

WOMAN AS A VICTIM OF DOWRY SYSTEM WITH REFERENCE TO SHOBHAN BANTWAL'S *THE DOWRY BRIDE*

J. Blessy¹ and Dr.P.Enola Arutchelvi Parvatha²

¹M.Phil Scholar in English, M.V.Muthiah Government Arts College for Women,
Dindigul. blessyjacobggf1997@gmail.com

²Associate Professor, Department of English, M.V.Muthiah Government Arts College for
Women, Dindigul arutchelvi64@gmail.com

Abstract

One of the major predicaments that women face in life is Dowry or Bridal Price. Since medieval times it has been in practice in India. The purpose of giving dowry to a bride by her family has its own reason that she could maintain her independence after marriage. But gradually the system has become an issue in women's lives when it turns to be a compulsory one. Both women who have economic adequacy or inadequacy are targeted often to death. This article exposes a feminist psychological analysis of the phenomenon of dowry, its impact on the life of a bride in Shobhan Bantwal's *The Dowry Bride*, domestic violence against women and need to overcome this issue to make our society a better place for women to live in.

Keywords: *Bridal Price, Domestic Violence, Predicaments, Feminist psychological analysis.*

Women are the most important part of Indian society. Without women, no society can develop. Because of the Indian tradition and culture, there is always a need for women to prove their self-worth and importance. Their freedom and rights are denied in every aspect of their life. Dowry is a widespread social problem for women around the world. It is more predominant especially in India. Though the word 'Dowry' is not used in the marriages, gifts are exchanged as a token of love and prestige. But at present time it has become mandatory for bride's family. In ancient times the Dowry system does not commence as an impediment to a bride's marriage. But in the medieval period it has

become obligatory for the bride's family to give dowry according to the expectation of bridegroom's family.

The most interesting part is that the bridegroom's family will never accept that any kind of gifts from the bride's family as a part of dowry. They will say that, 'they give it to their daughter and we do not ask anything for us'. Often the parents of the bride are willing to provide a huge sum of money and valuables thinking that their daughter's future will be a pleasant and secured one. In our Indian society there is a false conception that man is a hero, a magnificent object to be admired and praised. Whereas women are dependent on men.

According to the Illustrated Oxford Dictionary dowry is defined as "property or money brought by a bride to her husband on their marriage." This research focuses on the feminist psychological analysis on the phenomenon of dowry, its impact on the life of a bride in Shobhan Bantwal's *The Dowry Bride*, domestic violence against women and need to overcome this issue to make our society a better place for women to live in.

When we examine the psychological causes we would add yet another dimension to understanding and combating the phenomenon of dowry. This article puts forth several psychological based explanations as follows.

In Indian context, a mother-in-law is financially independent in the family but is also put in an emotionally insecure position. Jethmalini and Prasad (1995) opine that in India women place their honour on their partner and male heir in addition they also contribute a copious amount of time and assistance on their life partner and children by sacrificing themselves. In course of time, this sacrifice leads to a mother gaining power within the family. For example, in return her son may consult her on all important issues. After her son's marriage, a mother may no longer feel like she is all important in her son's life. Seeing her source of power slip away, she tightens her grip on power by controlling the bride and new couple's relationship. This issue of possible dissatisfaction with the amount of dowry adds ammunition to a volatile situation.

Moreover, young girls and women are conditioned all their lives to serve their in-laws, without regard of their own needs. Mothers-in-law are in a position to take advantage of this belief system. When a woman becomes a mother-in-law, she is finally in a position

of power after having been controlled throughout her life (Jethmalini and Prasad, 1995, p.146). The abused become the abuser. If there is resistance from the daughter-in-law may turn to verbal abuse that could escalate into physical violence. Another reason for the abuse of the new bride stems from the collective fears of the family. According to Kakar (1988), the family fears that the growing attachment between the new couple will lead the man to neglect his responsibility to the family as a dutiful son, brother, breadwinner and so on.

Therefore, any public expression of affection is actively discouraged through oblique hints or outright shaming. The husband and wife are often allowed to be together only for brief periods at night. As a consequence the intimacy between the husband and wife develops gradually and situates the woman in peril for ill treatment as she has no associates inside the structure.

Megha, the protagonist of the novel *The Dowry Bride* overhears shocking conversations of her husband and mother-in-law, who plots to murder her as she has not produced a child and further her parents also, fails to keep up their promise regarding her daughter's bridal price. Megha comes to be panic-stricken when she becomes conscious that she is the intended victim of the planned murder. Frantically she runs through the deserted streets of Palgaum, her way is lighted merely by the glows that are threaded up for the festivity of Diwali, her one and only goal is to escape from the predators. But fleeing from her predators seems impossible unless she finds help from someone.

Soliciting her bosom buddy will bring dishonor to the family of a virtuous woman and seeking help from to her own firm conventional people is incomprehensible. Instead with an empty hand except the sari she wears, Megha decides to approach Kunal, the man who has shown her concern and reverence. Kunal helps her hiding her in his apartment and becomes her protector. On the other hand the illicit temptation that develops between them can result only in agony and threat.

Megha is trapped between convention and the realities which are concealed in her heart, therefore, the dowry bride will find out the actual price of the only things worth having in life. Megha in the novel *The Dowry Bride* is the victim of patriarchal oppression. She is ostracized on the basis of gender, dual social norms and dowry system. Megha's

birth itself is considered as a burden by her own parents, as she is born as a third daughter to her parents who already have two daughters. Her parents worry as they are already in debt by paying dowries to their two daughters. Megha's arrival into the world has brought not bliss but only disappointment to her parent that is evident through the following lines, "along she came- another infant girl- with all the wants, needs, and tribulations of a female. And all the burdens of a Brahmin woman" (11).

"Dowry was a curse; it had brought her nothing but grief" (223). Thus dowry is practiced by a majority of Indian families. Not all instances of dowry lead to abuse and violence, but it is important to be vigilant. Therefore, the practice of Dowry should not be accepted simply because it is a norm. To combat the negative impact of dowry, it is essential to harness psychological interventions that are informed by gender and culture, along with more commonly attempted legal, social service, and educational approaches. These interventions ought to be widely available in the community.

WORKS CITED

Bantwal, Shobhan. *The Dowry Bride*, New Delhi: Fingerprint Publication, 2015, Print.

<https://www.readmuse.blogspot.com>