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No. 08, Arul Nagar, Seera Thoppu,

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Phone : +91 94896 71437 - [info@iledu.in](mailto:info@iledu.in) / [Chairman@iledu.in](mailto:Chairman@iledu.in)



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## “IF DOWRY IS ILLEGAL, WHY IS ALIMONY STILL ACCEPTABLE? A CRITICAL LEGAL INQUIRY”

**AUTHOR** – KOMAL DIMANA, 2<sup>ND</sup> YEAR LAW STUDENT AT GOKUL GLOBAL UNIVERSITY, SIDDHPUR, DEPARTMENT OF LAW

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### Abstract

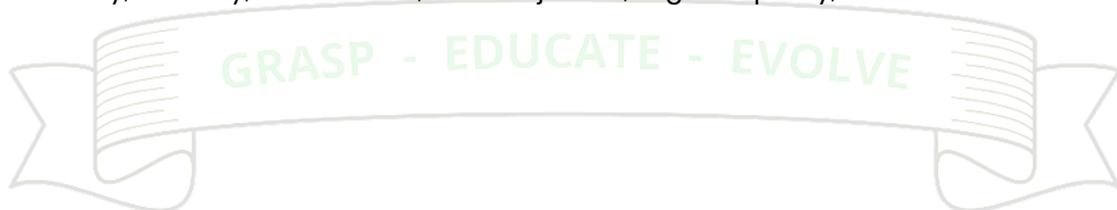
This research paper analytically examines the evident paradox between the illicitness of dowry and licit acceptance of alimony in the society and Indian legal system. Although both involve the transfer of money or property in the context of marriage, dowry is criminalized under the Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961<sup>386</sup> due to its abusive and patriarchal nature. In contrast, alimony is legally approved as financial support provided to a wife after divorce or separation which is intended to ensure economic justice and to prevent financial hardship<sup>387</sup>.

The study here explores the historical, legal and social foundations of both concepts, highlighting key differences in intent, timing and legal rationale. It delves into gender dynamics, societal expectations, and economic dependency questioning whether alimony in practice, sometimes perpetuates the same inequalities that dowry laws aim to eliminate<sup>388</sup>.

Through a comparative analysis of legal frameworks, case law, and socio-cultural narratives, the paper seeks to clarify the distinction between dowry as a social evil and alimony as a protective legal remedy while also addressing public misconceptions and potential misuse<sup>389</sup> of alimony provisions. The research concludes by recommending legal and policy reforms to ensure that both dowry and alimony are understood and applied in ways that promote gender equality, justice and dignity for all parties involved.

India criminalized dowry with the passage of Dowry Prohibition Act 1961<sup>386</sup>. This act made the giving or taking of dowry illegal, and it also addresses issues related to dowry demands, harassment and deaths. And in courtrooms, across India, husbands are still ordered by court to pay lakhs and crores in alimony to their ex-wives after divorce<sup>390</sup>.

**Key Words:** Dowry, Alimony, Marital laws, Gender justice, Legal disparity, Matrimonial remedies



<sup>386</sup> Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961. (1961). *Government of India*. Retrieved from <https://indiankanoon.org/doc/529323/>

<sup>387</sup> Hindu Marriage Act, 1955. (1955). *Sections 24 & 25 – Maintenance Provisions*. Retrieved from <https://indiankanoon.org/doc/60394/>

<sup>388</sup> UNDP. (n.d.). *Gender Equality Index Reports*. <https://hdr.undp.org/>

<sup>389</sup> Law Commission of India. (2018). *277th Report on Alimony and Maintenance*. <https://lawcommissionofindia.nic.in>

<sup>390</sup> Supreme Court of India. (2025, June 12). *SCC Online*. <https://www.sconline.com/blog/post/2025/06/12/divorced-not-remarried-womans-permanent-alimony-chanced-supreme-court-legal-news-scc-times/>



## Introduction

First let's understand Dowry:

In ancient India, dowry was a voluntary gift from the bride's family to help couple start a new life. It was a symbol of affection and support, not coercion. As time elapsed, especially during the medieval period and colonial rule, dowry evolved into a social obligation and later a demand, leading to economic strain on the bride's family. In some communities, dowry became a status symbol and then started linking to the market value of the groom, their status, employment, earnings etc.

As per Dowry Prohibition Act 1961, "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<sup>386</sup>; or
- (B) By the parent of either party to a marriage or by any other person, to either party to the marriage or to any other person,

On or before or at any time after the marriage, in relation to the marriage of the said parties but does not include dower or Moher in the case of persons to whom the Muslim Personal Law (Shariat) applies.

It involves transferring money or valuables from the bride's family to the groom's family. It is governed by the Dowry Prohibition Act 1961 and is a criminal offence. The law criminalizes both giving and receiving dowry. The minimum punishment for giving and receiving dowry is 5 years imprisonment and fine could not be less than Rs. 15,000 or the value of dowry whichever is higher.

Now let us understand Alimony:

Alimony, on the other hand, also called maintenance, is a legal financial support granted after divorce, under section 144 of the BNSS<sup>391</sup> (section 125 of the CrPC)<sup>392</sup> and personal

laws. As per Hindu Marriage Act, 1955, under section 24 it is the interim maintenance during the pendency of proceedings and section 25<sup>387</sup> explains permanent alimony upon divorce or annulment. The Hindu Adoption and Maintenance Act, 1956 provides maintenance to wife, children and aged parents<sup>393</sup>. The Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Divorce) Act, 1986 governs maintenance rights of Muslim Women<sup>394</sup> and the Special Marriage Act, 1954 is about maintenance provision for interfaith or civil marriages<sup>395</sup>.

The main goal of alimony is to ensure that a wife who is financially dependent is not left destitute after separation or divorce. It considers the non-monetary contributions like household chores and taking care of the family which is done by the wife during marriage. Thus, alimony is based on the principles of equity and social justice<sup>387</sup>.

Alimony can be temporary, interim or permanent depending on the income disparity, duration of marriage, and future earning capacity of the parties. Interim Maintenance is granted during the pendency of court proceedings and is provided to cover basic needs like food, shelter and court's legal costs under section 24 of the Hindu Marriage Act and section 144 of the BNSS. Permanent Alimony is provided as a final and last settlement after divorce or annulment or marriage. This can be paid as a lump sum, monthly or periodic payments under section 25 of the Hindu Marriage Act<sup>387</sup>.

### Key differences between Dowry and Alimony

Aspect	Dowry	Alimony
Nature	Pre-marital demand	Post-marital support
Legal Status	Illegal (Dowry Prohibition)	Legal under BNSS and personal

<sup>393</sup> Hindu Adoptions and Maintenance Act, 1956. <https://indiankanoon.org/doc/1238431/>

<sup>394</sup> Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Divorce) Act, 1986. <https://indiankanoon.org/doc/1192571/>

<sup>395</sup> Special Marriage Act, 1954. <https://indiankanoon.org/doc/253107/>

<sup>391</sup> Bhartiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS), 2023. Section 144.

<sup>392</sup> Criminal Procedure Code, 1973. Section 125. <https://indiankanoon.org/doc/1524633/>



	Act)386	laws391
Purpose	Often abusive and forced	Protective, compensatory, reconstructive
Consent	Mostly absent	Court-mandated or mutually agreed

So, dowry is about transaction before marriage, and alimony is about rehabilitation after marriage ends.

Both involve money been given to the woman one before marriage one after. The difference is that Dowry is demand -driven and coercive whereas alimony is need based and court decided<sup>387</sup>.

**Background**

Aspect	Details
Claiming maintenance	(A) Wife unable to maintain herself (B) Child who is physically or mentally disabled (C) Parents unable to maintain themselves (D) Legitimate or illegitimate child
Liability to pay	Any person having sufficient means who neglect or refuses to maintain
Wife definition	Includes divorced woman who has not remarried
Minor definition	Person below 18 years of age as per Indian Majority Act, 1875 <sup>396</sup>

Court Authority	Magistrate of First Class
Order Includes	Monthly/periodic allowance + Interim maintenance during proceedings+ Legal expenses
Timeframe for disposal	Application for interim maintenance to be disposed within 60 days from notice <sup>391</sup>
Effective Date	From date of application or court order as decided
Failure to Pay	May lead to warrant and imprisonment up to one month or until payment is made <sup>391</sup>
No warrant Condition	No warrant after 1 year from due date of unpaid amount <sup>391</sup>
Refusal to Live with Husband	Valid grounds: second marriage, adultery, domestic cruelty <sup>391</sup>
Disqualifications for Wife	Living in adultery Unjustified refusal to live Mutual separation <sup>391</sup>
Cancellation of Order	If wife is in adultery or refuses without cause, court may cancel order
Rise of Dowry & Social Reforms	19th-20 <sup>th</sup> century social reformers tried to abolish dowry Early state laws: Bihar Dowry Restraint Act, 1050 and Andhra Pradesh Dowry Prohibition Act, 1958 failed In 1959 the Dowry Prohibition Bill was introduced and referred to a Joint Committee of

<sup>396</sup> <https://www.indiacode.nic.in/bitstream/123456789/15299/1/majorityact.pdf>



	Parliament		demands
Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961	Enforced on May 1961 Defined dowry as any property or valuable security given directly or indirectly in connection with marriage 1984 Amendment- Allowed presents during weddings if a gift list with details is maintained		Burden of proof shifts to the accused If woman dies within seven years of her marriage due to burns or bodily injury, or under unnatural circumstances, and it is proven that she was subjected to cruelty or harassment due to dowry demands, the accused that is the husband and his relatives must prove their innocence.
Penalties under Dowry Act (Sections 3,4, 4A)	Section 3: Giving/Taking dowry- Minimum 5 years imprisonment + Rs. 15000 fine or dowry value, whichever is higher Section 4: Demanding dowry- 6 months – 2 years imprisonment + Rs. 10000 fine Section 4A: Advertising dowry demand- 6 months- 5 years imprisonment + Rs. 15000 fine. <sup>386</sup>	Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC), 1973	Section 174 & 176- Procedure for investigating unnatural deaths, including dowry deaths Section 41- Arrest of individuals in dowry-related offenses without warrant Section 125- Provides legal framework for ordering maintenance for wives, children, and parents who are unable to maintain themselves. <sup>392</sup>
Bhartiya Nyaya Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS), 2024	Section 144 - maintenance of wives, children, and parents. This section outlines the process of a court to order someone to provide monthly maintenance if they neglect or refuse to support their dependents, including wives, children, and parents.	Indian Penal Code, 1862	Section 304B- Investigating dowry deaths Section 498A- Cruelty by a husband or his relatives towards a woman, often linked to dowry demands <sup>397</sup>
Bhartiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), 2024	Section 80- Dowry death Section 85 & 86- Cruelty by husband or his relatives towards a woman which can be related to dowry		

<sup>397</sup> <https://www.indiacode.nic.in/repealedfileopen?rfilename=A1860-45.pdf>



Case Laws on dowry death	Baljinder Singh vs. State of Punjab (June 2025) <sup>398</sup>  Shabeen Ahmad vs. State of Uttar Pradesh (March 2025) <sup>399</sup>
Case Laws on alimony	Sukhdev Singh vs. Sukhbir Kaur (February 2025) <sup>408</sup>

The question that arises is that if a woman is educated, working and self-sufficient why should her ex-husband continue to support her financially? Here is where we might talk about Gender Equality. The question then is if we want equality, shouldn't the law apply equally? Shouldn't alimony be gender-neutral and based on need, not just gender?

What are the answers to the above questions?

1. Make alimony laws gender neutral.
2. Link alimony to actual need, not assumptions.
3. Strictly prevent misuse, just as we prevent dowry demands.

As the definition and provisions are different for both dowry and alimony, they were created in different contexts too. One was about buying a bride; the other was about not abandoning one.

In this evolving world, where women lead family, boardrooms, politics and courts, the law too must evolve. Justice is not just about who pays the alimony- it's about why they must pay it. So yes, dowry must remain illegal, but alimony must be reformed. Fair not forced and balanced, not biased.

The practice of dowry is illegal under the Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961, yet alimony financial support post-divorce. It is legally sanctioned under various personal laws and Section 144 of the Bhartiya Nagarika Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS)<sup>391</sup>. The ostensible contradiction between the rejection of dowry and acceptance

of alimony raises questions of gender justice and equality in the Indian legal and social framework.

### Gender Justice and Legal Philosophy

Dowry is deeply engrained in patriarchal norms that consider rules as economic burdens and property to be transferred during marriage<sup>400</sup>. The amount of wealth women brings in is directly proportional to the woman's value in the eyes of the society. The more money she brings in, the more is her value abusing her identity in the marriage contract. This practice propagates male dominance, where the groom's family is considered superior and entitled to receive dowry in India since ages. This often leads to violence, domestic abuse, mental disruption, control and suppression, strengthening the belief that women are inferior and dependent.

Alimony is premeditated to safeguard fairness and justice after the collapse of a marriage. It acknowledges that many women or dependent spouses may have foregone careers or their education and commit themselves towards household duties or child and family care. The goal of alimony is to compensate for unpaid domestic labor that the wife or spouse provides to the family, financial support and realize economic self-worth after divorce<sup>387</sup>. This marks a step towards gender justice by recognizing inequality in the negotiating power and discrepancies in income generation that exists within marriages.

While alimony is a protective measure, concerns exist about its misuse for financial gain or harassment of the other partner especially in cases where the claiming spouse is financially stable, and the marriage is very short lived<sup>401</sup>. Whereas some argue that false claims of alimony weaken genuine cases and can lead to legal and emotional harassment of men. Courts progressively analyse the financial

<sup>398</sup> <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/india/participating-in-operation-sindoor-doesnt-give-you-immunity-sc-in-dowry-death-case/articleshow/122047335.cms?from=mdr>

<sup>399</sup> <https://indiankanoon.org/doc/9429399/>

<sup>400</sup> S. Gopal Reddy v. State of A.P., AIR 1996 SC 2184. <https://indiankanoon.org/doc/1213429/>

<sup>401</sup> Kalyan Dey Chowdhury v. Rita Dey Chowdhury Nee Nandy, (2017) 14 SCC 200. <https://indiankanoon.org/doc/87785076/>



status, education and employment of the party that is claiming before approving them for alimony aiming to prevent misuse<sup>402</sup>.

Since traditional times roles are assigned in a family by our society. Economic responsibility has been assigned to men and domestic responsibility to women. This division creates economic dependency especially among housewives making alimony mandatory after divorce. It has also been observed that due to these traditional methods of assigning roles women tend to choose depending on men financially treating men as the sole provider of them and their family. Laws on dowry and alimony reflect society's attempt to address this power imbalance first by criminalizing dowry and the other by ensuring alimony after divorce. However, as gender roles evolve, there's a growing call for gender neutral laws that recognize the economic vulnerability of any spouse regardless of gender<sup>403</sup>.

### Societal Perception and Misconceptions

The misconception lies in the understanding of alimony with dowry as both, in people's head, are money transfer in marriage from one party to other. This confusion is understandable, as both relate to money or property, but the basis for each, their timing and legal status are completely dissimilar. Dowry is before marriage, even if enforced under duress that is illegal is premarital while alimony is post marital support and very much legal to protect against unfairness. Such confusion may create stigma against valid alimony requests in women.

Public sentiment is often shaped by the media's coverage of select instances of spurious dowry or alimony allegations<sup>389</sup>. The sensationalized reporting of either divorce or dowry cases often shrouds the persistent economic oppression and abuse of women, providing a platform for the narrative of male victimization while stunting the needed social, judicial and political

discourse that would otherwise aid women in their quest for justice. The actual figures of such abuses may be low, but the societal perception is created driven by such sensationalized narratives.

The general population does not possess adequate awareness concerning the laws on dowry and alimony. Myths and media driven narratives shape public perception way more than actual protective legal frameworks and their safeguards. It is important to launch the following programs:

- Foster awareness of entitlement and compliance frameworks
- Enforce judicious engagement with legal resources
- Assist individuals in identifying protective laws such as alimony versus dowry which are prohibited (in most cases)

Greater legal awareness would enhance compliance, reduce misuse, and expand access to justice.

### Comparative Jurisprudence

In USA, the practice of dowry is not legally acknowledged. While some communities consider it as a cultural practice, it bears no legal significance. On the other hand, alimony is a well-defined practice and is awarded based on the length of marriage, income, lifestyle, age, work capacity, for all states except California, at judicial discretion<sup>404</sup>.

Canada also does not legally recognize dowry. If communities exchange dowry, it is regarded as a personal issue unless it leads to violence or forceful actions. Spousal support is addressed by the Canada (Federal) Divorce Act which attempts to achieve equity and fairness by providing compensation for economic disadvantages resulting from the marital partnership<sup>405</sup>. The Act employs the Spousal Support Advisory Guidelines (SSAG) to determine support levels. Moreover, alimony

<sup>402</sup> Mamta Jaiswal v. Rajesh Jaiswal, AIR 2000 MP 150. <https://indiankanoon.org/doc/1728023/>

<sup>403</sup> Swaraj Garg v. Kaveri, 2013 SCC OnLine Del 1276. <https://indiankanoon.org/doc/186075044/>

<sup>404</sup> IRS. (n.d.). Topic No. 452 Alimony. <https://www.irs.gov/taxtopics/tc452>

<sup>405</sup> Government of Canada. (n.d.). Divorce Act & Spousal Support Advisory Guidelines. <https://www.justice.gc.ca/eng/fl-df/fact3-fiches3.html>



does not favour one gender and can be claimed by either party<sup>405</sup>.

According to Muslim legal systems, a groom is bestowed with the obligation of giving a bridal gift or mahr, to the bride at the time of wedding. A wife's financial security is guaranteed through mahr, though distinctly different from a dowry. Alimony which is known as Nafaqah or Iddat Support is also an obligation where the husband has to provide support during the marriage period and for a designated time after divorce. In several Muslim countries, there is no obligation of maintenance after the iddat period unless it is stated in the marriage contract<sup>406</sup>. Some modern interpretations and countries do provide this right however (like India after the Shah Bano Case<sup>407</sup>).

### Case Studies & Judicial Trends

1. In the case *S. Gopal Reddy vs. State of A.P* (1996) the Supreme Court highlighted the provisions of Section 304 IPC concerning suspicion of a woman's death in relation to dowry. During the proceedings, the Supreme Court stated that if a married woman dies in suspicious circumstances within seven years of the marriage and there were past signs of dowry conflict, then there is a presumption of dowry death<sup>400</sup>.
2. *Shah Bano Begum and Ors. vs. Mohd. Ahmad Khan* (1985) is a landmark case in which the Supreme Court granted a post-divorce maintenance to a Muslim woman under Section 125 of CrPC. This case was one of the reasons for the Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Divorce) Act, 1986<sup>394</sup>. It showed that maintenance is a matter of law based on fairness, not religion<sup>393</sup>. The judgement delivered in 2017 by the Supreme Court on Section 498A IPC on allegations of dowry harassment stated that there are cases of misuse. With this

ruling, the court established policies aimed at preventing the issuance of exaggerated or falsified claims, one of them being the creation of family welfare committees<sup>407</sup>.

3. In *Sukhdev Singh vs. Sukhbir Kaur* (2025), the Supreme Court of India ruled that a woman is entitled to maintenance from her husband even if the marriage is void under section 24 and 25 of the Hindu Marriage Act, 1955<sup>387</sup>. The decision recognized the financial vulnerability of women regardless of the marriage's legal status<sup>408</sup>.
4. In a recent 2025 case, the Apex Court ordered Rs. 50,000 monthly alimony and property transfer. The alimony was increased from Rs. 20,000/month to Rs. 50,000/month with a 5% increase every 2 years. This important decision reinforced that alimony should allow the dependent spouse to live with dignity and in the same manner when they were once married<sup>409</sup>.

Where we talk about alimony claims to be misused,

1. In *Kalyan Dey Chowdhury vs. Rita Dey Chowdhury Nee Nandy* (2017), the Supreme Court of India reduced the alimony from Rs. 23,000/month to Rs. 10,000/month stating that the wife had sufficient income from employment. This judgement set a practical benchmark and emphasized that alimony should be based on actual need and is not an entitlement<sup>401</sup>.
2. In another case, *Mamta Jaiswal vs. Rajesh Jaiswal* (2000), Madhya Pradesh High Court gave an important decision by denying maintenance. It was denied to an educated, professionally qualified woman who was capable of earning.

<sup>408</sup> *Sukhdev Singh vs. Sukhbir Kaur* (2025). <https://indiankanoon.org/doc/138104701/>

<sup>409</sup> SCC Online. (2025, June 12). *Divorced not remarried woman's permanent alimony enhanced: Supreme Court*. SCC Times. Retrieved from <https://www.scconline.com/blog/post/2025/06/12/divorced-not-remarried-womans-permanent-alimony-enhanced-supreme-court-legal-news-scc-times/>

<sup>406</sup> Muslim Family Law Principles. (n.d.). Mahr and Nafaqah.

<sup>407</sup> *Mohd. Ahmed Khan v. Shah Bano Begum*, AIR 1985 SC 945. <https://indiankanoon.org/doc/823221/>



The High Court quoted, "If the woman is educated and qualified, she cannot sit idle and claim maintenance for her laziness". It set up a strong precedent that maintenance is not a right without responsibility<sup>402</sup>.

Judiciary's efforts in balancing both spouse's rights surrounding dowry and alimony dictates that both have their share of issues that governs either dowry or alimony. In alimony considerations, many factors come into play including age and health of each spouse, duration of marriage, financial standing of both spouses, standard of living during the marriage and also the reasonableness in support. Moreover, the presence of dependent children, expenses incurred by the parties, their behaviour, and the spouse's income potential who is requesting maintenance support are important as well. Current patterns demonstrate a shift towards neutral policy as weaker men can also claim maintenance support. In case law, Swaraj Garg vs. Kaveri (2013)<sup>403</sup>, The Delhi High Court decided that Section 24 is gender neutral, and maintenance can be claimed by either spouse if prerequisites are fulfilled. The ruling granted interim maintenance to the husband acknowledging that during the litigation he could not economically sustain himself. The court reiterated that for alimony, the critical determinant is economic dependence, not the political gender division.

### Challenges and Criticisms

Even though alimony is designed to support financially dependent spouses, there are cases where it has been misused to exploit the system for money<sup>401</sup>. Filing alimony claims where the party has no intention to pay, is burdening the other partner, has become a common practice now-a-days. As a result, men's rights groups have raised concerns about the lack of protection against fraudulent claims<sup>401</sup>. However, even though this is the case most of the time, courts do try to look into the earning prospects, needs and conduct of both parties paying alimony.

Like Section 498A of IPC, dowry laws face enforcement issues due to slow investigations, lack of evidence, and social pressure on victims to withdraw complaints<sup>410</sup>. Alimony payments getting ordered are just as likely to be delayed or unpaid. Calibrated subterfuge makes unwarranted payment evasions easy to escape accruing repayments. Trying to enforce unpaid payment collection emerges as a costly endless rat race.

Marital discord has now a days become menace in the society due to various factors. The parties who are fighting due to these marital discord are having several remedies in law. The small issue between the two parties spoils their entire lives and marriages which are sacrosanct in India by putting it at stake. Marriages are not merely a social contract, but a spiritual union that binds two souls together. However, now a days these sacred marriages receive set back in the above circumstances. The distress, disharmony and lack of adjustment amongst the persons lead to conflict. In ARP vs. State of Maharashtra<sup>411</sup>, Bombay High Court quashed an FIR registered against the husband, his 2 sisters and his maternal aunt under section 498A (cruelty) and section 377 (unnatural sex) IPC, and sections 3 and 4 of Dowry Prohibition Act. The counsel for the applicants cited Gian Singh vs. State of Punjab<sup>412</sup>, in which the Supreme Court ruled that High Courts have the authority to quash non-compoundable offences like sections 498A & 377 in matrimonial cases if the disputes are essentially private and have been resolved.

Many women, especially in more conservative or outlying areas, won't claim maintenance due to social stigma, family and community pressure to avoid the court system, or because they have been conditioned to believe that maintenance is undignified. Men also tend not to claim alimony if they are legally eligible to it because of the social stigma attached with

<sup>410</sup> Rajesh Sharma v. State of U.P., (2017) 8 SCC 746. <https://indiankanoon.org/doc/1108133>

<sup>411</sup> file:///Users/user/Downloads/1752562885\_3403-bombay-hc-re-state-of-maharashtra.pdf

<sup>412</sup> <https://indiankanoon.org/doc/69949024/>



men being financially dependent. This impunity creates a disharmony and emphasizes the urgency of better legal indoctrination and a change in public mind-set.

### Recommendations

Since alimony and dowry laws are ambiguous, they are sometimes misused or exploited. Reforms should make a clear distinction between gifts and dowries, include uniform formulae for computing it under different personal laws, steps to thwart false claims and to provide safety valves for deserving claimants. A hybrid civil code or harmonised personal laws would introduce more standardisation and justice.

Having laws in place is ineffective if they are not enforced. There is a need for specialized enforcement consisting of fast-track courts for maintenance and dowry disputes, public education campaigns focused on legal rights, regular training for law enforcement and the judiciary, and sustained public education on legal rights and remedies. Legal literacy fosters the ability to challenge injustice and avoid manipulation.

Assumptions based on gender should not shape economic realities. Framing Maintenance obligations brings gender biases to the forefront. These rules should permit both spouses, irrespective of gender, to claim maintenance based on need and dependence. Courts should uphold fairness and take a balanced approach irrespective of the gender of the litigants<sup>391</sup>.

Investing in education, skills training, and economic opportunities, particularly for women, provides the most effective long-term change. Greater financial independence reduces reliance on alimony and makes individuals less vulnerable during the breakdown of a marriage<sup>389</sup>.

### Conclusion

The differences between dowry and alimony are both legal and moral, and they include their intent, timing, and social purpose. Dowry is a

demand made during marriage, often necessitated legally, enforcing social control and the objectification of women, and is appropriately outlawed in Indian legislation. On the other hand, alimony is post-marital legal compensation, meant to provide social economic justice to a dependent spouse post-divorce or separation. It accepts unpaid divorce contributions in the marriage and tries to avert financial dependency, rather than impoverished exploitation by the other spouse.

As with many other provisions, perception and enforcement in this case comes with its challenges. Social defiance and public perception around alimony confused with dowry demands tends to blur understanding. To combat public misunderstanding, proper education of the law, adjustment and neutral application of maintenance laws, and legal reforms is certainly required<sup>389</sup>.

A balanced approach is protecting individuals from economic exploitation during marriage through dowry, and economic vulnerability post marriage via alimony. This is essential in achieving modern matrimonial law centered on justice, equality and dignity.

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