CHAPTER - VIII

Findings, Conclusion and Suggestions

The problem of 'bride-burning' is a matter of great concern for parents, legislators, courts and society as a whole. It has become a day to day phenomenon in our country. The young married women have been beaten, tortured and burnt to death or compelled to commit suicide due to the non-fulfilment of dowry demands or for any other reason. The number of cases varies from family to family but what remains constant is the sordid story of inhuman torture and violence against women. No community is free from this menace. This practice is not only confined to a particular community, but it has permeated into each and every section of our society.

Inequalities of power relationship between the sexes and the patriarchal order of the society has relegated women to casualties in a male dominated society. Women are victims of dowry related crimes in our society in which inequalities and abuse of power are deep rooted and pervasive. Due to the patriarchal domination, economic dependence and subordinate status, the women cannot escape from the conditions created for them.

Major Findings of the Survey

A study of 208 cases by the present researcher
showed that the tragedy is not a sudden or unpredictable event. In almost every case of bride-burning, there was a long history of harassment, cruelty and violence by the husband and in-laws. The brides’ parents were often aware about what is happening but they advised them to return to their husband’s home. A summary of main findings of the survey is as under:

1. In majority of the cases, the victims’ parents were not satisfied with the police investigations. Some bride-burning cases were assigned to junior and inexperienced police officers for investigations.

2. The survey revealed that in 20.2% cases, the dead bodies of the victims were cremated in secrecy without giving any information to the victims’ parents in order to destroy the material evidence.

3. In 10% cases the police refused to register the cases and in a number of cases it was registered under the wrong sections of the I.P.C.

4. In 13.9% cases only the dying declarations were recorded. In most of the cases the police discouraged for the recording of the dying declarations.

5. In a number of cases, the act of killing was preceded by several forms of harassment, battering and domestic violence against the victims. It all started with comments followed by insults, abuses.
and denial of food. In majority of such cases, the taunts and insults were started by mother-in-law and sister-in-law. The dowry demands as well as harassment for such demands generally begin soon after the marriage. This may continue until the death of the bride. In our survey, it was found that in 30.7% cases, the illtreatment and battering started after 2 to 3 months of the marriage.

6. 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 purchase of land. In 40.6% cases, dowry was demanded in the form of electronic gadgets and domestic goods.

7. The survey revealed that in majority of the cases (65%), the victims at the time of death were between the age group of 19-22 years. Further, it was found that in (53.9%) cases the first two years of married life were very crucial in brides' marital life.

8. It was found that in 6.9% cases, the victims' death occurred beyond the seven years period of legal presumption as to dowry death.

9. The problem of bride-burning is prevalent in both urban as well as rural areas and among different communities. The survey revealed that in majority of the cases (90.9%), the victims belonged to Hindu religion, in 8.1% cases they were Muslims and in
0.5% cases, each the victim belonged to Sikh and Jain religion. In majority of the cases, bride burning had occurred among high caste families. The cases of bride-burning show that it is not only a lower caste phenomenon but rather a high caste problem.

10. In almost all the cases, the victims had been living in the joint family since the date of marriage till their demise. If the victims were living separately with their husbands, the in-laws continued to exert influence on their sons. In almost all the cases of bride-burning, the marriage was arranged one and there was a complete absence of love-marriage. In some cases, the husband performed second marriage after the victim’s murder and received desired dowry from the second wife.

11. The survey revealed that the parents of the victims had married their daughters in families richer than themselves. The incidence of bride-burning can be associated more with higher income groups. The common belief that the most cases of bride-burning occur only in less educated family is not true. The survey disclosed that even highly educated families are also frequently involved in this menace.

12. Our survey revealed that the most commonly used methods were burning, poisoning, strangulating, hanging and beating to death. In cases of suicides,
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.

13. Besides dowry, other motives were also attributed in murder and suicide of the brides. In some cases there was a maladjustment between husband and wife. In few cases the victims had produced the female child and/or failed to produce any child.

14. In some cases, the criminal proceedings were initiated against the husband and in-laws by the victim's parents but it was withdrawn as a part of a compromise. But such compromise did not last long and they were murdered or compelled to commit suicide by their husbands and in-laws.

General Conclusions

Women are perhaps the worst and most frequent victims of violence in India. Wife-beating, though described as the most common marital pastime in India, is nevertheless not confined to India alone. But the dowry related violence and bride-burning are, however, two criminal phenomenon peculiar to India. Since the violence against women is an undisputed fact, it takes the form of wife-beating and domestic violence. While bride-burning is the extreme manifestation of wife-beating and domestic violence. Wife-beating and domestic violence are a day to
day phenomenon and affecting the whole family. Even the dowry victims themselves are beaten for a long time before they are ultimately murdered. The genesis of such death lies in the tension created by persistent demands of dowry accompanied by beating and harassment. This problem is not confined to one particular strata of society but it exist everywhere though in different forms.

The dowry related violence is not only inflicted by husband alone but the entire family of husband participate in it. The mother-in-law in particular emerges as a dominating figure in violence and harassment of the daughter-in-law. In majority of the cases, the husband and the mother-in-law of the victim play a leading role in planning against and executing the bride. In most cases, neither the woman nor her parents reported the violence to the police or took legal action against the demand for dowry. In a number of cases, the girl is persuaded by her own parents to bear everything quietly, not to discuss her misery with others and encouraged to go back to a violent home. A girl is trained since childhood that her husband is a 'pati-parmeshwar' (God-husband), irrespective of whether he is good or bad.

The custom of dowry is deep rooted in the Indian society but over the years, it has turned into a social menace, too entrenched and diabolical to be tackled by the reformers and the law makers. Though the efforts to
eradicate the dowry practice go back to several decades but it has perhaps become the most alarming social issue during the last two decades or so as manifested by the growing violence against women emanating matters relating to dowry.

It is generally understood that dowry, in its original form, was not based on avarice and extortion as is quite often the case today but just a token of love and regard for the bridegroom. 'Varadakshina', as it was known in the Hindu Shastras, was 'dakshina' of purely voluntary nature without which the meritorious act of 'Kanyadan' would not be complete. Religious rationalisations apart, the main motivation on the part of bride’s parents was to provide security and compensation for inheritance rights to the daughter in order to enable her to lead a dignified and harmonious relationship with her husband and his family. In the course of time, the voluntary element in dowry has disappeared. The coercive element has slowly crept in and took deep roots in the marriage relationship.

It is a social evil where a constant demand for more and more money from the bride’s parents is made. When the demand is not met, then the marriage ceremony stands cancelled, where not cancelled the girl is illtreated and harassed to bring more dowry from her parents. The dowry
is given and taken both in cash and kind. However, the majority of persons are inclined towards the taking and demanding of dowry in cash. The amount of dowry is usually decided well before the marriage takes place. If the dowry brought is considered insufficient, she is not given a suitable place in the family. The bride is not allowed to keep any part of dowry that she brought with her except for a few pieces of jewellery. The greed of money is also a causative factor for dowry demands. The groom and his parents want to lead a luxurious life by getting money in an easy way. Since the reputation factor is involved in dowry system, inadequate dowry makes the groom’s family feel that its reputation has been lowered by the bride and the receipt of more dowry is considered as a security for standard living by the groom and his parents. All this had been the main cause of bride-burning.

Apart from dowry demands, there are other apparent causative factors responsible for bride-burning and the connected violence in our fast developing consumerism ridden society. The phenomenon of violence and bride-burning has been explained on the basis of the motive to harass the young woman into submission and to make her insure in her own family. Sometimes, there is a maladjustment between husband and wife on the one hand and the wife and her in-laws on the other. In Indian society
the arrange marriages are performed with the parents' consent. Sometimes the match is totally unsuitable either because the boy is handsome and the girl is not beautiful or the boy is educated whereas the girl is uneducated. The in-laws of the brides want to have authority over them and in case if they oppose this, it leads to conflict which in turn may result in extreme form of murder or suicide.

A new tendency has emerged that when a bride fails to produce a male child or any offspring within few years of marriage, she is subjected to cruel treatment, harassment and battering. Sometimes, the husband is advised to get second marriage in order to receive more dowry and due to the rigidity of divorce law there is no any way out except to get rid of the bride.

The socio-economic inequalities brought in existence the lower status of the women in society. If all males and females were equal economically and educationally probably there would not have been the problem of dowry and certainly not as an acute one as today. The lack of education in the family has its impact upon the whole social structure. The level of parental education, mostly that of father in patriarchal societies and that of mother where socialization is primarily the function of family, is of significance in moulding the attitudes, beliefs and behaviour patterns of their offspring. Education is
considered to be an assets and an insurance of socio-
economic mobility. Sometimes, the education of the girl is
neglected by her parents in order to save money and to pay
in dowry. Majority of the parents like to give their
daughters in marriage in higher status families for which
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.

One of the major causes for the exploitation of the
females is their economic dependence upon men. In the
field of employment and other economic activities women
are discriminated against the World over. Due to the
economic dependency on the husband and the in-laws women
are forced to tolerate suffering and torture. The
unemployed wife is dependent on her husband who controls
the purse. Her role is confined only within the household
works. Her employment outside the home is seen as a
threat to the authority of the husband and in-laws so
beating and verbal insults are used to subjugate her.
This attitude must be changed among men and women. Their
economic independence can help them to take their rightful
place in the society.

The causes of violence, battering, harassment, dowry
demands, dowry deaths and suicide are deeply rooted in the
socio-cultural milieu of the society. There are various
patterns of aggression against the brides. In many cases, the death of the bride is caused in a number of ways which is a plain and simple murder. Sometimes, they are compelled to commit suicide or strangulated and hanged to make it a case of suicide. So that the material evidence is either destroyed or manipulated. The most common form of killing of brides is by burning by sprinkling of kerosene oil. In some cases, such deaths have been labelled simply as accident by the victims in-laws and husband. The data from the State of Uttar Pradesh as well as from KAVAL Towns of Uttar Pradesh show a continuous increase in dowry deaths and dowry harassment. Among the KAVAL Towns, Allahabad registered highest number of dowry deaths in 1993 followed by Kanpur. In a number of cases, the brides were driven to commit suicide by their husbands and in-laws. In some cases, they commit suicide themselves to relieve from the continuous harassment and violence. The figures of suicides from KAVAL Towns show a mixed trend of increase and decrease. The method of the commission of suicide is reported to be by burning, hanging, poisoning and drowning.

The Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961, provides no real measures for redress if a bride finds herself being held to ransom. The Act was amended in 1984 because its definition of dowry was not enough to ensure conviction of offences under the law. The punishment was enhanced for
giving or taking of dowry and for demanding of dowry. The Dowry Prohibition (Amendment) Act, 1986, was passed with a view to curbing the evil practice of dowry. The Amending Act brought certain necessary changes in the Indian Penal Code, 1860, the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973, and the Indian Evidence Act, 1872, in order to put an end to dowry harassment and dowry-death. The present Act has failed to achieve its objectives and the menace remains almost as usual. The law has, obviously, limitations when it comes to correct the social maladies like dowry. The evil practice of dowry survives only because of the connivance of both victims’ parents and beneficiaries. The compulsions of dowry seekers and dowry givers are overwhelmingly social, unquestionably ingrained in our social values and norms. But, in the meantime, the law must provide solace and all possible help to those who wish to resist the pernicious manifestations of the dowry system which leads to dowry harassment and bride-burning.

The law enforcement agencies play an important role in the control of crime against women particularly in dowry harassment and bride-burning cases. The enforcement of law is the primary function of the police who are vested with numerous statutory powers. Police are often accused of attitudes, practices and perceptions which greatly diminish the successful implementation of laws. The usual charges are: Police reaching the scene too late,
reluctant to record the F.I.R., registering the cases under wrong sections or preferring to register most of the cases of bride-burning as suicides, manipulating the material evidence, discouraging to record the dying declaration and carrying out the investigations in a lackadaisical manner. The police tend to treat violence against women as 'family affair'.

The lower judiciary is charged with the responsibility of the prosecution of offenders, granting bail and remand. Sometimes, the offenders are not punished due to the lack of evidence and they get escape free from the punishment. Dissatisfaction has arisen with certain judicial assumptions generally operating at the trial level which perhaps provide an unjustified advantage to the defence. In many cases, the lower judiciary has also provided a chance to the offenders to go scot free from the punishment.

Administration of criminal justice is normally a challenging job and it becomes even more difficult if a minimum social support is not forthcoming. Generally, there are no witnesses to the transaction leading to the unnatural death except the family members, some of them might have been parties to the crime. More often, the neighbours, who might be having some clues or evidence against the culprits, are unwilling to testify either because of the fear of spoiling the neighbourly relations
or because of long protracted proceedings of the police and the court.

The problem of dowry harassment, battering, cruelty and bride-burning have to be tackled at all levels, the legal level, the police level, and most importantly the social level. As long as women are treated as second class citizens in the country and home, these problem will continue. Girls are even today told that once married they should leave the in-law’s house only after death and bear all pains and humiliations. Changes in social values and attitudes must be brought about if, "we want to curb the problem of dowry and bride-burning". Many young women can be saved from unnatural deaths if they are insulated from the source of violence at social level.

Suggestions

From the above discussion what emerges is that there is a need for amendment in the law relating to dowry and bride-burning in relation to investigation, prosecution and punishment of offenders. Some legal changes are necessary in the present system to make it goal-oriented and serve its purpose in more efficient manner. The following suggestions are being made -

A. Legal Action :

(1) Amendment in the Dowry Prohibition Act

(i) The provisions of the Dowry Prohibition Act need to
be made effective to check the evil practice of dowry and the term ‘dowry’ should be more clearly defined.

(ii) The punishment for giving or taking or abetting the giving or taking of dowry and for demanding of dowry should be enhanced.

(iii) "Giver" and "Taker" of dowry should be clearly and separately defined in the Dowry Prohibition Act.

(iv) Registration of marriages together with a list of gifts should be made compulsory. Provision must be made that any gifts made after the marriage can also be incorporated into the list.

(v) The anti-dowry cell should be given more power in terms of taking action rather than a counselling and reconciliation-cum-guidance body.

(vi) There should be a statutory ceiling on the marriage expenses. Spending lakhs of rupees by people who have it puts the have-nots into troubles. The boy’s parents demand the marriage to be celebrated on the model set by rich persons. Hence expenses in marriage should be limited and the culprits should be penalised.

(vii) Whenever the in-laws of the victim’s are booked under the Dowry Prohibition Act, they, sometimes,
seek the help of the politicians. The politicians who interfere with the law should also be booked as abettors and punished as such.

(viii) Under the existing law the dowry offences are cognizable only for the purposes of investigation. To make the laws more stringent these offences need to be made cognizable i.e. arrestable without warrant and also non-bailable. A police officer should be empowered to arrest the accused persons without warrant. In such cases bail should not be granted to the accused persons.

(ix) Appointment of Dowry Prohibition Officers as provided in the Dowry Prohibition Act should be made obligatory. It is highly desirable for their utility in the prevention, investigation and prosecution of dowry related crimes.

2. Amendment in the Procedural Laws and Penal Code

(i) Dowry related violence, harassment, cruelty, murder and suicide take place within the four walls of the in-law’s home. It is difficult to obtain evidence against the culprits. In such cases the circumstantial evidence, the antecedents and behaviour of the husband and in-laws and any small evidence against them should be given much weight to secure their conviction.
(ii) All unnatural deaths of woman should be suspected as murder and thorough investigation should be done to see that it is not a case of bride-burning.

(iii) Investigation in bride-burning cases should be carried out by not below the rank of Deputy Superintendent of Police.

(iv) Whenever death occurs due to burns, or otherwise the forensic experts should also accompany the investigator to the spot to get an early clue whether it is a case of suicide or murder or accident.

(v) Whenever the wife commits suicide or death occurs in the in-law’s house the body of the deceased should not allowed to be cremated till the parents or guardians of the deceased come and give a written statement that the death is natural or accidental and that no foul play is suspected. In case the husband or in-laws dispose of the body before the parent’s arrival, they should be tried for murder and deterrent punishment should be awarded. The police officer or any person who permits such hasty disposal should also be tried as abettor for the offence of murder.

(vi) In bride-burning cases, the Capital Punishment should be awarded as ‘rarest of rare cases’.
(vii) In all cases of bride-burning, the post-mortem should be carried out in a proper way as to find out the cause of death.

(viii) The dying declaration of the victims should be recorded in the presence of a lady doctor and a lady police officer who can be expected to inspire confidence in the dying woman. Further, a near relative of the victims should be present at the time of recording of the statement and the statement if possible should be tape-recorded. This would make it difficult to alter the dying declaration later by interested parties.

(ix) Domestic violence and wife-beating should be created as a new offence in the Indian Penal Code and it should be explicitly delinked with dowry demands.

(x) The offence of cruelty under section 498-A, IPC has to be delinked clearly to the demands of dowry.

(xi) Compensation to the dependents of the victims should be provided under Section 357 of the Cr. P.C.

3. Amendment in the Hindu Marriage Act, 1955

(i) Section 14 of the Marriage Laws (Amendment) Act, 1976, declares that no marriage may be dissolved unless the period of one year (originally it was three years period)\(^1\) has elapsed since the solemnization of the

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marriage, though in the case of the 'exceptional hardship' to the petitioner or exceptional depravity on the part of the respondent, the marriage may be dissolved earlier. The term 'exceptional hardship' and exceptional depravity have not been defined in the Matrimonial Causes Act, or in the Hindu Marriage Act. The parties are required to wait for one year for the presentation of the petition of divorce or judicial separation before the Court since the solemnization of marriage.

The young married woman lives in the state of tension in her in-law's family since the marriage. She becomes the victims of harassment, battering violence and even burnt to death. Due to the rigidity of divorce law they cannot escape from the tragedy. It is suggested that the provisions of divorce law should be liberalised. The framework of the law must take into account the hard realities of life and accord the woman an appropriate and effective remedy that will enable her to remould her life before it is too late.

(ii) The Supreme Court for the first time in Shoba Rani case\(^2\) had granted divorce to the petitioner when she was subjected to persistent demand of dowry. The Court treated it as equivalent to cruelty. It is suggested that this ruling be given statutory position. The persistent demand of dowry should be deemed to be cruelty

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for the purpose of the grant of matrimonial relief under the Hindu Marriage Act, 1955. So where the demands grow persistent, the woman will be able, in due time, to take a decision as to her future course of action. Whether she would still continue to live in a state of tension which might ultimately result in a tragedy, or whether she would prefer to secure release from the situation for all time to come.

4. **Legal Aid**

Legal aid in the form of legal representation has become a fundamental right within the ambit of Article 21 of constitution. There is a need to extend free legal aid to cases of dowry harassment and bride burning to the victims/victims’ parents. The benefit of free legal services may not reach to such victims unless there is some one to inform him that about his right to have access to the court.

Normally litigation is so expensive that it is beyond the reach of each and every person. The present study disclosed that in a number of cases, the parents of the victims had made a compromise to the accused persons because they could not afford the expenses of the court on account of limited sources. It is, therefore, suggested that in every possible case of bride-burning and dowry harassment free legal aid should be provided to the victims/victims’ parents.
Legal aid units, cells or societies should be opened up which should have two-fold responsibilities— one to render legal assistance and second to educate women on their legal rights. Another aspect of legal aid programme is legal literacy which should aim at to motivate and mobilise people against the problems of dowry and bride-burning. The women should be mobilised in co-operation with voluntary organisations and legal aid agencies for propagation and promotion of legal literacy. Knowledge of laws and access to the judicial system would strengthen the position of women and enable them to seek relief available under the law. The work in this area must be started by voluntary social workers and organisations for women from gross-root level to upper strata of the society.

Legal literacy should be provided at school and college level. The school and college curriculum should have a short course on legal literacy. The women should be more aware of their legal rights.

5. **Speedy Trial**

Like other cases in bride-burning cases also trials are prolonged for years. The procedure for trial is so lethargic and time taking that people lose faith in it. Taking advantage of a protracted trial the witnesses are won over by accused persons. Many witnesses become
hostile. Therefore, the legal procedures should be simplified and made least cumbersome.

6. Special Family Courts

The ordinary system of courts is not sufficient to deal with the problem of bride-burning and dowry offences. These offences should be tried separately in special family courts. These Courts should be presided over by women judges, who have a deep knowledge of social problems and compassion for women's problems. These cases should be decided within three months from the date of admission.

7. Coroners Act for Bride-burning Needed

The Coroners Act, 1871, which is in operation in Bombay needs to be extended to other areas. This will ensure better investigation and inquiry into the causes of unnatural deaths. The advantage is that the inquiry will be conducted by a person of independent standing enjoying judicial powers with a status and jurisdiction commensurate with the necessities of such cases. The main object of an inquest by a coroner is to satisfy the public conscience that an unnatural death is not hushed up.

8. Trained Police Personnel - Women Cadre

The most policemen have neither the time nor the inclination, training or aptitude to handle complex issues of human relationship. It is ridiculous to expect him to
deal adequately with such cases. Trained police women, not police men, should deal with bride-burning cases. A proper training should be given to them to deal with such cases. They must be allowed to fully share all the duties performed by their male counterparts. Women police have a great potential to cool, defuse and de-escalate many situations. Since the crime is committed within the four walls of the home, they can use her intimate knowledge of a woman’s daily existence in the investigation. Therefore, they should be recruited in more number.

9. **Strict Enforcement of Law**

Preventive measures may be adequate in their formal content, but their successful enforcement is a matter of great difficulty. To remove unhappiness in the family is beyond the province and capacity of the law. But the law can provide suitable legal remedies that may avoid or at least reduce the harm caused by situations which precipitate tragedy in family life. The laws should be strictly enforced to punish the accused persons.

10. **Restraint on Second Marriage**

When any death of a bride is proved to be a murder or suicide due to dowry harassment by a court of law, the husband of the deceased should be restrained from marrying again for a period of 5 years and violation of this should be cognizable offence punishable by law.
B. Social Action :

Apart from strengthening law and legal machinery the evil of dowry and dowry death has to be taught at social level.

1. Women's Education

The movements for improving women's status all over the world have emphasized the role of education. At present in India educated and literate women constitute only 39.42% of total literate persons during 1994. It is believed that education will bring about a reduction in the inequalities between sexes and uplift women's subjugated position in the society. There should be change in the attitude of parents, teachers, school management and of girls and women themselves.

Education is no longer a mere qualification for marriage, it should be aimed at giving women vocational training to make them independent and able to compete for all available opportunities. The administration should take effective steps to provide basic education to all and expand facilities for technical education in urban as well as in rural areas.

There are several instances in which young married women are not permitted to continue their education in her husband's home. They should be allowed to continue their
education in her husband’s home. It is usually understood that if a boy is educated, only an individual is educated, but if a girl is educated, thereby the whole family is educated.

2. To Remove Socio - Economic Inequalities in Reality and Practice

Much of the decision-making power has rested with men. Despite the various laws, the women continue to be paid less wages and still they are at the mercy of their husbands and in-laws. In order to remove the socio-economic inequalities in reality and practice, it is the need of the time that their right to participate in economic activities and seek employment equally with men should be legally recognised. Their economic independence would help them to take their rightful place in the society and create confidence in them. Turning legal guarantees of equality into economic reality require conscious actions by governments, leaders and others with economic power. The economic prospects should be provided in both urban as well as in rural areas. Their economic independence and security will enhance their status and position in the society. Men and women both must fight against the economic exploitation of women and must end injustice to them.

3. Role of Neighbours and Relatives

The social menace like dowry can be eradicated with
the societal or community help. It is the society or
community which can play a better role in the prevention
of bride-burning cases than the enforcement agency. It is
essential that the public should be educated to help women
not only when brides are being burnt to death but also at
the time when they are being subjected to all sorts of
harassment and illtreatment. Neighbours and relatives can
play a vital role by informing the parents of the bride
who may be quite unaware of the torture that the bride is
undergoing at her in-laws’ house.

The neighbours and relatives can also be helpful in
minimising this menace by helping the victims not only at
the time of the occurrence of the incident but even much
earlier. They can intervene and try to reconcile the
warring groups.

Most important of all a consciousness has to be
created among the neighbours and relatives that in any
such case it is their duty as citizens to intervene and
later help the police in proper investigations. Such
persons who give information to the police to investigate
into the bride-burning cases should be rewarded with
incentives. If this co-operation of the neighbours and
relatives is forthcoming, the number of acquittals will go
donw drastically.

4. Social Boycott and Humiliation of Such Family

The best preventive measure of this menace is the
public opinion which should express its displeasure with bride-killers by social boycott and humiliation of their family. In several cases, the families against whom there were allegations that they had murdered their daughter-in-law were able to find other brides for their sons. Why are people ready to give the hands of their daughters for burning? Is it because daughters are considered as a burden.

There are numerous stories of parents marrying a second daughter with the same groom who compelled their first daughter to commit "suicide" or burnt alive. The real and most effective deterrent will be the social distaste or disapproval of dowry seekers and bride-killers. Such a milieu has to be created in the society so that even the mention of the word "dowry" should be considered vulgar and condemned outright.

5. **Official Recognition to Women's Social Welfare Organisations**

Voice of a single woman does not carry any weight in the male dominated society. If a group of women of like minded views join together, form an organisation and raise their voice against the suffering of women, they can make an impact.

After independence several women's organisations were setup to raise the voices against the women's
victimization. Its membership is open to women and are run by women only and not by men of the political parties. Organisations like Mahila Dakshata Samiti, Samta Manch, Saheli and Stree Sangharsh Samiti were formed in Delhi. In Bombay, women's groups like the Stree Mukti Sangathana, Socialist Women's group, Feminist Network collective came into existence. Moreover, in Patna, Kolhapur, Madras, Aurangabad, Raipur and other smaller cities also, autonomous women's groups started blooming. In KAVAL towns of Uttar Pradesh, the branches of All India Women's Conference have been established but these branches are confined only to urban areas.

In Delhi, Bombay and other places the women organisations started raising their voices against wife-beating, dowry harassment and bride-burning. In a number of bride-burning cases the women's organisations have played a vital role. They have mobilised public opinion, exerted pressure on the police and an equally apathetic legal system and in quite few cases, played an active role in recovering dowry from greedy in-laws. Even these organisations led to the passing of Dowry Prohibition (Amendment) Act, 1984.

In fact, the organisations who propagate against dowry or atrocities committed on women do not actively organise the men or women against these practices. Their activities are limited to the cities and a little media
coverage is considered enough. The Social Welfare Organisations, on the other hand, limit their activities to the stereotyped activities of welfare. They carefully avoid any clash of interest within their periphery. Most of the voluntary organisations are interested in promoting their own interest. Sometimes, those organisations who try to combat these atrocities are termed as flesh-traders.

Under the Dowry Prohibition (Amendment) Act, 1984, only three All India Women’s Organisations, All India Women’s Conference, Mahila Dakshata Samiti and Guild of Services, have been recognised and authorised to file complaints to lower courts directly or at police stations. But none of the organisations have yet availed of the facility.

The women’s organisations and voluntary organisations should play their active role. The branches of the women’s organisations should be established at gross root level. These organisations should put relentless pressure on the administration to see that the law is strictly enforced. Whenever they come to know about the case of dowry harassment and bride-burning they should immediately lodge the report to the police and pressurise the police officer to come in motion. There is a need for more organisations along the lines of civil liberties groups to monitor the women’s
rights and protest against their infringements in urban as well as in rural areas.

In fact, there are practically no effective women's social welfare organisations in the country except in a few cities, like Delhi and Bombay, which can really protect the interests of hapless women. No doubt, there are a number of voluntary organisations which have paid much attention to the crimes against women such as dowry, bride-burning, rape, violence and harassment and sati etc., but they have not been given the official recognition by the government. In order to protect the interests of a large number of hapless women, the various women's social welfare organisations should be recognised and authorised to file complaint on behalf of the victims for which the State Government have to be motivated.

6. Short Stay Homes

The Government should established short stay homes for women who are dowry victims and later they should be rehabilitated.

7. Awakening of the Problem Among the People

In colleges and universities the battle against this social evil should be fought tooth and nail. Seminars, symposium, Debates, Essay Competition, etc. should be held to denounce the system. Indeed, even a child needs
to be convinced that the dowry system is an evil so that when he grows up, he rejects dowry at the time of marriage.

8. Publicity and Propaganda

The Government should give wide publicity through T.V., Radio, Films etc. Anti-dowry slogans, talks and interviews with eminent sociologists and lawyers may be telecast/broadcast on T.V. and Radio regularly. Slogans like, "giving or taking of dowry is a social evil", "help eradicate dowry", "giving or taking dowry is a punishable offence" etc. should be printed on the postal stationary so that much publicity can be given with the least one.

Documentary films on the evil effects of dowry should be screened in villages and towns. Film producers should be encouraged to produce other films with this theme, "Dulha Bikta Hai", "Dulhan Sasti Dulha Manhga", "Dahez" are only a few films in Hindi and two or more such films should be there in all languages. The films should be tax-free to encourage the people to see about the social evil.

9. Role of Political Parties

The social compulsive element in crusade against dowry may be brought about by the political parties in the country. If they can generate enormous resources to fight elections or plan to turn the ruling party into a mass
movement and involve the people with the party at the grass-roots level, they can also create a social force to fight and kill the dowry giant. They only need the will to do it. As the largest single political party in the country, Congress (I), through its vast organisational network all over the country can generate a powerful social force against dowry. Its army of volunteers can form groups, committees or councils at various levels, village, district and state, who would mobilize public opinion against dowry and check it effectively. The problem of dowry is a national one, and there is no reason why other political parties, irrespective of their different ideologies, should not join hands together in the battle against dowry. It is hoped that the ruling party will take the lead and other political parties would readily associate themselves in the national task of enforcing Dowry Prohibition Act and other laws throughout the country.