her share in her father property. Even though the Gujar Bakarwals of J & K are muslims and claim to adhere to the traditional Islamic rules of inheritance yet the girl is not entitled to receive the dowry given to her at the time of marriage.


All muslims marriages in Madhya Pradesh involve the signing of a marriage contract, the NIKAHNAMA, by both the bride marriage contract, the indicating assent to the union. Included in the contract is a statement of a amount of Mahr settled upon. Mahr is a payment to be given to the bride by the groom and his family. All muslim girls are expected to bring dowries. Detailed lists are kept of dowry items, and if marriage ends in divorce, a woman would ideally take her dowry things with her.
RAJASTHAN-SOCIAL PROBLEMS-WOMEN, MUSLIM-MEWS-CUSTOMS AND RITES-DOWRY


Meos of Rajasthan does not accept bride-price or a gift from the groom's family. They boast that they are giving dowries and not selling their daughters. Although the feeling against bride-price is strong yet the custom has become quite prevalent. In north India, the prevailing practice among high Hindus is to give dowry. Though educated Hindus have decried this custom but the practice is increasing and lower castes have also adopted it.

INDIA-SOCIAL PROBLEMS-MARRIAGE-MUSLIMS, PEERZADAS-CUSTOMS AND RITES-DOWRY-EVIL EFFECTS-MARITAL PROBLEMS


In the peerzadas community the dowry is a matter of concern for a bride: how will her in-laws respond it? They do not specify what should be included in the dowry and the bride who arrives practically empty-handed will not suffer for her parents' poverty. But outside, it is all different. Some people's may be noble and make no demands, but many families have the vulgar habit of insisting that certain items should be included several engagements have been broken off by the peerzadas when they find that the groom's people appear more interested in the goods the bride will bring then they are in the bride herself.
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