
THE DOWRY TRAP: SOCIETY'S OBSESSION WITH MARRIAGE, STATUS, AND SOCIAL PRESTIGE

Miss Prachi Singh, Assistant Prof, College of Law for Women, Affiliated to Osmania University, Hyderabad

यत्र नार्यस्तु पूज्यन्ते रमन्ते तत्र देवताः ।
यत्रैतास्तु न पूज्यन्ते सर्वास्तत्राफलाः क्रियाः ॥”

(Manusmriti 3.56)

“Where women are honoured, there the gods rejoice; where they are not respected, all actions remain fruitless.”

ABSTRACT

The present paper is an in-depth critique of the continued existence of dowry in contemporary India, in spite of the constitutional affirmation of equality and tightened legislations against dowry. The underlying text behind the study is the shifting dynamic of marriage and the process of marginalizing marriage as a symbol of social status to one of social prestige, economic competition, and public recognition—this leads to the increasing normalizing of extravagant marriage and material expectations. The study also analyses the legal provisions in relation to dowry offences in the Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961 and the Bhartiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023, around dowry-related murder and cruelty towards married women.

The study brings to the fore how dowry or bride-price is manifested in modern ways – demanding for luxury cars, flat, lavish wedding ceremony, gold, and paying the economic support of the bridegroom for work and lifestyle. The paper also highlights some of the recent real life cases of dowry harassment, such as Twisha Sharma, the Dowry death case of Deepika Nagar and the “Death of a newlywed” case in Lucknow to show the psychological, emotional and physical impact of Dowry harassment. In addition, empirical pie chart analysis based on secondary sources like the NCRB reports, India Spend reports, reports from the United Nations Women and journal articles have been included in analysing the persistence of dowry practices, new forms of dowry demand, and the effect of dowry on women.

Keywords: Dowry System, Patriarchy, Domestic Violence, Social Prestige, Gender Equality.

INTRODUCTION

In Indian culture, all its philosophies emphasized dignity, respect, and equality in social life. However, Marriage in the modern form is a very paradoxical reality. In the traditional Indian household, marriage has become more than just a holy bond between two people; it's grown into a public display of wealth, status, socialization, and validation. Once considered a cultural and emotional connection is in many cases an economic bargaining process influenced by prestige, social structures, and demand for “paternalism.” Dowry culture has continued to thrive in the contemporary world because of its legal ramifications as well as a subconscious idea of reputation and acceptance in society.¹

The large-scale celebration of lavish weddings has played a major role in the normalisation of the practice of dowry in modern-day India. Lavish ceremonies, luxurious settings, fancy dresses, excessive jewellery, and public display of riches are some of the things that are traditionally seen as symbols of family prestige and honour. The marriage process has become an increasingly performative process, with its essence being about how many material things you can invest. Marriage increasingly is a performative process, and what matters for society is a material expenditure, not emotional compatibility nor respect. Driven by social decorum, even the word "gift" is adopted to link dowry with mores and status so that the economic requirements behind the dowry system remain largely hidden from society. Implicit values from the social endorsement of towering weddings contribute to the idea that the value of marriage is found in material exchanges.

This social responsibility is placed most heavily on the shoulders of the mother, particularly for daughters, who may feel incredible strain, psychologically, emotionally, and financially. Many families feel they cannot refuse such unreasonable demands, because in a society in which the marriage of the daughter is usually considered a matter of familial honour, the family cannot afford to break with it, given its lack of good repute or criticism. Parents often spend their entire life savings, pay off mountains of debt, and mortgage their home, or even jeopardize their financial positions in order to make a marriage that is considered “respectable” by society's norms. When fears of social exclusion and judgment prevail, the family has to do

¹ Shalu Nigam, *Towards an Inclusive Gender Just Code in India: Women's Rights are Non-Negotiable* (We the People Network 2025)
Negha Senthil, Jayanthi Vajiram & Nirmala V., *The Misuse of Law by Women in India – Constitutionality of Gender Bias*, arXiv (2023)

what's acceptable to the public rather than what is healthy for them. The solidarity and joy of marriage thus become counterpointed with economic vulnerability and social anxiety.²

The mentality of 'Log kya kahenge?' captures the essence of 'how unspoken is how it works' in South Asian societies, the unseen power mechanism that dictates individual choice. The power of social prestige was as effective as any other coercion; it made people feel obliged to comply with oppressive conventions even though it might be illegal and wrong. To please other people's expectations to accept gifts of bride wealth can discourage any backlash against them and can even encourage and normalise emotional abuse. When challenged by families who don't approve, they are seen as unable, dishonourable, or merely "socially low," thereby strengthening conformity by instilling fear of condemnation. Dowry exists in the form of not just greed but systems of collective social conditioning that support material extravagance as bringing honour.

Dowry culture in modern India is thus not simply a legal matter or a traditional custom but must be viewed as an expression of a patriarchal power structure that embodies class aspirations, social competition, and symbolic status. Though constitutionally guaranteed equality and enactment of legislations like the Dowry Prohibition Act of 1961, the practice is having its sophisticated versions, most of them socially acceptable. With dowry, what can be seen is the duality that exists between the law and a posit. distribution of expectations, laws that are progressive, and expectations that are regressive. So today, the dowry system is not only the commodification of marriage – it is the commodification of dignity – in other words, the economic and social valuation of relationships rather than the human and equality-based valuation.

WHAT FACTORS CONTRIBUTE TO THE VISIBILITY OF DOWRY PRACTICES IN SOCIETY? WHAT FACTORS MAKE DOWRY EXERCISES MORE NOTICEABLE WITHIN SOCIETY?³

Although the abolition of the custom of Dowry is legally prohibited in India, it still exists in

² Anju Vali Tikoo, Dowry System in Modern India: A Legal and Social Perspective, 12 Indian J. L. & Soc'y 115 (2023)

India UNFPA, *Laws Addressing Gender Based Violence and Harmful Practices* (2025), <https://india.unfpa.org>

³ IndiaSpend, *Why Dowry-Related Crimes Continue to Rise in India*, <https://www.indiaspend.com>

Ibid

Prem Chowdhry, Marriage, Patriarchy and Violence Against Women in Contemporary India, 58 Econ. & Pol. Wkly. 42 (2023)

society in a hidden and open manner in modern society. Dowry, which was once thought to be a marriage ritual, has slowly been transformed into a deeply entrenched system of cultural and economic extraction based on the principle of patriarchy, social standing and inequality considering gender. This dowry system has now evolved in modern India from being a simple cash demand to more complex and socialized practices carried veiled as “gifts,” “family responsibilities,” or “customary support.” Therefore, in order to understand dowry, a socio-cultural analysis of the commercialization of marriage within hierarchical social structures can usefully complement, if not replace, the legal interpretation of dowry. To understand dowry, a socio-cultural analysis of the commercialization of marriage within the hierarchical social structures is therefore useful, if not an alternative, to the legal interpretation of dowry.

Both the legislative and dictionary meaning of the word ‘dowry’, as per Section 2 of Dowry Prohibition Act 1961, defines the word as any property or valuable security which is given or agreed to be given, directly or indirectly, by one party to another partner in the marriage, or by the parents or relatives of one party to the other party, in connection with the marriage. That does not have to be payment – it can be any demand related to the marriage pact. The key part in the statutory definition is the term “in connection with marriage”, which roughly translates to ‘in relation to marriage’ – this can help separate dowry than whether the giving was voluntary or of affection; however, it is important to note that the latter comes with expectation or demand. As such, a gift given without any strings attached and without any provocation is not considered to be a dowry transaction and thus does not give rise to criminal responsibility, "except in the case of social pressure, coercion, negotiation, or expectation. As such, a gift made without a provocation or demand falls outside the scope of dowry, except in the case of social pressure, coercion, negotiation, or expectation.

Thus, the line separating gifts and dowries is of significant importance in modern talk of the law. Voluntary contributions are typically just symbolic gestures of love and generally are non-intrusive, do not involve bargaining, and do not place any social pressure on the contributor. Dowry, however, works because of the implied economic advantage that a marriage grant. But this distinction is sometimes not applied because demands are made which are actually coercive, but disguised as “customary gifts” to avoid legal challenge. Among the worst consequences of committing to a partner is that families are often forced to give costly things because of the threat of ridicule, cancellation of marriage, emotional harm, or even later assault

of the wife. Hence, the culture of dowry persists today rather than as a formal crime.⁴

Dowry has taken on a number of disguised and updated forms in the modern world, reflective of the new economic hopes and consumerist values. Fancy vehicles, prime residence apartments, gold accessories, costly wedding parties, foreign tour packages and buying fancy electronic gadgets are some of the factors that are now frequently being taken into account in matrimonial discussions. In many instances, the bride's family members are expected to fund the complete expense of a lavish wedding ceremony celebration in order to maintain the family members' prestige and social standing. Worse still, dowry practices today also include providing for the suitor's university education, business ventures, professionalization, or emigration abroad, making marriage an engine for economic development. These practices highlight that today's dowry is not just a traditional practice, but a part of an institutionalized system of financial exploitation accepted as such by society.

The dowry system is considered bad and expensive, and in view of this, Indian criminal law imposes very high penalties for both the giver and taker of the dowry. Part III of the Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961, against dowry makes the offering, receiving, or facilitating of dowry a crime, thereby imposing prison terms and fines. In addition, Section 4 takes into account the direct or indirect asking for a dowry, regardless of whether the marriage has been conducted or not. The provisions not only embody the legislative purpose to make certain businesses illegal but also the notion of 'culture of coercive expectation', which was implicit in the legislative process when discussions were taking place about marriage. These provisions demonstrate both the legislative intention to make these businesses illegal as well as the idea of 'culture of coercive expectation' that existed during the discursive process in which law was composed relating to marriage.

Legal framework regarding dowry-related violence has also undergone a change in accordance with *Bhartiya Nyaya Sanhita 2023 (BNS)*, which has superseded the Indian Penal Code. The offence of dowry death has been brought within the ambit of Section 80 of *Bhartiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023*, and Section 304B of IPC, as originally framed, was repealed. This is in response to cases of abnormal deaths and situations in which the woman's death took place within the first seven years of marriage, and evidence of cruelty or harassment bearing on dowry demands

⁴ The Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961, No. 28 of 1961, § 2, 3 and 4
Aparna Mahanta, *Domestic Violence and Dowry Harassment in Modern India*, 64 *J. Indian L. Inst.* 211, 218–20 (2022)

is found quite near her death. The provision is in response to the grave problems of dowry-related deaths on a declining trend, including dowry-related suicide, burns, and mysterious deaths within the marital houses, as acknowledged by the legislature.⁵

Moreover, the IPC Section 498A, which used to cover offences of deserving cruelty against a woman by her husband or his near kin, has now been replaced by the *Bhartiya Nyaya Sanhita* Section 85. Unlawful demands for property or valuable security are tied to the provision of physical and mental cruelty for married women, effectively criminalising these activities. Mental cruelty acknowledges that dowry-related abuse is more than physical violence, and can happen over long periods of time in the form of threats, psychological or emotional coercion, and humiliation.

It is therefore impossible to simply interpret dowry in present-day India as a “ceremonial gift of money” only – it is a socio-economic phenomenon that could be understood only through the prism of a patriarchy, consumerism, and social prestige fixation. Progressive legislative changes and criminal sanctions have not hindered dowry from changing adaptively within contemporary marriages: frequently, it exists as an embedded component in traditional discourses of honour, marriage, and family obligations. But it is its enduring nature that reflects the shocking disparity between the constitutional vision of equality and the lived reality of women who are still experiencing violence and economic exploitation at the hands of their spouses.

REAL-LIFE CASES REFLECTING THE REALITY OF THE DOWRY TRAP

Case 1- The case of Twisha Sharma happened in 2026⁶

Twisha Sharma's demise in 2026 was one of the most talked-about alleged dowry harassment incidents of the last few years. A few months after getting married in Bhopal, model-actor Twisha was found dead under suspicious circumstances at her matrimonial home. It was first investigated as a case of suicide, but later sparked a nationwide public outcry after her family claimed she was being subjected to years of "mental harassment", domestic abuse, and dowry-

⁵ The *Bhartiya Nyaya Sanhita*, 2023, No. 45 of 2023, §§ 80, 85, India Code (2023)

Ibid

Veena Talwar Oldenburg, *Dowry Murder: The Imperial Origins of a Cultural Crime* 112–15 (Oxford Univ. Press 2002)

⁶ Times of India, Twisha Sharma Case: Suspicious Death and Alleged Dowry Harassment Investigation, <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com>

related violence by her husband and in-laws. Media reports stated that Twisha had been in emotional distress, which she had been sharing with her close family member before dying. Among the most disturbing revelations discovered in the investigation was one from her that said, “I am trapped, bro,” and meant, “I’m emotionally trapped, I can’t get out of this marriage.” There were also reports that there was verbal abuse, psychological pressure, and frequent marital disputes within the home.

The controversy came to a boil as inconsistencies emerged in the investigation and post-mortem procedures, which culminated in public protest against the investigation and calls for a proper inquiry. Later, the Supreme Court took suo motu cognisance of the case, and demands for a CBI investigation mirrored the public negativity over investigations in the dowry case involving powerful families.

The Twisha Sharma case is important on the grounds that it's not just about her death being suspicious – it's those intangible aspects of marital abuse that many women know of. The case illustrates the silencing of the emotional and psychological trauma of women by society's messages to adjust, save the marriage, or simply be faced with it, in the guise of maintaining “family honour.” Parasitic mental harassment from husbands and wives is often aggravated until it becomes an untreatable tragedy. Through Twisha's case, we come to an understanding of the dangerously silent nature of emotional abuse and the societal message that women are expected to bear suffering in order to maintain the bonds of marriage.

Case 2 – Deepika Nagar Dowry Death Case⁷

Yet another shocking incident came to light from Greater Noida, with young Deepika Nagar's death revealing the stark truth behind the relentless demands for dowry, accompanied by the facade of a socially acceptable marriage. While family members claimed she had been physically and emotionally harassed by her husband's family for a long time over dowry demands, it is alleged that Deepika walked away from the terrace of her matrimonial home. Her family states that there had been a significant amount of dowry received during the marriage, aside from cash and gold, there were furnishings and a car. The demands apparently did not cease with marriage, however, but were more complex. Her in-laws reportedly insisted

⁷ Economic Times, Deepika Nagar Dowry Death Case: Family Alleges Repeated Demands for Gold and Luxury Items, <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com>

that her family give more gold pieces on festivals, gifts, cash, and even a car.

The most poignant element in the case was the “festival-based dowry demands” that were inculcated into society. What used to be common occasions of representation of celebration and affection reportedly became means to financial extraction and emotional pressure. Even after Deepika had been the subject of numerous reports for her efforts to fulfill them to keep peace in the marriage, she was reported to have tried to once again indulge into these desires despite financial constraints, buying expensive jewellery items.

The case also shows the well-entrenched ‘Adjustment culture in India. Reports suggest Deepika has faced harassment and suffering, but was repeatedly persuaded to adjust to it and continue the marriage without going back to her parents' home. This is a shift in society in which marriage is seen as more important than caring for a woman's body and mind.

Dowry today is not just about the exchange that takes place at the time of marriage, as Deepika Nagar's death has already highlighted. Instead, it tends to become an ongoing economic exploitation, reinforced by emotional blackmail, social pressures, and expectations of women being subjected to after marriage.

Case 3 – Newlywed Death in Lucknow⁸

The same happened in Lucknow as well – a newlywed woman whose body was found dead in suspicious circumstances within months of her marriage. Her relatives claimed that she was harassed and even tortured over a car.

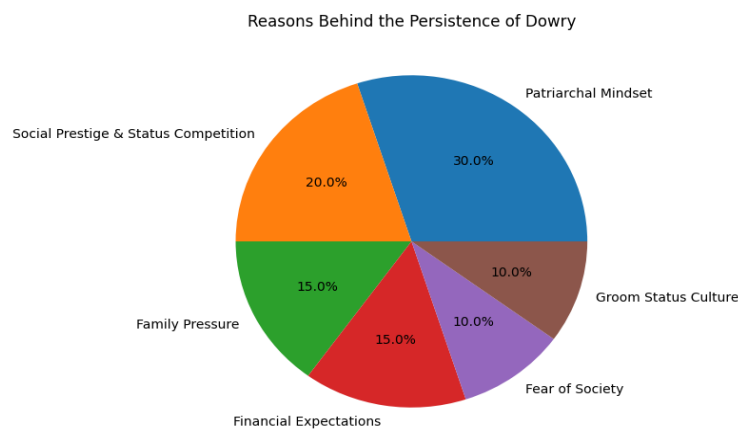
The woman's in-laws are believed to have coerced her family into meeting their demand for a four-wheeled vehicle and harassment allegedly escalated over time. The case once again brought to light the transactional nature of some of the arrangements that people form to be married, that marriage is an exchange of items instead of an emotional match. The Lucknow incident is an instance of dowry demands living on in the modern and aspirational state. The material symbols of status, such as cars, luxury goods, and expensive assets, are more and more considered indicators of social status, and so play a role during marital negotiations. This need

⁸ Times of India, Newlywed Found Dead in Lucknow; Family Alleges Torture Over Dowry and Car Demand, <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com>

is not only the need of the individual, but the need of the society whose pursuit of prestige, economic demonstration, and symbolic achievement is its obsession.

Most importantly, the case captures the general social pattern that is evident in many dowry cases – silent suffering by the wife to "take it", a flair for compromise by the family rather than confrontation, and the normalization of violence through the rhetoric of "adjustment". Such events expose that the problem of dowry is not just due to less governance, but social attitudes and feelings still keep the importance of the family image and continuity of marital function ahead of a woman's dignity and safety.

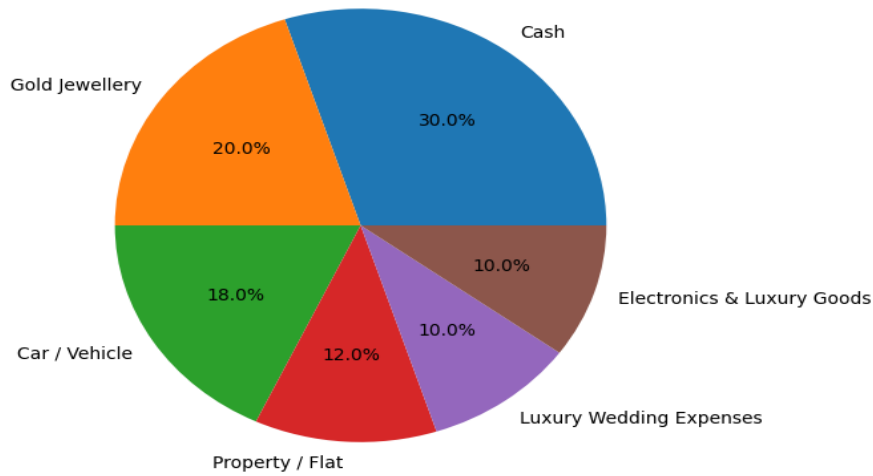
PIE CHART ANALYSIS OF THE DOWRY SYSTEM IN INDIA



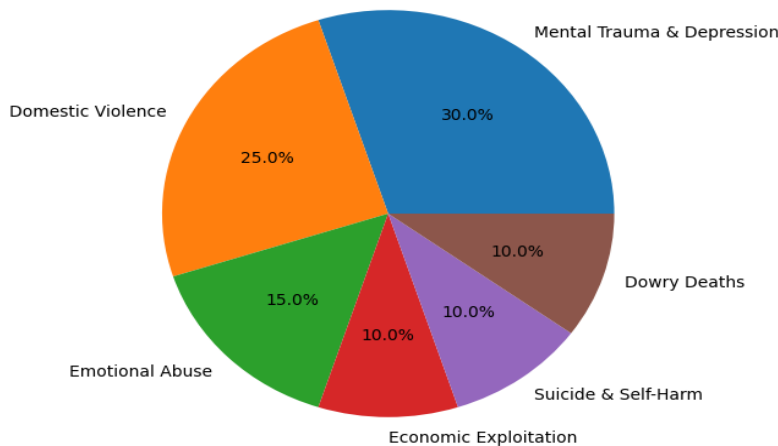
This pie chart illustrates that no future role models to change the mindset of patriarchy are yet available to continue to invest in practices associated with dowry in India. Increased public display of marriages and their societal validation also play a big role in the perpetuation of dowry culture, where social prestige and status competition are also key influences. These continue to be the norm in both discussions and reality, and are further reinforced by family pressure and financial expectations, the fear of social judgment, and the professionalism of the groom.⁹

⁹ United Nations Women, Ending Violence Against Women and Girls, <https://www.unwomen.org>
National Commission for Women, Complaints and Investigations Relating to Dowry Harassment, <https://new.nic.in>

Most Common Forms of Modern Dowry Demands



Impact of Dowry on Women



This chart illustrates that the traditional item of dowry remains cash and gold, and requests for cars and flats, as well as the luxury of wedding arrangements and high-value electronic items, are a result of the rise in the commercialisation of marriage. The results provide evidence of the relationship between the existence of the dowry aspect currently and the expectation of material aspirations and social expectations that are affected by the status.

The pie chart explicitly highlights that the dowry is much more than just an economic burden, making it a multidimensional form of violence against women. Humiliation, neglect from loved ones, threats, and repeated requests for cash or expensive gifts are common consequences of dowry pressure, and the mental trauma and depression category, which is the largest (30%), is

the prevailing form of suffering caused by dowry pressure.¹⁰

Domestic violence, which is defined as "assault, intimidation and torture in the context of marriage, as a direct result of dowry demands accounts for 25% of the impact, demonstrating the direct link between dowry demands and physical violence in marital homes. Emotional abuse, constituting 15%, in essence, is the normalized culture of insults, manipulation, emotional blackmail, and pressure on women to “adjust” so as to maintain the dignity of the family. Economic exploitation accounted for the remaining 10% of women and their families; these people faced continual financial commitments to pay for cash, jewellery, vehicles, or property; changing marriage from an equal relationship to an economic deal. Furthermore, the chart shows that 10% often end in the case of women getting killed in self-defence (causing suicide and self-harm), and another 10%—Dowry deaths—for the women who face cruel and brutal treatment and are killed as a result. Overall, the analysis concludes that dowry taking is more than a mere cultural phenomenon; it is also a significant violation of women's dignity, mental health, physical integrity, and access to life, and hence requires speedy legislative, social, and cultural reforms.

OVERALL FINDINGS

Area of Analysis	Key Findings	Major Observation
Mental Trauma & Depression (30%)	Largest impact category in dowry-related abuse.	Psychological suffering and emotional breakdown remain the most common consequences of dowry-related pressure.
Domestic Violence (25%)	Dowry demands are strongly linked with physical abuse.	Women frequently face assault, intimidation, torture, and threats within marital homes.
Emotional Abuse (15%)	Emotional manipulation and humiliation remain normalized.	Women are often forced to silently tolerate insults, emotional blackmail, and societal pressure to ‘adjust’.

¹⁰ Prem Chowdhry, Marriage, Patriarchy and Violence Against Women in Contemporary India, 58 ECON. & POL. WKLY. 42, 45–47 (2023)
National Crime Records Bureau, *Crime in India Statistics 2024*, Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India, <https://www.ncrb.gov.in>

Economic Exploitation (10%)	Marriage increasingly treated as an economic transaction.	Continuous demands for money, jewellery, property, and luxury items create financial instability for families.
Suicide & Self-Harm (10%)	Severe emotional distress affects victims.	Fear of social stigma and lack of support systems push many women toward self-harm.
Dowry Deaths (10%)	Fatal consequence of prolonged harassment.	Dowry deaths continue despite strict legal prohibitions, exposing gaps in social attitudes and enforcement.

CRITICAL ANALYSIS ¹¹

The results are very clear that the dowry system in modern India is not a mere custom; it is a multidimensional form of gender-based violence deeply embedded within the patriarchal, social prestige, and economic competition. The greatest prevalence is 30% Mental trauma and depression, followed by domestic violence at 25%, indicating the psychological and physical toll women experience in their marital relationships. Emotional abuse represents 15%, economic exploitation, suicide, and self-harm, 10%, and dowry deaths, 10%, all of which highlight the extremely serious emotional, financial, and precipitous impact of dowry-related abuse. The apprehending states of these dowry crime hot spots—Uttar Pradesh (28%), Bihar (17%), Madhya Pradesh (10%), and Rajasthan (10%), in a combined percentage—account for almost 65% of dowry deaths reported in India, according to more recent data from the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB).

The modernities, education, and a well-disciplined law still do not seem to have eradicated the custom of dowry, which still exists in sophisticated ways in the form of a request for a luxury car, a flat, an expensive marriage, and the monetary contribution for the groom's profession, even under the pretence of tradition and rank. But with this moral taint in social media culture and societal pressures, marriage has also become more of a business arrangement, and women

¹¹ Ibid

have become used to the constant necessity to “adjust” and “put up with” abuse for all of “family honour”.

SUGGESTIONS

1 Implementation of anti-dowry laws should be strengthened to ensure speedy justice in dowry-related cases

2 Social campaigns should be promoted regarding gender equality and awareness about the legal protection available against dowry harassment, domestic violence, and women’s rights

3 Society should discourage extravagant weddings and status-based matrimonial practices that promote dowry culture and unnecessary financial burden on families.

4 Financial empowerment of women should be encouraged through equal educational opportunities, skill development, and employment generation to reduce economic dependency and resistance against dowry practices.

5 Victim protection mechanisms should be strengthened through accessible counselling services, mental health support systems, legal aid, and rehabilitation facilities for women facing dowry harassment and domestic violence

CONCLUSION

The study arrives at the conclusion that despite comprehensive legislation on dowry, the system has remained a serious socio-legal issue in modern-day India, which is influenced by a strong matrix of patriarchy, social prestige, and economic competition. The findings show that not only do dowry practices result in financial exploitation, but they also cause significant mental and physical trauma, domestic violence, emotional abuse, suicide, and dowry death, and the recent NCRB data indicates that it is prevalent in certain states such as Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, and Rajasthan. The study also reveals that dowry has become a consumerist and status symbol phenomenon related to luxury cars, lavish marriages, flats, and high cost gifts in the context of modernization and social media culture. Thus, the elimination of dowry demands not only to implement the law successfully but also a radical change in the society, where women are empowered through gender equality, awareness of the law, empowerment of

women capable of managing finances, mental health provision, and rejection of status based matrimonial practices.

REFERENCES

1. Anju Vali Tikoo, Dowry System in Modern India: A Legal and Social Perspective, 12 INDIAN J. L. & SOC'Y 115 (2023).
2. Aparna Mahanta, Domestic Violence and Dowry Harassment in Modern India, 64 J. INDIAN L. INST. 211, 218–20 (2022).
3. Economic Times, Deepika Nagar Dowry Death Case: Family Alleges Repeated Demands for Gold and Luxury Items, <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com> (last visited Aug. 30, 2026).
4. India UNFPA, Laws Addressing Gender Based Violence and Harmful Practices (2025), <https://india.unfpa.org> (last visited Aug. 30, 2026).
5. IndiaSpend, Why Dowry-Related Crimes Continue to Rise in India, <https://www.indiaspend.com> (last visited Aug. 30, 2026).
6. National Commission for Women, Complaints and Investigations Relating to Dowry Harassment, <https://ncw.nic.in> (last visited Aug. 30, 2026).
7. National Crime Records Bureau, Crime in India Statistics 2024, Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India, <https://www.ncrb.gov.in> (last visited Aug. 30, 2026).
8. Negha Senthil, Jayanthi Vajiram & Nirmala V., The Misuse of Law by Women in India – Constitutionality of Gender Bias, arXiv (2023).
9. Prem Chowdhry, Marriage, Patriarchy and Violence Against Women in Contemporary India, 58 ECON. & POL. WKLY. 42 (2023).
10. Prem Chowdhry, Marriage, Patriarchy and Violence Against Women in Contemporary India, 58 ECON. & POL. WKLY. 42, 45–47 (2023).
11. Shalu Nigam, *Towards an Inclusive Gender Just Code in India: Women's Rights are Non-Negotiable* (We the People Network 2025).
12. The Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023, No. 45 of 2023, §§ 80, 85, INDIA CODE (2023).

13. The Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961, No. 28 of 1961, §§ 2–4, INDIA CODE (1961).
14. Times of India, Newlywed Found Dead in Lucknow; Family Alleges Torture Over Dowry and Car Demand, <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com> (last visited Aug. 30, 2026).
15. Times of India, Twisha Sharma Case: Suspicious Death and Alleged Dowry Harassment Investigation, <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com> (last visited Aug. 30, 2026).
16. United Nations Women, Ending Violence Against Women and Girls, <https://www.unwomen.org> (last visited Aug. 30, 2026).
17. Veena Talwar Oldenburg, *Dowry Murder: The Imperial Origins of a Cultural Crime*, 112–15 (Oxford Univ. Press 2002).