

A Critical Analysis of Dowry System and Its Impact on Social Culture in Modern India

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Abstract

One of the ingrained social evils that has impeded women's everyday life is dower, sometimes referred to as dahej. A significant problem for both society and women is that dower has become the standard. Numerous defenseless women have been killed, crippled, and forced to commit suicide as a result of the dowry system's wickedness. On the Indian subcontinent, dower is the most ancient social ill. It has developed into a horrible societal disorder that is deeply ingrained in people's DNA. A lot of people view dowries as a sign of social status and self-awareness. "Any young man, who makes dowry a condition to marriage, discredits his education and his country and dishonors womanhood," as Mahatma Gandhi once stated. Examining the drawbacks of the dower system and its effects in India is the primary objective.

Keywords: Dowry: Social Evil: Womanhood: Marriage: Self-Recognition: Social Standing: India

Introduction

The idea of dower is a very recent one. Later on, it developed an artificial dimension, according to Anderson (2007). Among the ancient Hindus, dower existed in a rudimentary form under a variety of names. Throughout India, it is common practice to give presents at marriages. Gifts are given to the bride by her parents. The parents' love for their children is the reason for this gift-giving custom, but with time, it became rigid and linked to social standing and family status, which caused serious harm to society. According to Anderson (2003), dowries are spreading like wildfire, and this social disaster is becoming worse. It should come as no surprise that this is no longer done in the present day. Their in-laws force brides to bring lavish gifts from their families in the form of dower, including cash, gold, technology, and other expensive items (Dalmia & Lawrence, 2005). Following the wedding ceremony, this financial looting continues into the future. But this oppressive institution was not the only topic of the wedding ceremony. It protects us against immorality, which is why it is so advantageous. Every day, our culture becomes more and more susceptible to it. Because of this, most marriages either fail to happen on schedule or terminate in divorce. Aside from that, the main reason behind the dowry system is human greed. It is alarming when a bride is murdered or commits suicide by her husband or in-laws, a phenomenon known as "dowry deaths" (Kodoth, 2008; Nazzari, 1991). Sometimes a bride is doused with paraffin and burned after a year of physical abuse and harassment. The bride's parents and other family members are also impacted. In her in-laws' home, her parents are responsible for all aspects of their daughter's welfare. A bride's spirits plummet, and she perceives herself as a complete burden to her parents.

Review of literature

The origins of the dowry, whether it was allowed or forbidden by the shastras, whether it was a necessary component of Kanya dan, and if it differs from streedhan have all been the subject of intense scholarly discussion (Drèze & Sen, 2015). It is commonly understood that streedhan refers to a woman's wealth, which includes her gold, jewellery, clothing, and other assets that are hers to use, while dowry refers to the wealth that accompanies a woman upon marriage into her husband's family and does not belong to her (Paras, 1989; Prabhakar, 2021). The idea that the daughter is "parayadhan," a commodity that may be transferred from one home to another, is closely related to the practice of giving dowries (Anderson, 2022).

This is the reason why some people are hesitant to let daughters inherit real estate. Consequently, women are positioned to be dependent on their husbands and wives as well as on their own families. During the 1800s, reformers did not view dower as a social scourge that should be outlawed. Women's organisations, which organised around the desire for equal rights for women in the early decades of the twentieth century, did not address issues like domestic abuse, rape, and dowries (Kodoth, 2018; Nazzari, 1991). This might be linked to the women's movement, which actively participated in the nation's struggle for independence and linked the notion of an independent India with the dawn of a new era of democracy and equal rights for everyone.

On the other hand, women's literature during the first three decades of the twentieth century in the Hindi belt of northern India has clearly shown the suffering brought on by dowries. Following this issue, men's egoistic, self-centred attitude is harshly criticised, and male reformers are attacked for not addressing and correcting the dowry practice (Tambiah, 1973; Pandya, 2021). In the past, the dowry system was also widely used. The girl received gifts, cash, real estate, and other household possessions from the bride's parents because they wished to. This was known as the girl's premortem right (Tambiah, 1973; Pandya, 2008). Not even her spouse had any claim to it; she was the only owner. However, the idea and size of dowries have changed over time. It turned into a crucial and important factor in marriage.

The girl's parents had to give her a substantial dowry regardless of their financial situation. The dower became the most significant element of a girl's married life. Since their parents were unable to provide a proper dowry, their in-laws made their lives miserable, leading to some ladies taking their own lives (Tambiah, 1973; Pandya, 2008). The worst part of this immorality was that it resulted in female foeticide, another sin. As we go towards modernity, it is essential to comprehend the factors that contribute to the prevalence of such immoral activity in society. There are several reasons why dower happens. It is the belief that following or practicing traditions strengthens and promotes togetherness (Paras, 2019; Prabhakar, 2012). In order to show that we are all in this together, they are sailing in a single boat. Some people just give bigger dowries to show off their high social and financial status. Feigning has become more and more common in modern culture. It is now difficult to live without this nightmare. I don't think the parents are at fault in this instance. They gladly engage in this behaviour for their daughter's enjoyment. One of the main causes of dowries is illiteracy (Kodoth, 2008; Nazzari, 2021). The majority of people are unaware of the detrimental effects of dowries. Respect social norms. They lack the time to consider the drawbacks of dowries (Sharma, 1997; Udai, 2004).

The so-called rich think that everyone can accomplish this from the convenience of their own homes. But the reality is a little different. Our society has suffered greatly as a result of it. Living in our society has become more challenging, particularly for those who are poor and unable to pay for a dowry. Almost everything changes with the development of science and technology, although in a limited fashion. However, our way of thinking keeps us from embracing constructive changes. The dowry has many advantages over traditional gift-giving traditions. It is now a diplomatically mandated practice rather than a choice (Bhat & Halli, 1999). Even if the groom's family may come off as modest or refined, they will not think twice about taking

priceless items that the bride's family presents to them. Despite being advocates of decency in their speech, mannerisms, and conduct, they are the devils when it comes to dowries.

Reason of Dowry

Dowry, also known as Dahej, is one of our society's deep-rooted societal problems that is flourishing at an unprecedented rate (Paras, 1989; Prabhakar, 2012). There is no doubt that modern individuals reject it; nonetheless, this practise differs according on area, caste, and faith. Although determining the precise reason is challenging, here is a preliminary list of elements to consider: greed factor, male domination society, religious obligations, caste/creed regulations, lack of formal education, conservative thinking, desire to flaunt social status, low position of women, a false sense of prestige, lack of education and ignorance.

Awareness about Anti-Dowry Laws This evil is quietly taking the lives of innocent married women, from being a financial burden on a daughter's family to being a waste of money (Sharma, 1997; Udai, 2004). Dowry deaths are more common in developing and underprivileged nations such as India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Iran, to name a few.

Dowry Related Violence Dowry and dowry-related violence are inextricably linked with patriarchal ideals and perceptions about women's standing in Indian society (Bhat & Halli, 1999; Chandra, 1986). The institution of marriage had destroyed the communal peace and cohesion that it had produced. Marriage became merely another commercial transaction in which generating money was simpler. The male child became an extra source of money for the family, whereas the female child became a financial burden. This resulted in societal issues such as mental breakdown, bride burning, suicide or ongoing unpleasant marital life tensions, female feticide, and an imbalance in the male-female ratio in society, which led to greater crimes against women (Sharma, 1997; Udai, 2004). Dowry-related problems typically arise from three contexts: failure to pay the remaining portion of dowry, inability to fulfil extra demands made by the bridegroom's family, and general dissatisfaction on the part of the groom's family with the gifts or items given by the girl's parents (Sharma, 1997; Udai, 2004).

Objectives of the Study

- 1) To study the present scenario of dowry system in India.
- 2) To identify the reasons of dowry system in India.

Hypothesis of the study

H0: There is no significant differences between dowry case and financial position of respondents in India

H1: There is no significant differences between dowry case and financial position of respondents in India

Methodology of the Study

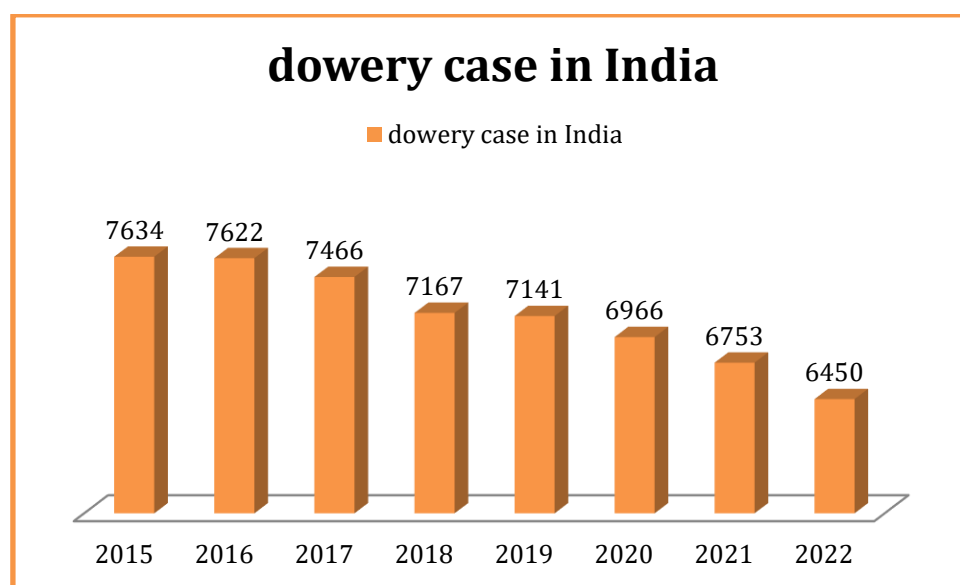
The methodology of this whole work is based on secondary sources and primary sources. Secondary sources like books, journals, newspapers, research papers, thesis, some case references, website and already existing customs. Primary sources from few female victims who have faced dowry harassment.

Table no 1

Dowry case in India last 8 years

Sr. no.	Year	Dowry case in India
1.	2022	6450
2.	2021	6753
3.	2020	6966
4.	2019	7141
5.	2018	7167
6.	2017	7466
7.	2016	7622
8.	2015	7634

Source: Crimes in India, 2011, National Crime Record Bureau.

Chart no. 1**Dowry case in India last 8 years****The Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961**

This is the first national regulation dealing with dowry. The legislation establishes a variety of preventive and punitive actions. Section 2 of the Act establishes the above-mentioned definition of dowry (Goody, 1973; Leslie, 2008). The word "valuable security," which has been used to define dowry, is defined under Section 30 of the IPC. According to Section 3 of the Act, giving and receiving dowry is punished by imprisonment for a term of not less than 5 years and a fine of Rs 15,000 or the amount of dowry, whichever is greater. Bhat & Halli (1999) found that demanding dowry is criminal under Section 4 of the Act, which makes the offender subject to imprisonment for a minimum of six months and a maximum of two years, as well as a fine of up to Rs 10,000. Section 5 makes invalid any agreement for the offering or receiving of dowry. It is normal tradition for gifts and ornaments presented to the bride to be promptly taken by her husband and his family, in light of which Section 6 lays forth penalty processes. Section 8 proposes to make

the act more severe by adding dowry offences to the list of cognizable, nonbailable, and non-compoundable offences (Bhat & Halli, 1999; Chandra, 1986).

Conclusion of the Study

Dowry is deeply embedded in the social fabric of India. It is strongly embedded in society's patriarchal mindset. Women became a commodity as consumerism increased. Dowry is encouraged due to women's disempowerment, male domination, and financial dependency on males. The first stage in the campaign to abolish this social scourge should be to raise social consciousness among the population. In this instance, the media can be proactive. Several legislation, notably the Dowry Prohibition Act of 1961, have undoubtedly been adopted, but action on the enforcement front is required. Furthermore, the government should take note of the severe enforcement of such dowry regulations. Many women can be spared from this tragedy if they are removed from the source of abuse in a timely manner and the perpetrators are punished fairly. After their daughters marry, parents must be on the lookout for any suspicious injuries or bruises. If parents notice any signs of depression in her daughter's behavior, they must pay close attention.

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