CHAPTER V

THE SOCIOLOGICAL APPROACH TO BRIDE-BURNING

The data as analysed in the preceding chapter demonstrate an upward trend in the dowry related crimes in recent years. The available data suggest that the murder of a bride at the alter of dowry or for any other reason is far more prevalent than the public realize. The murder of the young bride on account of dowry is not a private issue but a high priority public social issue in terms of the socio-cultural forces. Firstly, social scientists and the public alike have become increasingly sensitive to bride-burning since late 1980s. Secondly, various women’s organisations have played a significant role in highlighting the issues of harassment, battering and violence of young brides. Till now, the Indian sociologists did not show much interest in studying Indian socio-legal problems. They concentrated their research on marriage and family, family patterns, social structure and processes of social change etc. However, as is apparent from chapter III (Supra) some studies have been conducted to analyse various social, economic, religious and cultural factors which have direct or indirect bearing on the incidents of dowry harassment and bride-burning.

This chapter is devoted to the study of problem of
bride-burning from sociological perspective in one of the KAVAL Towns namely Agra. A field survey was planned to collect sociological data. In order to ensure objectivity and avoid local biases, data from neighbouring District Aligarh were collected, compared and analysed. The present chapter is thus based on the result of the field survey. (1)

A total of 208 cases of bride-burning were studied. The study revealed a mass of legal and sociological data regarding the phenomenon of bride-burning. The data present the social background of the victims, their husbands, their in-laws and their parents as to their educational status, occupational status, religion, caste, family composition etc. The survey also covered some of the personal and social characteristics of the victims and the offenders based on police records and interviews.

The present chapter is divided into seven sections. First section deals with the distribution of dowry related offences. The data have been classified on the basis of place of occurrence, reporting to the police, initiation of criminal proceedings, nature and type of dowry harassment, the dowry demands, modus operandi of dowry related crimes and the motive involved in such cases. The second section relates to the victim's personal and social background. The distribution is made on the basis of the

1. The methodology used in securing data for the field survey has been described in chapter I Supra.
age of the victims, duration of the marriage, occurrence of death within and beyond seven years, educational status of the victim, rural and urban background of the victims, religion of the victim, caste, family composition, and the nature of marriage of the victims. Next section deals with personal and social background of the husband. Analysis has been made of such variables as educational status, occupational status, economic status and second marriage. Fourth section of the chapter has been devoted to the analysis of the sociological data relating to the parents of the victims. It covers such aspects as educational status, occupational status, economic status and the fulfilment of the dowry demands. In the fifth section the analysis has been made of the sociological background of the victim’s in-laws. This included educational status, occupational status and income. On the basis of the analysis of the sociological data of the victim, her husband, her parents and her in-laws, the sixth section is devoted to the recording of the findings of the study. The last section is devoted to inferences from the findings and the conclusion of the chapter.

(A) Dowry Related Offences

Out of 208 cases, 86 cases from Agra District of U.P. of which 29 cases from rural areas and 57 cases from urban areas were studied. 122 cases from Aligarh District of U.P. of which 92 cases from rural areas and 30 cases from urban areas were studied. Table I shows the
distribution of the cases district and area wise.

**TABLE I**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl.No.</th>
<th>District</th>
<th>Rural</th>
<th>Urban</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>AGRA</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>ALIGARH</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>208</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In our sample of 208 cases of bride-burning, it was found that in 102 (49%) cases, the victims were murdered by their husbands and in-laws, in 88 (42.3%) cases, they were burnt to death, in 13 (6.2%) cases, they committed suicide and in 5 (2.4%) cases, attempts were made to commit murder. A study of the FIRs revealed that only 20 (9.6%) cases (as it is evident from Table - II) were

**TABLE II**

**Dowry Related Crimes Registered in Agra and Aligarh Districts During 1987 to 1992.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl.No.</th>
<th>Sections IPC</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>302</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>9.62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>304-B/498-A</td>
<td>170</td>
<td>81.73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>306</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>6.25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>307</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2.40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>208</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
registered under section 302, IPC, 170 (81.7%) cases were registered under section 304-B/498-A, IPC, 13 (6.2%) cases were registered under section 306, IPC and 5 (2.4%) cases were registered under section 307, IPC. In 6 cases, the offences were converted from section 307, IPC to 304-B/498-A, IPC and in 2 cases from 304-B to 306, IPC.

1. Place of Occurrence - Death

In majority of cases, the death of the victims appears to have occurred at their in-law's home. The data revealed that in 139 (66.8%) out of 208 cases, the death of the victims occurred at their in-law's home, in 55 (26.4%) cases at different hospitals and in 2 (0.9%) cases, the victim's death occurred at their parent's home. In 3 (1.4%) cases, the dead bodies of the victims were found in well, in 2 (0.9%) cases in river, in 2 cases the victim's dead body was found on the railway line. In remaining 5 (2.4%) cases, an attempt was made to cause the death of the victims but they were rescued.

As far as the post-mortem is concerned in 117 (56.2%) out of 208 cases, dead bodies of the victims were taken into custody by police and post-mortem were carried out. In 42 (20.2%) cases, the dead bodies of the victims were cremated in secrecy without giving any information to the victim's parents and in remaining 49 (23.5%) cases no information regarding the post mortem of the dead body of the victims could be obtained.
It appears from the above figures that in about 20% of cases a hurriedly conducted cremation destroyed the material evidence about commission of crime. This might have affected police investigation and subsequent trial of the offender. A similar trend has been reported by Ranjana Kumari in her study. (2)

A study conducted by Shoma Chatterji of police reports in the form of FIRs and Daily Diary entries in 109 cases in the Delhi region in June-July 1982 revealed that in 83 cases, post-mortem was carried out. 24 cases were not followed by post-mortem of which, in 20 post-mortem was waived on the request of some male relative such as the husband or in-laws or father or brother. (3) How can justice be done when the accused persons have the freedom to decide on whether a post-mortem is or is not to be done?

2. Reported to Police

Out of 208 cases, bride-burnings in 182 (87.5%) cases were reported to the police and were recorded as FIRs under Section 154 Cr. P.C. In 21 (10%) cases, the police refused to register the cases and the FIRs were given to the concerned Senior Superintendent of Police. In 2 (0.9%) cases, reports were given to the Additional


District Magistrate and in 3 (1.4%) cases, reports were given to the Judicial Magistrate of the concerned district.

In majority of cases, the police did not investigate the cases properly out of which 2 cases were transferred to the CID after great pressure from the victim’s parents side. The interviews results indicated that in majority of cases, the victims’ parents were not satisfied with the police investigations. In a number of cases the police were blamed for taking illegal gratification or tampering with evidence. A similar observation has been reported by Ghadially and Kumar in their study.(4)

The interviews of the parents of the victims disclosed that only in 29 (13.9%) cases, the dying declarations of the victims were recorded either by the police or doctor or Magistrate. In remaining cases there was no information regarding the dying declarations of the victims. In 26 (12.5%) cases, the victims blamed in their dying declarations that they had been burnt by pouring kerosene oil by their husbands and in-laws. In remaining 3 (1.4%) cases, they admitted that they had poured kerosene oil on themselves and set on fire. But some of the parents claimed that such statements were made under pressure from the victim’s husbands and in-laws.

In 203 (97.6%) cases, FIR was lodged with the police by the victim's father or mother or brother or some relative. In 4 (1.9%) cases it was made by neighbours and in one case FIR was lodged with the police by the victim's husband that she had committed suicide.

It is interesting to note here that none of the case was reported to the police by the Women's Welfare Organisations at Agra and in Aligarh District of U.P. despite the fact that there are the branches of All India Women's Conference at these two places. No case was reported even by the District Legal Aid and advise Committee of the concerned district.

The survey showed that there has been lack of seriousness and interest on the part of the police while investigating the cases. One of the S.H.O under promise of anonymity said. "Likh do saab Dahej Hatya Ke sare case jhute hain. Log 304-B ka durupyog kar rahe hain (please write down that all cases of dowry deaths are false and fictitious. People are misusing the provisions of section 304-B"). This statement indicates the negative attitude of the police officers towards the cases of bride-burning. Sometimes, the bride-burning cases are assigned to a junior and inexperienced police officers. In some cases, the police refused to record the FIRs and reports were given to the Senior Superintendent of Police of the concerned district. Very often the offences are
registered under wrong sections of IPC by the police.

The findings of the present survey receive corroborative support from other studies. Ram Ahuja in a study of 13 dowry death cases conducted in four cities of Rajasthan found that in 9 cases, the victim's parents were not satisfied with the way of police investigations and in 10 cases it was assigned to very junior officers. Further, he observed that in 7 cases the victim's parents revealed that the police colluded with the family and fabricated the evidence.\(^{(5)}\)

Ghadially and Kumar studied 36 cases of dowry deaths as they appeared in well known magazine *MANUSHI* from January 1979 to December 1985. They observed that among the registered cases 22 percent were registered as cases of suicide or of abetment to suicide. In 8 percent of the cases, murder or attempt to murder was registered by the police. \(^{(6)}\)

3. **Criminal Proceedings Initiated Against the Husband and In-laws**

In majority of cases, the victim's parents were aware of the harassment and violence that their daughter were being subjected to. In 6 (2.8%) cases, criminal proceedings were initiated against the husband and in-laws of the victims by their parents but later on compromises were made.

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The survey revealed that in 2 (0.9%) cases, the brides were being subjected to harassment, battering and violence and at the climax an attempt was made to burn to death by sprinkling of kerosene oil but they were rescued. FIR was lodged against the victim’s husband and in-laws and criminal proceedings were started against them but compromises were made and the wife returned to her husband’s house. Upon her return, the domestic violence was accelerated to such extent that it eventually resulted in murder by burning. In the first case this happened within 27 days of the compromise.

In the second case complaint was filed under Section 125 Code of Criminal Procedure for maintenance by the victim which was withdrawn. But after she returned to her husband’s house she was subjected to more harassment and was eventually burnt to death. A similar remark has been reported by Ghadially and Kumar in their study.  

4. **Nature and Type of Dowry Harassment Prior to Occurrence of Death**

Bride-burning is generally understood to involve the murder of a young bride on the alter of dowry or any other reason by the husband and in-laws. But before the act of killing, several forms of harassment, battering and domestic violence take place against the victim. The harassment, battering and violence generally started with comments followed by insults, abuses and denial of food.

7. Ibid.
A similar nature of harassment have been reported by Vijay Sharma in her study. She observed that the nature of harassment were taunting, teasing, beating, threatening etc.\(^{(8)}\)

In our study, all the brides were reported to have been illtreated soon after the marriage. In 156 (75\%) cases it was alleged that the victims were battered by their husbands and in-laws, in 37 (17.7\%) cases the victims were insulted and taunted and 12 (5.7\%) cases were reported for denial of food to the victims by their husbands and in-laws. In most of the cases, the victims were beaten and assaulted by their husbands and mother-in-laws. In majority of cases, the taunts and insults were started by mother-in-law and sister-in-law. A similar trend has been reported by Anjali in her study.\(^{(9)}\) In remaining 3 (1.4\%) cases, no information was received relating to the battering and illtreatment of the victims.

In 14 (6.6\%) cases, the victims were battered and ousted from the in-law's home. They remained at their parent's home for few months/years. In 2 cases, the victims remained at their parent's home for a period of 4 months, in 2 cases for 7-8 months and for one month, one


year, 2 years and for 3 years in one case each. In 5 cases the victims stayed at their parent’s home for a period of several months.

It was found that all the brides (except in 3 cases) were reported to have been the victims of illtreatment and battering within few days of the marriage. In 22 (14.1%) out of 156 cases, the illtreatment and battering started within a few days of the victim’s marriage, in 48 (30.7%) cases after 2 to 3 months, in 35 (22.4%) cases after 4-5 months, in 39 (25%) cases after one year and in 12 (7.6%) cases the illtreatment and battering were started after two years of the victim’s marriage.

In 13 (6.2%) cases, it was alleged that the victims’ husbands and in-laws refused to allow the brides to visit to their parent’s home and they were also prohibited to attend social functions.

Similar findings were revealed by Ghadially and Kumar in a survey report\(^{10}\). They observed that domestic violence was reported in 78 percent of the cases. In 31 percent of the cases, the violence took a milder form such as shoving, kicking, quarreling, taunting, harassment, blackmailing and mental torture.

Ram Ahuja in his survey report observed that all the victims were reported to have been ill-treated soon after the marriage. In 3 cases, the illtreatment was alleged to

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\(^{10}\) Ghadially, Rehana and Kumar, Promod, op. cit.
have been started within a few days of the victim's marriage and in 14 cases after 2-3 months.\(^{(11)}\)

5. The Dowry - Given and Demanded

Dowry takes different forms depending upon the socio-economic groups involved. By and large, it includes money, land and buildings, transport aids like scooter, car, cycle, jewellery and household equipment whether given as dowry or as gifts to the daughter.\(^{(12)}\)

The survey data revealed that the dowry given by the victim's parents in their daughter's marriage varied from Rs. 10,000 to Rs. 1,50,000. In 55 (26.4\%) cases, the dowry was given between Rs. 10,000 to Rs. 30,000, in 70 (33.6\%) cases between Rs. 31,000 to Rs. 50,000, in 35 (16.8\%) cases between Rs. 51,000 to Rs. 70,000, in 10 (4.8\%) cases between Rs. 71,000 to Rs. 1,000,00, in 3 (1.4\%) cases between Rs. 1,000,00 to Rs. 1,50,000 and in 35 (16.8\%) cases no information was received. The victims' parents stated that they had given the dowry according to their financial position. The dowry included both in cash as well as in kind. A similar report has been made by Paul in his study.\(^{(13)}\)

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11. Ahuja, Ram, op. cit., p. 106


The dowry given in cash ranged from Rs. 3000 to Rs. 50,000. The dowry given in kind included the electronic gadgets like, radio, fridge, T.V. tape-recorder, cooking gas etc. other durable included motorcycle, scooter, hero majestic, cycle, furniture, gold and gold ornaments, clothes, kitchen utensils and even buffalo etc. These consumer goods (except buffalo) given as dowry were reported by Vijay Sharma in her study. (14)

It was found that dowry demands were made both before the marriage and at the time of marriage, but in majority of the cases the dowry was demanded with force after marriage. These demands were made either as an exercise of the rightful prerogative of the groom and his family or to express dissatisfaction with meager dowry at the time of marriage. A similar trend has been reported by Dasgupta and his associates. (15)

The survey revealed that in 165 (79.3%) cases, dowry was demanded specifically in cash as well as in kind. In 36 (17.3%) cases, there was no specific demand of dowry but the victims' husbands and in-laws were expected dowry either in cash or electronic gadgets. It 98 (59.4%) out of 165 cases, dowry was demanded as hard cash by the victims' husbands and in-laws after the marriage. The


hard cash demanded varied from Rs. 5,000 to Rs. 1,00,000.\(^{(16)}\) In many cases, cash was demanded to establish or expand business, to get service or to buy expensive articles. In few cases, the cash was demanded for purchasing land. In 67 (40.6%) cases, dowry was demanded in the form of electronic gadgets and domestic goods such as, T.V. (coloured), V.C.R., radio, watch, motorcycle, scooter, moped, cycle, gold and silver ornaments, furniture such as sofa set, double bed etc. Other demands included such things as household utensils, almirah, fan, clothes, fridge, buffalo etc. But the most commonly demanded items of dowry were motorcycle and scooter. In few cases, the mother-in-law demanded gold ornaments as a presentation for herself.

When these demands were not met, the victims' husbands and in-laws started maltreating the young brides. Harassment and battering took place against the young brides and at the climax they were murdered by their husbands and in-laws.

Ghadially and Kumar in a survey report observed that in 58 percent cases, the most common item of dowry demanded was hard cash. The cash was demanded not only for its own sake but usually to expand business, cover marriage expenses or to buy expensive articles. This was followed by household furniture (28 percent). Colour television, sewing machine, dunlop sofa, bed, radio and cupboard were the most commonly demanded items of

\[16. \text{ See Infra f. n. 37.} \]
furniture. Jewellery ranked a close third (25 percent) followed by vehicle, clothes, and household linen.\(^{17}\) It is interesting to note that in 59.4\% cases under present survey, cash demands were made and in 40.6\% cases demands included variety of durable.

6. **Modus Operandi of Dowry Death/Murder, Suicide and Attempted Murder**

Different methods were alleged to have been adopted in killing the brides. The most commonly used methods were burning, poisoning, strangulating, hanging and beating to death. Out of 208 cases, 190 (91.3\%) cases resulted in murder, 13 (6.2\%) cases resulted in suicide and in 5 (2.4\%) cases, an attempt was made to cause the victim's death.

As far as the nature of murder is concerned, in 88 (46.3\%) out of 190 cases, the victims were alleged to have been killed by burning by their husbands and in-laws. The second most common method of bride's murder was alleged to be by poisoning. This modus operandi was adopted in 32 (16.8\%) cases. Strangulation was the cause of death in 26 (13.6\%) cases. In 6 (3.1\%) cases, the victims were alleged to have been beaten to such extent that it caused their death.

The survey revealed that in 2 (1.0\%) cases, the victims were shot down by fire arms. In 4 (2.0\%) cases, \(^{17}\) Ghadially, Rehana and Kumar, Promod, op. cit., p. 168.
the victims were alleged to have been murdered by stabbing with knife and gadasa.

A common procedure adopted in 14 (7.3%) cases was murder followed by disposal of dead body in such a manner that if it was recovered it may look like a case of suicide. Out of these 14 cases, in 5 cases strangulation was followed by hanging and in 4 cases, it was followed by setting the bodies on fire. In one case dead body was placed on railway line. In 4 cases, the dead bodies were thrown either in the well or in the river. In remaining 18 (9.4%) cases, information about causes of death was not available.

In 13 (6.2%) cases, the victims were alleged to have committed suicide. It was alleged by the victim's parents in the FIRs that the victims were subjected to harassment, battering and violence by their husbands and in-laws for bringing insufficient dowry and they were abetted to commit suicide. In few cases it was, further, alleged that the victims in order to relieve themselves, from the continuous harassment, battering and violence, committed suicide. A similar trend of suicide has been reported by Ram Ahuja in his study.\(^{18}\)

The survey revealed that five different modes of suicides were adopted by the victims. In 4 cases, the victims' poured kerosene oil on their bodies and setting

\(^{18}\) Ahuja, Ram, op. cit., p. 115.
themselves on fire. In 4 cases suicide by poisoning was alleged. In 3 cases, they hanged themselves from the roof. In one case, the victim jumped into the well. In yet another one case, the victim committed suicide by jumping before a running train.

As far as the cases of attempted murder are concerned in 4 cases, an attempt was made to cause the death of victims by pouring kerosene oil on their bodies and in one case the victim was alleged to have been injured by weapon.

7. Motives in Bride-burning

In our study the data revealed that in majority of cases (except in 7 cases), dowry was attributed as motive for bride-burning. It was stated by the victim's parents in the interviews that on account of their failure to give adequate dowry or fulfil continued demands of huge dowry their daughters were subjected to harassment, battering and violence to such an extent that resulted in murder or suicide. However, in 7 (3.3%) cases out of 208, the other motives were also attributed in murder or suicide of the brides. In 3 out of 7 cases, the victims' husbands were having illicit relations with another girls and it created a maladjustment between the husband and wife. In 2 cases, the victims had produced the female child. Further in 2 cases, the victim had failed to produce any child. Further, in all these cases, harassment, battering and
violence were accelerated upon the victims by their husbands and in-laws that resulted in murder or suicide.

The motive behind it was to perform the second marriage and there was no any other way out except to get rid of the bride by killing.

On the basis of above data it may be observed that the problem of bride-burning is not and cannot be an unicausal problem but it is the product of a multidimensional process. The survey indicated that a number of factors contributed to the bride-burning.

(B) Victim's Personal and Social Background

1. Age of the Victim

The survey revealed that the age of the brides at the time of marriage ranged between 15 years and 30 years as it is evident from the Table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl.No.</th>
<th>Age group</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>%age</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>15-18</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>15.94%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>19-22</td>
<td>163</td>
<td>78.74%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>23-26</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4.35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>27-30</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.97%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>N 207</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In 33 (15.9%) out of 207 cases, the victims at the time of marriage were in the age-group of 15-18 years, in 163 (78.7%) cases between 19-22 years, in 9 (4.3%) cases between 23-26 years, in 2 (0.9%) cases the victims were married in the age-group of 27-30 years and in one case, no information could be obtained regarding the age at the time of marriage of the victim. The mean age of the victims at the time of marriage was 20.8 years.

It was discovered during the survey that 33 (15.9%) victims were married before attaining the legal age of marriage but the victim’s parents did not disclose the real age of the victims in the FIR. It also indicated that the majority of the victims (78.7%) were married in the age group of 19-22 years.

Table 4 below shows the age of the victims at the time of premature death.

**TABLE - IV**

**Victim’s Age Group At The Time of Death**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No.</th>
<th>Age group</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>%age</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>15-18</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>19-22</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>65.03%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>23-26</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>25.61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>27-30</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>7.88%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TOTAL N 203 100%**
In 3 (1.4%) out of 203 cases, the victims at the time of death were between the age group of 15-18 years, in 132 (65%) cases between 19-22 years, in 52 (25.6%) cases between 23-26 years and in 16 (7.8%) cases, the victims at the time of death were in the age group of 27-30 years. In 5 cases, the victims survived. Out of these 5 cases, in 3 cases the victims were in the age group of 19-22 years at the time of attempted murder. In one case she was approximately of 24 years of age and yet another victim was of 27 years of age. In majority of the cases under present survey 132 (65%) out of 203 cases, the victims were in the age-group of 19-22 years. This constituted 65% of total cases studied. The mean age of the victims at the time of death was 22.1 years. As noted above the mean age at the time of marriage of victim was 20.8 years. This establishes the fact that bride-burning generally takes place shortly after marriage.

Other studies have also disclosed a similar pattern of age distribution of victims. Ranjana Kumari conducted a field survey of the reported dowry victims of 150 cases in Delhi during September-December 1986. She observed that most of the victims (80 percent) were in the age group of 21-35 years and victimisation started immediately after marriage. (19)

Ghadially and Kumar in their survey report observed that in 47 percent of the cases, the age of the women ranged from 18 years to 28 years with a mean age of 22.7

years. (20)

2. Duration of Marriage

In 202 cases, the duration of marriage ranged from less than 6 months to 14 years and in one case no information was available regarding the date of marriage.

TABLE - V
Duration of Marriage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No.</th>
<th>Months/Years</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>%age</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>0 - 6 M</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>6.93%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>6 - 12 M</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>19.30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>1 - 2 Y</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>27.72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>2 - 3 Y</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>16.83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>3 - 4 Y</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>7.43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>4 - 5 Y</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>6.44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>5 - 6 Y</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4.95%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>6 - 7 Y</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3.47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>7 - 8 Y</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2.47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>8 - 9 Y</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.98%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>9 - 10 Y</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.99%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>12 - 13 Y</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.99%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>13 - 14 Y</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>TOTAL N</td>
<td>202</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

20. Ghadially, Rehana and Kumar, Promod, op. cit.
The survey revealed that in 14 cases, the time-gap between marriage and death was less than 6 months. It is interesting to note that in one out of 14 cases, the time-gap between marriage and death was less than 2 months and in 3 cases, the time-gap between marriage and death was less than 3 months. In 39 cases, the time-gap between marriage and death was about 6 months to 12 months, in 56 cases 1 to 2 years, in 34 cases 2 to 3 years, in 15 cases 3 to 4 years, in 13 cases 4 to 5 years, in 10 cases 5 to 6 years, in 7 cases 6 to 7 years, in 5 cases 7 to 8 years, in 4 cases 8 to 9 years, in 2 cases 9 to 10 years, in 2 cases 12 to 13 years and in one case, the time-gap between marriage and death was about 14 years. In 53 out of 202 cases the mean length of marriage was 7.4 months. In 149 cases, the mean length of marriage was 3.4 years.

These figures indicate that the first two years of married life were very crucial in a bride's marital life. In 109 (53.9 %) out of 202 cases, bride-burning took place within two years of marriage. The figures show that longer the time of married life the lesser are the chances of victimization.

The present survey finds the corroborative support from the observations of Ghadially and Kumar. They observed that the length of marriage ranged from 11 days to 10 years with a mean length of marriage equal to 2.33 years.

21. Ibid.
3. **Bride-burning Within Seven Years and After Seven Years of Marriage**

The period of seven years is legally relevant for the purposes of criminal prosecution. Any death occurring within a period of seven years of marriage leads to a legal presumption that it was a case of dowry death.

The survey revealed that in 188 (93%) out of 202 cases, the victims died within seven years of their marriage and in 14 (7%) cases, they were died after seven years of their marriage. In remaining 4 out of 5 cases, an attempt was made to cause the death of the victims within seven years of their marriage and in one case after seven years of her marriage.

In 38 (18.2%) out of 208 cases, the victims had children, and in 9 (4.3%) cases the victims were pregnant. No information was available in remaining cases.

4. **Educational Status**

Another variable which affects the social status of a person is education. It enhances not only respectability but is economically rewarding. With a view to examining the educational status of the victims as a variable affecting the bride-burning, the survey included data on that account as well.
TABLE - VI

Educational Status of Victims

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No.</th>
<th>Level of Education</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>%age</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Illiterate</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>22.12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Literate</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>29.80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Up to High School</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>18.27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Up to Intermediate</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>9.62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Graduate</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>5.29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Post Graduate</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.92%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>No Information</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>12.98%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>208</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The survey revealed that in 46 (22.1%) cases, the victims were illiterate, 62 (29.8%) were literate, 38 (18.2%) were educated up to High School level, 20 (9.6%) up to Intermediate, while 11 (5.2%) Graduates and in 4 (1.9%) cases, the victims possessed post graduate degree. In remaining 27 (12.9%) cases, no information was available regarding the educational status of the victims. Among educated victims, one possessed M.A., B.Ed. degrees. She was more qualified than her husband.

Ram Ahuja in his survey report observed that 3 victims out of 13 were illiterate, 3 were educated up to primary level, 2 up to the secondary level, one up to the higher secondary level, and 3 were graduates and one had a technical degree. (22)

Ranjana Kumari in her survey report observed that

22. Ahuja, Ram, op. cit., p. 162.
only 9 percent of the victims were uneducated. Graduates formed the largest section (26 percent) followed by Intermediate (16 percent) and post-graduate (4 Percent)\(^{(23)}\).

Present survey and similar studies\(^{(24)}\) noted above lead us to conclude that as far as the cases of bride-burning are concerned the literacy or high level of education does not prevent the victimization of a bride. It appears that the grooms have little respect for the education of the girl. Despite the fact that they can contribute to family income if allowed to take up a job. Therefore, education has little meaning for grooms if the girl fails to bring the desired dowry.

5. Rural - Urban Background of the Victims

Bride burning is not merely an urban phenomenon. But this evil is also dominating the rural scene. The survey revealed that in 113 (54.3\%) out of 208 cases, the victims were from rural background and they were married in rural areas. In 68 (32.6\%) cases, the victims were from urban background and were married in urban. In 11 (5.2\%) cases, the victims were from urban background but they were married in rural areas and in 16 (7.6\%) cases, the victims

\begin{unnumbered}

23. Kumari, Ranjana, op. cit., p. 32.

\end{unnumbered}
were from rural background but they were married in urban areas.

It may be noted that dowry demands are becoming part and parcel of social life both in urban areas and rural areas. Victimization in the form of bride burning may take place according as to where the marital home is located.

6. Religion

The problem of bride-burning is not only confined to a particular religious community i.e. Hindu but it has permeated even among other religious communities in India as it is evident from Table VII.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl.No.</th>
<th>Religion</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>%age</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Hindu</td>
<td>189</td>
<td>90.87%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Muslim</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>8.17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Sikh</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Jain</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>208</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The survey revealed that in 189 (90.87%) out of 208 cases, the victims belonged to Hindu religion, in 17 (8.17%) cases they were Muslims and in one (0.48%) case each the victim belonged to Sikh religion and Jain religion.
7. Caste

One of the salient features of Indian social structure is the caste system which is the traditional basis of social stratification. Caste has today become the major structural network of social change in Indian society. It is one major institution which is woven into the entire Indian societal fabric. Caste is an extended group in which every member is either an actual or a potential kin of another. Caste is usually segmented further into several sub-castes and each sub-caste is endogamous.

The institution of caste in India provides a common cultural idiom to the members of the society and one finds that caste cuts across the religious divisions. Not only the Hindus, but also Sikhs, Jains, Muslims and Christians are segmented into caste. The problem of dowry harassment, wife battering, violence and bride-burning does not seem to be specific to any particular caste group among Hindus, but its incidence is found to be alike among all castes i.e. Brahmins, Rajputs, Bansal, Aggrawal, Gupta,


Backward castes, Schedules castes, etc. as is reflected by Table VIII.

**TABLE - VIII**

*Distribution of Victims by Caste Groups Among Hindu Segment*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl.No.</th>
<th>Caste</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>%age</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Brahmin</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>13.76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Rajput</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>17.46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Lodh Rajput</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>12.69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Gupta</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>10.60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Aggrawal</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5.29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Bansal</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3.70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Varshney</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.06%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Kashyap</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Kushwaha</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Backward caste</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>12.17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Kachhi</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Utensils maker (kumhar)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.06%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Scheduled caste</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5.29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>No information</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>12.69%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| TOTAL  | N     | 189   | 100%  |

The survey revealed that in 26 (13.76%) out of 189 cases, the victims belonged to high caste Brahmin, 33 (17.46%) cases to Rajput, 24 (12.69%) cases to Lodh Rajput, 20 (10.60%) cases to Gupta, 10 (5.29%) cases to
Aggrawal, 7 (3.70%) cases to Bansal, 2 (1.06%) cases to Varshney, 1 (0.53%) case to Kashyap, 3 (1.59%) cases to Kushwaha, 23 (12.17%) cases to Backward caste, 4 (2.11%) cases to kachhi, 2 (1.06%) cases to Utensils makers, 10 (5.29%) cases to Scheduled caste and in remaining 24 (12.69%) cases no information was available.

It was further observed that in majority of the cases, bride-burning had occurred among high caste families. Thus, the figures show that bride-burning is not only a lower caste phenomenon, but rather a high caste problem.

It was found that in all cases, the marriages were performed within the same caste. The requirement of the Indian tradition that marriage has to occur within the caste continues to be strictly adhered to.

8. Family Composition

The classic form of the family in India is that of the joint family. It is prescribed in some of the sacred Hindu books. It prevailed in India for centuries. The joint family structure is today more characteristic of rural than of urban families; of the upper caste and wealthier strata of society than that of the lower and poorer strata; of the more orthodox sectors than of those which have taken over western traits; and of Hindu than of Muslim communities. But even among urban Westernized and
Muslim families, the patterns of interpersonal relationship set by the joint family are not wholly ignored, and influence of the orthodox scriptural joint family can still be seen everywhere in India.\(^{(28)}\)

In the family, the wife comes as a stranger. All the other members of the family have already imbibed the family traditions, customs and usages, and the family sentiments have become quite a part of their lives. The newly-wedded wife, on the contrary, is in these respects a perfect stranger in the family. Her first important duty on entering her new home, therefore, would be to exert towards adapting herself to the traditions and sentiments of the house of which she now becomes a member. A true adaptation, however, would become the most difficult task if it is one sided only; it is desirable that the other members of the household too should attempt to be of real help to the newcomer. They have to take a lenient view of her acts of omission and commission until she has become acclimatized to the new atmosphere. The greater part of this responsibility, which falls on the shoulders of the members of the family, has naturally to be shared by the husband.\(^{(29)}\)

Financial stability is essential for a newly married


couple to start married life. For this purpose, a variety of social customs such as dowry or bride-price and exchange of goods are provided for in Hindu marriages, and also to some extent in the marriage of other religions.\(^{30}\)

The sample data showed that in almost all the cases, the victims had been living in the joint family from the date of marriage till their demise. However in 3 cases, the victims were living separately with their husbands prior to death for durations not longer than one month, two months and ten months. It is interesting to note that despite separate living of the victims, the in-laws continued to exert influence on their sons. They were alleged to be involved in the harassment, battering, violence and murder of the brides.

The survey results are pointer to the fact that bride-burning occurs in houses where husband and wife are living in the joint family. Incidence of bride-burning seems to the negative aspects of otherwise esteemed system of the joint family.

9. Arranged Marriage

Marriages in India are generally arranged by the parents and relatives of the boys and girls. Even among educated and urban based families, the traditional system of arranged marriages is followed. In such marriages

matters relating to dowry, other exchange of gifts and the entertainment of "barat" (marriage party) are also settled. Failure to fulfil the promises leads to bitterness among the two families. The boy's family may feel cheated if insufficient dowry in cash or in kind is brought by the bride. The tussle starts immediately after the marriage. The in-laws of the bride begin to subject her to harassment.

The survey data testified the fact that in almost all the cases of bride-burning reported to police, the marriage was the arranged one. There was complete absence of love-marriage. The romantic love as a basis of marriage was conspicuously absent. In this type of marriages, the prime consideration is usually the girl and the emotional attachment with her. Dowry or other monetary benefits remain a secondary or no consideration at all. It cannot be said that bride-burning does not occur in case of love-marriage. In view of the meagre sample it would be hazardous to reach any such conclusion.

C. Social, Educational and Economic Background of Victim's Husband

The bridegroom (like his parents) is not shy of demanding or accepting dowry. Instances are not lacking, where educated men have demanded large sums as dowry on the ground that had to spend great deal on their education and that their social and economic status is high, and has to be maintained and they expect bride's parents to
provide compensation for all that through costly gifts, described in current terminology as, "Four F's-meaning, Fiat, Flat, Fridge and Foreign tour". (31)

There are a number of considerations such as family background, occupation of the groom, his educational background, his personality etc. which seem to lure dowry and even determine the amount of dowry. The amount of the dowry is influenced by the educational and professional background of the groom. (32)

Sometimes, the husband becomes the mere spectator of the crime committed against his wife. In majority of the cases, the husbands and mother-in-laws of the victims had played a leading role in planning and executing the crime. (33)

1. Educational Status

The survey revealed that in 18 (8.6%) out of 208 cases, the victim's husbands were illiterate, 40 (19.2%) were literate, 46 (22.1%) were educated upto High School, 38 (18.3%) upto Intermediate, while 30 (14.4%) were


32. Chaudhary, Pratima K., op. cit.

Graduates and in 9 (4.3%) cases, the victim’s husbands possessed post-graduate degree. In remaining 27 (12.9%) cases, no information was available regarding the educational status of the victim’s husbands.

2. Occupational Status

In 22 (10.5%) out 208 cases, the victim’s husbands were engaged in manual or other labour. In 25 (12.0%) cases, victim’s husbands were in government services and in 51 (24.5%) cases, in non-government services. Among the self employed persons, one (0.48%) husband was a private medical practitioner, one (0.48%) was an advocate, 25 (12.0%) were businessmen and 26 were petty traders. In 23 (11%) cases, victim’s husbands were agriculturist owning their lands. In one (0.48%) case, the husband of the victim was a driver, one (0.48%) was a motor mechanic and in 2 (0.96%) cases, they were shoe makers. In 3 (1.44%) cases the victim’s husbands were unemployed and in 2 (0.96%) cases they were students. In remaining 27 (12.9%) cases no information was available.

It, thus, appears that the crimes of bride-burning were committed by husbands engaged in all types of occupations.

3. Economic Status-Income

The survey revealed that in 30 (14.4%) out of 208 cases, the income of the victim’s husband was less than
Rs. 1500 per month. In 49 (23.5%) cases, it was between Rs. 1500 to Rs. 2000 per month. In 45 (21.6%) cases, it was between Rs. 2000 to Rs. 2500 per month. In 32 (15.3%) cases, it was between Rs. 2500 to Rs. 3000 per month and in 25 (12%) cases, the income of the victim's husband was above Rs. 3000 per month. In remaining 24 (11.5%) cases, no information was available regarding the income of the victim's husbands.

4. Second Marriage

The survey reports show that in 3 (1.4%) cases, the victim's husband performed second marriage after the victim's murder. It is interesting to mention that in one case, the victim's husband performed second marriage within 10 months of the incident. At the time of survey the husband was having one issue from the second marriage. The educational status of the second bride was upto intermediate level. In these cases, the husbands and in-laws received a handsome dowry from the second bride.

The survey results show that in 8 (3.8%) cases, the victim's husbands were interested to perform second marriage. In these cases, the victim's husbands and in-laws were expected to receive more dowry again in second marriage. To get rid of the brides, the harassment, battering and violence were accelerated upon the victims by their husbands and in-laws that resulted in murder. Other studies also disclosed a similar trend in their
D. Social, Educational and Economic Background of the Parents of Victim

Sometimes, the parents of the girls themselves are responsible for perpetrating this evil and leading to their daughters committing suicide when harassed by their husbands and in-laws. When a daughter in difficulty comes to her parents for advice or help, they enjoin upon her to treat the husband as 'parmeshwara' and to adjust in his house whatever the circumstances.

There are many cases in which the parents of the brides have to incur debts or even sell their property to meet the dowry demands of the bridegrooms and their parents. In several cases, they continue to fulfil the demands of their daughter’s in-laws forgetting that they cannot buy peace, not to speak of affection, by meeting the monetary demands of their in-laws. The demand may lead to constant harassment and violence which is even turned into murder or suicide. (35)

In some cases, the parents of the girls like to give their daughters in marriage in higher-status families. Because of this they are required to pay higher amount of

35. Ahuja, Ram, op. cit., p. 114.
dowry. A similar observation has been described by Pratima Kumari in her study. (36)

1. Educational Status

As regards the educational status of the victim's parents is concerned, in 16 (29.3%) cases, the parents were illiterate, in 60 (28.8%) cases they were literate. In 36 (17.3%) cases, the parents have received education upto High School, in 19 (9.1%) cases upto Intermediate and in 5 (2.4%) cases upto graduate level. In remaining 27 (12.9%) cases, no information was available regarding the educational status of the victim's parents.

2. Occupational Status

Occupational status of the bride's parents is highly relevant in the analysis of the cases of dowry demands, harassment and bride-burning. The type of occupation a person engaged in may also determine his economic position and his capacity to meet the demand for dowry. It is for this reason that occupational status was included as one of the items of the survey.

The data revealed that in 33 (15.8%) out of 208 cases, the victims' parents were engaged in manual or other labour. In 22 (10.5%) cases, the parents were in government services and in 30 (14.4%) cases in non-government services. Among the self employed persons, 25

(12%) were small businessmen, and 32 (15.3%) were petty traders. In 2 (0.96%) cases, the parents were owner of a shoe factory. In 34 (16.3%) cases, victims' parents were agriculturist owning small lands. In one (0.48%) case, the father of the victim was a driver of roadways and in 2 (0.96%) cases, they were shoe-makers. In remaining 27 (12.9%) cases no information was available.

It, thus, appears that cases of bride-burning were reported by parents engaged in all types of occupations. Most of the parents were not economically very well off.

3. Economic Status - Income

The survey reports showed that in 37 (17.7%) out of 208 cases, the income of the victim's parents was less than Rs. 1500 per month. In 45 (21.6%) cases, it was between Rs. 1500 to Rs. 2000. In 42 (20.1%) cases, it was between Rs. 2000 to Rs.2500. In 24 (11.5%) cases, the income of the victim's parents was above Rs. 3000 per month. In remaining 25 (12%) cases, no information was received regarding the income of the victim's parents.

The data showed that majority of parents belong to not so good economic background. Yet, they were harassed for dowry demands running into thousands and in many cases even into lakhs. (37) The parents were often forced to borrow loans and advances. Sometimes, they had to

37. See f.n. (16) and the text accompanying it.
mortgage their lands and properties. The survey disclosed that in two cases, the parents had to mortgage their houses in order to raise funds to pay for huge dowry demands. It finds a similar corroboration from the Hooja's study. (38)

4. Demands Fulfilled After Marriage

As earlier mentioned that in 165 cases, the specific demands of dowry were made. Following such demands, in 15 (9%) cases, the victim's parents had partially met the demands which ranged from Rs. 2,000 to Rs. 10,000 and in 2 cases radio and buffalo was given. But in rest of the cases, the victims' husbands and in-laws demands could not be fulfilled. When these demands were not met, the victims' husbands and in-laws precipitated serious consequences for the young brides. Harassment, battering and violence took place against the young brides and at a climax they were murdered by their husbands and in-laws.

The present survey finds a corroborative support from the study of Vijay Sharma. She observed that when the demands were not met by their parents it led to their harassment in the matrimonial home. They were harassed by their husbands, mother-in-laws and sister-in-laws. (39)


E. Social, Educational and Economic Background of Victim's In-Laws.

Sometimes, the in-law's interference is a hindrance to the victim's happy life. Very often, the poor husband does not know whether to take his wife's side or parent's or sister's side. The attitude of the in-laws becomes troublesome for the young wife. The brides are subjected to torture and harassment by their in-laws for non-fulfilment of dowry or any other reason.

In most of the cases, the greed of the in-laws derives them to contemplate and execute murder. The greedy in-laws may conspire and kill the bride with a view to remarry and receiving more handsome dowry.

1. Educational Status

The survey reports revealed that in 49 (23.5%) out of 208 cases, the victims' in-laws were illiterate, in 62 (29.8%) cases, they were literate. In 40 (19.2%) cases, they were educated upto High School, in 22 (10.5%) cases upto Intermediate, in 7 (3.3%) cases upto Graduate level. In one (0.48%) case, the victim's in-laws possessed a post-graduate degree. No information was available in remaining 27 (12.9%) cases.

In comparing the educational status of the victims, their husbands, their parents and in-laws, there was a disparity in their educational status. The data revealed
that the victims' husbands were more qualified than the victims and the victims' in-laws were also more qualified than their parents. The figures indicated that in most of the cases, the bride-burning had occurred in highly educated families. The ratio of the educated victim was about 4 times more than that of illiterate victims. Thus, the common feeling that most of the bride-burning cases are occurred only in less educated family is not true. The survey results show that highly educated families are also frequently involved in bride-burning cases.

2. Occupational Status

The survey data revealed that in 20 (9.6%) out of 208 cases, the victims' in-laws were engaged in manual or other labour. In 26 (12.5%) cases, the in-laws were in government services and in 34 (16.3%) cases, in non-government services. Among the self employed persons 27 (12.9%) were small businessmen, 33 (15.8%) were petty traders and one was an advocate. In 2 (0.96%) cases, the in-laws were owner of a shoe factory. In 34 (16.3%) cases, the victims' in-laws were agriculturists owning their lands. In one case, the in-laws of the victim was a freedom fighter, in another one case, a driver and in 2 (0.96%) cases, they were shoe makers. In remaining 27 (12.9%) cases no information was available.

3. Economic Status - Income

As far as the economic status of the victim's in-
In 29 (13.9%) out of 208 cases, the income of the victim’s in-laws was less than Rs. 1,500 per month. In 48 (23%) cases, it was between Rs. 1,500 to Rs. 2,000. In 42 (20%) cases, it was between Rs. 2,000 to Rs. 2,500. In 38 (18.2%) cases, it was between Rs. 2,500 to Rs. 3,000. In 26 (12.5%) cases, the income of the victim’s in-laws was above Rs. 3,000 per month and in remaining 25 (12%) cases no information was available.

In comparing the income of the victim’s in-laws and her parents, in 42 (22.9%) out of 183 cases, both belonged to the same economic level of lower middle-class. In 38 (20.7%) cases, the victim’s in-laws belonged to upper middle class of a higher income group in comparison to the higher income group of the victim’s parents in 35 (19.1%) cases. These figures indicate that the parents of the victims had married their daughters in families comparatively richer than themselves.

The menace of bride-burning is not only confined to a lower-class families or middle-class families, but it is more frequently prevalent in higher income group of the middle class. The figures revealed that the ratio of bride-burning is also more in such group.

Pratima Kumari observed that the majority of parents like to give their daughters in marriage in higher-status families. Because of this they are required to pay higher amount of dowry. It does not become a problem if the
parents solemnize the marriage of their daughters in families which are equal to the status of their own. (40)

F. Major Findings of the Study

The actual number of bride-burning is higher than the police records. If the cases of dowry harassment and torture are included, the number would be greater. The victimisation of young women who fails to bring the desired/demanded dowry assumes all forms of violence ranging from taunts to beating and even murder or driving them to commit suicide. In our study the victims in 17.7% cases were insulted and taunted by their husbands and in-laws, in 75% they were battered and in 5.7% cases, the victims were reported for denial of food by their husbands and in-laws. The present survey report showed that in a sample of 208 cases, 49% victims were murdered, 42.3% were burnt to death, 6.2% were pushed to commit suicide and in 2.4% cases an attempts were made to cause the death of the victims. Different methods were used in killing the brides. The most commonly used methods were burning, poisoning, strangulating, hanging and beating to death.

The cases of bride-burning were found to incorporate two motives. Firstly, the young brides were either murdered or compelled to commit suicide in 201 cases (96.6%) when their parents failed to fulfil the dowry demands. Secondly, the murder of the young brides or

40. Chaudhary, Pratima K., op. cit.
driving them to commit suicide was on the pretext of strained family relations in 7 cases (3.4%).

Thus, on socio-economic analysis of the victims, victims' husbands, parents and in-laws' background it was found that:

1. The most of the victims (65%) were in the age group of 19-22 years. In 53.9% cases bride-burning took place within two years of marriage.

2. The problem of dowry harassment, torture and bride-burning exists across religious and caste groups. In the present survey report, of a total of 208 victims, 90% were Hindus, 8.1% Muslims and 0.4% of the each victims belong to Jain and Sikhs. Among the various castes, bride-burning was high among Rajputs (17.4%), Brahmins (13.7%), Lodh Rajputs (12.6%), Gupta (10.5%), Aggrawal (5.2%), Bansal (3.7%), whereas among Backward class (12.1%) and in Scheduled Castes (5.2%).

3. The dowry given by the victim's parents to the grooms/in-laws consisted mostly of expensive consumer items like coloured T.V. Refrigerator, V.C.R. and Scooter as well as cash varying from Rs. 3,000 to Rs. 50,000.

4. The dowry demands start from the very day of engagement and it continues till the dreadful event is over. In majority of the cases, dowry demands
were made soon after the marriage. In 59.4% cases, specific demands were made in hard cash by the victims' husbands and in-laws after marriage. The hard cash demanded varied from Rs. 5,000 to Rs. 1,00,000. In 40.6% cases demands included variety of durables.

(5) The present survey showed that the cases of harassment, battering, violence and bride-burning are occurred frequently in educated family also. In 57.7% cases, the victims were educated, and 7.2% were graduates and post-graduates. In 59.6% cases, the victims' husbands were educated and in 18.7% cases, they were graduates and post-graduates. In 59.6% cases, the victims' in-laws were educated and in 3.8% graduates and post graduates. In 55.2% cases, the victims' parents were educated and in 2.4% they were graduates and post graduates.

(6) In all cases, the dowry given to grooms/in-laws was much beyond the parents income. The bride-burning occurs among the rich and the poor alike due to greed for dowry. The victim's in-laws victims among the lower income group constituted 15.8%, among the middle income group it was 49% and 34.9% among the higher income group.

(7) The survey reports showed that in 10% cases, the Police refused to register the cases of bride-burning and reports were given to the concerned
Senior Superintendent of Police. In majority of the cases, the victims' parents were not satisfied with the police investigations. The dying declarations of the victims were recorded only in 13.9% cases.

(8) In 20.2% cases, the dead bodies of the victims were cremated without giving any information to the victim's parents in order to destroy the material evidence.

(9) In 6.9% cases, the victim's death occurred beyond the seven years period of legal presumption as to dowry deaths.

(10) In 1.4% cases, the victim's husbands performed second marriage after the victim's murder and received a handsome dowry. In 3.8% cases, the victims husbands were interested to perform second marriage.

(11) In 66.8% cases, the death of the victims occurred at their in-laws home, in 26.4% cases at different hospitals and 0.9% cases at their parent's home.

(12) In 2.8% cases, criminal proceedings were initiated against the husband and in-laws of the victims by the parents but later on compromises were made.

(13) In 6.6% cases, the victims were battered and ousted from the in-laws house. They remained at their parent's home for few months/years.
Conclusion

The problem of bride-burning has been analysed by looking into age, education, occupation, income, caste, family composition, illtreatment and humiliation, patterns of brides murder, and motives in regard to 208 bride-burning cases. Based on this, two propositions have been drawn: (1) the most important factor contributes to the bride-burning is offender's motives and (2) the economic situation in the family of a bride's husband contributes much to her adjustment soon after her marriage as well as to her humiliation and cruel treatment.

The motive for the murder of the young wife had been that she had brought insufficient dowry in her marriage. The consequences of the demand for dowry are obviously disastrous not only for the wife and the husband and their two families, but also for the marriage itself. The dowry demand is not merely a demanding of cash and goods beyond the capacity of bride's family to give but rather a question of the inter-relatedness of psychological, social and economic factors.

The expense of a marriage ceremony is very heavy in India. It is the most expensive of all the festivities of the Hindus. The higher caste marriages involve an amount running above one lakh. Among the poor family the amount is large and disproportionate to their economic position.
The financial status are worse in joint families where large number of dependents are to be fed.

It is significant to find in the present survey that dowry or gifts whether given voluntarily or on demand never comprised of cash alone but were also in the form of kind. The amount of cash dowry varied among the various socio-economic groups and it ranged from three thousand to one lakh or even more.

In majority of bride-burning cases, as revealed from the survey, the trouble is created by the women themselves for their own sex. It has been found that it is the mother-in-law or sister-in-law or both, who often prove tyrant rather than the husband and father-in-law.

The findings of the present study suggest to conclude that practice of dowry is widely prevalent in Hindu society but it has spread to other communities also. Even the educated, modern and sophisticated urban youth does not feel shy of demanding dowry. The study also revealed that the system of dowry has given rise to several social problems and it has made lives of young wives miserable in their new home. It puts a young woman’s life under constant oppression and thus, results in maltreatment of young wives. The present survey confirms the prevailing view that the practice of dowry perpetuates inferior status of women in their matrimonial home.
The case history of every bride-burning reveals that the tragedy is not a sudden or unpredictable event. In almost every case of bride-burning, there is a long history of harassment, torture and violence by the husbands and in-laws. The bride’s parents are often come to know about what is happening, but they advised her to return to her husband’s home. The victim meekly obeys the wisdom of her parents as she too sees no future of herself outside her husband’s home.