

# A dreadful evil-dowry



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A Dreadful Evil--Dowry As soon as I opened my eyes I saw the big and bold headline on the newspaper, " Dowry tales: Woman set on fire by husband, in-laws. " According to reports, " 24-year-old Jyoti died after she was allegedly set on fire by her husband and in-laws on Sunday as her parents could not meet dowry demand of 10000 dollars. " (live). Day by day this dreadful evil is taking away so many lives. One dowry death is reported every 77 minutes. (Sinha) Reading the Newspaper I remembered what Gandhi said, " Any Young man, who makes dowry a condition to marriage, discredits his education and his country and dishonors womanhood. " - M. K.

Gandhi (Majumdar 79). Womanhood is being dishonored by this heinous deed, especially in sub continental societies, who are suffering from this social evil at the moment. The dowry system is prevalent virtually in all parts of India, Bangladesh and Pakistan. Dowry has been defined by a young lady as " the price paid by the parents for getting their daughters the post of a daughter-in-law"(Gupta). Parents pay huge sums of money so that their daughters may secure a satisfactory and permanent post. Unfortunately, the whole affair has assumed the proportions of a scandal. The groom's parents try to extract the maximum from a matrimonial alliance.

They insist on receiving huge amount of cash, luxury items like television sets, VCR's, refrigerators, cars, scooters and in certain cases even houses. Cases of harassment exist where young brides are losing all of their savings on account of dowries multiplying during the recent years. Giving away a daughter in marriage is called 'Kanyadaan'. Here ' Kanya" means ' Girl' and ' Daan' means ' to give away something permanently'. However people

believe that woman and man are not equal, so when a woman is married she has to bring something valuable to adjust her weight/value with the man.

Some people also think that it will help the bride-groom to ensure a better future for his family. Nowadays people think that a dowry consists of articles of household utility, gold ornaments and some cash. Since a girl enjoys no right to the parental property, and the system carries some kind of a moral justification. I've seen this felonious deed and its consequences with my very own eyes. I've seen how my beautiful cousin was humiliated and suffered from dowry system. Hoimonti, my cousin, is a 21-year-old modern girl raised and educated in Dhaka. Her parents are educated and they belong to the middle class of our society.

She was the only child of her parents, so she is very affectionate to her parents. Like every other girl, she has dreamed about her wedding day since her adolescence. She dated a guy and decided to get married to him with the blessing of both parents. Both of their families supported their decision. As she was their only daughter, my uncle spent almost all of his money on this marriage. Expensive ornaments were all over her body. She was full of diamond and gold ornaments and dressed like a princess. The matter of dowry was not discussed as she and her parents considered it to be a vicious practice.

But her husband's parents were silent at that time as they were pretty much happy with the gold made ornaments. But the silence did not last very long. Her parents sent her to her husband's house with the conviction that their daughter will be treated like a queen. But the scenario was far more different than their imagination. A week later, my aunt called Hoimonti, " How are you

my precious daughter? ” she asked. “ Mom I’m happier than I ever imagine,” Hoimonti replied. But her mom easily understood her frigid voice. She thought something was wrong. So she stormed to Hoimonti’s house and rang the bell.

Hoimonti’s father in law opened the door with a sweet smile and told her to come inside. “ I want to see my child, where is she? ” aunty asked sternly. “ She is in her room but she is not feeling very well” he replied pathetically. The harshness in her voice and eyes quickly vanished and was replaced with softness. “ What’s wrong? ” she asked. “ Well her room is very small and she don’t have any air conditioner, television, fridge, large bed and obviously a car so how can she be okay? ” he replied. Her mom then asked him to see her daughter but he did not agree to let her see Hoimonti.

He demanded those things in order to let her see Hoimonti. Hoimonti’s parents gave her a lot of ornaments which took away all of their money. But still in order to see her happy and secure a better future for her they sold all of their property and took loans. They gave all of the things that Hoimonti’s parents-in-law demanded. After a few months, Hoimonti’s husband called her parents and asked for land for his new business. He threatened her parents that if they do not give him this then he will kill Hoimonti. So in order to save Hoimonti’s life they gave him what he wanted.

Desire for those things rose higher and higher with the passage of time. In the meantime, Hoimoti had to face a lot of torture if her parents were late in giving the item that they asked for. As time went by the severity of the torture increased. Physical and verbal abuse and mental manipulations followed, entwined with spurts of romance and fun became part of daily

routine. But she had no other options to tolerate this torture. Her husband, her parents in law and their relatives didn't give her the value that she deserves. As she was a modern girl so she was against this system.

She knew that dowry is prohibited in this country by the dowry prohibition act, 1961: " In this Act, " dowry" means any property or valuable security given or agreed to be given either directly or indirectly- (a) by one party to a marriage to the other party to the marriage; or (b) by the parents of either party to a marriage or by any other person to either party to the marriage or to any other person; at or before or any time after the marriage in connection with the marriage of said parties but does not include dower or mahr in the case of persons to whom the Muslim Personal Law (Shariat) applies. " (Kati) So she tried to stand against it.

But the more she tried the more torture on her increased. She tried to take the help of the police, but in this corrupted society they were unhelpful to her. They told her it's her family matter so they won't get involved in this aspect. Two years into the marriage, things got increasingly difficult to handle. She spoke to her parents and expressed her wish to end the marriage. But there is a stigma attached with divorce that education and wealth has not been able to overturn. Her parents asked her to give it one last shot. Every girl in this situation should be able to take a stand and have the courage to walk away.

What good is independence, education or liberation if you cannot do what is right? Hoimonti was in a fix. She couldn't break the marriage or stay in this horrible position. She wanted to give freedom to her parents from feeding the hunger of her husband and his parents. So she saw no other way other

than attempting suicide. She hung herself with the help of a rope and the fan of her room. She then found a way out to freedom from that hell. Her husband and her parents-in-law were arrested for this but after some weeks they got out of the corrupted jail. Hoimonti represented the poor condition of the women in subcontinent.

She showed that how women are deprived of the respect that they deserve. So we should eradicate dowry permanently from our society. In reality a strong propaganda campaign should be started against this evil by all responsible persons in the society. The young men and women should stage demonstrations against those persons who give or take dowry. Of course, the Government should also pass stringent laws against this evil but social evils can only be abolished with the active co-operation of the society. The youth can definitely play a key role in eradicating this evil practice.

Young boys should take a pledge that they will neither demand a dowry nor accept it, and young girls should be resolved not to give their consent to marriage with a boy who demands a dowry. If more and more girls are educated and made economically independent, it will accelerate the process. More love marriages and more inter-caste and inter-provincial marriages should also prove helpful. Works Cited Majumdar, Maya. "Dowry: The Scourge." Ency. Of Gen. Equ. Through Women Empowerment. Ed. Maya Majumdar. New Delhi: Sarup & Sons, 2005. 79-80. Print Kati, Murali. History of Dowry. "Samvada. Samvada, 13 Oct. 2008. Web. 7 May 2013. [http://samvadadowry.blogspot.com/2008\\_10\\_01\\_archive.html](http://samvadadowry.blogspot.com/2008_10_01_archive.html) Gupta, Kanchanbala. "Dowry -" the price paid by the parents for getting their daughters the post of a daughter-in-law. "Tea Time Gossips.

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