Dowry deaths

What is dowry?

- Dowry refers to any kind of gift in the form of cash or goods including ornaments, which is given by the bride's family to the bridegroom's family.
- Dowry Prohibition Act of 1961 defines dowry is any kind of property or valuable security directly or indirectly agreed to be given by one party to another party to the marriage.

What are the reasons for dowry menace?

- **Traditions -** The age old practice is perceived as a quintessential custom in marriage.
- **Matter of reputation -** People still believe that dowry giving or receiving gives a lot of merit in reputation within the society.
- **Illiteracy -** It is the penultimate factor behind the problem of dowry and the lack of understanding legal escapes.
- **Patriarchy -** The patriarchal structure of the society treats women as subordinate and men as superior and women are treated as objects.
- **Groom price -** The qualification of groom is seen as the benchmark of dowry prices.

What is dowry death?

- The section 304-B of Indian penal Code (IPC) defines dowry death and provides for its punishment.
- The death of woman is caused by any burns of bodily injury or occurs otherwise than under normal circumstances within seven year of her marriage in connection with any demand or cruelty or harassment for dowry is considered dowry death.

What are the legal provisions against dowry death?

- **Indian Penal Code, 1860 -** Section 304B of the Indian Penal Code defines dowry death and provides for the stringent punishments for the offenders.
- Punishment for dowry death ranges from a minimum sentence of imprisonment for seven years and a maximum sentence extending to imprisonment for life.
- **Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973 -** Under Section 41 of CrPC, dowry death is a non-bailable offence.
- The police have the authority to arrest any person without issuing of any warrant along with the authority to carry out the investigation with or without the permission of magistrate of a court.
- **The Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961** - The exclusive act to deal with the dowry system prevalent in India.
- The Act lays down a certain set of preventive and punitive measures.

What are the provisions of Dowry prohibition Act of 1961?

- The Act provides for the wider scope of the term ‘dowry’ and the scope of punishment.
- Any property or valuable security from one side to another either given or agreed to be given in future directly or indirectly in connection with marriage amounts to dowry.
- Giving or taking of dowry is punishable under this act with a minimum term of 5 years and a fine up to Rs 15,000 or to the extent of the value of dowry whichever is more.
- These offences comes under the ambit of non-bailable and cognizable.

What should be done?

- **Society -** Societal change and widespread awareness.
- Keeping women on par with men and making them independent of men.
- **Literacy -** Educating and empowering women.
- Women reservation has to be taken as a source of women empowerment.
- **Fair usage -** Strict adherence to laws against dowry.
- **Avoiding escalation -** Early reporting of domestic violence related to dowry can reduce dowry deaths.
- **Discourage misuse -** The dowry laws should be used to curb the menace and not to be misused to defame or slander one’s name.

Reference

1. The Indian Express | Dowry death crime against society

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