

## Dowry-Related Domestic Violence in India: A Sociological Analysis of Causes, Consequences, and Legal Remedies in the Post-COVID Context

Gargi Singh, Soyonika Gogoi, Dr S MD Azash, MD Zafar Sadique

<sup>1</sup>Assistant Professor, School of Law, Presidency University, Itgalpur, Rajanukunte, Yelahanka, Bengaluru-560064 (Karnataka State), India email: [gargi.singh@presidencyuniversity.in](mailto:gargi.singh@presidencyuniversity.in)

<sup>2</sup>Assistant Professor, School of Law, Presidency University, Itgalpur, Rajanukunte, Yelahanka, Bengaluru-560064 (Karnataka State), India, email: [soyonika.gogoi@presidencyuniversity.in](mailto:soyonika.gogoi@presidencyuniversity.in)

<sup>3</sup>Assistant Professor-Senior Scale, School of Law, Presidency University, Itgalpur, Rajanukunte, Yelahanka, Bengaluru-560064 (Karnataka State), India, email: [md.azash@presidencyuniversity.in](mailto:md.azash@presidencyuniversity.in)

<sup>4</sup>Assistant Professor-Senior Scale, School of Law, Presidency University, Itgalpur, Rajanukunte, Yelahanka, Bengaluru-560064 (Karnataka State), India email: [md.zafar@presidencyuniversity.in](mailto:md.zafar@presidencyuniversity.in)

### Abstract

*Domestic violence, particularly dowry-related violence, remains one of India's most pervasive social evils, deeply rooted in its historical, cultural, and socio-economic structures. This study explores the phenomenon of dowry violence against women through a sociological lens, examining the systemic oppression women face under patriarchal traditions. Utilizing secondary data from government reports, scholarly articles, and NGO reports, the research investigates the causes of dowry violence, including greed, illiteracy, economic dependence, and gender inequality. The study analyses the interplay between social norms, legal frameworks, and dowry-related crimes such as bride burning, harassment, and domestic violence, further exacerbated during the COVID-19 pandemic. The paper discusses various sociological theories, including Patriarchal Restoration Theory, Structural Functionalism, Social Conflict Theory, and Social Disorganization Theory, to interpret the perpetuation of dowry practices in Indian society. Despite the existence of legal provisions like IPC Sections 304-B, 498-A, the Dowry Prohibition Act of 1961, and the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act of 2005, enforcement remains inadequate. The study concludes with recommendations for a multidimensional approach involving legal reforms, education, economic empowerment, and shifts in societal attitudes to effectively combat dowry-related violence and promote gender equality.*

**Keywords:** Dowry Violence, Domestic Violence, Women Empowerment, Indian Society, Legal Remedies, Sociological Analysis.

### Introduction

The first task in post-independent India was to provide a constitution promises to secure to all its citizens- —Justice-social, economic and political. Of all forms of discrimination in society, gender-based discrimination is the most intriguing. This is because this discrimination is not on the basis of racial origin or economic status or ethnic identity; rather this discrimination is based on social construction of biological differences. A consequence of any form of discrimination is violence. Violence against women is very much rampant in our society. Violence against women is a product of social values, social status of women, and

legal protection that women get. Today's, Indian society is surrounded with many problems such as unemployment, illiteracy, population growth, terrorism, etc. Among these problems, a problem which is deep rooted in Indian society is the problem of dowry system. This fact that it is condemned by every modern citizen of this country and yet it still flourishes at a very large scale in our society is a testimony of how deeply rooted this system is in the Indian society. Dowry related violence has been regarded as a universal phenomenon, cutting across all sorts of boundaries and is continuously increasing in India. Dowry death is one of the typical problems of Indian Society which is a matter of grave concern. The following definition of dowry

related violence was adopted for the present study “any act of violence or harassment associated with the giving or receiving of dowry at any time before, during or after the marriage”. Religion, customs, age-old prejudices, etc. have put Indian women in a subservient and exploitable position in many domains of life. The low rates of democracy, lack of economic independence, value biases operating against them, etc., have resulted in the women being dependent on men folk and other institutions of authority like the family, neighbourhood and the society. They are usually ignorant of their rights and also do not have proper access to justice. The offences of dowry, dowry-murders, dowry- suicides, demand of dowry etc., are the heinous crimes committed against women. The concept of equality among marital relationship is toppled by custom, as human dignity of women is questioned with custom.

The custom of dowry in Indian marriages is a deep-seated cultural phenomenon that has been described as one of the largest obstacles, “to confront India on her road to economic and social justice.” The custom is held responsible for a number of problems perpetrated against nation’s women, including dowry violence, bride burning and wife-murder. Women are the key of economic growth, but still, they are the one who have to suffer all the difficulties. The word ‘dowry’ is almost synonymous with Indian women’s oppression under patriarchal system. It has been an apparatus for indicating low status of women, the argument being that callous and mundane efficiency of “dowry deaths” indicate the low value of women’s labour and high cost of their marriages, making women a liability for their natal families and a source of lucre for many marital families. Some of the problems which had been haunting the community of women for centuries are not found now. Problems such as child marriage, practice of ‘sati’, prohibition on widow remarriage, exploitation of widows, devadasi system, purdah system, etc. have almost disappeared. As a result, of this suppression Indian women now feel that they too have their own individuality, personality, self-respect, talent, capacity and efficiency. Many of those women who could grab the opportunities extended to them have proved that they are capable of discharging the responsibilities assigned to them on par with men.

The nation which neglected almost 50% of its population for several centuries has now understood the necessity of giving equal rights and opportunities to its womenfolk. Dowry problem in India exists because of mainly two problems: Firstly, there is an excess supply of women in the Indian marriage market that results in the use of dowry as an equilibrating mechanism. Secondly, a differential in the patterns of human capital accumulation of men and women have led to a larger positive benefit for marriage for women than for men, the net differences of which is theoretically equivalent to the amount of the dowry. Both these explanations for the existence of dowry are fundamentally grounded in the powerful social and cultural ideologies of marriage held by the vast majority of Indian Society.

## Literature Review

The issue of dowry-related violence in India has been extensively explored from multiple sociological and interdisciplinary perspectives. Randeria and Visaria (1984) highlighted that the increasingly coercive nature of dowry practices has significantly eroded the social status of women, placing them at the mercy of patriarchal expectations. Gangrade and Chander (1991) pointed out that although India has enacted several laws to prohibit dowry practices, their poor enforcement has allowed these customs to persist unchecked. Negi (2000) emphasized that consumerist pressures, fuelled by modern advertising and materialistic aspirations, have further intensified dowry demands. The All-India Democratic Women’s Association (AIDWA, 2003) similarly connected the rise in dowry related cases to growing consumer culture and the widespread availability of luxury goods, which often become objects of dowry negotiations. Several scholars have documented how entrenched cultural and familial structures continue to normalize and sustain dowry practices. Haveripeth (2013) and Ramegowda (2013) emphasized that dowry violence remains deeply embedded in cultural stagnation, where both husbands and their extended families may jointly participate in the abuse of brides. Singh (2013), through a study of women seeking help from Family Counseling Centres in Chandigarh, identified dowry demands as a major source of marital discord, noting that such violence frequently manifests physically,

emotionally, and economically. Rajeswari (2014) explored the paradox that, despite women's increasing participation and leadership across multiple sectors of Indian society, they continue to experience systemic oppression and violence within the private sphere, largely driven by gendered power imbalances reinforced through dowry customs.

## Theoretical Framework

The present study adopts a multi-theoretical approach to analyse dowry-related domestic violence in India, recognizing the complexity and deeply rooted nature of the issue. Several classical and contemporary sociological theories are integrated to provide a comprehensive framework for understanding the causes and consequences of dowry practices within the Indian socio-cultural context.

First, **Patriarchal Restoration Theory** offers a central lens for analyzing how male dominance is institutionalized within family structures through dowry practices. The patriarchal system reinforces gender inequality by treating women as subordinate and as property transferred during marriage, where dowry serves as a form of economic control that secures male authority (Goody, 1973).

Second, the study applies **Structural Functionalism** to understand how dowry functions within traditional family institutions to maintain social stability and perpetuate existing social norms. According to Goody (1973), marriage payments such as dowry serve to redistribute wealth and secure alliances between families, reflecting broader social structures of hierarchy and inheritance. In Indian society, this redistribution often becomes exploitative, transforming from a traditional custom into a mechanism of economic coercion.

Third, drawing from **Structuralist Theory**, dowry is understood as part of a larger symbolic and cultural system of reciprocity. Structuralists emphasize how dowry transactions embed women within networks of obligations and expectations that reflect the social organization and cultural ideology of marriage and kinship systems (Levi-Strauss, 1969). These structures reinforce women's subordinate status by embedding economic transactions within marital arrangements.

Fourth, **Social Conflict Theory** provides a critical framework that highlights how gender-based power inequalities fuel dowry-related violence. From this perspective, dowry is a reflection of broader patriarchal power struggles, where men exert dominance over women's bodies, labor, and autonomy. The ongoing conflict between the dominant (male) and subordinate (female) groups perpetuates violence when dowry expectations are unmet, often escalating to emotional, physical, and financial abuse.

Finally, **Social Disorganization Theory** explains how the weakening of community institutions due to rapid urbanization, migration, and socio-economic transitions reduces social control and fosters dowry-related crimes. Shaw and McKay's (1942) work illustrates that weakened neighbourhood structures and mixed cultural environments create conditions where dowry violence flourishes, as legal and community oversight fail to intervene effectively. By synthesizing these theoretical perspectives, this study recognizes dowry violence not as an isolated phenomenon, but as the outcome of intersecting socio-economic, cultural, and institutional forces that sustain gender inequality in Indian society. This comprehensive framework allows for a multidimensional analysis, combining macro-level structural forces with micro-level interpersonal dynamics, and serves as a foundation for developing holistic policy interventions.

## Role of Women as Backbone of Society

The woman according to the Bible was created by God with one of man's ribs. The rib was taken from his side. This signifies that a woman is a man's co-worker and both are meant to work hand in hand to help build up the society. There was a significant reason God created her from the ribs and not from the man's foot to show her place is alongside man and not under his foot to be trampled upon. But most of the today's society holds a contrary view, as a woman is seen dependent on man and inferior to him. This mentality rightly begins right from the family, which is the smallest unit of society. The birth of a boy child is most times celebrated with more pomp and pageantry than that of a girl child because it is believed that it is the male that will carry on the family name. But the ability to support

life makes woman the most powerful and strongest being. She can play different roles at any difficult times with ease be it that of a dutiful wife, or to be an obedient daughter, or caring mother or adoring sister. Down the ages women were not given their due yet they passed on without complaints. In spite of all these qualities, “Women in Indian society have been victims of ill-treatment, humiliation, torture, and exploitation for as long as written records of social organisation and family life are available. These records are replete with incidents of abduction, rape, murder, and torture of women.”

It is said that maturity of a civilization is known from the respect of women get in that civilization. Talking of Indian society, the status of women here is not something we can boast about. Dowry deaths are also result ones of change. History is replete with examples of courageous women like Lakshmibai, Indira Gandhi, Hellen Keller and so on. Dowry-related violence is a serious problem that affects the lives of women and girls. It includes gifts, money, goods or property given from the bride’s family to the groom or in laws before, during or any time after the marriage. It is just a showcase of response to explicit or implicit demands or expectations of the groom or his family. The United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women defines dowry-related violence or harassment as “any act of violence or harassment associated with the giving or receiving of dowry at any time before, during or after the marriage.”

The violence and deaths associated with dowry demands can constitute domestic violence. Similar to acts of domestic violence, the acts used in dowry-related offenses include physical, emotional, and economic as well as mental violence, as well as harassment and stalking as means to exact compliance or to punish the victim. It is often the women who struggle with bringing successful claims of dowry-related violence, as emotional and economic violence are difficult to prove in a court of law. However, dowry-related violence is distinct from domestic violence in that the husband or current partner may not be the only perpetrator of dowry-related violence or death. In-laws, former spouses, or fiancés may also commit acts of dowry-related violence.

Survivors of dowry-related violence often require similar services as survivors of domestic violence. These women will require transport to shelters, emergency services, support programs, and legal assistance. In comparison with some other social problems, “gender discrimination” does not “appear” to be a serious problem in India. It “appears” to be so because; it has not been made a very big social issue so far. But in reality, it has weakened the strength of the female community of India. Though constitutionally men and women are equal, socially men are given priority and importance sometimes to the disadvantage of women. There are various areas wherein this discrimination is apparent.

- Discrimination in Socialisation.
- Discrimination in the Distribution of Power and Work.
- Women’s Health is ignored.

## **Custom of Dowry in Indian Marriage from Past to Present**

### **Violence against women in India:**

Religion, customs, age-old prejudices, etc. have put Indian women in an inferior and exploitable position in many domains of life. Low rates of participation in education, lack of economic independence, value biases operating against them, etc., have all become the results for the women being dependent on men folk and other institutions of authority like the family, neighbourhood and the society. They are usually ignorant of their rights and even they do not have easy access to justice. The issues related to women are being raised and discussed in various flora, in the recent times. Despite the enactment of laws, formulation of reformatory legal processes, provision of legal aid to the needy, extensive use of the provision of Public Interest Litigation, conduct of Family Courts, Women/Family counselling centers, etc., women in India have a long way to go in concretizing their Constitutional Goals into reality.

### **Historical Background**

Stereotyped customs sometimes persist, irrespective of the harm or good they may bring to a society. Legal reforms lag behind, and the legislations fail to perform before the customs- perhaps because it doesn't have a sense of the urgency of the task or the

power of social and economic conditions to limit legal rights and duties. The custom of dowry giving thus continues to lead to economic exploitation and ill treatment of brides, and humiliation of other people affected by it.

The original purpose of dowry was to provide "seed money" or property for the establishment of a new household, to help a husband feed and protect his family, and to give the wife and children some support if he were to die. Therefore, a husband thus establishes certain property rights in his wife's dowry. In addition, the wife might bring some other assets as the marriage property of her own, which did not include in the dowry and which was, as a result, hers alone. This property was "beyond the dowry".

Even in the oldest available records, such as the Code of Hammurabi, the dowry is described as an already-existing custom. Regulations surrounding the custom include: the wife being entitled to her dowry at her husband's death as part of her dower, her dowry being inheritable only by her own children, not by her husband's children by other women, and a woman not being entitled to a (subsequent) inheritance if her father had provided her dowry in marriage. If a woman died without sons, her husband had to refund the dowry but could deduct the value of the bride price; the dowry would normally have been the larger of the sums. This has just been a method for protection for the wife against the possibility of ill treatment by her husband and his family. In other words, the dowry provides an incentive to the husband not to harm his wife.

Amongst Hindus, marriage in the same caste and sub-caste has been prescribed by the social and religious practices with the result that choice of selecting a mate by own is always restricted. This results in the paucity of young boys who have high salaried jobs or promising careers in the profession. Therefore, they become scarce commodities and their parents demand huge amount of money from the girl's parents to accept her as their daughter-in-law, as if girls and chattel for which the bargain has to be made.

But now Dowry system in Indian Marriages has become the commercial aspect of the marriage. The practice of giving dowry was very common among

all people of all nations. A girl gets all the domestic utensils that are necessary to set up a family. Dowry system in India was prevalent since the Vedic period. In Epic period gifts from parents, brothers and relatives and relatives were recognized as women's property- stridhan. Kautalya has rightly pointed out means of subsistence or jewellery constitutes what is called the use of property of the woman. It is no guilt for a wife to make use of this property in maintaining her son her daughter-in-law or herself if her absent husband has made no provision for her maintenance. It is made its way to all sections, classes, castes, societies and communities. It even permitted the tribal societies known for primitive egalitarianism and gender equality and to Muslim community too. Strong legislation, laws and women's movements, every attempt to resist it has been thwarted by the wide social sanction accorded to this illegal practice.

Since British rule till date efforts are being made to remove evil from Indian society that is dowry system but in spite of huge efforts cornered, evil persists in all aspects everywhere in country. Problem is no more confined to one or two states or north Indian states but gained roots in the soil of Southern as well as Eastern states.

## **Dowry among Muslims**

All Muslim marriages involve Mahr, a payment to the bride by the groom and his family whenever she demands it and as per agreement some or all the mahr may be paid at the wedding. Mahr is usually given in cash, but it may also include real estate and jewellery. The pledge of Mahr is said to be legally binding. The groom's kinsmen are also expected to provide the bride with clothing and jewellery at the wedding. All Muslim brides are expected to bring dowries to their conjugal homes. These range from a few cheap cooking pots to a grand array of household goods, clothing, milking animals and even servants.

## **Dowry among Indian Christians**

The Indian churches also face the problem of dowry – especially those with ancient traditions in South Tamil Nadu and Kerala, such as the Syrian Church. The dowry arrangement is commonly accepted by the church; justified on the grounds that the bride is bringing with her wealth equivalent to her share in



the family property. In order to avoid sub-division and fragmentation of immovable property, the female members of the family are given their share in cash and jewellery. Until recently, a certain portion of the dowry was given to the church as a gift. There is, even now, a special ceremony among these Christians in the presence of the local priest, to mark the giving of the dowry. The evils of the dowry system are therefore experienced by the Christian community, no matter what justifications are put forward.

### Causes and Effects of Dowry

There have been a numerous causes of dowry system which can be explained as:

**Greed-Expectation:** When the marriage ceremony talks are initiated, a major mindset works that it is the event for extortion from the bride's family. Several reasons are cited including the dowry is being demanded to compensate the costs of the groom's education and liability. The fact lies in the reason that the girl is also a responsibility for the family, not a liability, which is ignored widely. The primary reason behind such measures can be justified through the greed factor. Owing to expectations of material benefits from the bride's family, dowry is demanded for, and at times, when the demands are not met, either the marriage is called off, or the bride is exploited leading to domestic violence.

**Social Status:** The ancient India was quite liberal in the event of gift exchange during marriage. This all depends upon the financial status of the families. However, at present, the dowry amount and in-kind gift exchange that has led to depletion in status of women in the society, and led to depiction of social stance through the net worth exchanged. The financial status of the bride's family is of no significance to the groom's family leading to prospective dowry extortion in a marriage. Yet again, the bride's family try to pay it out owing to the fact that losing a marriage proposal would deteriorate their status in the society.

**Illiteracy:** With a literacy rate of 74.04% in the country, it is quite valid to consider it the primary cause for different social evils and heinous crimes. Starting from the segment that is not knowledgeable about the laws and legislation, they face several

atrocities owing to dowry exchange practices. They are left with little or no choices and have to meet the demands of the groom's family, which when not met; it leads to exploitation of the women.

**Status of Women:** It is quite obvious that women's status in the society is not an equal one as compared to man. The plight doesn't end here. Rather, the society owes its infrastructure build up to the effective contribution of both genders alike. However, it is significantly ignored and the ultimate sufferers are the women in such setup. The dowry system is the brainchild of such mindset and is the primary reason behind the plight of women in the nation.

**Lack of Willingness to adhere to laws:** The Government of our nation has drafted several legislations to prevent the dowry system. However, after the decades of drafting, these laws are still insignificant and this social evil still resides in our society. The primary reason behind the failure is lack of mass participation. People pay no heed to such laws and make sure to exploit the dowry system to gain material benefits under the veil of a marriage proposal. Hence, the demands are made, and owing to ignorance of anti-dowry laws, the bride's family suffer at the hands of the groom and his family.

### Effects of Dowry System

The effects/ impact of dowry system is discussed below:

**Initiates gender imbalance:** One of the main aspects of dowry system is that it creates gender inequality in nation. According to the social infrastructure of the nation, it is a common perception that a woman is a liability and is to be married off someday, with a dowry debt at disposal. Well, for the masses, the birth of a girl is a loss to long-term plans to pay off the dowry along with the child.

This saving venture hampers the future of the girl and restricts her of equal opportunities for the male child. The very future planning for a better marriage proposal ruins the prospects of a merrier life for the child. The plight of the girl child is initiated with her birth due to this particular infrastructure and continues to hamper her peace of mind and tranquillity. According to the latest 2011 census

stats, the number of females per 1000 males stands at a meager count of 943. Hence, this impacts the building blocks of the society and hampers the growth of the nation.

**Social Effects:** When we speak of the constituent evils of the segment in our subcontinent, dowry system is one of the most leveraged one, in the society that comes into mind. Being widely practiced across the nation, every other family faces the brunt of it. If a demand is not met by the bride's family, it is she who suffers at the hands of her groom's family leading to social imbalance and emotional breakdown. 70% of our population resides in the villages and this practice still holds its stance amidst the economy and the society as a whole. The society judges the worth of a person on the basis of dowry accepted or received and this framework can be attributed to the detrimental status of woman in the society.

**Decrement status of women:** When a girl is born, for particular individuals, the societal framework is dismayed. She is no longer happiness and her birth is no more an occasion and a burden. She is deprived of basic rights to education, freedom and speech. However, owing to the basic structure, and the dowry ideology, her ordeal doesn't end with marriage. For a female individual, with little or no self-economic support, she exists at the assistance of her groom. Hence, when his demands aren't met, it leads to the breakdown of the empathetic relation between the two entities leading to disparity. And this leads to domestic violence and poses a serious threat to the future of the family. The girl loses on her freedom once she is married and it yet again, comes at the cost of a dowry debt.

**Promotes domestic violence and crime:** Dowry system initiates the act of violence in the society. When demands are not met by the bride's family, the consequences become a danger. At times, extreme steps are undertaken to shell out financial grants or material benefits from the bride's family. Well, yet again these steps can be attributed to the much-debated domestic violence. The crimes against women take a surge owing to this structure of extortion.

**Economic effects:** Economy is the financial stockpile of the nation. It is a deep-vested, mass

effort to bring the platter for every individual. Dowry system, though it seems a minor social evil can affect the nation and its individuals alike. Owing to this setup, women aren't granted equal rights and opportunities, leading to loss of economic workforce from the segment. Women are active participants in the development of the nation, and if their rights are hampered at the domestic level, it affects our economic build-up significantly. We lose the consistent workforce at the hands of a social evil and hamper the growth of our own home and the society.

**Deteriorating financial status of bride's family:** Dowry doesn't affect the bride alone. Rather, its ordeal extends to bride's parents and they have to bear the financial demands of their counterparts to ensure well-being of their child. With regular demands from the groom's family, reports of suicides are increasing in every day-to-day life. Needless to say, this social evil should necessarily be eradicated for the society and the nation.

**Loss of self-esteem among the women:** The demands being met for the welfare of the bride comes at a cost. Out of concern for her parents, she loses on self-esteem by believing she is a burden on her family. It affects her peace of mind, and her right to a better life. Dowry system has imposed an invisible chain upon the freedom and self-respect of women and continues to haunt them since time eternal. Observing the problem closely, it can only be stated the greed of an individual ruins the peace of a beautiful brain.

## Laws Related to Dowry Deaths

Initially at the time of marriage, money is given by bride's family as per demand of the in laws but later on hunger of dowry is increasing extremely high which is followed by torture of bride and ends up in her death. In other words, in bride burning cases, crime is normally abetted and even committed by the females themselves. The unnatural death of newly married young woman due to dowry is routine headline of every newspaper and media even today. Self-burning by females after death of her husband in Hindu community is traditionally accepted and matter of proud as in 'Pratha' or 'Johar'. But nowadays, large number of newly married young women is burnt alive by their husbands and / or in laws or forced by them to end their unhappy life,

while a few others are killed first and then burned to hide the crime. In majority of these cases, dowry is the prime motive behind this terrible crime. Protection of young married women from the hands of this heinous crime:

## IPC Section 304 - B deals with dowry death

When the death of a married woman is caused by any burns or bodily injury or occurs under abnormal or suspicious circumstances within seven years of her marriage duration and it is clearly shown that soon before her death she was subjected to cruelty or harassment or torture by her husband or any relative of her husband or in laws for, or in connection with, any demand for dowry, such death shall be called as "dowry death", and such husband or relative or in laws deemed to have caused her death. Whoever commits dowry death shall be punished with imprisonment for a term minimum of seven years which may extend to imprisonment for life.

## IPC Section 498 - A deals with husband or relative of husband of the subjecting her to cruelty

Whoever being the husband or the relative of the husband or in law of a woman, subjects such woman to cruelty or harassment or torture shall be punished with imprisonment for a term which may extend up to three years and shall to pay fine. The cruelty can be either mental or physical torture which drives the women to commit suicide or to cause serious injury, or danger to life or health.

**The Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961:** The Dowry Prohibition Act of 1961 was one of the most significant attempts for the uplift of women's status in the society and the abatement of dowry system.

This legislation marked the inception of an evolution leading to development of a legal infrastructure which effectively monitored the exchange and facilitation of exchange of dowry. It imposes a penalty in section 3 in case of exchange or demand for dowry. The minimum term for the lay-off was 5 years and a minimum fine of INR 15,000 or the amount of dowry, depending upon whichever is higher. In case a demand for dowry was made, it was equally punishable in the legislation. Well, if a direct or indirect demand was made, it would invoke a prison term of 6 months at the threshold with a fine of INR 10,000.

**Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005:** Women are one of the most significant assets of the society and are active contributors in an all-round development of the nation. However, owing to the male dominated setup in our society, they suffer both physically and mentally. Well, their ordeal is not limited to the society as a whole. Rather, several cases reveal that domestic violence is still a significant deterrent against the uplift of the woman's status in the society.

To counteract the abuse women, face at their own abode, the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005 was passed. It facilitated a civil law solution to protect a woman from domestic violence in India. The definition and the segments included in the legislation are diversified and include all forms of abuse, namely, physical, emotional, economic, sexual or verbal aggression.

According to the preliminary survey report collected by the District Crime Records, Shimoga Police Commissioner's Office, from the year 2001 to 2010 the cases registered under 498(A) IPC and 498(A) DP Act statistic is as below:

**Table 1 Cases Registered under 498(A) IPC**

Year	Reported	False	Transferred	Punishment	Decided	Settlement	Enquiry	Investigation
2001	134	08	08	07	88	08	07	02
2002	159	01	01	04	131	08	11	03
2003	127	02	04	03	84	07	2	05
2004	107	08	04	07	55	05	19	03
2005	158	04	06	10	93	07	32	06
2006	191	05	05	04	87	06	93	01
2007	158	03	06	02	52	06	85	04
2008	207	04	10	01	33	01	157	01
2009	255	03	15	02	05	-	193	37
2010	48	01	-	-	-	-	19	28



Table 1 reveals a consistently high number of reported cases under Section 498(A) IPC across the years, indicating the widespread nature of dowry-related violence. The relatively low number of false or transferred cases suggests that most complaints are serious and reflect genuine grievances. The figures on settlements and investigations underscore the growing reliance of women on legal remedies.

The most important cause of accepting dowry by the grooms' parents is that they have to give dowry to their daughters and sisters. Naturally, they look to the dowry of their sons to meet their obligations in finding husbands for their daughters. For instance, an individual who may be against the dowry system is compelled to accept fifty to sixty thousand rupees in cash in dowry only because he has to spend an equal amount in his sister's or daughter's marriage. The vicious circle starts and the amount of dowry goes on increasing till it assumes a scandalous proportion.

## Statement of Problem

The research problem dealt with in the current research project is highly relevant and of great importance in the present-day context when the instances of dowry deaths are increasing and so is the number of women affected by it. Dowry death, in this 21st century, is a burning problem of the society. It is increasing day by day owing to prevailing socio - economic fabric and life style in the family. It has become a major challenge to the police personnel, medico legal experts as well as to judicial officers not only to wipe out this social menace but also to penalize the culprits in deterrent manner. The most interesting feature of this crime is that in the majority of the cases of bride – killing centered only one sex. More often cruelty emanates from the failure of the parents of the girl to meet the exacting demand for the dowry by the in-laws of the victims; our anxiety on this score has darkened into dread which in turn has dwindled into despair. The unnatural deaths of newly married young women have become a public talk of the town now. Nowadays a large number of newly married women are burnt alive by their husbands and / or in-laws or forced by them to choose fire to end their unhappy life. In majority of these cases dowry is the first and foremost motive behind this heinous crime. The

extreme stage of vulnerability, pain, emotional conflicts, exploitation and helplessness has ceased up the minds of women hampering the social development of the whole of country, and adding a bad name to our democracy. It is mainly because of lack of awareness that women have been turned into a saleable commodity. Most of the women are not educated enough to defy the pre-established social norms. Even those who are educated are continuing this ugly tradition in the name of social prestige. The dowry system is responsible to a great extent for child marriage and discrimination against girls.

## Research Objectives

- To assess the role of women in society and crime against them.
- To explore the custom of dowry in Indian marriages from past to present at a glance.
- To analyse the dowry death and dowry against women over a decade and cause of such cruel custom.
- To determine the various laws relating to women and dowry and its consequences.
- To make aware about how the society has converted the custom of marriage-to-marriage market.
- To provide suggestion about how to actually prevent the increasing trend of dowry death.

## Hypotheses

Based on these objectives, the study proposed several hypotheses:

- (1) that young married women between 18–30 are the most vulnerable demographic;
- (2) that regional disparities exist in the frequency of dowry deaths;
- (3) that the effectiveness of legal enforcement significantly influences the reporting and prevalence of dowry violence; and
- (4) that socioeconomic development does not necessarily translate into reduced dowry practices.

## Universe/Population of the Study-

For the purpose of this proposal women are the group which will be taken in account exclusively, to understand the ill effects of dowry death both their physical as well as psychological. In this study,

women are exclusively chosen because they are the only victim in large numbers of this heinous crime.

The project has classified the victims of dowry deaths into different age groups as follows, from 0-10 years, from 10-15 years, 15-120 years and from 20-25 years. It includes mostly female victims. Paper is only confined to the age limit of women under different divisions.

### Method of data Collection-

The relevant data used in the paper is collected from secondary sources. Data includes Articles, UN Reports, Census Reports, News articles, Case Laws, reports from different NGO's involved in dowry death issue, and other web generated resources. The paper intends to establish connection between the crimes going on related to dowry death and the age groups of women who mostly suffer.

The setting for this research is India, showing alarming rate in the growth of heinous crime, along with it shows the comparative studies of other states from all the four corners of the country. It tries to establish the relation between all the variables with the help of Graph drawn on the basis of data obtained from different secondary sources.

### Data Analysis and Discussion

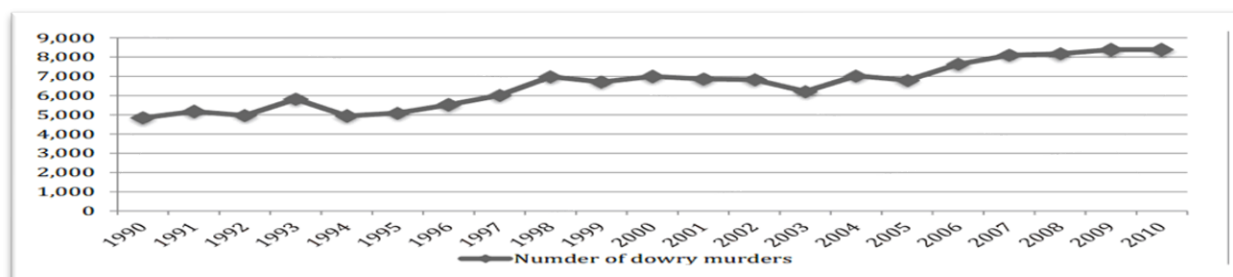
Unnatural deaths of married women amongst the total female deaths have been an increasing trend in Indian society during the recent past years, which may be suicide, homicide, or even accidents. But these suicides and homicides are currently more commonly associated with the dowry disputes. Magnitude of dowry deaths shows that there has been a sharp increase of dowry deaths in the National Capital, while Chennai being at the lowest rate.

**Table 2 Magnitude of Dowry Deaths**

FSI Rank within Top 8 Cities	City	Gender Ratio (Female per 1000M)	Rapes-Nos	Rapes per Lakh Females	Dowry Deaths-Nos	Dowry Deaths-per lakh Females
1	Chennai	964	43	1.9	18	0.2
2	Bengaluru	940	65	1.6	51	0.7
3	Kolkata	930	37	1.7	11	0.3
4	Pune	883	52	3.3	4	0.1
5	Hyderabad	943	46	2.3	36	1.9
6	Mumbai	900	191	3.3	18	0.3
7	Ahmedabad	852	56	2.0	9	0.1
8	Delhi	866	488	6.3	118	1.5

Table 2 shows that Delhi reports the highest number of dowry deaths per lakh women, followed by Hyderabad and Bengaluru, which emphasizes the fact that urbanization does not necessarily equate to

safety for women. In contrast, cities like Pune and Ahmedabad report lower figures, highlighting regional differences in dowry practices and law enforcement.



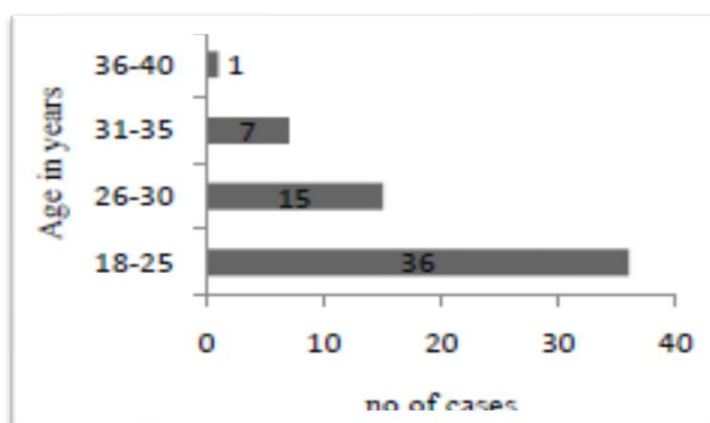
Source: NCRB, Crime against Women, 1990-2011

**Figure 1 Reported dowry deaths in India**

Figure 1 illustrates a steady rise in dowry deaths from 1990 to 2010, which may be due to increased awareness and reporting but could also reflect a real rise in incidents.

The above graph has been published by the NCRB, Crime Against Women where it depicts there has

been a gradual rise from year 1990-1997 and after 1997 there has been a steep increase from 1998-2010. This shows that although the world is getting technologically developed but still the mindset of the third world country like India has still been in the period where women were being sold just for in the exchange of money.

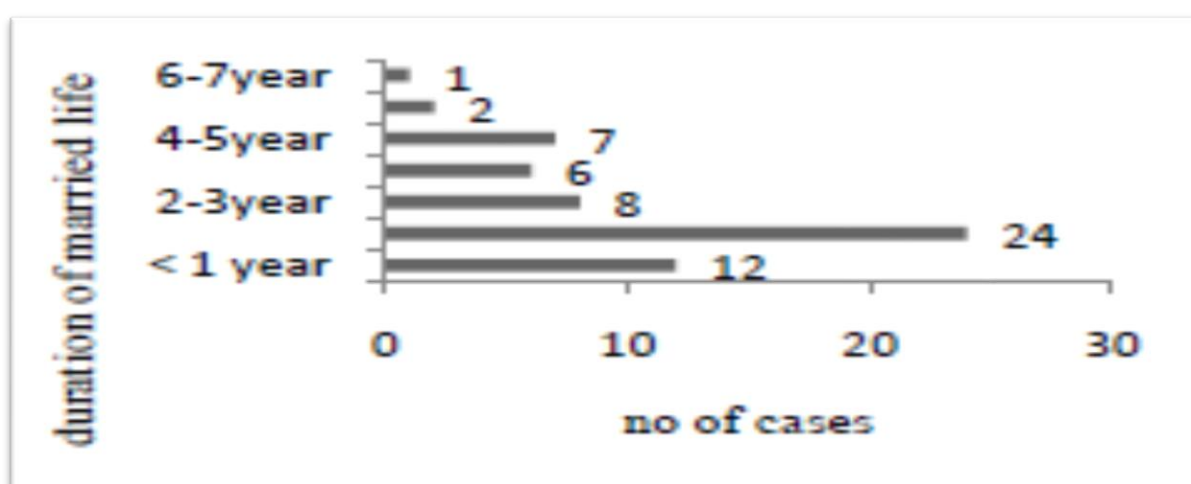


**Figure 2 Age of dowry death victims**

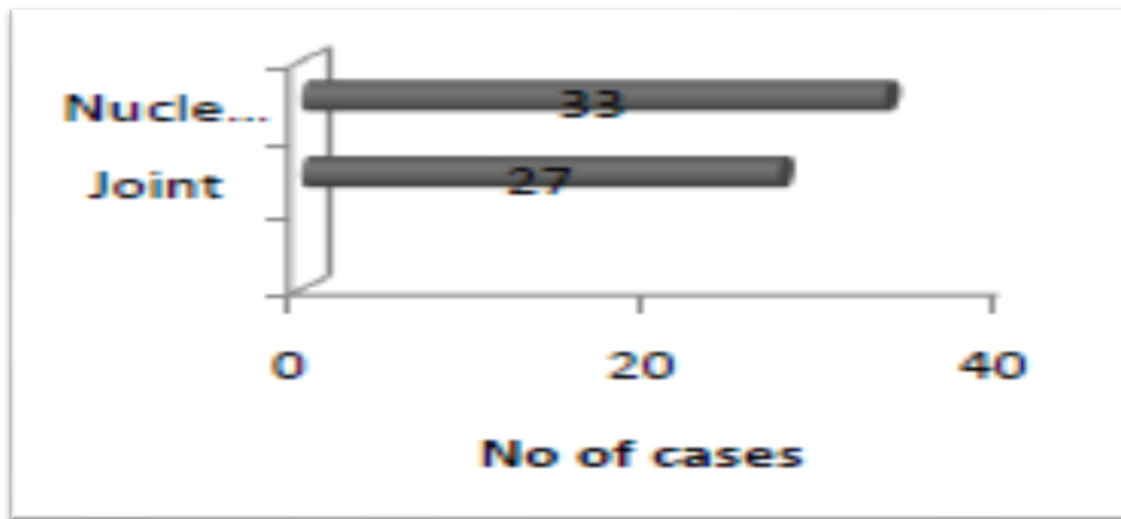
Figure 2 shows that women aged 18–25 form the most vulnerable group, indicating that young, newly married women are most at risk.

Most of the victims are aged between 18-25 years (60%) cases, followed by 25% cases in 26-30 years,

11.66% cases in 31-35 years and only 1.66% case has occurred in 36-40 years of age, 56% of victims belong to the age group of 18-25 years. From the below graph 3, it is evident highest number of dowry death cases is from 2<sup>nd</sup> to 3<sup>rd</sup> year of marriage may be due to infertility or infidelity.



**Figure 3 Duration of married life in dowry death victims**



**Figure 4 Occurrence of dowry deaths in relation to type of the Family**

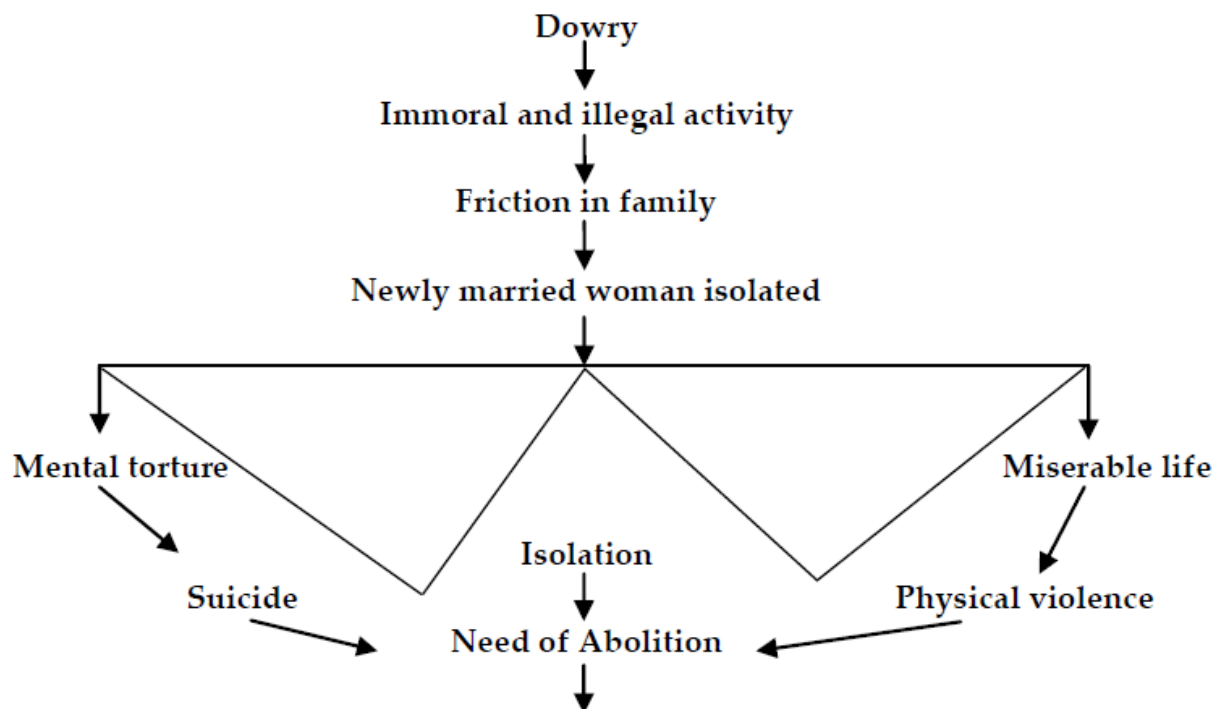
Figure 4 highlights that 55% of these deaths happen in nuclear families, contrary to the assumption that joint families pose a greater risk, and this may be due to a lack of oversight and increased isolation.

With regard to type of family, this study shows most cases were from nuclear family 55% where suicides were easily committed, and 45% from joint family. This may be due to rapid urbanization where

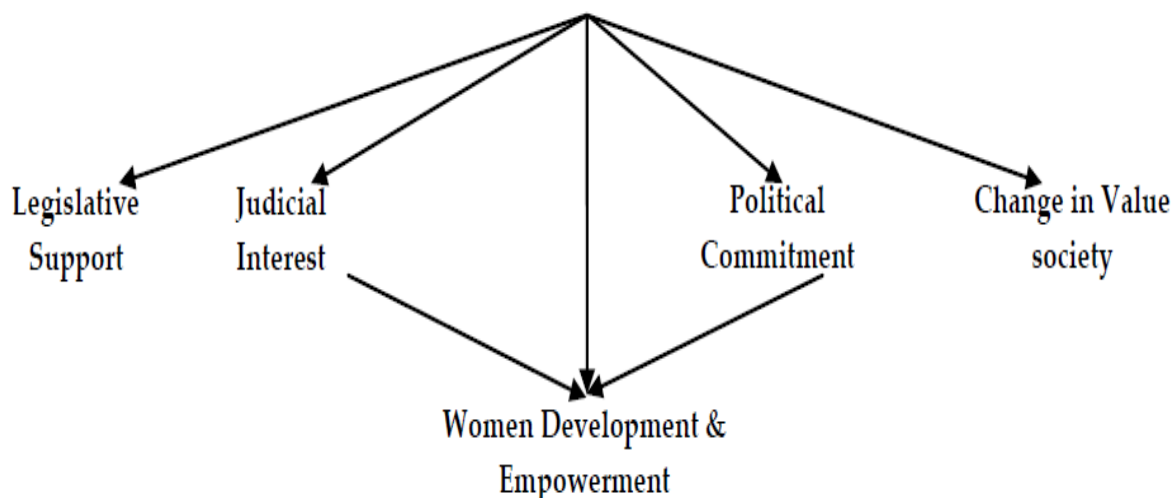
families settle in urban areas in search of work and other issues, and more often wife accompanies husband, segregating from joint families.

The National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) figures state that 8,233 dowry deaths were reported in 2012 from various states. The statistics work out to one death per hour.

### SOCIOLOGICAL MODULE OF DOWRY PROBLEM



**Figure 5 Sociological Module of Dowry Problem**



**Figure 6 Sociological Process of Dowry System**

The above Figures 5 and 6, diagram depicts the sociological process of dowry system. More specifically how it leads to illegal activities and from there it to women development and empowerment.

#### Summary of the Findings

1. Since India after independence, the country has seen a rise in dowry-related violence alongside its economic boom. The country's growing economy exacerbates dowry crimes by encouraging a culture of materialism.
2. Key findings from the study include a continued rise in dowry deaths despite the presence of strong legal frameworks. Victims are predominantly young women aged 18–25, and nuclear family structures show higher instances of dowry-related violence. Although legal awareness has increased, it does not always lead to effective enforcement or protection. Deeply entrenched societal norms and patriarchal values continue to dominate, limiting the effectiveness of legal and social reforms.
3. Women, the worst sufferers of such change, have become victims of molestation, rape, domestic violence including dowry torture and death.
4. The tentacles of dowry have penetrated in all social constituencies i.e. both in urban and rural areas, upper, middle and lower castes and classes, different religions, etc. overall it has assumed a pan-Indian character.

5. The increasing rate of literacy and the governmental emphasis (whether through media or various welfare schemes/ financial incentives) on status equality of male and female child has not made any significant change towards eliminating the gender biases from peoples' minds.
6. Cases of dowry death has been increasing day by day and immediate measures need to be taken by the Government as well State intervention also requires for the complete elimination of this heinous evil.
7. To evaluate the existing legal measures provided in IPC under different provisions and to access the impact of the Dowry Prohibition Act of 1996.

#### Recommendation

The problem has to be visualized in a wider context and cannot be viewed in isolation from the status of women in the society. Only, Legislation cannot by itself solve deep-rooted social problems; there must be some other way of approaches. Therefore, what is required is not only a strong legal support network from government but also opportunities must be provided for economic independence, essential education and awareness, alternative accommodation and a change in attitude and mindset of society which includes judiciary, legislature, executive, men and the most importantly woman herself. Restructuring society in terms of power and role relationship while emphasizing the



egalitarian values has become need of the hour. The need of the time requires is a more holistic approach to dealing with the phenomenon of violence against women, particularly in Dowry and Bride Price. During the national Struggle for Independence, Gandhi gave a call for emancipation of women. He wrote-” I am uncompromising in the matter of women ‘s rights. The difference in sex and physical form denotes no difference in status. Woman is the complement of man, and not inferior”.

Thus, the first task in post-independent India was to provide a constitution promises to secure to all its citizens- —Justice-social, economic and political. With all her rich cultural antiquity, diversity and heritage, India has also been a country that has suppressed her women. It is ironic to say the least, because Indians have always worshipped their country as a Janani or Mother. On the one hand they worship this mother, and on the other they disregard their sisters, daughters, mothers, and wives. One first raises your voice against dowry. resist taking and giving dowry.

Also, the domestic violence, murder, and female infanticide that result from the dowry tradition must be abolished through increased enforcement of legal provisions such as those in the *Dowry Prohibition Act of 1961*. By vehemently prosecuting and convicting perpetrators of dowry violence, the expected punishment could be increased enough to offset the benefits of committing such dowry related crime, thereby reducing the overall frequency of occurrence.

## Conclusion

Dowry problem has become one of the most important and heinous crime in this 21<sup>st</sup> century. Dowry as well as bride price humiliate and dehumanize women in India. It is true that the increasing coercive character of dowry has led to a decline in the status of women. But it must be pointed out that contrary to popular wisdom; women do not have a higher status in those castes and communities where dowry and bride price is paid for them. This social curse has to be attacked by a multipronged and organized approach by police, women welfare organizations, reputed public servants, and judiciary and the practice of dowry abuse is rising in India. The most severe in —bride

burning, the burning of women whose dowries was not considered sufficient by their husband or in-laws. The concept of equality has exercised a powerful emotional appeal in the struggle of women to free them from age-old oppression. The only long-term solution is to change the mindsets of the people they need to view women with respect and as equal partners in building India’s society.

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