

## **Dowry in Kashmir- A sociological study of Srinagar city**

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**Abstract:** This research paper argues on the evil of dowry system and its upshot in Kashmir. It indicates the rampancy of dowry & tries to see its prevalence among Muslims in Kashmir. It highlights the case studies of those women who had been victim of Dowry in Kashmir. Dowry is one of the most distressing & perilous evils in today's society that its problems can't be fully figured out without resorting to case studies. The case studies provide the qualitative & essential information. In order to reach the profound insight of this evil, the researcher conducted some case studies in Srinagar city, of Kashmir, of those women who have been victims of Dowry. The researcher seeks to interact & observe their conduct & tries to understand the state of affairs & situation when & how they were in the clutch of dowry. The study is carried on the factors that focus the behavioral patterns of the given element & its relationship with the environment.

**Keywords:** Dowry, Srinagar, Law, Women & Muslim

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### **INTRODUCTION**

Parliament passed the comprehensive legislation called the Dowry Prohibition Act (28 of 1961) which was assented to, by the President of India on 20 May 1961 & was enforced with effect from 1 July 1961.

According to Section 2 of the Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961 the term 'dowry' means any property or valuable security given or agreed to be given either directly or indirectly-

(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 any other person, to either party to the marriage or to any other person; at or before or any time after the marriage in connection with the marriage of said parties but does not include dower or Mahar in the case of persons to whom the Muslim Personal Law (Shari 'at) applies [1].

The Dowry Act, 1961 (Amended, 1986) states that 'The Dowry Prohibition (Maintenance of list of presents to the bride and bridegroom) Rules 1885 prescribes that list of gifts, and other items should be made and kept. Where the death of a women is caused by any burns or bodily injury within 7 years of her marriage and shown that soon before death she was subjected to cruelty or harassment by her husband or any relatives is known as dowry death and punishment is for not less than 7 years but which may extend to life term imprisonment [2]'.

Dowry is not of very ancient origin. It assumed abnormal proportion in later times only. Among the ancient Hindu, the custom of dowry did exist in simpler form though under different names. This custom of giving presents at the time of marriage prevails in India commonly. Parents of the girl give presents to the bride. The reason behind these presenting of gifts is the affection of the parents towards their children but in due course of time this custom has grown rigid & became associated with social status & family prestige leading to great social evil. Dowry is spreading like fire & this social evil has taken a worse turn. 'The Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961' makes giving, taking & abetting of Dowry punishable u/s 3 of the said Act, which lays that any person after commencement of this Act gives or takes or abets the giving & taking of dowry, he shall be punishable with imprisonment for a term which shall not be less than six months but which may extend to ten thousand rupees or the amount of the value of such dowry, whichever is more. Provided that the court may for adequate & special reasons to be recorded in the judgment, impose a sentence of imprisonment for a term of less than six months. (2) Nothing Sub-section (i) shall apply to, or in relation to-

(a) Presents which are given at the time of a marriage to the bride (without any demand having been made in that behalf). Provided that such presents are entered in a list maintained in a list maintained in accordance with the rules made under this Act.

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(b) Presents which are given at the time of marriage of the bridegroom (without any demand having been made in that behalf).

Provided that such presents are entered in a list maintained in accordance with the rules made under this Act. Provided further that where such presents are made by or on behalf of the bride or any person related to the bride, such presents are a customary nature & the value thereof is not excessive having to the financial status of the person by whom or on whose behalf such presents are given[3].

### **History in India**

There has been considerable academic discussion on the origin of dowry, whether it has been prescribed or proscribed by the *shastras*, whether it was an integral part of *kanyadan* and whether it is different from *steedhan*. It is generally accepted that *steedhan* means the wealth of woman – the gold, jewelry, cloths & other property which belong to the bride & hers to use whereas dowry is the wealth that goes with the women, that is, the wealth which does not belong to the woman but which accompanies her when she marries into her husband's family. The practice of giving dowry is closely linked to the concept of the daughter as '*parayadhan*', a commodity to be transferred from one family to another. This is at the root of the reluctance to permit daughters to inherit immovable property. Women are thus placed in a position of dependency both in their own homes & in their marital homes. The 19th century reformers did not raise the issue of dowry as a social evil to be legally banned. The women's organizations, which in the early decades of the 20th century, rallied around the demand of equal rights for women, also did not take up issues such as domestic violence, rape and dowry. This was perhaps because of the women's movement which participated wholeheartedly in the struggle for independence of the country & linked the dawn of a new era of democracy & equal rights for all with the vision of an independent India. However the misery caused to women by dowry has been tellingly portrayed in women's literature of the first three decades of 20th century in Hindi belt in north India. This concern is accompanied by sharp criticisms of the self-centered egoistic behavior of men & attacks against male reformers for their failure to address & tackle the practice of dowry [4].

### **Islamic perspective**

In Islam, the institution of dowry has no approval. The most important thing about Islam here is that it has created dower (Maher) which the husband has to pay to his wife. However, giving gifts etc to the bride from her father's side has been a normal practice since ages. When the Prophet of Islam (peace be upon him) married his daughter to Hazrat Ali (RA), he gave her a mattress of palm leaves, a sheet of camel leather & a bed sheet of Yemen, besides an earthen lota & chakki [5].

### **Concept of Maher**

Dowry and Maher are often misunderstood and misused concepts. Actually, there is no concept of dowry in Islam, but it is practiced in most Muslim societies. Nor is dowry the English translation of Maher. Maher is the 'bride gift'. At the time of the marriage, the groom commits to hand over and actually hands over to the bride a sum of money called Maher/dower which is a token of his willing acceptance of the responsibility of bearing all necessary expenses of his wife. This is the original meaning of Maher. According to the 1984 Islamic Family Law (Federal Territories), it is stated that the dowry (*mas kahwin*) refers to a payment from the husband to the wife that is legally due by Islamic Law at the solemnization ceremony (*akadnikah*), either in the form of money actually paid or recognized as a credit with or without security, or as something that, according to Islamic law, has monetary value, which is a token of his willing acceptance of the responsibility of bearing all necessary expenses of his wife symbol of the husband's seriousness in marriage, it reflects the love and willingness of the husband to live with the wife, and to sacrifice for the welfare of his family. It is also a sign of respect from the husband to the wife [6].

### **Kashmir Context**

Kashmir is a beautiful place & people often called it as paradise & the 'land of sufis' which means pure & without malice. But unfortunately, the thought is transforming & fluctuating by witnessing some sort of change in the Kashmiri society. From some previous years there is a change in the culture & life style of people. The influence of modernization & westernization has not even led Kashmir unmarked. The need of development is been felt by the people now-a-days. And it is obvious that where there is improvement, aggravation can't remain away from it. Kashmir is also going through the same. Obviously, misdeeds have been always a part of every society but ratio varied because of cultural & religious impact, so is with Kashmir. Besides every social evil, as per the perceptive, incidents of domestic violence in Kashmir are on rise. Women normally don't speak about it and suppose it a part of their destiny and live with it. Most of them are unwilling to protest due to social stigma attached to it and to avoid legal hassles and other awkward dealings. Dowry is one among them. The demand for the dowry has become most vital condition of the marriage. Today we fix dowry rates for boys of different categories doctors, engineers, lecturers, business men, executives. Merit of the girl has nothing to do in the settlement of the marriage proposal. We generally see that ordinary parents find it difficult to select a boy, well-settled in life, for their girl who is well qualified and well-versed with household activities. Now a day's marriage is a game of dowry hunters. Marriage, which is something sacred, should be made as simple as possible. It would not be out of place

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to mention one of the sayings of the Holy Prophet (Peace be upon him),

"The best marriage is that upon which the least trouble and expense is bestowed." It is sad that we have departed from the teachings of the Messenger of Allah".

We all know that Kashmir is also facing problems like dowry but there are certain facts which are not yet revealed. It is not that the laws have not been framed to curb this evil from the society rather, the government has imposed a law on Dowry in the year way back 1960 but either the people are not well informed about the law or they ignore it, or may be the laws remained limited to the paper & ink only and are not imposed in practicality.

### **OBJECTIVE**

The paper aims to study the issues & concerns of dowry & its customary practice among Muslims in Srinagar City. It tries to see that to how much degree dowry system is affecting women in Srinagar City.

### **EXPERIMENTAL SECTION/MATERIAL AND METHODS:**

In the present paper, the case study method, through personal interviews, pertained to different aspects such as socio-economic background of dowry victims, causes & effects. The researcher has conducted 11 case studies of Muslim women from different areas of Srinagar district of Kashmir. Both the primary and secondary data were included. The primary data was substantiated by secondary data. The primary data was derived from the 11 case studies & observation during the process. The secondary data on the other hand, were obtained from published documents and existing literatures such as magazines, books, journals, newspapers & internet, which were relevant to dowry system. On the top of each case the background information of the victim is given for easy reference. The names used in the case studies have been changed for the lawful & moral causes. The cases are as follows:

#### **Case 1**

##### ***Background information***

***Demographic status: Urban***

***Place: Srinagar***

***Educational qualification: 12th pass***

***Occupation: Housewife***

***Age at marriage and now: 29, 34***

***Age difference with Husband: 5 yrs***

***Qualification of Husband: B.A***

***Occupation of Husband: Private school teacher***

***Income of Husband: 9,000/month (approx.)***

***Type of family: Joint***

***Children: 01***

Dilshada belonged to downtown area of Srinagar city. She was born in a poor family. Her father was a class fourth employee in a government office & mother housewife. She with her 4 siblings studied in a

government school. After passing her 12th class, she was forced to marry because their financial state was going down as her father was about to get retired. But Dilshada was interested in studying further & she was a good student. At last, bowing to the circumstances of family she quieted & was ready to marry. After 5 months of search she was engaged to a private teacher in nearby city. During this period the in-laws behaved very polite & civilized. After 7 months she was married to the same person. She was loved by her husband so much. The in-laws were also taking care of her until her sister-in-law got engaged. She was asked to give all the belongings (like copper, gold & cloths) of her that she brought at her marriage. At first, they demanded very peacefully. But with the passage of time they appeared to be very discourteous. After 1 & a half year of marriage the demands were on increase & the torture got intense. Dilshada simultaneously gave birth to a girl. This also flamed the situation as they wanted a boy. Her husband also started annoying her. After 7 months of nursing time she went back to her husband's home. The in-laws again started demanding material goods. The tension was on its peak at the time of the marriage of her sister-in-law. She was openly demanded dowry as they wanted to give it to their daughter. She provided her possessions & some money to them unwillingly. After that, dowry was demanded occasionally, but every time she was taunted and tortured mentally. Unfortunately, after some months her mother passed due to brain hemorrhage. But the demands of her in-laws continued. She somehow managed & arranged money & gave them because her husband threatened her to leave her. After some months she went to her father's home. When her husband called her to come back she put the condition that she will not provide anything demanded by her in-laws. He agreed on this & now she is living with them but the friction between the family members is still there.

#### **Case 2**

##### ***Background information***

***Demographic status: Urban***

***Place: Srinagar***

***Educational qualification: 12th pass***

***Occupation: Housewife***

***Age at marriage and now: 31, 38***

***Age difference with Husband: 8 yrs***

***Qualification of Husband: B.A***

***Occupation of Husband: Office Clerk***

***Income of Husband: 15,000/month (approx.)***

***Type of family: Joint***

***Children: 01***

Saima a resident of Chanapora, belonged to a middle class family & her mother had passed in early childhood. Her father, a shopkeeper, along with her elder brother & younger sister reared them like a mother. She could not complete her studies because all the responsibilities came over her. At the age of 31 she was married to an office clerk residing at Nowshara.

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Her father gave her enough gold & money on her marriage. Her sister-in-law & mother-in-law told her in 7 days of marriage that their colony has threats of thievery so she must surrender her jewelry in their hands for security. But till today, the gold was not given & even shown to her. She wears artificial jewelry on marriages & other occasions. Moreover, she was asked to bring sweets, bakery, & even some times “Kokar Majma” when she came back from her father’s home. Unfortunately, she was not aware & was told that these are mandatory customs. But when she came to know that they are demanding, she tried to revolt but she was threatened that she will be thrown out of the house. She was abused & her sister-in-law often dragged her in corridor. Her husband remained silent in this matter, when she asked him to say anything he was mum. She also tried to raise voice against her in-laws but every time she was trashed. She had already suffered a lot & do not wanted to become burden on her father so she tolerated everything but when she was asked to bring a scooter for her husband, she refused it as it was not affordable for her. She came to her father’s home for 3 years. After that her husband repented & took her back to his home. Now she is living with a kid in the same house but separately.

### Case 3

#### **Background information**

*Demographic status: Urban*

*Place: Srinagar*

*Educational qualification: Graduate*

*Occupation: Clerk (private)*

*Age at marriage and now: 30, 36*

*Age difference with Husband: 3 yrs*

*Qualification of Husband: M.A*

*Occupation of Husband: Government teacher*

*Income of Husband: 20,000/month (approx.)*

*Type of family: Joint*

*Children: 0*

Rafia Jan lived at Bemina in a middle class family. Her father was a Pathwari & mother housewife. She lived with 2 siblings & her parents. She completed her graduation with full enthusiasm & she was fond to do a job. After 2 years of struggle she got a job in an office as a clerk. Her monthly income was 5 to 7,000. She contributed to her family & also saved some money for her marriage. A mediator brought a proposal of marriage for her. Everything seemed good so the marriage was fixed. The mediator took a good amount of money for fixing the marriage. She was married to a well qualified government teacher of Zakura area. Her marriage was working smoothly only until she was shocked to see the real face of her in-laws. Her life was shattered just after six months of her marriage, when her sister-in-law & mother-in-law asked her to bring cash for them. They told her that they have no problem if she wants to continue with her job but the condition was that more than the half of her salary should be contributed to the in-laws. When she tried to complain

her husband, shockingly, he threatened her of giving divorce & accused her as characterless. The reason for demanding this money was that the groom’s parents have already spent money on marriage & their son is on good post. She was even asked to surrender her gold to her sister-in-law who was yet to get married. She was tortured by her husband & her in-laws. They also complained her of being infertile but in actual, the relationship with her husband was not good. After 2 years she came to know about her husband’s extra marital affair & when she raised voice against this. She was thrashed like an animal. Her husband was having affair with a girl who was less than half of his age, who also was his student. She was asked to give divorce but she refused. She went to an Imaam Sahab of a nearby Masjid & requested to look in the matter. Her husband was called & ounseling was done for them. Her mother-in-law passed after few months of this incident & now she is living with her husband but the clouds are still in the sky.

### Case 4

#### **Background information**

*Demographic status: Urban*

*Place: Srinagar*

*Educational qualification: 10th pass*

*Occupation: Housewife*

*Age at marriage and now: 26, 31*

*Age difference with Husband: 7yrs*

*Qualification of Husband: 12th pass*

*Occupation of Husband: Peon*

*Income of Husband: 7,000/month (approx.)*

*Type of family: Joint*

*Children: 01*

Sabah was born at Fateh kadal area of Srinagar. She was the only daughter of her parents; her father being a Mason faced many hardships in rearing his family. Sabah was loved by her parents very much & they wanted her to study but due to the poor conditions of her family she studied only up to 10th. Dedicating her teen age to her parents & home she surrendered all her desires & spent time in doing the domestic work. After 3 years her father witnessed an accident & he lost his leg. It was not possible for him to stand & move properly. He used to remain at home. The survival became difficult but her maternal uncle took the responsibility to look after them. He helped them a lot by cash & kind. Sabah knew a little bit of tailoring so she brought clothes from nearby tailoring shop & worked as a helper in order to fulfill some basic needs. After 5 years her uncle brought a proposal of marriage for her. Finally at a young age she was married to a peon in an office who lived at Batamloo & was 7 years elder than her. During the marriage functions her father was at instant asked to invite (to give Saal) 12 ladies on Mehndi ceremony. He any how managed & arranged bread & meat (Choche Maaz) for them. He was also forced to arrange food (saal) for 40 people at right moment from groom’s side which was 30 as per the

commitment. He however managed at that very time, as he had saved all his earnings for her only daughter & he also borrowed some money from his friends & relatives. Now she was married in these circumstances where it was difficult to move backward. Her husband compelled her to sell her gold & snatched even the amount of Maher from her. Her in-laws demanded money every month & tortured her. She was from a poor family & she was not able to fulfill the needs so she attempted to make suicide but anyhow she was rescued by neighbors. Finally, a written statement from Masjid Committee was taken from him that neither dowry will be demanded from Sabah & nor any kind of harsh treatment will be tolerated. Now Sabah is living with her husband & having a kid.

#### Case 5

##### **Background information**

*Demographic status:* **Urban**

*Place:* **Srinagar**

*Educational qualification:* **B.A**

*Occupation:* **Clerk (private)**

*Age at marriage and now:* **34, 42**

*Age difference with Husband:* **06 yrs**

*Qualification of Husband:* **12th pass**

*Occupation of Husband:* **Businessmen**

*Income of Husband:* **16000/month (approx.)**

*Type of family:* **Joint**

*Children:* **01**

Hanifa was born in Aluchibagh, in a middle class family & her father had a carpet business. All her younger brothers & sisters were married but she was not getting married because she had a blotch on her left side of face. She was very depressed & used to remain calm & alone. Initially, she used to go at sacred places & pray for her marriage but with the passing time she was hopeless & fed up too. Her mother used to take her to doctors beauticians but nothing worked. This brought in her nature a kind of angeriness & exasperation. She used to get irritated every time & was upset with her life. Finally, she got an offer of marriage from with a man who was 40 at that time residing at Safa kadal. As compensation she was given a piece of land on marriage as dowry. She got married to Afzal (name changed) who was a businessman in 2006. Hanifa was more educated than Afzal and that too became her fault and it went against her. After marriage Hanifa was asked to sell her land. Her husband told her that he wants to start a new business & needs money. She happily did what she was told. After 8 months she was again asked to arrange some money from her father's home for the establishment of business. She went to her father & he gave her a good amount. Her husband assured her to return this money but he never did. Rather, she was asked to get more. When she came to know that it is not for any business she revolted. In turn, she was battered, abused & taunted. She lived in a miserable condition & became weak by health. Her husband started annoying her but soon when he came to

know about her pregnancy he treated her good. At last, when she gave birth to a girl he was again ruthlessly beating her. Finally, she decided to get separated; the case remained in court for 2 years but Hanifa & her parents did not lose hope & now she is living with her daughter at her father's home & she is working as housekeeping.

#### Case 6

##### **Background information**

*Demographic status:* **Urban**

*Place:* **Srinagar**

*Educational qualification:* **10th pass**

*Occupation:* **Housewife**

*Age at marriage and now:* **27, 36**

*Age difference with Husband:* **2 yrs**

*Qualification of Husband:* **12th pass**

*Occupation of Husband:* **Shopkeeper**

*Income of Husband:* **5,000/month (approx.)**

*Type of family:* **Joint**

*Children:* **01**

Gowhar a resident of Rambagh area of Srinagar was brought up by a fruit seller. Her mother was a housewife & she had three children including Gowhar. Her father met an accident & he died when Gowhar was just 19. After 3 years her mother also died with some chronic disease. Gowhar & her younger sister were reared by their elder brother Nasir who was also a fruit seller Nasir was married before his mother died & had 2 children. His wife supported him a lot in taking care for Gowhar & her sister. Gowhar studied only up to 10th class. After 5 year from her Mother's death she was married. Gowhar an orphan was married to a shopkeeper who was also orphan residing at Nishat & all the expenses of her marriage were taken by her brother Nasir. Gowhar was a simple & a religious girl. She wanted a smooth married life but after 1 & a half year of marriage she gave birth to a boy. Suddenly, she was forced by her husband to work & earn money. Her sister-in-law was a divorcee & she lived nearby with her three children. Gowhar often had fights with her sister-in-law on silly things. But things went wrong when Gowhar told her husband that his brother tried to abuse her many times. Her husband was not ready to hear anything about him. The clashes between Gowhar, her husband & her in-laws continued. When one day she asked her husband about the reason being annoyed by everyone always, her husband told her that she has not brought dowry with her. She was amazed to hear this & she decided to work in a knitting centre. After some months her husband asked for her salary & when she gave some of it she was badly battered by him & whole of the money was snatched from her. Her husband took money from her & gave to her sister who pressured him to do so. Gowhar was fed up she registered a case in women commission & her husband along with his family was brought to the commission. She is now thankful to the commission as she earns but

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her husband was that much confronted with legal issues that he behaves nice to her now.

#### Case 7

##### **Background information**

*Demographic status:* **Urban**

*Place:* **Srinagar**

*Educational qualification:* **B.Sc**

*Occupation:* **Teacher**

*Age at marriage and now:* **29, 33**

*Age difference with Husband:* **3 yrs**

*Qualification of Husband:* **M.Sc**

*Occupation of Husband:* **Teacher**

*Income of Husband:* **22,000/month (approx.)**

*Type of family:* **Joint**

*Children:* **02**

Masrat belonged to Sonwar area of Srinagar city. She was born in good well settled family. Her father was a forester & mother teacher. Masrat had one brother & one sister. Masrat was the second child & she wanted to become doctor. She could not make it so she did her B.Sc. After passing her graduation, she was married by her parents to a Government teacher Hilal residing at Dalgate. She was loved by her husband so much. They went for outing once a week after & used to bring gifts for her after marriage. As per Masrat 5 months after her marriage were the beautiful moments of her life but her world turned upside down when she was asked to get 2 lakh rupees from her father. Her husband was very nice to her. Her husband motivated her to get money that it is not dowry but the need of home & it will be a kind of help. She did what her husband told her. 1.5 lakh was given to them but later she came to know & was shocked that her husband knows it's not the need rather dowry but still he is calm. She went to her father's home for 3 months but her husband apologized & convinced her to come back. After 2 months she came to know about her pregnancy & her husband was very happy. But her in-laws again demanded money. She somehow managed & arranged money & gave them just to keep good relation with them. With the passage of time, the demand increased which in turn increased the burden on her parents. Her husband was silent in this matter because he was dominated by his mother & father. When she failed to give further amount, she was mentally & physically tortured by her mother-in-law in the absence of her husband. When she gave birth to twins her husband somehow changed & opposed his parents. Now she has somehow managed to live separately with her husband & children but the past brings to her goose bumps.

#### Case 8

##### **Background information**

*Demographic status:* **Urban**

*Place:* **Srinagar**

*Educational qualification:* **B.A**

*Occupation:* **Teacher**

*Age at marriage and now:* **31, 35**

*Age difference with Husband:* **6 yrs**

*Qualification of Husband:* **M.Com**

*Occupation of Husband:* **Banking Associate**

*Income of Husband:* **24,000/month (approx.)**

*Type of family:* **Joint**

*Children:* **0**

Tahira is a resident of Jawahar Nagar. She was born in a middle class family. Her father was an office clerk. Abdul Ahad Beigh (father of Tahira), lived with his wife, mother, two sons & a daughter. Tahira was brought up with more love & extra care than her brothers. Every kind of facility was given to her. She did her studies from a well reputed institute of Srinagar. Her dream was to become a lecturer. But instantly after her graduation, she opted for a job as she wanted to be independent even though her family gave her everything she wanted. She was very fond to earn so she became a private teacher. At the same time she wanted to pursue with her studies through correspondence so she admitted herself in a distance mode. Soon after three to four months her paternal aunt came with a proposal of marriage with her son. Their parents did not find anything wrong but they wanted their sons to get married first as they were elder to her but at the same time they did not wanted to lose the proposal. So, they decided to engage Tahira with the said boy. Tahira was at the disposal of her parents so she also agreed & he (Tajamul) was good looking boy & banking associate. They were finally engaged. During the engagement Tahira & Tajamul often used to date each other. Tajamul however, provoked Tahira to leave the studies & she got convinced. In 2 years her brother was married & after that, Tahira also got married to Tajamul. But during this period the formalities like 'Kokar Majmas' 'Bateh Terem', etc on various occasions was given to Tajamul's family. Some times Tahira felt that these are unnecessary things but she was told that these are customs of marriage. Soon after 3 months of marriage, Tahira was upset because her mother-in-law who was also her Aunt was demanding things. She was asked to get copper items, furniture & domestic household items. Her father was shocked when he saw this even he was asked to pay the phone bills. Her mother was suffering with hypertension; she blamed her husband & herself for spoiling her daughter's life, she was stressed & felt ill & finally passed away. She was still asked to get Dowry which she failed to bring & was fed up. When she was pregnant, she believes that some conspiracy was made against her & she faced an abortion. Her brothers did not lose hope & fought against this. Finally, she got divorce in 2 years & now she is living at her brother's home & is working in a school to make her livelihood.

#### Case 9

##### **Background information**

*Demographic status:* **Urban**

*Place:* **Srinagar**

*Educational qualification:* **12th pass**

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*Occupation: Beautician*  
*Age at marriage and now: 28, 34*  
*Age difference with Husband: 4 yrs*  
*Qualification of Husband: B.A*  
*Occupation of Husband: Businessman*  
*Income of Husband: 15,000/month (approx.)*  
*Type of family: Joint*  
*Children: 01*

Shugufta, was born in Lal Bazar area of Srinagar. She was from a poor family. She studied only up to 12th class. She was married to a businessman Amir. He was the only son of his parents. When she was married to Amir she thought she will be happy but right from the first night Amir behaved strange. Days passed but things were getting worse. Her compatibility with Amir was not that good for almost one year. Her father-in-law asked her to bring Dowry & he assumed her to get good relation with her husband. She refused as she was from a poor background. She used to serve all her in-laws with love & concern but they were not behaving well. Amir asked her to bring more dowries from her father's home, who is a class fourth employee and his three daughters were yet to get married. Once he slapped her by & asked to bring dowry and even his mother endorses him. Shagufta cannot hear properly and the doctor has told her that her ear drum has been damaged. The case was brought before court by Shagufta's father. The case remained for 7 months & finally it was resorted. After two years Shagufta gave birth to a boy & her husband is still reserve but at least kind to her as before.

#### Case 10

##### **Background information**

*Demographic status: Urban*  
*Place: Srinagar*  
*Educational qualification: Graduate*  
*Occupation: Housewife*  
*Age at marriage and now: 30, 38*  
*Age difference with Husband: 3 yrs*  
*Qualification of Husband: M.A*  
*Occupation of Husband: Businessman*  
*Income of Husband: 18,000/month (approx.)*  
*Type of family: Joint*  
*Children: 02*

It was a really sorrowful tale and I felt quite depressed when Rehana shared her marriage story. Rehana a resident of Solina was born in a middle class family. Her father was a Clerk & mother housewife. Rehana was good at studies & wanted to study more but her grandmother being conservative wanted her to get married soon. So after her graduation, she was married to Shakeel at Nowpora some six years ago. While telling her story she said that I had completed my graduation when my parents started to think about my marriage. And when finally it was decided to whom I will get married, everything looked fine and nice. But suddenly after the engagement the groom's family

started to demand the dowry form small instances and for different excuses. Once they said that I am not much educated so give us something in dowry. So when I told them that if my education is problem then I will start my post-graduation soon and then this problem will go too. But they refused and said that we want dowry and we don't want you to be more educated than our son (groom). When I asked Rehana what about your children? She replied that this is the only reason now that I am living in this house. My children are my life now. Rehana has two children; one daughter and a son. This often happens that after marriage when a child is born the girl gets bound to the house and the grooms family demands more and more even the bride is their responsibility but all is upside down.

#### Case 11

##### **Background information**

*Demographic status: Urban*  
*Place: Srinagar*  
*Educational qualification: under Graduate*  
*Occupation: Housekeeping*  
*Age at marriage and now: 31, 36*  
*Age difference with Husband: 6 yrs*  
*Qualification of Husband: B.A*  
*Occupation of Husband: Shopkeeper*  
*Income of Husband: 11,000/month (approx.)*  
*Type of family: Joint*  
*Children: 01*

Sometimes the matter really goes topsy-turvy when we think about a thing and it comes out to be something else very strange. Same thing happened with Hajra. She was very anxious of getting married right from her childhood. She was not that much interested in studies. Her father made her to study up to 2nd year. Being a carpenter her father also wanted to finish his responsibilities. So he decided to marry both Hajira & her sister on the same day so as to save expenses. When she got proposals for marriage, she was waiting for a nice family who would really don't b like other people and their thinking should be different than the usual. And when she finally got that type of family and person she also agreed for marriage. She found Ahmed of Nowshara to be religious and she thought that a religious person knows that how a marriage should be and the things like dowry from bride side won't be acceptable. But everything turned upside down when the Ahmed's family demanded dowry both in cash and kind. While narrating her tale, Hajra said, "Ahmed wasn't like that, he never asked for everything but I think it's his family that is pressurizing him to do things like this. And when someone continuously make you think like that, you literally become like that and act like that." When asked about now the nature of his husband, Hajra replied that sometimes he behaves so good that everything seems like heaven but suddenly when the external pressure from his family comes, everything looks burning both from outside and inside. Hajira is separated now from 1 year. Her case is still in

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the court she is waiting for the justice. She is working as housekeeping in a hospital for her livelihood.

## RESULT AND CONCLUSION

After contacting the victims of dowry it was very clear that 'Everyone has a story to tell'. These women faced a lot of disgrace & dishonor. It was also clear that dowry is been practiced in Kashmir, however it appears in different disguise. It has become a social malevolence & has taken form of various social, economical, emotional & ethical problems in society. The dowry system is also an economical stress on bride's family. Woman is ill-treated and beaten for the sake of money. Women face physical and mental anguish when they are not able to accomplish the demands of their in-laws. Husband fight with his wife & treat her horribly without considering her health and feelings. It is a menace on women folk, it degrades her status, it is a burden to a girl's family, it compels a girl to earn from dissolute & disrepute ways. Parents are always stressed to meet the demands of In-laws. It is always a matter of concern for parents because their girls remain unmarried due to insufficiency of dowry; they also lose their self respect. The relationship of a husband & a wife is also affected. Moreover it also brings aggression or conflict between family members. Husband beats, abuses & frights with his wife for the sake of dowry. It was observed with grief that even fairly well educated women were of this view that men have full authority over women.

At last I can say that, marriage is a beautiful relation & people marry as it's a formal union & a social and legal tie between two persons that binds their lives legally, economically, and emotionally. But as every coin has two faces, similarly this splendid relation sometimes can turn life into a nightmare. A girl, who has dreamt of her marriage like a fairy tale, build diamond castles in air, assumed her husband as a prince, can be a victim of dreadful appearance of a marriage, which can turn her world upside down. Dowry is one of the most horrendous & terrifying evils in the society that have become somewhat necessary living tools for a marriage to run. It slinked in our society to fatal results. It has assaulted our social environment with its venomous air. Dowry has been the utmost nuisance to many parents. Its occurrence has made people to feel mentally distressed & has been a great financial devastate. It won't be wrong to quote here;

***"They say Marriages are made in Heaven, but so is thunder & lightning".***

-C. Eastwood

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