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Dowry and domestic violence against women in Kashmir (A study from district Kulgam)

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ABSTRACT

The practice of dowry has witnessed sharp changes throughout the world. Dowry as a social evil has become an all caste/class phenomenon and a have risen at the peak. It has become difficult for the parents to marry their daughters. These changes have been associated with several negative significances for women, including their survival. Despite these significances the practice of dowry continues persistent. Based on data from Kashmir district Kulgam, this paper examines the link between dowry and domestic violence.

1. Introduction

The phenomenon of domestic violence against women stands for a fact of life in many societies in the developing as well as developed world. Various sociological and other studies in, cross-cultural perspective have established its significant existence in all units of society. The existence and permanency of this phenomenon has been found in the human societies regardless of their differences in culture, regional, religious, political, economic, social, educational, demographic and other fields. These studies have revealed that while practices related to domestic violence against women reflect extreme form of gender discrimination, its causation can be explained in terms of various factors. In totality; it represents a dehumanized, degenerated and cruel practice in order to dominate and discriminate women by men by force.

Domestic violence is done to her in many forms such as dowry, cruelty, rape, sale of wife, adultery, low education, giving more importance to son, eliminating the women from proprietary rights so that she should depend wholly upon her husband to survive within the walls, the women faces as much violence as there is no need of others to torture her. As, these lines are cited by someone.

"It is better to be with stranger in streets in dark at night, than to be in home, as this is the place where all incidents occur."

Dowry

It is one of the tragedies of modern times that despite the spread of education, change in traditional beliefs, customs and manners, the condition of women remain largely unchanged. Despite the declaration of several laws designed to upgrade the women, evil like dowry continue causing destruction in the lives of parents and the young girls. At present era marriage has become like a business transition, where the terms are dictated by the boy's parents. The financial terms are settled much in advance of the actual marriage ceremony. Even if the girl's parents do everything in accordance with the wishes of the groom and his parents, there is no guarantee of a happy future for their daughters.

Every day in the new papers the news in connection with dowry is seen. The headlines say it all: "Woman suffers 90% burns; mother-in-law, sister-in-law held" (Himalayan Mail,08.10.2005), " Dowry is an evil to be eradicated anyhow" (Kashmir Times, 8.10.2006), "Come online to declare, I don't want dowry" (Greater Kashmir, 27.08.2007), "Dowry deaths are Rear Head in Valley" (Hindustan Times,10.10.2007), "Avoid acquittals on flimsy grounds in dowry death cases" (Daily Excelsior, 15.10.2007), "Women tortured for dowry in US"(Daily Excelsior, 20.11.2007), "Andhra Minister in dowry harassment case"(Hindustan Times, 02.07.2007), "Deceased committed suicide on Karvachouth" (Early Times, 22.11.2007), "Women beaten for dowry, loses vision" (Indo Asian News Service, 28.08.2010), "Dowry a curse, that is why girls are killed: President Patil" (Indo Asian News Service, 06.10. 2010). News in Daily Excelsior, 7 May 2008, entitled "Dowry claims life of young house-wife".

From the above discussion it has to be noted that dowry is main cause of domestic violence against women throughout world. The Present investigation was carried out to highlight the drastic effect of dowry system on domestic life of women in Kashmir especially in our study area i.e. district Kulgam.

2. Methodology

The research study is based on the primary as wells as secondary sources of data, which includes direct interviews and reports of Crime Records Bureau, journals, newspapers and research papers.

3. Case studies

Case Study I

AM (23 years old) is resident of wattooAharbal, tehsil D.H.pora district Kulgam. Her marriage took place on 22nd April 2018. Her husband is an army personal and is posted at Jammu division. Soon after marriage round about 10 days her husband left home for resuming his duty. The victim was with her father-in-law, mother-in-law and two brother-in-laws. After her husband's departure her in-laws started harassing and abusing her every time. Due to this reason she telephonically communicated to her husband and narrated the situation, instead of verifying the truth her husband started abusing her on phone. Finally her husband arrived on 11th August 2018

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back to his home. She once again narrated the whole story to her husband but instead of supporting her he started beating her due to which she received internal injuries on her neck. Her in-laws also joined the party and dragged her on ground and torn her clothes and she was left naked.

Her in-laws were in lust of greediness and were demanding more dowry from her. They already have received huge chunk of Gold worth rupees five lacks, laptop worth rupees 50,000 and cash amount of 30,000 as dowry from her parents. She after marriage was never ever allowed to visit her parental home and in this manner she was subjected to physical as well as mental cruelty and her in-laws were taking undue advantage of her helplessness. She was waiting for the change among her in-laws behaviour but there was no change at all. Her mother, sister and uncle once visited her matrimonial home, but instead of greeting them her in-laws abused them ruthlessly and forcibly throw them out. This disrespect act from her in-laws lead her to raise alarm in the village. Soon after this incident her husband forcibly took her to police station in order to create fear among her relatives, in the meantime her mother, sister and uncle also reached to the police station where she narrated the whole story to SHO. Finally she, her mother and sister filed application before SHO wherein they sought action against her husband and in-laws and is now waiting for justice for the protection of her rights.

Case study II

MZ resident of D.H.Pora belongs to a poor family. Her father is a carpenter. She got married at the age of 26 years in chogalpora district Kulgam. Her husband is a businessman; there are father-in-law, brother-in-law and her husband in her in-laws family. She has a three years old daughter. Her in-laws and her husband demanded dowry to her. Her father gave her dowry as he could effort, but they demanded more from her. Her husband torture physically and emotionally her every time and forced her to leave her matrimonial home. She finally left and lives in her parental family along with her three years old daughter. In her parental home there are also two sisters and two brothers who are younger to her (victim) and are still unmarried. They are having worst condition, they hardly effort their both ends meet. The victim and her parents knocked the door of justices where she was divorced by her husband. Now she is living with her parents along with her daughter.

Case study III

RQ from D.K Marag district Kulgam got married at the age of 25 years in the same village. Her father is a farmer; he works hard to meet the needs of his family. At the initial stage of her marriage she was very happy with her husband and in-laws. But this happiness was not long lasting as her in-laws and her husband started torture her both physically and verbally, they demanded her dowry. She knows that her father's condition is not so good to give her dowry, so she always remained silent and waiting for a change in her in-laws. But unfortunately that doesn't happen, they tortured her more and more. Finally she left her matrimonial home and came to parental home where she was waiting for four months for her husband to come and to settle again in her matrimonial home, but nobody came to her parental home. At last she approached the court for justice and is now waiting for justice.

During our field work out of 300 respondents 157 were of the view that the main cause of domestic violence is dowry which is evil. The below table shows the demand of dowry as narrated by respondents:

S. no	Items demanded	No. of respondents	percentage
1	Golden jewellery and cash	43	27.3
2	Land	64	40.8
3	Refrigerator, washing machine and all furniture items	41	26.1
4	Costly gifts	9	5.8
Total		**157**	**100**

From the above table it is clear that 157 out of 300 (that was the sample size of our research) respondents told that dowry is the main cause of domestic violence against women. According to the table 43/ 157 i.e. 27.3 per cent respondents told that their in-laws demand golden jewellery and cash, whereas 64/157 i.e. 40.8 percent told that their in-laws demanded land, 41/157i.e. 26.1 per cent respondents were of the view that their in-laws demanded furniture, refrigerator, washing machine etc. from them and the in-laws of 9/157 i.e. 5.8 per cent respondents demanded costly gifts.

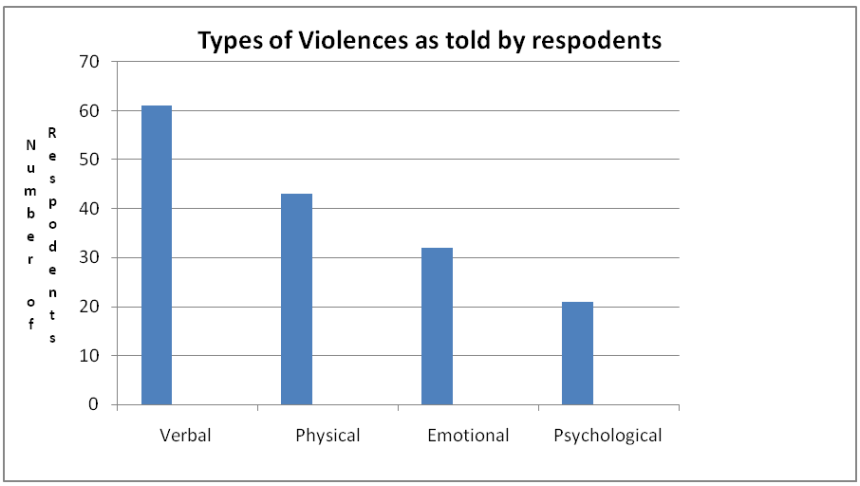

Fig. A

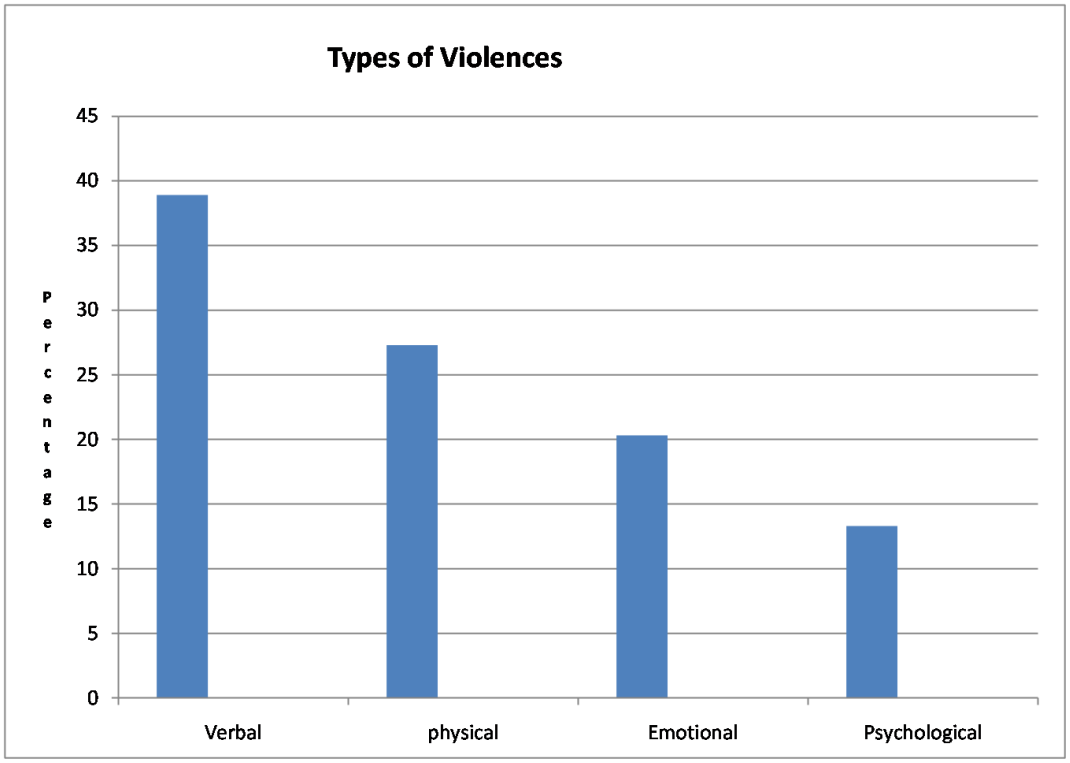

Fig. B

The above fig. A and B shows the types of violence, number of respondents and their percentage. 61/157 i.e. 38.9 per cent of our respondents were of the view that they were tortured verbally by their in-laws for the demand of dowry, 43/157 i.e. 27.3 per cent were tortured physically. Whereas 32/157 i.e. 20.3 per cent of our respondents face emotional violence and 21/157 i.e. 13.3 per cent face psychological violence for the demand of dowry.

4. Discussion

Dowry in legal terms means 'any property given by one party to the other party at before or after the marriage as consideration for her marriage." In common terms it means an unwilling abstraction from bride's father of all the things that the bridegroom's parents desire for agreeing to accept the girl to their son.If it, is not given the marriage may not take place the wedding ceremony may be paused and compression be brought on the bride's parents to make a promise or agree to fulfill the promise of desired gifts within specified period failing which a threat is made of sending the bride back to the parental home.The same has been found by this study as we have mentioned in the above table and as well as in case studies.

Possible way to eradicate dowry system

Despite the laws imposed by the government the dowry system has a strong hold in the society. Here are active solutions for eliminating this problem:

I. Education:

Lack of education is one of the main contributors to social practices such as dowry system, child labor and caste system. People must be educated to promote logical and sensible thinking to get rid of belief systems that give rise to such evil practices.

II. Empowering women:

Despite of looking for a well-settled groom for their daughters and investing all their savings in the weeding, people must spend on the latter's education and make her self-dependent. Women must also be made aware of their rights and how they can use them to protect themselves from any kind of abuse. Women must continue to work even after their marriage and emphasis their energy on productive things rather than yielding to the sarcastic remarks of in-laws.

III. Gender Equality:

Gender inequality that exists at the core of our society is of the main reasons for dowry system. From a very early age, children must be taught how both males and females have equal rights and are not inferior/superior to each other.

Apart this, campaigns should be held to sensitize the issue and the laws set by the government must be made more stringent.

5. Conclusion

Dowry system is the cause of agony for girls and their families. The solutions mentioned here must be taken seriously and incorporated in the system to get rid of this problem. The government and general public must join hands to eradicate this system.

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