

Letter from a new wife on dowry

Dowry is the practice where the bride brings in money or property to her husband's house, with its value demanded by the groom and his family and often accompanied by ill treatment of the bride if the demands are not met.

Under the 1961 Dowry Prohibition Act, offering or accepting dowry is prohibited and is a punishable act that calls for imprisonment up to two years. Yet the practise continues throughout all tiers of society and sadly **affluence and education has still not combated dowries in India and Australia.**

Affluent Indian families

Amongst the literate and the affluent communities of modern day India, dowry is not an acceptable norm. The era of forced arranged marriages are giving way to a more liberal process. A girl can choose her partner and **neither the bride-to-be nor her family see the need to offer dowry for a good marriage alliance.**

There are families who will reject marriage proposals for their daughters if someone seeks dowry; this is now possible as the modern day Indian girl is highly educated, independent and has the freedom to choose her groom. *However this does not completely protect all young brides from the consequences of the dowry.*

My name is Simran Kaur (name changed to protect the identity) I am 31 year-old modern girl raised and educated in India. My parents are educated and belong to the middle strata of society. Like every girl I have dreamt about my wedding day since adolescence.

I dated a guy online who lived in Australia and I decided to get married to him with the blessing of both parents. *The matter of dowry was not discussed as myself and my parents considered it to be a vicious practice.* I left my parents and job back in India to live a Happy Life with my husband in Australia and my parents believed I would be treated the way I was treated back home.

Few weeks after I arrived in Australia, I felt that my husband was not happy that my parents didn't give him and his extended family expensive gifts on wedding.

My parents did give me some money to carry on, which he took by saying we live together so I am going to handle that. Whenever I used to ask him for money like I need to buy something, he would taunt me by saying did you use to get money at your home? *Your parents didn't give you much money for Australia so just survive without it.*

Even when I started working, I was not allowed to buy things on my own or check money online. I had to ask him 100 times before buying anything.

He used to help his family financially but I could not send anything to my family because I am a girl and didn't bring any dowry with me.

I was asked to stop talking to my family because he didn't like them and had been threatened million times that I would be sent back to India if I do not agree to his terms.

The mentality of these guys has not changed at all, even if they have become citizens of Australia. They think women should bring dowry to compensate them for taking on the burden of marrying a woman. Once married the woman is to be just confined to household chores and should not utter a word. Whether she is educated, working, earning income is immaterial.

Sent to Dr Manjula O'Connor Consultant Psychiatrist by a patient , victim of dowry abuse , 2014.