

EVIL EFFECTS OF DOWRY OR ARGUMENTS AGAINST DOWRY

Practice of dowry which assumed the form of an institution over the years has caused a lot of hardships to a large number of people in the Indian society. At one time dowry was given willingly by the bride's parents, and it was being accepted by the groom's family as a kind of voluntary gift. But today, dowry has come to be "demanded". In the marriage negotiations, very often dowry considerations becomes primary ones, and all other considerations become secondary. Dowry is demanded by the groom's party without taking into considerations about the paying capacity of the bride's party. Hence in many poor families the birth of a child is very much despised. From the day of the birth of the girl, the problem of dowry haunts the mind of the parents. Dowry had virtually become a menace in the Indian society. Its practice leads to various evil consequences among which the following may be noted.

1) Dowry causes great economic burden on bride's family: Dowry has become great economic burden to the middle and lower middle class families. People belonging to these classes spend on maintaining the family standards in providing the necessities of life, educating children and meeting various social obligations. These people who live from hand to mouth rarely save money. Hence to arrange the marriage of their daughters they have to borrow money or sell a piece of their property or mortgage valuable articles of the family. And this incurred debt is passed on from generation to generation which ultimately leads to total collapse of the family.

2) Dowry lowers the status of women and Damages her dignity: Prevalence of the custom of dowry reflects upon the inferior status of women in society. In her own natal home, a girl is considered to be liability and a drain on the family resources. This has major effect on the socialization of children. In respect of food, dresses, medical care, education etc., in the middle class family boy is given more importance than the girl. Particularly when the family income is very less, boy is likely to obtain preference to girls in the matter of education. Dowry is thus a great impediment in the progress of education of girls. Without higher education girls can hardly get into high positions which help them increase their status.

Dowry lowers the status of women in another way. As every marriage brings substantial sum, one would normally be tempted to contract a second and third marriage just for the monetary benefit. The boy who receives huge amount of dowry may think of himself as more dignified as having a higher status, greater prestige and more respectful than the girl. This may make the married woman to develop a sense of inferiority.

3) Dowry Causes child marriage: Dowry system is one of the strong factors leading to practice of child marriage. Many people arrange the marriage of their daughters in childhood, that is, prior to puberty, in order to escape from dowry. When the boys become mature they often find difficult to adjust with their wives. Even today child marriages are not completely eradicated.

4) Dowry leads to harassments and murders: Women are ill-treated, disrespected, man-handled, tortured and are subject to all sorts of cruelties in the name of dowry. Tragic results of dowry system can be seen, in which newly married girls are always being victim of harassment, violence, murder and suicide. Dowry is demanded as though it is a fundamental right of the bridegroom. Violence against women who bring less dowry or no dowry include- physical battering, emotional neglect and torture, verbal abuse, refusal of sufficient food and so on.

In spite of the legislation against the practice of dowry, it persists. Demands for dowry has even caused dowry deaths.

5) Dowry leading to Immorality: Practice of dowry is not only regarded as unlawful but even as immoral. According to Gandhi ji, one who makes dowry as a pre- condition of his marriage, not only shows disrespect to a woman but also humiliates his own nation, education and womanhood. This practice leads to some immoral practices as

a) In order to escape from the menace of dowry some unmarried women take up some petty jobs to earn money, just to improve their financial conditions. They often sexually cheated by young boys who make false promises to marry them. These girls get pregnant and are socially defamed and later they commit suicide.

b) Some parents who cannot pay substantial dowry to a boy of their selection, helplessly they decide to give their daughter in marriage to an aged man or a disabled man or even a diseased man or to a divorcee. This may make many girl to become unhappy throughout their lives.

c) Dowry system enhances the importance of male children at home. Due to this female children are neglected and put to all sorts of hardships.