INTERVENTIONS ON DOWRY IN INDIA- A REVIEW FROM A GENDER-SENSITIVE RIGHTS PERSPECTIVE

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A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS (HUMAN RIGHTS)

FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES

MAHIDOL UNIVERSITY

2005

ISBN 974-04-6639-7

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ABSTRACT

Dowry has been prevalent in India for centuries as a practice of Hindu families. However, due to its spread, the dowry system has affected other religions like Islam and Christianity. In some situations, the consequences of the non-payment of dowry have been tragic for young married women. The ill-treatment and harassment of women for inadequate dowry seriously violates their basic human rights. Due to the lack of a dowry, women are killed by their marital family. Due to the inferior position of women, their deprived condition remains untouched by the police. Human rights of women are given least preference in a male-dominated society like India. India has ratified the International Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), but despite some efforts the condition of women remains poor and they are continuing to die of dowry related violence.

The study analyzes the role played by the government and NGOs in addressing the dowry issue in India from a gender sensitive rights perspective. Documentary research, semi-structured in-depth interviews, and case studies were the main methods used in this research. A total 14 people were interviewed from the government sector, NGO sector and family members of women affected by dowry related violence.

The thesis argues that consumerism and illegal money are some of the causes behind the continuance of dowry. Research outcomes revealed that the dowry system is still a widespread practice in Hindu marriages and women are being harassed and killed due to dowry problems. Government initiatives have been minor and ineffective. Police and the judicial system are gender-insensitive and inefficient in their work. NGOs are positively working towards the equal rights of women in the society, and though their interventions have been effective there are still more actions that need to be taken.

The study concludes by suggesting that the government, having ratified CEDAW needs to play its part as an obligation. NGOs have to initiate some valuable steps from their part. Finally, the thesis is concluded by giving vital recommendations.

KEY WORDS: DOWRY / WOMEN'S RIGHTS / GENDER / INDIAN NGOs / INDIAN JUDICIAL SYSTEM

119 P. ISBN 974-04-6639-7