

Dowry: a curse

Dowry was originally designed to safeguard the woman and the provision was made in the form of “Sthreedhan” (“Stress means woman and “dhan” as wealth) consisting of money, property or gifts given solely to the woman by her parents at the marriage. But, the abuse of this custom eroded and aborted the original meaningful function where dowry was a safety net for the woman. It has now become a price tag for the groom. The groom often demands dowry consisting of a large sum of money, furniture, and electronics.

The price of the Indian groom has considerably increased based on his qualifications, profession and income. Doctors, chartered Accountants and Engineers expect a handsome dowry. A reactionary wave of preserving oppressive practices of dowry demands appeared also in the West and other countries where immigrants of Indian origin established themselves.

Dowry has reduced the status of women to that of a commodity, a commodity, available in the market with so much cash and gifts. The grooms have also become a saleable commodity available at such a price, earning so many amounts per month. The rates of dowry have been fixed for the grooms of different categories- Doctors, Engineers. Bank officers, govt. Officers and Businessmen command high ranking in dowry parameters.

In case the marriage with dowry lesser than the demand takes place, a new chapter of mental and physical violence against the bride begins to extract more dowries. The violence status from the day one with taunting remarks from the in-law and the docile husband also.

The practice of dowry abuse is still on the rise in India. The most severe is bride burning when it was considered insufficient dowry by her husband or in-laws. Most of these incidents are given the shape of as accidental burns in the kitchen or are disguised as suicide. It is evident that there exist deep rooted prejudices against women in India. Cultural practices such as the payment of dowry is serving as death warrants for women in Indian so duty.

The need of hour is the social awareness at least among the females. More stringent laws, more awareness, more education to the girls, more self-dependence of the girls and a social awakening can only curb this ever increasing evil.