

Dowery deaths essay



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Silenced by their culture large populations of women in India tolerate abuse and subsequent death because they have provided insufficient dowry. In a culture that is male dominated women are raised to be servants to their husbands often arranged to marry a man that they have never met. Women that are beaten or just unhappy must suppress their feelings to keep their husbands blissful or face shame and be turned away by their own families. Indian womens household must pay a dowry for the privilege of marrying a man of status. The dowry often consists of money, merchandise, or gold that is displayed when the couple is married. Women are being mistreated for insufficient dowry money because the grooms family may be greedy and would like more items. If the brides family cannot provide more for the in-laws they will kill her so that he may keep the dowry he already had collected and then marries another that may possess more money or status. The original dowry is determined by the perceived value of the husbands hand in marriage. If the husband is very desirable then he commands a very high dollar figure, if the offer of money is too low then the grooms family will not accept it because it is an insult.

A woman held a PHD and married a man that was a shopkeeper with less education than she possessed. Her father provided a years worth of salary and many gifts. After the couple had been married six months, the in-laws requested a washing machine and other items that the brides family could not afford to give. They taunted the bride and eventually she was found hung from a ceiling fan. The groom was never convicted because he told the police she committed suicide, because she did not love him enough. Since the death took place in his home, they had no way of knowing if it was the

truth. The woman was cut off from her relatives and had once asked her father to help her because she did not feel safe with her new husband. The father told her that she should give it time because he was not to intervene too early in the marriage, he wanted her to stay married at the time.

(Mandelbaum p. 1)

Women in India marry within their own social caste which divides people into four major groups the Brahmin, kshatryia, vaishya, and the sudra with some of the lower people being called so the untouchables. The untouchables are called so dirty that even a glass that they have drunk from cleaned, will always be contaminated. Female babies are viewed as a burden to the father, that he must work and save to marry her off and males are always preferred. The birth of a girl is mourned in most families, which contributes to female infanticide in India today. (India dowry p67) The marriages that take place are all arranged and can take place even as children, teenagers, and twenty-year-old businessmen and women that has to yield to the practice in society. Women that do choose their own mates are not exempt from the dowry and often face anger from their parents or being disowned. Parents will often look for the most suitable mate for their daughter in classified ads, Internet, or marriage brokers with out prior knowledge each other the bride and groom are married if the dowry is in agreement on both sides. In Hindu laws of Manu a woman is joined to her husband and has to suffer with him and act with tolerance, this religion believes that women are the cause if a marriage fails and that men are absolved from their own actions. If there is any unhappiness in the home of an Indian woman, they look at her as the cause even if the husband is in some cases beating,

taunting and allowing his friends to gang rape her. These women have no choice but to stay in inhumane situations because they were raised in a culture that does not give them many rights and teaches them from an early age to be a servant. If an Indian woman needs help there are few places to which she can turn, the family of the groom will seek her out because she has dishonored her husband. Her own family will not take her back to their house because she is a difficult woman that may prevent her sisters from being married if the rumor spreads about her family. The increased supply of many luxury items in India has escalated the demands that grooms make for dowry amounts with the sky the limit being the normal attitude.

(Mandelbaum) The parents of the groom are looking to get the most for the hand of their son in their society they do not romanticize marriage like we do in America, but look at it as business arrangements. If the grooms parents are very greedy they may decide that the bride should have an accident that will lead to her death. The son then can take another bride that will give them more gifts and they still get to keep the money from his first marriage, giving his parents a very nice living. If a woman is widowed in Indian society she is expected to mourn for her lost husband not to marry again or participate in life. The act of Sati is an old ritual that involves the widow to throw herself on the open flames of her husbands funeral fire and burn alive to assure his place in heaven. This was outlawed in India but some of the warrior castes still have cases of this happening today.

Deaths that occur in the home make it hard to determine the exact details of the brides death. Women that die often fall into accidents with their stove that sometimes explode and other times simply catch their clothing on fire

until they burn to death. They do use kerosene stoves which are highly flammable but they also leave very little of the bride behind for the investigators to look at. Major government hospitals in Pune City admit eight women burn victims a day of that only 20% that they see ever live. (Waters p 525) If a man is convicted of a dowry death he does not face a very stiff punishment. Less than one percent of the cases end up in conviction. (India dowry p67) There was a case in which the husband was found guilty of killing his wife and was sentenced to give back the dowry and wedding costs, then he was set free to go on his own. If the same case has been brought up here in America the man would have face a charge of life in prison. The society offers very little push to resolve this pressing issue. The Indian Penal code amendments and the Evidence act require an investigation on all deaths of brides that were married for less than seven years. (Waters, p525) It is horrifying to imagine what these women go through in the course of their lives, being brought up to believe that you are inferior and then to be stripped of your free will with torture of the mind and body. The women are treated like machines that just do what the husbands prefer with out any regard. These women have only shelters to help them if they try to leave, but often find themselves with no money, education, or place to run to. The act of dowry giving has to end before the treatment of women will get any better, because as long as a woman is not seen for her value as a worker and member of society then she will continue to be discarded. Women are not permitted to inherit any property until there are no close males alive within 12 generations. (Chaturvedi) Indian government needs make greater laws and try to enforce them strictly, but it is the men who make the laws in India and the religion that backs up this practice. The men are not to anxious

to see this practice go and the religious do not see a need for change, so womens groups must fight to help get a better quality of life for Indias women. Years of silence must be ended in India with women choosing what they wear, say, and most importantly whom they marry with out the risk of being beaten or condemned.

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