

The Hindu view on Dowry In a Hindu Marriage



Centuries Old Custom of Dowry in a Hindu Marriage

Please note that the dowry system is not a practice in South Africa but I was obliged to mention it.

This tradition spans as far back as we can go that the parents of the bride give a dowry which the girl takes with her when joining her husband after Hindu marriage. This accepted practice of dowry is now under threat and is being viewed as “Not kosher” as it puts too much burden on ordinary families to prepare a dowry.

In the times gone by, for most religions of the world, giving a dowry was seen as the insurance against divorce. Dowry would be seen as means for the husband to look after his wife and give her a happy married life because she was completely dependent upon him.

Although the bride may be equally or more educated and in a better job than the groom these days, she is still supposed to bring dowry when joining her husband. A Hindu marriage may be considered incomplete without a dowry. (Which I find personally rather Neanderthal)

Dowry May Consist of Various Things in Hindu Marriage

There is an endless list of things a dowry may consist of. Apart from girl's dresses and shoes, there is gold jewellery she will take with her. She may not have used gold jewellery while being single as beautiful artificial jewellery is available in abundance. New gold jewellery is ordered for her that she will take in the form of a dowry. Gold items are for her ankles, hands, wrist, neck, ears, nose, forehead, head, etc. The list does not end here as there will be items of gold for her mother in law

and other lady members of that family. The groom will be offered gold items like a ring, chain, cuff links, wrist watch with gold bracelet, etc. for his use. Then his clothing like suits, shirts, etc. will also form part of dowry.

Rich People Take Pride in Giving Huge Dowry

It becomes the game of money power for the rich people to make a show of their wealth in the form of dowry for their daughters. Even when their daughter is professionally qualified with a high job and income, they take pride in giving her expensive things.

The Woman in Herself is a Dowry in Hindu Marriage

For the brides's parents, the biggest dowry in the Hindu marriage is the bride herself. If the woman has been an earning member in her parents' home, they lose an earning member as she is leaving them after the marriage. She joins as an added earning member to her in-laws home, whose income goes up. Not only that, she is always helping and thinking good for her husband and in-laws, looking after the home, particularly the kitchen whenever she can. She will be a good counsellor and helper to her husband's various activities, including his business if he has got one. Whatever he gains is with her added intelligence, cooperation and help. **Hindu ladies are faithful, sincere and always place their husbands above anything in life.** There has been a surge in western men seeking Hindu brides for marriages for lasting happiness. People go do a dating search to find a companion.

Dowry a Great Burden for Ordinary Families in Hindu Marriage

For middle-class and poor families, the dowry is the biggest burden in Hindu marriage. In certain cases, their whole life savings may not be enough to make a reasonable dowry. They may have to take big loans repayable in years, meaning tightening their other expenses. The girl may be well educated and professionally employed with a good income but still this old custom remains a part of Hindu Marriage. For some, it's now being regarded as an evil custom. (Again I find this personally Neanderthal)

Demand for More Dowry in Hindu Marriage

A family which cannot afford a good dowry must mention it at the initial meetings. When the families start showing interest for the marriage proposal, it's advisable to disclose what is in your mind and make it clear that you don't believe in giving or accepting big dowry. Make clear that the girl will leave with whatever they can afford, without big and expensive items and lot of jewellery. If the groom and his parents are intelligent enough, looking at the charms and delicacy of the girl and her good employment, they will accept it openly. Perhaps the reply will be 'we don't believe in dowry either, the important thing is the happiness of the son and daughter after the marriage'. On the other hand the greedy parents, who have no regard for girl's qualities and qualifications except money, may withdraw from the marriage negotiations. The matter will end happily there, without any damage to either party.

Last Minute Dowry Demand in Hindu Marriage

Problems may arise before the marriage if no mention is made about the dowry from either side because the boy's side might like to know how much of it will be forthcoming. It's always advisable to discuss and disclose your intentions before it becomes too late, as some families expect dowry and do not mention it in the initial stages. Just a few days before the marriage, they may like to know how big the dowry will be or state how much they want. Invitation cards may have gone out about the marriage date, and now there is a dowry demand which girl's parents cannot afford. This puts the girl's parents in a very difficult position and to cancel the marriage at this last stage will not look nice. They may seek huge loans to make sure the marriage goes ahead as planned.

There has been a law enacted in India which forbids giving or accepting dowry in Hindu marriage. This is a good step taken in the right direction by law makers in India. However, it has been difficult to enforce that law as there are a very few cases reported when dowry has been demanded in a marriage. In case of a divorce, it becomes very difficult to recover the items or their face value given in the marriage.

Daughter's Happiness and Well Being Important in Hindu Marriage

Most parents who have to pay large dowries at the last minute will like the marriage go ahead, even if they cannot afford it. Their daughter has met and liked the man and families have seen each other a few times and enjoyed the meetings. They will do whatever possible and see that their daughter gets married. To cancel things at the last minute brings a bad name.

Equality in Status of a Woman in Western Society

A woman enjoys equal rights in every respect with men in the western world. In sports and employment women are as good as men in the performance of their skills. In western countries, if the wife has been looking after the home and children and the husband's income or business thrives, she will share a good part of the money. In case of a divorce a significant portion of his total wealth, including property, will be taken by her. According to western laws, his wealth has gone up because she has been looking after children and home. If she has been working with him in his business, then it's equally divided. Treat a wife on equal terms in a nice and loving way, as she will always remain a great asset to her family.

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Compiled for the upliftment of Sanathan Dharma
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