

⚠️ AWARENESS CAMPAIGN

The Dowry System

A Social Evil That Must End

A sensitization presentation for college students | Based on NCRB data & national research

6,100+
Deaths in 2023

15,489
Cases Reported

20 Lives
Lost Every Single Day

+14%
Rise in Cases (2023)

What is the Dowry System?

Dowry refers to the assets – cash, jewellery, property, or goods – that a bride's family is expected to bring to the groom's family as a condition of marriage. While once framed as a gift, it has evolved into a coercive demand and a vehicle of exploitation.

Historical Origin

Originally intended to provide a bride with financial security after marriage, the practice gradually transformed into a social obligation enforced through pressure and coercion.

Modern Reality

Today, dowry demands often escalate even after marriage, leading to harassment, domestic abuse, and in the worst cases – murder or suicide of the bride.

No Religious Basis

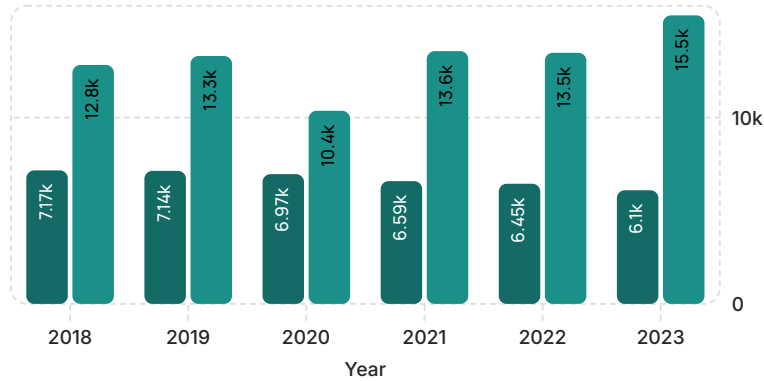
Dowry has no religious significance and is practiced across Hindu, Muslim, and Christian communities throughout South Asia – making it a purely social and cultural construct.

⚠️ Dowry has been **illegal in India since 1961** under the Dowry Prohibition Act, yet the practice persists widely – disguised as "gifts" or "traditions."

The Alarming Numbers

Official data from India's National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) reveals the terrifying scale of dowry-related violence in our country.

■ Dowry Deaths ■ Cases Registered



Source: National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), Govt. of India

20

Deaths Per Day

In 2023, at least 20 people died every single day due to dowry-related issues – an unacceptable national tragedy.

35K+

Deaths (2017–2023)

Over 35,000 women were killed for dowry in just six years, according to NCRB data.

95%

Marriages Involved

A World Bank study found dowry was paid in 95% of rural Indian marriages studied from 1960–2008.

ROOT CAUSES

Why Does Dowry Persist?

Despite legal prohibitions, the dowry system endures due to deeply entrenched social, economic, and cultural factors.



Patriarchal Norms

Deep-rooted male dominance treats women as a financial burden. A girl's worth is judged by what her family can offer, not by her own merits.



Economic Greed

Dowry is used as a wealth transfer mechanism for the groom's family. Demands often escalate after marriage as a form of ongoing financial extortion.



Social Pressure

Families feel compelled to conform to community expectations, fearing social stigma if they refuse dowry demands or report abuse.



Gender Inequality

Low female literacy and economic dependence make women vulnerable. Lack of financial independence traps victims in abusive situations.

CONSEQUENCES

The Devastating Impact of Dowry

On Women

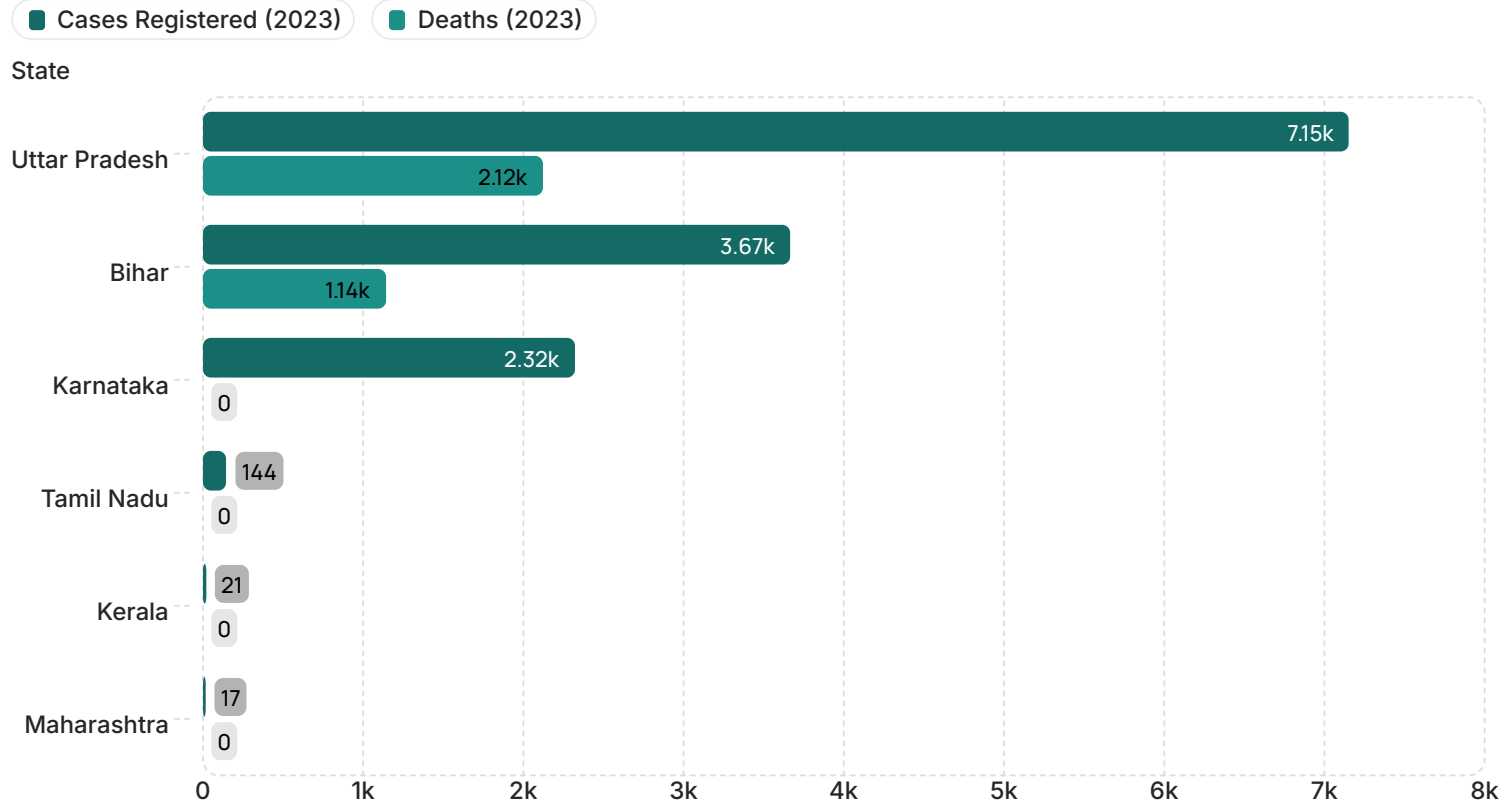
- Physical abuse, torture, and murder
- Psychological trauma and depression
- Forced suicide disguised as accidents
- Loss of dignity and autonomy

On Families & Society

- Financial devastation of bride's family
- Inter-generational cycles of poverty
- Normalization of gender-based violence
- Weakening of the institution of marriage

Where is Dowry Violence Most Prevalent?

Dowry-related deaths and cases are not uniformly distributed. Certain states account for the overwhelming majority of reported cases in India.



ⓘ Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, Rajasthan, and Haryana collectively account for about **80% of India's dowry death cases**. Source: NCRB 2023

Laws Against Dowry in India

India has enacted a strong legal framework to combat the dowry system. Knowing your rights is the first step toward protection and justice.

01

Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961

Completely bans the giving and taking of dowry. Violation is punishable with a minimum of 5 years imprisonment and a fine of ₹15,000 or the value of the dowry, whichever is higher.

02

Section 304B — Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS)

Defines "Dowry Death." Any unnatural death of a woman within 7 years of marriage where dowry harassment preceded it carries a minimum **7-year imprisonment**, extendable to life.

03

Section 498A BNS — Cruelty by Husband/Family

Covers mental and physical cruelty related to unlawful dowry demands. This is a cognizable and non-bailable offence with up to 3 years imprisonment.

04

Section 118 — Bharatiya Sakshya Adhinyam, 2023

Places the burden of proof on the accused when a woman dies under unnatural circumstances within 7 years of marriage and there is evidence of dowry harassment.



Reality Check: Despite these laws, conviction rates remain critically low. In Bengaluru, only 13 out of 610 dowry death cases (2011–2024) ended in conviction — just 2%.

STUDENT ROLE

How YOU Can Make a Difference

As future leaders, educated youth have the power and responsibility to challenge, disrupt, and ultimately eliminate the dowry system from our society.



Raise Awareness

Speak openly about dowry being illegal and harmful. Challenge friends and family who normalize it. Use social media to educate your community.



Support Victims

If someone is being harassed, encourage them to report it. Share helpline numbers. Be a safe person they can confide in without judgment.



Take a Pledge

Commit publicly that you will neither give nor take dowry. Influence your peers and future family to uphold this promise.



Engage Community

Organize anti-dowry drives, street plays (nukkad natak), and awareness workshops in your campus, neighborhood, and home village.

SOLUTIONS

A Multi-Pronged Approach to Eradication

Ending dowry requires coordinated action across education, law, economy, and culture. No single solution is sufficient.

→ Education is the Most Powerful Tool

When girls are educated and economically independent, the dowry burden decreases. Studies show literacy directly correlates with reduced dowry-related violence.

→ Awareness Campaigns Challenge Cultural Acceptance

The Government, NCW, and State Women Commissions run sensitization workshops – but youth-led peer education is proven to be far more effective among young people.

CALL TO ACTION

Be the Change

Break the Cycle. Build a Better Society.

Every great social reform – the abolition of Sati, untouchability, child marriage – began with awareness, courage, and young voices demanding change. **The end of the dowry system begins with you.**

National Helplines

Women's Helpline: 181

National Commission for Women:
7827170170

Police Emergency: 112



Report Dowry Crimes

File an FIR under **Section 498A & 304B BNS**. Seek legal aid through your nearest District Legal Services Authority (DLSA) – it is **free of cost**.



Your Campus Pledge

Sign your institution's anti-dowry pledge. Organize awareness drives. Create a zero-tolerance culture for dowry – starting right here, right now.

"The status of women in any society is the true measure of its civilization. A society that demands dowry is one that has failed its women."