

An Inquiry into the Nature and Consequences of Dowry in Rural Bangladesh - A Study of a Village

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Abstract : Dowry is a fatal problem in Bangladesh society. In Bangladesh the system of dowry is a widely practiced tradition which is considered as social problem and a curse for women specially in rural society. Its range is expanded from a poor family to rich one in the society in spite of people's consciousness about its undesired impact. The upper stratum people of society can face the problem easily with their surplus resources but the common villagers become economically distressed by losing their last resort. A good number of reasons are identified by the villagers for its introduction for instance poverty, unemployment and lack of women education, greed of husband and his parents, want of social security and poor implementation of dowry prohibition law. Some welfare measures i.e. creating opportunity for women education and employment along with social security, updating the dowry prohibition law by formulating extra law and enhancing capacity and ensuring strict implementation of the same and empowering the local government specially the union parishad, the increasing trend of its expansion can be curbed. This study indicates to explore the nature, consequences, origin, causes, existing laws and their implications in village society, and provide some suggestions on the basis of the opinion of the villagers for establishment of a dowry free society.

Introduction

Dowry, a terrible social evil in rural Bangladesh is a consequence of women's weak position in the family and social life. The problem is crippling the whole society and severely shaking the

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poor economic backbone of the poor villagers. Dowry is existing in society for a number of reasons. Whether we support it or not the presence of its ugly clutches is a must at marriage from the richest section to the poorest of the poorer in the society. The conscious part of society are very much anxious of this terrible social evil like any other vital problems. Once it was mandatory at marriage to provide bride price but today the custom has been reversed. It is a curse to the economically weak parents of several girls who are member of mostly lower income group of society. Abject poverty, unlimited greed of the husband and his parents and women's dependence on men are some of the main reasons for its existence. Side by side inadequate law and its poor implementation is also responsible for its wider expansion. If we look into the various dailies and magazines we come to know a lot of unwanted incidents happening due to dispute over dowry.

The term dowry simply means wedding gift. In the Encyclopaedia Britannica, dowry is defined as a term denoting the 'property' whether reality or personal that a wife brings to her husband on marriage. Normally it is provided to the groom by the bride or her guardian. Dowry is exchanged in various forms such as land, cattle, TV, fridge, motorbike, clock, cash money and other posh materials etc. In the most part the demand of dowry is fulfilled at the time of marriage. Sometimes, before marriage with the consent of girl's parents or guardians.

In general dowry means giving wedding gift from bride's parents or guardian to the groom. In some exceptional cases physically retarded groom inferior in terms of family status provides bride price (dowry) at marriage.

One bridegroom has committed suicide for getting no dowry from the bride's party as per prior verbal agreement. The people of rural area are ignorant in many aspects. Moreover, if any housewives are not physically tortured or killed by her husband due to conflict over dowry a few of the bride or her father pursue to get protection of law because of procrastination in settlement of the case.

According to a study the social problems which are followed due to dispute or demand of dowry and agreement or disagreement i.e, bridegroom party's demand and bride party's positive response that means if the demand of dowry is unfulfilled the repression to wife is a must, husband's demands for dowry after marriage and if the demand remains unfulfilled torture accompany the wife, stagnation at getting marriage of girls in time due to demand of dowry were the common triangular problems in women's life in society. If the problem remains out of good consideration of the government the livelihood of unfortunate women specially rural women will be disastrous and thus social stability will face danger.¹

Degraded outlook towards women from birth to different spheres of social life by man has contributed to the pervasiveness of dowry in Bangladesh. The position of women in family life is very weak specially in agrarian society. There is a familiar proverb 'A woman's heaven lies under her husband's feet' which illustrates the age old tradition of suppression and subordination of women in the male dominated Bengali society. Among the Muslims the difference in the treatment of males and females starts at birth when a male child is welcomed to the world by 'ajan' and continues through the different phases of his life. But by contrast a girl child receives no such welcome. As a whole, in Bangladesh women are dominated by patrimonial and patriarchal kinship system which enforces the dependence of women upon men and regulates their role and status². As if they are the birds in cage that have no way to fly³. Such situation is enhancing the trend of dowry practice in rural Bangladesh. Although the law for prohibition of dowry has been passed in the parliament in 1980 but its application is not effective in consideration of practical requirement. The state has to play a great role to combat this problem with a view to establish congenial atmosphere in society creating employment opportunities for young men and women in association with local government bodies and the support of conscious citizens of the country.

Statement of the Problem

Bangladesh is an agrarian village densed country of South-east Asia. Agriculture is basic to her economy. Majority people of Bangladesh are farmer by profession and most of them living in rural society. The economic condition of the majority villagers are weak and so greater section of them leading below standard of living. They face multifarious problems in their life. At present conjecture dowry has increased their sufferings widening the horizons of the prevailing problems. Due to its bitterness a vast number of families have been suffering severely for having marriageable girls. Their economic vulnerable situation have thrown them in the sea of trouble. Due to violence over the issue of dowry innumerable women are getting divorce or losing their lives by their husband or suicide. A glance into the daily newspapers and weekly magazines of the country will provide testimony to this statement. It is learnt from different newspapers that in Taragonj upazilla of Rangpur district oppression over women are increasing for their incapability to pay demand of dowry after marriage. Violence are happening against women in one place or other of this upazilla daily. Of them about 200 women got divorce under the circumstances of inability to response the demand of their husband for dowry during conjugal life. About 150 women have been living below the mark of human standard. Most of the women are belong to landless poor family. Due to their vulnerable condition they are staying beyond the aid of law of the country. For survival most of them are working as day laborer under discriminatory remuneration system. A larger section of them get half of the remuneration of their male counterpart.

Majority of population in Bangladesh is muslim. In Islam, marriage is a contract where husband has to pay or promise to pay his wife an amount of money in kind or in cash which is usually fixed at the time of marriage. This system of money payment is called dower or moher. It is actually related to the sexual possession of women. Muslim marriage system ensures females economic security

through dower. But in Bangladesh many families have been destroyed due to faulty marriage system, dower, and dowry. In Islam, the demand of dowry is completely prohibited. A muslim can never take dowry at marriage, on the other hand, he is to pay the amount of 'mohrana' to the bride fixed through mutual understanding of both party. Mohrana is an essential factor in muslim marriage system. In Bangladesh about 85% people are muslim by religion. In respect of our religious norms and values the custom of providing dowry cannot be imagined in the society. But the unfortunate fact is that the custom of dowry is widely practiced in muslim society. Some of the people are of this opinion like any other customs the dowry system has been penetrated in muslim society from Hindu religion due to environmental, ecological and historical reasons.

It is learnt from a newspaper (Bangladesh Barta, Kushtia) published earlier, that in three upazillas of Tangail district about fifty thousand marriageable girls are waiting to get marry due to incapability of providing dowry⁴. It can be assumed what is happening in the rest part of the country.

Although there is no real statistics of this figure of the entire country but it is conceived that the rate of sufferings of the victim women are on the wax. But no civilized society can desire such situation. We treat us to be a member of civilized society but our manner and behaviour does not prove that. We must change our mentality to solve this problem. Many educated young men treat marriage as a burden. This is also a reason for unmarried situation of several marriageable girls. Of course the main reason is abject poverty. In developing countries poor people are facing a lot of problems such as poverty, illiteracy, hunger, malnutrition, social superstition but recently dowry has appeared as a curse which has increased the length of problems and sufferings in the poor men's life in their sprained economy.

Objectives of the Study

The main aim of this study is :

- i) to know the view of the villagers regarding the causes of dowry and its eradication;
- ii) to observe its extent and nature of violence towards women;
- iii) to find out the ways how to eradicate the dowry system.

Methodology

Primary as well as secondary information are incorporated in this work. A questionnaire was administered to have relevant information from the respondents of different category that is the household head (male+female), son's wives, marriageable young men and women who were available during investigation. Various information regarding peculiar nature of violence against women due to dowry related issues published in the Daily Ittefaq through out the year 1999 were studied to get idea about the pervasiveness and complication of the problem. The survey work has been done in the last quarter of 1999 with the assistance of a group of well oriented informer under the close supervision of the researcher.

Limitations of the Study

Only a microscopic rural area has been selected for understanding of the problem and to investigate the view of the respondents as to the issue. So the suggestion which is recommended here do not bear any significant weightage. During investigation some family head (male) were not available. So in their absence their wife i.e, some of the housewives were interviewed and thus it is envisaged that they could not provide data accurately as per the demand of the questionnaire. Two different types of answers were found from same respondents (son's wives) against same question before their husband and mother-in-law. So some problems could not be avoided in getting accurate information from the respondents. Pertinently it must be mentioned that the view of urban young men and women would be different from their rural counterpart. In spite

of this limitations it is hoped that this work will attract others' attention who are interested in depth study of the issue from different angle. Although this work is not comprehensive and does not bear any discernible significance but it is envisaged to provide some food for thinking about the issue and if enable to attract the attention of the policy makers there might have opportunity to take up necessary steps in eradicating such contagious disease from the society.

About the Study Site

The village Sheikhpara is located in Tribeni union of Shailkupa upazilla of Jhenaidah district. It is situated by the eastern side of Islamic University annexed to the Kushtia-Khulna highway. The number of inhabitants of the village is approximately 1,200 of whom the percentage of men and women are respectively 55% and 45%. The majority of villagers are peasants by profession . Other professional communities include weaver, businessman, carpenter, fisherman, wage laborer, small trader, traditional child birth attendant and housewife. Most respondent women were housewives. The communication network of the village is reasonably good. There are some educational institutions with a haat (village market) situated by the side of Kushtia- Khulna highway.

Nature of Dowry

The concept of dowry in Bangladesh, probably originated from an ancient Hindu custom, an approved marriage among Hindus has always been considered to be a kanyadaan that is gift of the daughter. According to Dharmashatra the meritorious act of kanyadaan is not complete till the bridegroom is given varadakhsina in the form of cash or kind. The predominantly Muslim Bangladesh inherited the menace from the Hindu society which gives "pon" during the daughters' marriage since she does not inherit her father's property. The investigation into pon/joutuk/dowry is illuminating. Usually a woman is considered as a 'commodity' that is to be disposed of her parents as early as

possible after she attain puberty. She is to be transferred from one man (father) to another (husband) as a liability to be looked after. Without 'accompanying assests' that is dowry, she usually does not have much value. The value of human being is now measured by the wealth they possess, and the amount of dowry provided is seen as a reflection of the social status of the bride's family. On the other hand, the man's family when they are looking for a bride is also searching for economic security for their son. These same parents probably have paid dowry for their own daughters. Therefore, they also want to compensate the loss of property through to son's marriage. So the demand for dowry in cash or kind is coming out of the need for economic solvency in the family.

In rural areas, among the poor, money, ornaments or household articles are often demanded as a dowry. Similar demands are made in urban areas, some families even demand luxury goods - a car, television, furniture or even a job abroad or building a house for him. The custom demands a perennial flow of gifts from parents of the boys family on all festivals.

Dowry is provided in three phases. Firstly, before marriage. Secondly, at the time of marriage. Thirdly, after the marriage. When the demand is settled and fulfilled before and at the time of marriage based on the consensus of the bride and groom party, this is completed without any violence. We can term this as violence free phase. If the bride party becomes unable to present the demanded goods and money on the day of marriage ceremony will not be held. Besides the performance of marriage might be held on the basis of the assurance of providing dowry after marriage normally by the bride party. If the father or the guardian of the bride does not provide the promised dowry in time during post marriage time then the groom pressures the bride to realize dowry and torture her in case of incompatibility of the bride party. There are two dimensions of demanding dowry during post marriage. One is that the groom pressures to provide previously promised dowry on the day of the marriage to the bride party and the other is the groom

demands dowry to the bride to satisfy his greed and in case of positive signal their conjugal life continues happily. But if there is any negative reply due to incapability of the brides parents or guardians violence is being started to the women and at a point of time to be relieved from husband's physical and mental torture and other members of his family, she decides to die by suicide or in the end she is killed by her husband or other members of her husband's family. In the existing law for prohibition of dowry the donor as well as the acceptor are accused of guilty and if this is duly maintained the marriage will be held without dowry. But the reality of rural Bangladesh is different. On the basis of the unwritten consensus of the both parties the dowry is prevailed in social life. Because the overburden father of the bride will not confess the dowry at his daughter's marriage. On the other hand, as the groom is accepting dowry he will never disclose the fact before law enforcing agency. In this analysis it is clear that the Act which is working for prohibition of dowry is not adequate enough to facilitate marriage of marriageable girl in time without dowry. If any groom chooses any girl to marry and only due to want of assurance of gaining dowry change his decision he must be penalized by the law enforcing agency and if law of this category comes into existence the pervasiveness of dowry will be curbed and marriageable girl will be able to sit for marry in time in its absence. At the same time all the citizens of the society should be conscious about the social evils.

In that case some problem may arise i.e. there lies some apprehension of misapplication of this proposed rule. Intentionally some of the influential people may litigate against some innocent marriageable young men. If exemplary punishment is provided to the guilty by the honest administration then it is expected that society will be free from such malpractices. The government is to give attention to the education and employment opportunity of the female section of society if any qualitative change is aspired in society in respect of various social evils.

Existing dowry prohibition law is not effective to stop the bad practice in society virtually its existence is observed if somebody of bride's part makes litigation against bridegroom for torturing the wife for dowry during post marriage life whereas due to procrastination and financial burden in disposing the case a few people pursue the law enforcing agency and the court in this respect. So the present law in the most part relief the victim women from husband's violence to her with some financial assistance. In this situation sometimes their conjugal life is cut off by divorce. Considering the inadequacy of present dowry prohibition law in society the villager's view regarding application of dowry prohibition law at marriage is seen in the figure (table -37). The people of the rural area are mostly unconscious. Moreover under the present Dowry Prohibition Act if any women is being beaten or killed by her husband only a few of them pursue the law for protection of their right. In this circumstances, the marriages which are going to be held under demand of dowry are very difficult to discourage. Under the present system of dowry act some of the influential person get assistance of law in long time whenever the case is filed against bridegroom for claim of dowry after marriage but the distressed people who are affected dreadfully and are larger in number have no scope to be benefited from this law. So that the law is ineffective in case of them.

Existing Laws Regarding the System of Dowry

The Dowry Prohibition Act of 1980 defines dowry as property or valuable security given or agreed to be given as either directly -

- a) By one party to a marriage to the other party to the marriage,
or
- b) By the parents of either party to a marriage or by another person to either party to the marriage or at anytime before or after the marriage as consideration for the marriage of the said parties, but does not include dower or mahr in the case of persons to whom the Muslims Personal law (Shariah) applies.

Penalty for Giving or Taking Dowry

If any person after the commencement of this act, gives or takes or abets the giving of taking of dowry, he shall be punishable with imprisonment which may extend to one year, or with fine which may extend to five thousand taka or with both.

Penalty for Demanding Dowry

If any person after the commencement of this act, demands directly, from the parents or gurdian of a bride or bridegroom, as the case may be, any dowry, he shall be punishable with imprisonment which may extend to one year or with fine which may extend to five thousand taka or both.

Cognizance of Offence

Notwithstanding anything contained in the code of criminal procedure, 1898, act v of 1898.

- a) No court inferior to that of Magistrate of the first class shall try any offence under this act.
- b) No court shall take cognizance of any such offence except as a complaint made with one year from the date of the offence.

Offence to be Non-cognizable, Non-bailable and Non-compoundable

Every offence under this act shall be non- cognizable non-bailable and non-compoundable.

According to Repression Against Women and Children (Special provision) Act of 1995 lays down that-

- a) for causing death for dowry the offender shall be punishable with death penalty;
- b) for attempting to cause death for dowry, the offender shall be punishable with imprisonment for life;
- c) for causing grievous hurt for dowry the offender shall be punishable with imprisonment for 14 years which cannot be less than 5 years and also liable to fine.

Consequences of Dowry

Before presenting field facts pertinently some events are expressed on the basis of survey of daily newspapers and weekly magazines. During post marriage life violence against women is increasing and such news are disseminated regularly in different papers. In this context a well circulated national daily the Ittefaq published in round the year 1999 were studied to purport the nature and dreadfulness of the problem as a sample. It is observed that 24 housewives were killed by their husband, 3 were expired by suicide, 5 housewives got divorce⁵.

Here, two incidents are illustrated from the magazine Robbar and the Dhaka Courier.

- 1) Yasmin Azad Lovely got divorce from her husband. At present she is under her father's shelter. She was severely beaten by her husband and other members of his family. Her golden dream for building a happy conjugal life has turned to ashes. Now her father is in a crux at her presence before them after getting divorce. Now her husband giving her threat saying that acid will be thrown to her. At the time of marriage a suitable amount of money were given to her husband as dowry. Later on she was asked further to manage Tk. 10 lac as dowry from her parents. But her father gave her a small amount of money against the demand considering the future of his daughter. This amount did not satisfy her husband. Following such situation she was divorced by her husband⁶.
- 3) Nazneen Akhter Shilpi, an honors student of the department of Economics of a prominent college of the country was killed by her husband and mother-in-law. The couple had a happy conjugal life. Everything seemed perfect. After some days trouble began between Shilpi

and her husband and her husband's family members particularly with mother-in-law. Shilpi's husband and his mother allegedly started torturing Shilpi for dowry. Their torture and greed gradually increased Shilpi continued to bear the repression. Once she left her husband's residence for her fathers abode. Later on, under a written document she was taken back to her husband's residence. But after her return the rate of torture both physical and mental incresed. Shilpi became very upset. She had nothing to do. Shilpi often disclosed the story of her miserable life to her classmates and friends but could not find any way out. Shilpi, the ill fated young housewife was found dead in her bedroom on December 12 last.⁷ The violence towards women are incresing due to dowry related killings in 1999 according to human rights organization. These isolated cases reported in the daily newspaper, there are still thousands which are unreported. It is found that even when dowry is not demanded at marriage it becomes an issue afterwards.

Dowry practices has many other consequences, the UNDP observes : physical, psychological and sexual abuse of women, divorce, men having several wives, female suicide and parents becoming landless. Abandoned and divorced destitute women are often forced into occupations such as prostitution to survive.

The dowry issue has another different aspect that also is quite important. Daughter of poor families, which are unable to provide dowries, cannot hope to marry and families without sons pay dowries for their daughter but receive nothing to make up for this loss.

Causes of Dowry

The following causes are responsible for existing the problem of dowry :

1. Lack of social status and recognition of women
2. Inequal marriage
3. Lack of beauty of bride
4. Inequal economic condition of two party
5. Social status
6. Social formalities
7. Attitude and outlook
8. Dependence of women on others
9. Attitude of parents
10. Willingness to make husband solvent
11. Lack of self-respect of the young
12. Mentality of the parents of bridegroom

Findings

Now we are going to show a field picture in the form of table and analysis on a surveyed village. The data reflects various dimensions of dowry regarding socio-economic background of the respondents, their thinking about the nature of the problem and its remedy.

Table - 1 : Age of the Respondents

Age group	Family Head (Male)	Housewife (%)	Son's Wife (%)	Unmarried Male (%)	Unmarried female (%)	Total Respondents	%
10-15	-	-	-	01	16	17	5.46
16-20	-	02	30	13	09	54	17.9
21-25	08	08	15	13	02	46	15.3
26-30	10	10	30	03	-	53	17.6
31-35	05	10	13	-	-	18	3.6
36-40	16	20	02	-	-	38	12.6
41-45	05	04	03	-	-	12	3.10
46-50	04	06	-	-	-	10	3.32
51-55	15	02	-	-	-	17	5.64
56-60	05	04	-	-	-	09	2.16
61 to above	11	06	-	-	-	17	5.46
Total	79	72	93	30	27	301	100

Table-I depicts that the highest number of family head belong to 36-40 age group (16) and from 51 or above their muber is 31 out of 79. In the same way majority of housewives (20) belong to 36-40 age group. Son's wives belong to 26 -30 (30). The highest number of unmarried male and female respondents are respectively belong to 16-20 and 10-15 age group. Majority of the respondents. (153) belong to 10-30 age group.

Table - 2 : Academic Status of the Respondents

Level of Education	Family head	House wife	Son's wife	Unmarried male	Unmarried female	Total respondents	%
Illiterate	40	47	38	04	-	129	42.38
Can sign name	10	10	10	02	-	32	10.63
Class I -V	15	12	17	-	09	53	17.6
Class VI-X	11	02	26	07	11	59	19.6
SSC	01	01	01	-	-	03	-
HSC	02	-	01	08	05	16	5.3
BA/B.Sc/BSS (Passed & Studying)	-	-	-	08	02	10	3.32
MSS	-	-	-	01	-	01	-
Total	79	72	93	30	27	301	-

It is revealed from table 2 that highest number 40 out of 79 family heads are illiterate and only two have passed HSC. On the other hand, the number of illiterate housewife is 47 out of 72. This picture shows us the backwardness of women section in case of receiving formal educational in rural area. The highest number of son's wife (38) also belong to illiterate group which also bears the sign of women's backwardness in education which is similar to the status of housewives. Highest number of married males have passed and studying in honors and pass courses. The highest number of unmarried female (11) are students. Highest number of respondents (112) are in the bracket of class 1-7. This indicates that number of higher educated peoples are negligible in the village area. Otherwise higher educated peoples are residing far away of their own village home for job purpose and other reasons.

Table - 3 : Status of Land Ownership of the Heads of the Households

Quantity of land (Acre)	No of. owner	Percentage %
Up to 0.5 acre	27	17.8
.5 acre - 1 acre	50	30
1.01 acre - 2 acre	22	14.6
2.01 acre - 3 acre	18	11.9
3.01 acre - 4 acre	14	9.2
4.01 acre- 5 acre	12	Nigligible
5. 01 acre - above	08	Negligible
Total	151	

Table 3 shows that highest number of respondents [50 (33%)] own 5-1 acre of land. Only 8 respondents own land more than 5.01 acre. This picture reminds us that a nigligible portion of the villagers are the owner of the majority portion of cultivable land which is a core means of production in Bangladesh.

Table - 4 : Occupational Status of the Respondents

Occupation	Family head	House wife	Son's wife	Unmarried male	Unmarried female	Total respondent	%
Agriculture	42 (13.95)	-	-	-	-	42	13.9 5
Service	01	02	-	-	-	03	-
House wife	-	57	90	-	-	147	48.84
Study	-	-	-	26	20	46	15.3
Fishermen	01	-	-	-	-	01	-
Small trading	19	01	03	-	-	23	7.64
Nursing	-	01	-	-	-	01	-
Carpenter	02	-	-	-	-	02	-
Wage labor	09	03	-	02	-	14	4.65
Unemployed	05	-	-	02	07	14	5.65
Total	79	72	93	30	27	301	100

Table - 4 indicates the diverse occupational status of the respondents although overwhelmingly 42 family head are farmers by profession and 57 are housewives out of 72. Majority of the son's wives (90)% are housewives. Unmarried male and female are students. Majority of the respondents 147 out of 301 are housewives by profession. The table provides us the idea that a small number of people are involved in different profession like small trading, carpenter, wage laborer against a large number of housewife respondents. This highlights the fact that the absence of mobility of labor is acute in rural area.

Table - 5 : Monthly Income Level of the Studied Families

Income level (Tk.)	No. of family	Percentage %
Tk 0- up to 1,000	35	23.2
Tk 1,001 up to 2,000	58	38.4
Tk 2,001 - up to 3,000	22	14.6
Tk 3,001 - up to 4,000	15	9.9
Tk, 4,001 up to 5,000	10	6.6
Tk 5,001 up to 6,000	07	-
Tk 6,001 to up	04	-
Total	151	

Table 5 reveals that the monthly income level of 58 respondents are Tk 1000-2000 which is very meagre for maintaining family expenditure and uphold nutrition level of the family; villagers' standard of living can be considered by their lower income level.

Table - 6 : Opinion of the Respondents Regarding Acceptance of Dowry at Their Marriage

Nature of reply	Family head	Housewife	Total	%
Dowry was accepted	30	25	55	36.42
Dowry was not accepted	49	47	96	63.57
Total	79	72	151	100

Table 6 indicates that 30 family out of 79 took dowry at their marriage and 25 housewives out of 72 replied that their father gave dowry to the bridegroom at their marriage. Although more than half portion of the respondent replied negatively but as time passes on this practice is being widely paracticed in our sociey. On the other hand in the past bridegroom party was compelled to provide various gifts ornaments to the bridal party. But today that situation has become reversed.

Table - 7 : Opinion of the Respondents about Materials Gained as Dowry at Marriage

Goods taken as dowry	No of respondent	%
Cash money	12	40
Motorcyle	04	13.99
Household articles	04	13.99
Land	02	07
Freeze	02	07
Gold	03	10
Cattle	03	10
Total	30	100

Table 7 shows that 30 respondents took different things as dowry at their marriage from bridal party. Those are respectively cash money, motorcycle, household articles, land, freezer, gold and cattle. The highest number of respondents (12) took cash money for maintaining expenses at marriage and some money were invested for generation of income during post marriage life.

Table - 8 : Intentions of the Respondents about Getting Dowry at their Son's Marriage

	Yes	No	Total
Family head	06	21 (36.48)	27 (39.13)
Housewife	06	36 (63.15)	42 (60.86)
Total	12 (17.4)	57(82.6)	69(100%)

Table 8 expresses the view of the respondents whether they will take dowry or not at their son's marriage in future. 12 out of 57 replied positively and the rest of the respondents 57 (82.6) are in negative. This is a good sign. This may happen because of the bitter experience of the guardians regarding demand and consequences of dowry.

Table - 9 : Reasons for Taking Dowry at Marriage

Reasons	Family head	House wife	Total
Dowry is a custom at marriage	02	04	06
Dowry will have to be provided at their daughters marriage	03	02	05
Due to necessity of cash money in the family	01	-	01
Money is required to create employment opportunity for the bachelor son	-	-	-
Total	06	06	12

Table-9 appears before us with the informatin regarding the reasons for taking dowry at their son's marriage. 6 respondents informed that they will take dowry because of its presence as custom at marriage. 3 replied that they will take dowry due to necessity of cash money in the family for meeting daily requirements. This situation is a matter to be afraid of because some of the people want to change their destiny depending on other's financial assistance specially father-in-law's economic assistance.

Table - 10 : Number of Marriageable Sons and Girls of the Respondents

Types of respondents	No of daughters	No. of sons	Total	%
Family head	20	19	39	
Housewife	28	43	71	
Total	48	62	110	100

Table-10 indicates the number of marriageable sons and girls of the respondents. There are 39 (20+ 19) daughters and sons at family head's house where 71(28+43) marriageable daughters and son are waiting for marriage.

Table - 11 : Status of Receiving Dowry at Son's Marriage

Identity of respondents	No. of sons	No of respondents	Status	Total	%
Family head	45	7	12	19	35.18
Housewife	70	24	11	35	64.8
Total	115	31	23	54	100

Table-11 informed us of the fact that at 31 son's marriage dowry, was accepted and 23 people did not take dowry. Guardians claimed and realized dowry from 31 son's marriage out of 54. This picture provides us the idea that guardians are interested to obtain dowry at their son's marriage at the expense of the son's father-in-law's family welfare.

Table-12 : Level of consciousness about the Dowry Prohibition Act (the figure with the bracket indicates %)

Whether Conscious or not	Family head	House wife	Son's wife	Unmarried male	Unmarried female	Total	%
Conscious	30 (37.10)	43 (59.7)	51(54.83)	22(73.3)	12 (44.44)	158	52.49
Unconscious	49 (62.02)	29(60)	42(45.16)	08 (27)	15 (55.5) 1	43	47.5
Total	79	72	93 (100)	30 (100)	27 (100)	301	100

Table-12 gives us the idea that 30 family head, 43 housewives, 51 son's wives, 22 unmarried male and 12 unmarried female in 158 are conscious about Dowry Prohibition Act. 143 (47.5%) out of 301 were unconscious about the Dowry Prohibition Act. This is a dismal picture and establishes the idea that majority of the rural people are ignorant of the dowry prohibition law.

Table-13 : Opinion of the Respondents about the enforcement of the dowry prohibition law.

Status	Family head	House wife	Son's wife	Unmarried male	Unmarried female	Total	%
Dowry law is not enforced in society	67 (84.81)	52 (69.3)	61(73.5) (73.5)	17 (56)	06 (22.2)	203	67.7
Dowry law is enforced in society	12 (15.2)	20 (26.6)	32 (38.5)	13 (43.3)	27(27.7)	98	32.5
Total	79	75	93	30	27	301	100

Table-13 indicates that the respondents of different categories opined i.e., 68 family head 54 housewives, 21 son's wives, 5 unmarried male in 200 out of 301 viewed negatively that dowry law is not practiced in society. 54 housewives out of 75 and 32 son's wives out of 83 gave their information that the Dowry Prohibition Act is not implemented properly and the rest 101 thinks that Dowry Prohibition Act is in execution. In this group the number of respondents in different groups are as follows : Family head-12, Housewife-21, Son's wife-32, Unmarried male-15, Unmarried female-21. In fact due to want of interest for litigation among marriageable girl's father this does not come into existence.

Table-14 : Demand of Dowry at Son's Wife's Sisters Marriage.

Whether dowry was given or not	No. of respondents	No. of sister got marriage	%
Dowry was demanded	67	142	41.40
Dowry was not demanded	26	201	58.60
Total	93	34	100

Table-14 indicates that at the time of wife's sister's marriage 67 respondents have replied that their father had to pay dowry at their sister's marriage. Only 26 replied negatively.

Table - 15 : Demand of Dowry at Son's Marriage

Whether dowry was demanded or not	No. of respondents	Percentage
Dowry was demanded	59	63.44
Dowry was not demanded	32	34.40
Did not make any comment	93	100

Table-15 shows that marriage 59 respondents out of 93 dowry was demanded and the bridal party was compelled to responded positively. 32 respondents replied negatively. Only 2 respondents made no comment in this regard. Majority of the respondents recognized that dowry is reality at marriage in rural Bangladesh.

Table - 16 : Opinion of the Respondents about Whether the Society Treats Dowry as a Social Custom or not.

Nature of reply	Family head	House wife	Son's wife	Unmarried male	Unmarried female	Total	%
Treats dowry as a social custom	58	50	71	23	18	220	73.08
Dowry is not treated as a social custom	21	22	22	07	09	81	26.9
Total	79	72	93	30	27	301	100

Table 16 shows that 220 respondents think the society treats dowry as a common custom at marriage to the people of lower class becomes victims of this had practice.

Table - 17 : Idea of the Unmarried Male and Female Regarding Dowry.

Level of awareness	Positive	Negative	Total	%
Unmarried male	30	-	30	52.63
Unmarried female	26	1	27	47.36
Total	56	1	57	100

Table-17 informs us that unmarried male and female are also aware of the spread of dowry system 50 out of 57 respondents were aware of the system.

Table-18 :Attitude of the unmarried Males about Demand of Dowry at their Marriage.

Attitude	Unmarried males	%
Wants to get marriage with dowry	06	20
Decision to marriage without dowry	23	77
Depends on parents decision	01	3
Total	30	100

Table-18 indicates that 6 out of 30 unmarried respondents will claim dowry at their marriage but 23 out of 30 will not demand dowry at their marriage. It is a good sign for the society that future citizens are not interested to get marry with dowry. The reason for their such opinion is that they are observing the ill sufferings of this system in society.

Table-19 :Coment of the Unmarried Young Women in Getting Marry with Dowry.

Opinion	Young women	%
Positive	06	22
Negative	21	78
Total	27	100

Table-19 indicates that 6 unmarried young women will sit for marry if dowry is claimed by the bridegroom party and the rest 21 are adamant not to sit for dowry claimed marriage. It is observed that the respondents who are the prime of their marriageable life and whose age is increasing and seems to be passing time of their marriage are agreed to sit for marriage. On the other hand, who are relatively teenager and have been studying in high schools will not be agreed to have marriage with the bridegroom who will claim dowry at marriage.

Table-20 : Opinion of the Young Men to Marry in a Family which want to Give Dowry.

Opinion	Young men	%
Positive	04	13.33
Negative	22	73.33
Did not make any comment	04	13.33
Total	30	100

Table-20 indicates that 4 respondents will marry in a family who are interested to give dowry at their daughter's marriage and 22 respondents do not choice this.

Table-21 : Opinion of the Young Male and Female about the Treatment of Society to the People who Demands and Accepts Dowry at Marriage.

Opinion	Young man	Young woman	Total	%
Society honors dowry acceptors	08	06	14	24.56
Society dishonors dowry acceptors	20	21	41	71.92
Did not make any comment	02	00	02	
Total	30	27	57	100

Table-21 shows that 14 respondents think society honor the people who obtain abundant money and materials as dowry at marriage and 41 says that society hates them instead of paying respects.

Table-22 : Attitude of the Unmarried Young Men and Women in Changing Fate Through Getting Dowry at Marriage.

Opinion	Positive	Negative	Other factors have some role	Total	%
Young men	06	19	05	30	52.63
Young women	02	19	06	27	47.36
Total	08	38	11	57	100

Table-22 indicates that majority respondents (38) do not think that their father-in-law's money and material will change their luck. Only 8 respondents think dowry can change living standard. Some respondents (11) think that other factors also work for changing luck along with dowry.

Table - 23 : Causes for Taking Dowry at Son's Marriage.

Causes expressed by the respondents to take dowry at their son's marriage	No. of respondents in different category		Total	%
	Family head (male)	Housewife		
Dowry is a widely prevailed custom at marriage	02	04	06	31.57
Dowry will have to be provided at their girl's marriage	03	02	05	26.31
Cash money is required in the society	03	03	06	31.57
The son who is out of employment will be provided with father-in-law's money	01	0	02	
Total	09	10	19	100

Table-23 indicates that for various reasons dowry is practiced in society. 6 respondents think that dowry will have to be provided at their girl's marriage so they will demand dowry at their son's marriage. 6 respondents told that due to want of cash money some prefer dowry. 2 respondents replied that unemployed son will be provided anywhere with father-in-law's money.

Table-24 : Opinion of the Respondents about the Reasons for Prevailing Dowry in Society.

Responses	No. of respondents			Unmarried young (male)	Unmarried young (female)	Total	%
	Family head	House wife	Son's wife				
Want of education and employment opportunities for women	40 (50.63)	35	15	06	06	102	33.88
Managing job for young unemployed people	10	05	08	10	01	34	11.29
Providing gift to the daughter by the people belongs to rich section of society	05	05	05	03	-	18	5.98
Want of women's security in social life	06	04	20	02	08	40	13.28
Giving marriage of a lower family girl to the member of a superior family	05	02	05	01	-	13	4.31
Husband's parent's greed	13	21 (29.16)	40	08	12	94	31.22
Total	79	72	93	30	27	301	100

Table 24 portrays a picture about the reasons responsible for widely practice of dowry in society. 102 out of 301 respondents replied that want of education and employment opportunities for women is a vital for existence of dowry. 34 out of 301 respondents think that managing job for unemployed people is a reason for practice of dowry. 40 respondents think that due to want of women's security in society dowry prevails. 13 respondents believe that giving marriage of a relatively lower family girl to the member of a superior family. One interesting matter is that 40 out 93 son's wives blamed their father-in-law's greediness, where only 94 respondents from all categories out of 301 blamed father-in-law's greediness for existence of dowry.

Table-25: Opinion of the Respondents about Impact of Dowry on Bride's Father's Economic Condition.

Opinion of the respondents	Family head	House wife	Son's wife	Unmarried young man	Unmarried young woman	Total	%
Financial structure has been breakdown	54 (68.35)	59	33 (35.48)	13	20	179	59.46 6
Financial structure has not been breakdown	25 (31.65)	13	48 (51.6)	17	07	110	36.54 4
Financial condition is same as before	-	-	12	-	-	12	3.98
Total	79	72 (100)	93 (100)	30(100)	27(100)	301	100

Table-25 briefs us about the consequences of dowry in bride's family after meeting dowry at their daughter's marriage. 179 out of 301 are of the opinion that the financial structure becomes loose after providing marriage to the daughter's meeting demand of dowry. 110 respondents replied that although the financial structure has not been paralyzed but they faced a heavy setback. 12 respondents opined that the financial condition is good as before. One thing is evident that economically well-to-do family never falls in trouble whereas families belong to lower middle class face severe troubles in giving marry to their daughter.

Table-26 : Opinion of the Respondents about Giving Marry to the Daughter of a Poor Family with Dowry.

Opinion of the respondents	Family head	Housewife	Total	%
Poor families are facing severe trouble	57	59	116	76.82
Poor families are not facing trouble	22	13	35	23.18
Total	79	72	151	100

Table-26 presents the position of poor families in facing demand of dowry. 116 out of 151 respondents think that poor families are facing severe troubles due to practice of dowry where 35 respondents observe no problem in this connection.

Table-27: Opinion of the Respondents about Detachment of Conjugal Life of their Daughter for not Providing Dowry at Marriage.

Respondents	Family head	Housewife	Total	%
Daughter was divorced	01	03	04	6.06
Daughter was not divorced	22	40	62	93.93
Total	23	43	66	100

Table-27 shows us the impact of dowry at conjugal life. 4 respondents replied that their daughter was given divorced due to failure in meeting demand of dowry after marriage.

Table-28 : Opinion of the Respondents Regarding Killing of any of their Daughter by the Torture of Husband or Mother-in-law.

Respondents	Family head	Housewife	Total	%
Killed	02	02	04	2.65
Not Killed	77	70	147	97.35
Total	79	72	151	100

Table 28 informs us that sometimes consequences of dowry becomes dangerous. 4 respondents replied that their daughters were killed following severe beating by their husband and mother-in-law.

Table-29 : Opinion of the Respondents about Committing Suicide of any of their Daughter for Incapability of Meeting Dowry after Marriage.

Respondents	Family head	Housewife	Total	%
Committed suicide	02	02	04	2.65
Did not commit suicide	77	70	147	97.35
Total	79	72	151	100

Table 29 depicts that some of the women committed suicide for their incapability to provide dowry to their husband and husband's physical violence. 4 respondents told that their daughters have committed suicide due to husband's inhuman presentation. This incident expresses the dangerous consequences of dowry in family life.

Table-30: Opinion of the Respondents Regarding Bad Impact of Dowry in Society.

Opinion	Family head	Housewife	Son's wife	Total	%
Deteriorating social tranquility	56	65	89	210	86.06
Not deteriorating social tranquility	23	07	07	34	13.93
Total	79	72	93	244	100

Table-30 awares us about the bad impact of dowry at social life. 210 out of 244 respondents think that this practice is deteriorating social tranquility and the rest of the respondent's (34) opinion is reverse to it.

Table-31: Opinion of the Respondents Regarding Torture by their Mother-in-law not Getting Dowry at Marriage.

Opinion	No. of son's wife	%
Tortured	06	6.47
Free from torture	72	77.41
Did not make comment	15	16.12
Total	93	100

Table-31 reveals that 6 son's wives were tortured by their mother-in-law and 15 respondents made no comment regarding the issue.

Table-32: Opinion of the Respondents Regarding Rude Behavior by their Mother-in-law not Getting Dowry.

Opinion	No. of son's wife	%
Facing rude behavior regularly	16	17.20
Not facing rude behavior	74	76.56
Did not make any comment	3	3.22
Total	93	100

Table-32 manifests the fact that 16 son's wives respondents are facing constant rude behavior from their mother-in-law for not fulfilling their husband's and mother-in-law's demand for dowry.

Table-33: Opinion of the Respondents about Whether the Girl Children are Liabilites or not.

Respondents	Yes	No	Did not make any comment	%
Family head	70	03	06	79
Housewife	64	01	07	72
Son's wife	83	02	08	93
Unmarried male	29	01	-	30
Unmarried female	21	06	-	27
Total	267	13	21	301

Table-33 reflects the views of the poor fathers of the unlucky daughters to their girl child. 167 respondents are of the view that girl children are liabilities to them and 21 did not make any comment regarding the issue. In fact, society is discriminatory outlook toward girl children from the very beginning of their life is not conducive for congenial living atmosphere.

Table-34 : Opinion of the Respondents about the Abolition of Dowry System from the Society.

Opinion of the respondents	Family head	House wife	Son's wife	Unmarried male	Unmarried Female	Total	%
Support abolition of dowry	63	65	75	22	22	257	82.05
Does not support abolition of dowry	06	05	10	03	03	27	8.97
Did not make any comment	10	02	08	05	02	27	8.97
Total	79	72	93	30	27	301	100

Table-34 informs that 247 respondents are against the practice of dowry and only 27 are in favor of this system. 27 respondents made no comment in this respect. Those who are supporting this system are in an advantageous position of having parents of boy child and do not consider it as a serious problem in society.

Table-35 : Attitude of the Respondents about Taking Initiatives through Joint Effort.

Opinion of the respondents	Family head	House wife	Son's wife	Unmarried male	Unmarried Female	Total	%
Interested to take joint effort	09	10	79	18	20	136	45.18
Not interested to take joint effort	70	62	14	12	07	165	54.81
Total	79	72	93	30	27	301	100

Table-35 concludes that 136 out of 301 respondents think to initiate joint effort for eradication of dowry practice from the

society. 165 respondents are not aware of the joint effort and some of them are pessimistic of it for its irresistible tempo in social life.

Table-36: Opinion of the Respondents about the Role of UP Member in Elimination of Dowry.

Opinion of the respondents	Family head	House wife	Son's wife	Unmarried male	Unmarried Female	Total	%
The scope of law is inadequate and ineffective	55	22	30	12	10	129	42.85
Scope of law is adequate and effective	20	12	20	10	09	71	23.58
Did not make any comment	04	38	43	08	08	01	33.55
Total	79	72	93	30	27	301	100

Table-36 shows 147 out of 301 respondents are of the opinion that the public representatives of union parishads can play an effective role in eradicating the dowry problem. 115 respondents opine that playing effective role by public representatives will not be possible. 39 respondents made no comment regarding this.

Table-37: Assumption of the Respondents Regarding Effectiveness of Existing Dowry Prohibition Act.

Opinion of the respondents	Family head	House wife	Son's wife	Unmarried male	Unmarried Female	Total	%
The scope of law is inadequate and ineffective	55	22	30	12	10	129	42.85
Scope of law is adequate and effective	20	12	20	10	09	71	23.58
Did not make any comment	04	38	43	08	08	01	33.55
Total	79	72	93	30	27	301	100

Table-37 indicates the view of the respondents about the existing Dowry Prohibition Act. 129 out of 301 respondents opine that the existing law is inadequate to combat the problem. 71 think that existing law is adequate. 101 respondents made no comment in this matter.

Majority of the respondents are of the opinion that the Dowry Prohibition Act is completely unable to prevent bridegroom from demand of dowry. The implementation of law is to be found to some extent after marriage if victim housewives pursue law enforcing agency to take necessary measures for protecting her interest.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Poverty might be one of the many reasons for practice of dowry in Bangladesh but whenever we observe that a man from richer section of society claims dowry then this reason becomes null and void. But normally it is to be found that in a poverty stricken rural economy the existence of dowry is dominant. Although dowry related disputes are happening in segmented manner in different areas of the country but the scale of the problem amounts to a 'major crisis' considering the situation of whole nation which requires urgent and concerted action of government and NGOs as well as spontaneous response of the conscientious portion of society. Thinking all the dreadful nature of this problem some recommendations are forwarded below-

- 1) Government should adopt necessary measures with NGOs assistance for income generation of the common people so that they can improve their living standard and can enjoy a meaningful life.
- 2) The purview of the present Dowry Prohibition Law must be extended through formulation of extra laws and its proper implementation must be ensured.
- 3) Local government institutions should be empowered by the government to monitor the marriage affairs of the inhabitants and some judicial authority to be vested under them so that they can arrange dowry free marriage among the inhabitants.

- 4) Social movements by active participation and consensus of all the influential and conscious part of the society is a must. Without united effort the dream for eradication of dowry will not be possible.
- 5) Every citizen should bear in mind the fact that without providing due respect to others' right protection of own right will be impossible. In this connection enforcement of law is not all in all. Side by side a change in the way people think about others is critically important if they are to respect everyone as equal and to identify their own rights and to claim the protection of the law when needed while recognizing a duty to respect the rights of everyone else^৪.
- 6) Women should be conscious and aware of their rights and dignity along with acquiring education.
- 7) Legal rights of women should be included in educational curriculum.
- 8) Mass media, leaflets, poster may be used to eradicate this.
- 9) Law enforcing agency will have to work indiscriminately and exemplary punishment must be imposed within a shortest possible time after the case had been filed by the victim.

Consequently poverty alleviation is an important remedy to this problem. State is to take prime responsibility in this context. Side by side dowryless marriage can be encouraged by taking different activities. A good number of people are well aware of the measures taken in the Bishwa Ijtemah at Tongi regarding dowryless marriage. This is an instructive lessons for us. Only law enforcing agency is not adequate to eradicate the problem. People of light and leading, socio cultural and religious organization as well as radio, television and newspaper can play important role along with

government in this connection. In concluding stage it can be easily uttered that a good number of reasons are liable for existing of dowry in society. It is caused by many factors such as women's backwardness in family and society, want of social security, lack of employment opportunity, immaterialisation of Dowry Prohibition Act, discrimination between man and woman and so on. The poor villagers especially parents of daughters who are unable to gratify the demand of the groom's party are endangered and in the same way they are confined. Any social evil is harmful to maintaining stability and tranquility in society. The views of the common villagers bear much significance which is observe through their comments on the issue. The sufferer people aspires the disappearance of dowry from the society but the irony is that without social movement attainment of success on this issue will be impossible. The role of government, local government, NGOs might be positive in eradicating this problem to ensure a congenial atmosphere in society. The thinking of common villagers reflect the reality of the problem and the ways and means suggested by the villagers in the form of opinion should be given attention by the policy formulators and policy implementors. One thing is optimistic that young generation of the nation are abhorring the custom of dowry and a sort of hate tendency has been emerging among the most of the unmarried conscious male and female citizens. In every household of the country unmarried male and female are more or less available and most of the families are facing the severity of the problem in the same way. If all the people realize the complication and its negative consequences in the social life as well as their family life then it can be considered that the situation will be improved gradually. At the last, social movement involving all categories of people specially the people who are the worst sufferer might be a great step to eradicate this inhuman social problem.

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