

## **Socio-Economic Impact of Dowry System in Bangladesh: The Problems and Remedies**

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### ***Abstract***

*Dowry is a social custom, which arises from the pervasive greed. It is prevailing in both rural and urban sectors and among non-affluent naïffluent section of the people of the Bangladesh. Around fifty percent of the violences against women in Bangladesh are happening due to the dowry system. The author suggested that action plan with proper implementation is necessary for legal and social measures to fight against dowry system. He also further argued that with a combined effort and launching a social movement against dowry may help to achieve a goal oriented development process for which society should consider dowry activity as a criminal act.*

**Keywords:** Dowry, Dower, Legal, Social Awareness.

### **1. Introduction:**

Human dignity is greatly affected by the dowry system, which is prevailing in the society of Bangladesh. Definition of the dowry can be divided into two broad areas:

- a) Demand for amount/goods from the bride's family;
- b) Voluntary gifts from the bride's family.

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However, the Columbia Electronic Encyclopedia (2003) states that dowry is the property that a woman brings to her husband at the time of the marriage. It has been a well-established institution among the propertied classes of various lands and times, e.g., in ancient Greece and Rome, India, medieval Europe, and modern continental countries. In civil-law countries the dowry is an important form of property.

Dowry system has socio-economic impact of the country. It is one of the worst social systems, which creates discrimination for females by virtue of their birth in this sub continent especially in the country. Under the dowry system females are treated as a commercial product and they are measured as ordinary goods. This inhuman practice makes the society as unbearable situation. Greed for dowry is very much pervasive. Though currently cruelty of dowry system increases, but its root was originated in the society from the ancient society when non-Aryans started this practice in this sub continent. In this subcontinent though dowry system is acquit in India but in Bangladesh it is widening. It is increased at a higher rate after the independence. Lot of bridegroom studied at the expenses of father in laws in the British period. Pakistani era and also in the current age. "GHOR JAMAI" system was very popular among the Muslim society. At the expenses of father in law many people were able to establish in the society.

Dowry is not only prevailing in the rural areas, but also prevailing in the urban areas. People of all religions of this country are more or less affected by this illicit practice. The situation of women in Bangladesh is still deplorable and establishment of human rights of the women in the country is far from reality. When the world is becoming a global village, and gender equality was prevailing both in the developed and developing countries, a large number of women in Bangladesh were being tortured due to dowry by their spouses/members of in laws houses. In case of violence due to dowry not only men are engaged in torture but also sometimes women like mother in law etc are also engaged in torture. Relationship between mother in laws and wife is still now not very happy.

Dowry is one of the causative factors of violence against women. It can also be shown in the following form, if we consider other factors as remaining constant:

$$\text{Dowry} = \frac{\text{Gift in the Marriage}}{\text{Violence against Women}}$$

The Dowry Prohibition Act, 1980 and the Women and Children Repression Prevention (Special Provision) Act 2000 of the country - strictly ensures prohibition of dowry. But as a whole, dowry system has got a widespread virus infection towards the society. Moreover, as per the Islamic laws, the Mahr /Dower is something that is paid by the husband to his wife. Dower is a preventive measure to divorce wife by the husband. Even in Pakistan, dowry system is prevailing for which they have taken the rule -Dowry and Bridal Gifts (Restriction) Act 1976. But if we observe Muslim countries in Middle East or Indonesia- dowry system is not prevailing in such a manner. Actually dowry system is the worst social custom of this subcontinent, which is rising gradually due to taking the opportunity to rent seeking measures and unethical practices.

## 2. Objectives and methodology of the study:

- ◆ The study has been undertaken with following objectives;
- ◆ To conceptualize why dowry system is prevailing in the society along with the violence against women through a literature survey;
- ◆ To assess the present scenario of dowry system in the society;
- ◆ To ascertain how dowry system preventing the socio-economic development;
- ◆ To provide some recommendations to eradicate the problems of the dowry system.

The study has undertaken mainly based on both primary and secondary sources. For collecting data from primary sources, an opinion survey was made on random basis. The survey is conducted among married person only. A questionnaire was prepared and total numbers of respondents are two hundred forty seven. The study was done in six divisions of the country and respondents were selected from married person both female and male and occupations and income level of the respondents were varied. Ages of the respondents are in between 21 and 55 years. Detail types of respondents are given in appendix in Table: A. Some case studies were collected from the personal experiences of the respondents and the researcher. For secondary sources of the study used different dailies, journals, books and also web sites. Time period of the study was from the month of July 2004 to the month of September 2004. Ten case studies on dowry in Bangladesh is also given in the Appendix.

### **3. Literature Review :**

Farouk (1980) argued that women's unemployment problem in the rural areas can be overcome through : (a) remove illiteracy in the rural areas; (b) introduce a high yielding but labor intensive technology in the rural economy and (c) remove the limitation of women in doing out-door work in the rural areas.

Rao (1993) described that dowries of South Asia have steadily risen over the last forty years and now often amount to over 50 percent of a household's assets. He observed that a 'marriage squeeze' caused by population growth, resulting in larger younger cohorts and hence a surplus of women in the marriage market, has played a significant role in the rise in dowries.

Naved (1994) found that dowry was a major factor driving decisions regarding education of girl children. To some extent it also defines involvement in savings and credit and income generating activities.

Krishnaswamy (1995) examines attitudes of Hindu women toward the dowry, drawing on scale data from 100 married & 100 unmarried

employed females (Fs) ages 20-40 in Dharwad city, India. Correlational analyses show that both groups had favorable attitudes toward the dowry, with favorability positively correlated with educational level. Unmarried Fs were significantly more favorable than married Fs. Income & age interacted with marital status on attitudes toward the dowry. Income was negatively correlated with married Fs' attitudes & positively correlated with the unmarried Fs' attitudes; as age increased, favorability increased among unmarried Fs, while it decreased among married Fs. These attitudes held in married Fs regardless of whether a dowry was given. These results indicate the difficulty in harnessing opposition to the dowry system among working women, where materialism & consumerism are entrenched, even though the dowry supports continued gender inequality in India.

Unger and Crawford(1996) described that the pattern of intimate violence, where women are the victims and men are the perpetrators, is not due to biological destiny. Women are not born victims and men are not biologically predetermined to be aggressors rather, stereotypes of how women and men are supposed to behave, experience, that reinforce stereotypical behaviors, and a social structure that supports power inequities between women and men all contribute to violence against women.

In the article "Traditional Values Prevail as Education and Contraception Enter Rural Bangladesh"(1997),it was argued that in Bangladesh and many other South Asian countries, dowry--cash or valuables given by a prospective bride's family to her betrothed--has supplanted brideprice, which a man presents to his fiancée's family. Amin and other social scientists attribute this to a "marriage squeeze"--a mismatch in number between marriageable men and women. By custom, Bangladeshi teenaged girls marry men in their twenties. Since infant mortality has steadily declined, younger girls outnumber older men, and parents cope with the competition in the marriage market by offering dowries.

Zaman(1997) observed that a married women's family life particularly in Rural Bangladesh is generally not protected or safe. Their mar-

ried life in the most cases depends on at whim of husbands and other family members.

Ruth(1998) described that in most of the world's countries domestic violence is the cause

of violent attacks on women. In many countries it remains the main source of violence against women, even when prohibited by law.

Nasreen(2000) commented that any approach related to women is mainly dependent on national or international financial conditions or politics. Self-help projects, training schemes, credit facilities are vital for the development of poor women.

In Africa, women are literally "bought" and "sold" through the institution of bride price. Wakabi (2000) argues that if the bride/wife wants to divorce, the material items or money paid to the bride/wife's father have to be returned to the husband. If the family is unable to pay, the wife cannot get a divorce and is condemned to live in an unhappy and sometimes fatal marriage. Many Arab and Islamic states also consider bride price as a fundamental requirement of marriage. In these countries, the groom is required to give marriage gifts known as "Mahr" to the bride in exchange for her hand in marriage. In Asia, especially in India, women are subjected to abuse as a result of the institution of dowry, where the bride or her family have to pay dowry to the groom's family.

Chowdhury(2001) argued that a society's culture generally consists of two types of values .the core and the peripheral values. Core values are time honored values that remain relatively resistant to change. Peripheral values are those, which are either imposed, imitated or artificially created ones or are practiced in response to the exigency of the period and are amenable to change.

Khair(2002) mentioned that although legal provisions have not succeeded in uplifting women entirely, legal discourse has undeniably been crucial in identifying issues requiring intervention. As such, law

is an important site in which underlying, vis ña vis gender have been challenged and inequities and inequalities against women fought out.

Vplart(2002) in her research at Matlab region of Bangladesh found that the probability of remaining married was significantly higher for couples who were given higher dowries and through using a double selectivity approach ,pre modern inheritance interpretations of dowry. She argued that her both findings point towards the interpretation that dowry is not a form of parental discrimination in rural Bangladesh.

Srinivasan and Lee (2002) observed in India that employment doesn't reduce support for the dowry system. Women who work for pay are indistinguishable from the non-employed person.

Monsoor (2003), mentioned that in a study in the metropolitan city of Dhaka , it was revealed that 88% of Muslim wives did not receive any dower at all.

According to the article "Gender Dimensions of poverty in Bangladesh "(2004),if the dowry does not correspond to what the bridegroom or his parents demand, the marriage pact can be broken off, in which case the family of the bride is socially disgraced. As protection against utter destitution should she lose her husband through separation or death, under Islamic law a Bangladeshi woman can lay claim on a certain sum from him, the Mohorana, to be given her either when she marries or in case of divorce. But this does not happen either; first, because many women are not aware of this right and second, because insisting on it would expose a woman to social censure and the risk of losing her husband's goodwill. If a woman does demand the Mohorana in case of divorce, then her chances of remarrying plummet.

"Women's right in Bangladesh"(2004) article's observed that under the 1961 Muslim family ordinance, female has inherited less than male relatives do, and wives have fewer divorce right than husbands.

#### **4. Present status of the Dowry system :**

Marriage is becoming a commercial transaction, since in this process bride is being considered in terms of money or commodity. Bride's level of education or capability is less important than the transaction income earned by the bridegroom or his family through marriage. As such bride is not considered as human being rather medium of transaction and accumulation of wealth. Most marriages require dowry. Dowry demand does not stop after marriage. As a resultant factor, in case of rural areas distress people has to face tremendous sufferings and in some cases marginal and subsistence farmers also become landless. Despite certain exceptional cases, dowry has now become a system, whether one may like it or not. Recently published UNDP report shows that fifty percent of the total violence against women were happening owing to the dowry system. This cannot be eliminated overnight. Because it is directly linked with poverty and half of the population is still living below the poverty line.

Though in Muslim society dowry is strictly prohibited but still this practice is prevailing. According to Sura Nisa: 19, acceptance of dowry from wife or her father's family or its demand is not legal for husband. Actually the social custom of these geographical areas of the subcontinent injected Muslims in doing this sort of malpractices. In the society demonstration affect also give the advantageous position for taking dowry, which is actually one sort of rent seeking. Caste system and hereditary law of Hindu religion also help for taking dowry. However, corruption and unethical practice make this illicit activity a new turn in the society, as most of the people don't think this illegal practice as a crime rather they consider it as a 'Halal Ruzi' to accumulate wealth.

Most marriages are 'arranged' in this country but if a family is unable or not willing to provide dowry, then there is every chance of the broken of the marriage. Enacted legislation to stop the practice of dowry and the consequent violence against women for want of dowry is not enough as in practice, its repercussions are still continuing due to the fact of weak enforcement of the laws.



Moreover, according to the Population census of 2001(BBS), out of the women age group 10 years to 60 years and plus, 28.7% women did never marry. Main reason behind this is dowry. Moreover, from the same census it reveals that against 1075 marriageable women, 1000 marriageable male person is available. As such male people are taking the advantages. Even in case of love marriage, some times dowry also creating problem.

Demand for dowry varies depending on the educational, social and occupational background. Form of dowry also changes with over the time period. In addition to cash, there is a persistent demand for bicycles, motorcycles, cars, CNGs, jewelries, television sets, refrigerators, dish antenna, start up cost of a business, cost of education, job and even some time expenditure of the bridegroom for going abroad. A positive co-relation prevails between the demand for dowry and the incidence of torture for dowry. It is also observed that sometimes-voluntary gifts in the marriage ultimately turned a person to become more greedy. Till now society apparently fails to see dowry abuse from the point of view of criminal offence.

From a study of Zaman (1997) distribution of (cash money) taken by husband is shown below in Table: 1.If we consider inflation rate on an average 5% per annum, the demand for cash amount of dowry will be much higher then the below mentioned rate in the context of the at present market price.

**Table:1 — Cash Amount of Dowry taken**

Amount	Percent
Below 2,000	7.14
2000-5000	50
5,001-8,000	21.42
8,001-11,000	14.28
Above 11,000	7.14
Total	100

(Source: Zaman 1997)

Hossain (2004) argued that if we assume an average dowry of Taka 30,000 and dowry is required in 70% of marriage, then total dowry expense in Bangladesh, based on late 1990s' data, could be in the order of Taka 220 billion. This is around 12.6% of Bangladesh GNP.

Now we may point out some information regarding dowry related repression, which were collected from different sources:

According to the Home Ministry, at least 747 case were lodged with police in 1997 for dowry-connected repression on women against 903 cases in 1998. According to a report compiled by Bangladesh National Women Lawyers Association, there were 59 cases of repression and 114 killing related to dowry during April to August in 2003 across the country. There were 325 reported acts of dowry-related violence including 182 cases of murder and 75 cases of torture in the year 2002, said the Lawyers Association. Failing to bear torture, many women committed suicide. In 2002, 192 women were murdered for dowry and 30 women committed suicide. Between January and September, 2003, there were 155 dowry-related murders, 20 suicides, and 15 instances of acid burns. Dowry-related violence is on the rise. Recent survey by the Bangladesh Human Rights Organisation, and Bangladesh Women Lawyers Association revealed that in 2001, there were 12,500 cases of women repression, in 2002 the figure rose to 18,455 and in the year ending in 2003 the figure climbed to 22,450. Another figure shows that from the January 2003 to January 2004, 262 were died, repressed 124, acid burn were 12 and numbers of suicide were 9. A report shows that in the Magura district 10,000 marriage ended in divorce owing to dowry-related feuds. The killing of an industrialist's daughter at Dhanmondi, Dhaka recently by her husband, whom she has chosen to marry herself, had to face a tragic death by her husband as she refused to provide the money of dowry from her father. This indicates that curse of dowry also prevailing in the wealthy family.

From a recent collection of data it is observed that due to dowry system, in the rural areas child marriage which rate was low is gradually raising:

Actually dowry cannot ensure happiness. Dowry death, acid burning and other sorts of oppression to the brides are increasing, which indicate that growing exertion of cruelty on women in Bangladesh. Religious, political, and economical structures of the society can explain the age-old tradition of extortion of dowry that has taken a brutal form today. The perpetuation of the dowry tradition is indicative of the power of the gender and socio-political structures that aim to oppress women. In the society as a whole, women are relatively lower graded than the men who enjoy supremacy. Due to the dowry system, brutality can be documented in the various regions of the Bangladesh.

#### **5. Socio-Economic Impact of Dowry :**

Dowry violence is rising with the affluence and consumerism. The consumer boom has created problem for the economy of the country. Women are more than fifty percent of the total population, of the country. Their active participation in the process of economic development is required. But due to violence against women, nation cannot obtain proper services from them. If we consider last thirty-three years GDP growth rate of Bangladesh, then we shall observe that it is horizontally straight line as GDP growth rate is on an average around 5–5.5% while in Japan it is around 30-32% during the same time period.

Behind the prevailing dowry system actually, capitalistic philosophy is working. This implies that Money is only one measures of happiness. And bride is measured in terms of money. By taking the dowry, bridegroom is fulfilling their utility. If we measure the process, we shall observe that in case of acceptance of dowry, marginal utility of dowry is positive. This is unfortunate as social welfare is being degraded.

Now below we have provided the comment on Dowry system on the basis of the opinion survey:

**Table:1 Opinion Survey on Dowry system in Bangladesh**

Sl.No.	Types	Yes (In Percentage)	No (In Percentage)
1	Dowry is a heinous crime	31	69
2	Full amount of Dower was provided/received.	28	72
3	Voluntary gift provided/received during the marriage	92	8
4	Climed for Dowry at the time of marriage.	45	55
5	Dowry prevention system is helping to raise child marriage.	16	84
6	Whether dowry helps to establish any young man	27	73
7	Dowry is associated with psychological factor	28	72
8	Dowry is related to the non applicability of Muslim law of inheritance	32	68
9.	Will applicability of cent percent dower for Muslim bride help to reduce dowry system?	49	51
10.	How dowry system can be reduced?		
	i) Creation of Social awareness	41	
	ii) Reducing Poverty	29	
	iii) Creation of Job opportunity	15	
	iv) Moral boost up	9	
	v) Enforcement of law	6	

(Source: Opinion Survey)

It is revealed from the aforesaid table that among thirty-one percent of the total respondents claims that dowry system is a heinous crime. This is unfortunate that most of the respondents are still not properly aware of the bad side of this process. Ninety-two percent of the respondents are recipient of the voluntary Gift provided/received during the marriage. Forty-five percent claimed for the dowry at the time of marriage. In response to the question whether dowry prevention system is helping to raise child marriage-only sixteen percent support it. Through dowry system twenty seven percent are become able to establish. Twenty Eight percent claimed that it is associated with psychological factor. When inquiry is made regarding whether dowry is related to the non-applicability of Muslim law of inheritance-thirty two supports it. Forty one percent argue that to drive out need social awareness.

Dowry system has a socio-economic impact. A percentage of the amount, which is involved in the transfer mechanism of the dowry system from the bride's father to the relatives of the bridegroom's family, is used in the consumption pattern. It doesn't come into the investment process and income oriented activities.

Moreover, dynamics of dowry have significant negative effects on daily lives of women and families, and also on the economy as a whole. Dowry system creates social injustice and income inequality. In case of poor families after the birth of daughter, they tried to save rather investing on the welfare of their child such as expenditure on education, health. etc. But utilization of the lion share of the expenditure become unproductive Dowry leads to loss of land and marginalization process, landless families to migrate to the urban areas from the rural areas and fulfillment of basic needs become unattainable. As such pressures in the urban areas are rising and Bostis' are now one of the main sources of corruption. Vicious circle of poverty and underdevelopment of the economy is also prevailing. Due to lack of non-performance of providing dowry, some distress women also join in the garments sector as well as other odd jobs as labors or even some prohibited occupations.

Dowry system is demoralizing the society as a whole. It has been a devastating impact on the society. Not only repression on women, but also creates family tension, divorce, break up of families, social deprivation, miserable existence, burden for the society etc. Due to dowry system wastage of resources are happening. This creates the economic cost of the society.

Dowry system also creates some sort of "demonstration effect" in the society. This may be happened in both the case of poor and affluent families. Seeing the neighbors to provide dowry, others may be interested in providing dowry.

The low productivity leads to maintain underdevelopment of the economy as low level of income, low levels of savings, capital inadequacy, inequitable distribution of wealth prevails. Notorious practice of dowry system is creating social and economical evils.

Some recent dowry related harassments and tortures leading to deaths have created sensation all over the country. If we take cognizance, we shall observe that this system is rising due to the fact of poverty, gender discrimination, less empowerment of the women in the society, weak legislation and poor enforcement and greediness. Not only in the poor families but also in the wealthy families' dowry system is prevailing.

However, introduction of free education system for the girl students of the country is giving a scope for learning but it needs to be more effectively monitored. Otherwise it won't bring too much positive impact on the economy, as numbers of the drop out students among the girls are high.

Through creating the women empowerment, dowry system may be reduced. Though in India it was observed that employed women are giving dowry more but if reality women are more conscious about their capability in that case they may not allow dowry at all. As

such women should have access to equal share of property as well as proper basic knowledge based education is required so that they can

attain social justice, income equality. Starting from the Gram Sarkar to the national politics they must get due advantage not on the basis of quota system rather than they must have the equal opportunity to fight against their male counterpart.

## **6. Concluding Remarks and Recommendations:**

### **6.1 Concluding Remarks**

Both sort of dowry that means voluntary gift from the bride's family as well as demanding amount should be stopped. Attitude towards consumerism should be eradicated as well as commercialization of marriage should not be encouraged. In the twenty first century, women especially rural females are working in the garments sector. As such Farouki's observation that removal of the limitation of women in doing out-door work in the rural areas are largely changed. But still lot of females like males are unemployed or disguised unemployed in the rural sector. Though dowry is an evil system and its full cure is required but social taboo is so high that its growth rate may be reduced but can not be fully cured.

Moreover, dowry victims need proper shelter, job opportunity so that they can fulfill their basic needs. Each Muslim bridegroom must give dower and should not claim dowry.

Though the task of creating public and social awareness with collective effort against the dowry system is a very challenging one but it must be achieved so that the country can be free from this evil practice and women can get their due share of dignity. Women should be able to create their position in the family in the decision-making. Processes. Dowry is the peripheral values in the society, which is imposed, imitated or artificially created ones by the self-motivated group of people. They should be brought under law as well as criminally and hatefully treated by the society.

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia's recent steps to write 1.12 lakh letter, condemning dowry system to different heads of Gram Sarkars, politi-

cal, educational, religious, administrative and also different social organizations were one sort of anti-dowry marketing strategy. Moreover, around 4.7 lakh letters with the same content will be dispatched very soon. This may create some positive impact if both the bride and bridegroom aware that dowry is one sort of heinous crime and they prevent from taking any sort of gift. In this context, we may recall about Nisha Sharma of Hyderabad in India. When dowry was claimed, she set up an example through deciding not to marry. In Bangladesh, the bride should follow this sort of example.

Rao's (1997) observation for India is also applicable to the society of Bangladesh. The rural females are the worst victims of the dowry and the prices of bridegrooms are rising. Srinivasan and Lees' (2002) observation is also applicable to Bangladesh as employed women's are also victim of dowry in this society. To stop dowry besides, women, men of the society should come forward Unger and Crawford (1996) rightly observed that a need of change in social structure is required so that women can not be no more victims of violence and men can be identified as the aggressors. As such social structure should be changed and equality of both men and women in real terms should be established. Khair's (2002) arguments is partially true as legal provision is to curb the dowry system though creating proper enforcement of the legal procedure along with social awareness.

## 6.2 Recommendations:

Some recommendations are provided as follows to prevent dowry system in Bangladesh:

- i) To prevent the dowry system, the process should cover the grass-roots level to the upper level. As such steps are needed to be taken in the rural areas as well as urban areas. Gram Sarkars can play active role in the rural areas. Women should be encouraged to actively participate in politics both in the grass root level and also in the national level on the basis of their own capability but not on the basis of quota system as it lowers their dignity.



ii) All women should be considered as human being otherwise any sort of movement couldn't prevent evil process of the dowry system. To combat violence against women, seven issues should be taken into account: a) Servitude from hunger, b) Legal enforcement, c) Social awareness, d) Knowledge based education, e) Empowerment of women, f) Active participation in the decision making process in the family level, g) Ensuring social justice.

iii) Self-governing advocacy group may be created which can provide legal aid and help to create awareness so that prevention of dowry can be established. Though prevention is better than cure but if any dowry victim requires any sort of legal aid, special measures may be provided.

iv) In the textbook of the social science at the secondary level of school, a chapter may be included on anti dowry system so that easily boys and girls from their teenage can be aware of this evil system.

v) Building local people's organizations, mobilizing media, arranging policy level advocacy is required so that women can be aware of their basic rights related to gender discrimination, income inequality and they should think that they are not at the hands of the men like 'Nora' of "Dolls House" written by Ibsen. All political parties should launch movement against dowry from the same platform simultaneously. Separate movement may not give better result.

vi) Local government institutions of this country can also play active role to remove dowry system. As such they can launch specialized programs for creating awareness against dowry system.

vii) Government laws alone cannot prevent dowry. Dowry is a social disease. As such social mobilization is required. To take massive anti dowry measures, people should be properly motivated. It needs the united efforts of the educationists, bankers, civil administration, members of local government, civil societies and all citizens.

viii) People from every corner of the society may turn a core force along with politicians, intellectuals, reputed cultural & media person-

alities, public representatives, civil societies, NGOs, Imams of different mosques, community leaders . Support programs by the media like Cinema, radio, television, press, and web pages can also do a good job in the effective campaign against dowry should be arranged.

ix) While the rate of dowry torture is undoubtedly high in Bangladesh, the demand for dowry and violence related to it are on the also increase. To stop this evil force, women should attain self-reliance and earn proper knowledge based education. They should not depend on men and if they do not get due honor then marriage may not be encouraged.

x) An action plan with proper implementation is necessary for social measures to fight the dowry system. Opportunities for creating employment of women both in the rural and urban areas should also be increased.

xi) In rural areas and also low-level income group of people, practice of marriage registration is very low. Moreover, dower is not also properly obtained in most of the cases. As a result it is very easy to divorce the wife on the ground of dowry. To stop this inhuman practice, marriage registration should be enforced and rule should be promulgated so that hundred percent dower should be obtained by the wife at the time of marriage.

xii) With a combined effort and launching a social movement against dowry may help to achieve the goal. The society should consider dowry abuse as a criminal act. And treat both the dowry provider and receiver as criminal and heinous activist .

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### Appendix

Table A Types of the respondents in the Opinion Survey		
S. N.	Types	
1.	Age of the respondents	21-55 years
2.	All persons	Married
3.	Male	110
4.	Female	147
5.	<b>Income level :</b>	
	i) Upto Taka 3000 per month	97
	ii) From Taka 3000 to Taka 9000 per month	64
	iii) Above Taka 9000 to Taka 15000 per month	54
	iv) Above Taka 15000	32
6.	<b>Location :</b>	
	i) Dhaka Division	77
	ii) Chittagong Division	45
	iii) Rajshahi Division	37
	iv) Khulna Division	39
	v) Sylhet Division	28
	vi) Barisal Division	21

7.	<b>Occupation :</b>	
	i) Govt. Service	53
	ii) Private service	42
	iii) Teacher	31
	iv) Banker	29
	v) Lawyer	20
	vi) Journalist	19
	vii) NGO activities	17
	vii) Housewives	15
	viii) Students(married)	12
	ix) Others	9

(Source: Opinion Survey)

### Case Studies on Dowry in Bangladesh

**Case Study : 1**—While the author was a student of Economics dept. of Chittagong University during the mid eighties of the last century, a female student studied in the same session in the sociology Dept. Though she was very beautiful and also very much cultural minded but she was dwarf. Her affluent father arranged a marriage for her while she was College student. Her husband studied in the Chittagong Medical College at the expenses borne by her father for long seven years. After becoming doctor, the husband divorced the girl on the ground that she was not suitable for him. Irony was that they first meet while they were the second year Honours student; She came to Economics dept. to fill up a questionnaire as a part of her term paper assignment on Dowry.

**Case Study : 2**—A daughter of respectable Muslim family used to love her own cousin in Brahmanbaria District. The daughter was well educated and she did her Masters degree .But at the time of marriage when every thing was finalized, family of the proposed bridegroom Idemanded around Tk. Two lac. The girl refused to give any sort of dowry. As a result the marriage couldn't happen. This was a tremendous set back for her. Ultimately her family arranged settled marriage .But her ex lover took revenge. He gave misinformation to her hus-

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band and the marriage was ultimately ended. In the mean time the woman was doing a good job and married another married person who has two children. When asked, she told that she would never trust any bachelor person. So she takes this sort of decision but it seems that she is quite happy and has one child.

**Case Study : 3-**A female cook who is working in an illustrious family of Dhaka City, gave marriage of her 11 years old daughter recently. When her employer's family tried to convince her not to give child marriage-she did not follow them. She pleaded that as bride is child, expenditure on dowry was low. She argued that when the age of her daughter will rise at that time rate of expenditure on dowry will be higher.

**Case Study : 4-**Nazmunessa is a widow and doing small trading business with the help of NGO in Pabanbeg village of Faridpur District. Her husband died seven years ago. She struggled for rearing up her two daughters. She is now thinking how she can give marriage of her elder daughter (who is eighteen years old) as she has to pay dowry around Taka thirty thousand. When it was inquired, she told that she won't get any young man for giving marriage for her daughter without dowry. But she doesn't have any capacity to give marriage with dowry. She is seriously thinking to send her daughter to Dhaka city for working in any garments factory. Otherwise she will not have any alternative but to give marriage of her elder daughter to an elderly man who is around sixty years old and also has grand sons.

**Case Study : 5-**Rokshan is a young pretty lady of the age Twenty six years in Pakundia village of Kishorgonj District. She already gave birth of two children. During her marriage, her father gave around Taka Twenty Thousand cash and in kind worth of additional Taka Ten thousand after selling land of Two kathas. But after four years of her marriage, her husband demanded Tk. Sixty thousand for going to Kuwait . When her father refused to give any additional amount to her husband and husband's family including mother in law and father in law started torturing her. Her father tried to resolve the issue with the help of the elite of the village but failed. In the meantime, her husband



arranged another marriage who was ready to bear her expenses to go to Kuwait, and he divorced her. She returned to her father's family and takes a vocational training with the aid of local NGO. Now she can maintain her own family which includes her two children.

**Case Study : 6-** An interesting case was found in the Moluvibazar District. A young man married a bride who was settled in London with the condition that he will give her around Tk.twelve lac as dower. The young man was so crazy to settle in London, he sold his paternal property. After receiving the amount, bride converted the money in Pound sterling and transferred it to UK through hundi channel. Bride-groom went to the London with bride but he found that his life is full of misery. The bride threatened him to divorce her otherwise he will have to face the serious consequences. At last he was forced to divorce her and returned to Bangladesh as a pennyles. Now he is totally pauper and doesn't has any sources of income.

**Case Study : 7-**Mr.'X' (who doesn't want to disclose his name) is a high bank official .He told that he comes from very poor family. After passing the SSC examination in the year 1969, he came to Rangpur town and started staying as a lodging master in a wealthy family. The family was very kind to him. They financially helped him for getting admission in Karmaikal College. In the meantime, he fall love with the elder daughter who was her student. When they come to know the truth they give marriage with their daughter. And they bear his all expenses for higher education. Even after getting the job in a Nationalized bank, his father in law provided expenses for two years despite his repeated request not to give any more financial help. Now he is quite established and has a happy family.

**Case Study : 8-**Pinki was a girl of seventeen years of Harinakunda village when she was given marriage. After the marriage, she was regularly tortured by her mother in law and sister in law as her father couldn't provide dowry .The torture rises after she gave birth of a girl child. As she gave birth of another girl child, her husband not only divorced her but also mercilessly tortured her. When it was inquired why she didn't lodge complain against her husband, she told that if she takes this sort of action then she will be socially abandoned.

**Case Study : 9-**Zohara Bibi is a poor woman of Fatikchari union of Chittagong. At the age of sixteen years her marriage was happened. Now she is around thirty six years old. During her marriage her father provided three bigha lands to her husband. His husband started to stay at the house of her father. Unfortunately her elder brother died in a cyclone. Her father becomes ill. Taking the advantage, her husband occupied the remaining lands of her father and caused him to migrate from the village with her mother and another small sister. Her husband again married a maid servant. Although she has given birth of three children but she still did not get any due respect from her family. When asked why she did not take any legal action, she told that "Shamir padatolaya behast (Remarks in Bangla)."

**Case Study : 10-**Nasreen was working in a garments industry of the Dhaka city. When her age was fifteen she came from Begarhat to work. In the garments factory, a good number of men in the factory want to love her due to her beauty. But she did never want to respond any one of them. All on a sudden she started loving a young man who was unemployed but already graduated and resides in a mass adjacent to her factory and married him. Her father when heard the news was very shocked. However, he accepts the marriage. Her husband was totally depended on her income. Despite dependency he keeps more pressure on her for want of dowry. However, after one year of the marriage when she was pregnant her husband left her with a plea that she is not the person who can fulfill his wishes. First she wanted to abortion he baby. But as already six months was gone doctor asked her to refrain from doing it. At the time of the birth of her child she loses the job. After the birth she was in deep water as she has lot of debt. She tried to join her old garments factory. But they categorically informed that she has been dismissed from her job. Now she is full time prostitute and her son is with her mother in her village of Begarhat District.

(Source: Collected from personal experiences as well as news reporting of various Dailies).