

## Every new dowry harassment case is an indictment of our society

Statistics from the capital alone reveal that there are as many as [10 dowry cases registered every single day](#). A worse statistic is that in spite of the number of cases registered, the number of convictions in the past four years in dowry related cases is zero.

Only this week, a bright, intelligent, MBA graduate with ambitions to teach in a university [killed herself in her in-laws home](#) because she was unable to handle the harassment and constant demands for money from them. In a week where the triple talaq judgment is being hailed as a victory for gender justice, it is sobering to acknowledge that “dowry death” is a normal way for a woman to die in this country.

That dowry was outlawed in 1961 seems to have had no effect on large parts of society, in which parents of the bride are still expected to lavish “gifts” on the groom and his family. Last month, the [Supreme Court ruled](#) that a family welfare committee in every district will scrutinise dowry harassment cases before the local police can arrest the accused, because of the misuse of Section 498A of the Indian penal code, under which a man and his family, if named in a dowry harassment case, could be immediately arrested.

It is dangerous to begin with the assumption that the accuser might be misusing the law to her own advantage. While misuse is a genuine possibility, it cannot be denied that the problem is a rampant one, and one that must be addressed both from within society, and through laws.

The deeply patriarchal mindset in which a woman is “given” to a man as a wife must change, because it implicitly injects a power imbalance between the husband and wife. Which, in turn, enables the belief that the groom’s family does the bride’s a favour by taking her into the family.

The triple talaq verdict may be a positive step in the direction of recognising the rights of women, but the fight for gender justice and equality is far from over. It is only when dowry and harassment stop being “yet another” stories, that real progress will be known to have happened.

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