
CRIMINAL LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK GOVERNING DOWRY DEATH OFFENCE IN INDIA

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ABSTRACT

Dowry related violence remains a significant problem in India's efforts to protect women and effectively administer criminal justice. The Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961 made women's dowry gift, receipt and demand a criminal offence, but so many cases of dowry-related harassment and violence in marriage have been seen throughout the country. This scenario highlighted the importance of more effective and robust laws to tackle dowry offences. The enactment of Section 304-B of the Indian Penal Code, 1860 and the attendant evidentiary presumption in Section 113-B of the Indian Evidence Act, 1872, was a significant improvement in the legal framework in relation to dowry deaths. These provisions were designed to address the challenges encountered by the families of the deceased women in establishing the "domestic relations" of the deceased women in their case of unnatural deaths. India's criminal justice system has been completely rearranged with the passing of Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023 (BNS), Bharatiya Sakshya Adhiniyam, 2023 (BSA), and Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, 2023 (BNSS). The present paper deals with the law in India pertaining to dowry death using a doctrinal approach. It examines the constitutional scope of protection of women from matrimonial violence and examines the legal validity and functioning of offences of matrimonial violence such as dowry death and abetment of suicide. The paper also looks at the presumptions built on the BSA and investigative and procedural safeguards that exist under the BNSS. The Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961 is regarded as an effective preventive measure to supplement the criminal law system. The study also examines important judicial rulings that have helped define the concept of dowry death, its key ingredients, the need to establish a link between dowry-related harassment and death and the interpretation of the presumptions in the legislation. The overall aim of the study is to evaluate the effectiveness of the current legal situation in being able to respond to dowry-related violence and the impact the transition to the new criminal laws has had on women's protection in matrimonial contexts.

Keywords: Dowry Death, BNS, Dowry Prohibition Act, Domestic Violence, Women's Rights, Criminal Law.

1. INTRODUCTION

In history, dowry has been correlated to Indian society in various forms related to marriage. The concept of dowry is not the same as giving money to a daughter at the time of her marriage, and such voluntary gifts are not considered dowry. The modern dowry system, however, is often the demand for a sum of money, property or valuable security in relation to marriage. These demands can persist after marriage, and can lead to marriage being characterized as a source of physical, mental and economic harassment of married women.¹

Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961 is the main act that was passed on the subject of Dowry prohibitions. Section 2 defines dowry, Section 3 punishes giving of dowry and Section 4 punishes demanding of dowry. Dowry Prohibition Officers are also provided for in the Act.² The prohibition of the transaction has failed to prevent dowry-related harassment and deaths, however, as the incidents show, it was not possible to prevent violence within matrimonial relationship merely by banning the transaction. Section 2, 3, 4, 8-A and 8-B remain key components of the statute.

The legislature later enacted a particular crime of dowry death, under “Section 304-B of the Indian Penal Code, 1860”. Section 113-B of the Evidence Act, 1872 established the special presumption for the case of dowry death. These provisions recognized that this type of offense could often happen inside the marital home, and direct proof might be hard to acquire. The law then tried to substitute the ordinary rules of criminal liability with a presumed criminal liability when the necessary circumstances of creation were established.

The current framework is regulated mostly by the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023, Bharatiya Sakshya Adhiniyam, 2023 and Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, 2023, which entered into force on 1 July 2024. The overall structure of Section 80 BNS remains largely the same as the previous enacting legislation pertaining to dowry death. It includes cases involving the death of a woman due to burns or bodily harm or otherwise than as a result of normal circumstances within seven years of her marriage to a man, who may or may not have been her husband, by whom she was cruelly or otherwise mistreated, harassed or caused bodily harm for or in connection with a demand for dowry. Sentence is to serve a minimum of 7 years imprisonment

¹ Paras Diwan, Dowry and protection to married women ,(Deep and Deep publications , 3rd edn. , 1995)

² The Dowry Prohibition Act , 1961, section 2-4, 8-A, 8-B.

and can be imprisoned for life.

Dowry death constitutes a grave criminal offence due to the fact that many dowry deaths may result from long-standing continuous matrimonial cruelty and harassment over a course of years together. These cases are often difficult to prove also on the reason that victim woman who is died can't put forth her version regarding the cause and circumstances of her death as she herself is dead to tell her story or narrate her grievances as to how she met to her fate. Much of the cruelty or the harassment take place in the matrimonial house itself so it could hardly bring on record through Investigators & Court in many of the circumstances. The legal text aims thus to tie together substantive criminalisation, evidentiary presumptions and procedural protections.

2. HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE OF DOWRY DEATH LAWS

Dowry death is not only a problem of the modern criminal law; it is an outcome of the evolution of dowry from customary property or gift to the compulsory demand associated with marriage. In contemporary India, cash, property, vehicle and other valuables have been frequently demanded along with the harassment, abuse, physical violence and even the death of the married woman. The increased number of "kitchen-fire" deaths and other types of naturalised deaths of young brides in the 1970s and 1980s revealed the inadequacy of the normal criminal law, and a number of special offences against dowry were introduced.³

The Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961 is the first significant legislation. The Act forbade the giving, accepting and requesting of dowry and made the definition of dowry wide, namely "property or valuable security" given or agreed to be given "directly or indirectly" in connection with a marriage. The original law however was deemed to be insufficient because the penalties were low, the law did not establish a specific crime for the death of a woman due to dowry related cruelties and enforcement efforts were ineffective. Amendments were made to the Act, strengthening it, in 1984 and 1986. These amendments enhanced punishment, extended scope of prohibition and tried to enhance the prosecution of dowry offences. However, it was clear that unnatural deaths continued to occur in married residences, and for this reason, provisions

³ Kaustav Choudhury, "Origin of Dowry System and Section 304-B of Indian Penal Code, 1860," 2(3) International Journal of Legal Science and Innovation (2020).

were made specific to the issue of cruelty and death.⁴

In view of the rising incidence of the cruelty against married women, Parliament passed Criminal Law (Second Amendment) Act, 1983. This amendment added Section 498A into IPC 1860. Cruelty of husband or relations of the husband was made a criminal offence. “Cruelty” encompassed any act that might cause a woman to commit suicide or inflict serious harm upon her life, limb or health, or harassment to secure her or her relatives meeting an unlawfully made property or valuable security.⁵

Section 498A became pivotal due to its ability to allow the State to step in prior to an incident of harassment causing death. It recognized that dowry-related cruelty was a separate crime, punishable by imprisonment up to three years, and fine. It also acknowledged that cruelty can take the form of mental as well as physical and that harassment for an unlawful demand can be an offence.

This was the greatest legal reform: the Dowry Prohibition (Amendment) Act, 1986. With this amendment, Section 304B was introduced in Indian Penal Code to establish the offence of ‘dowry death’. The provision came into effect on 19th November 1986⁶.

In the old Section 304B IPC, the following circumstances constituted a dowry death:

A woman is burned to death or killed or died under suspicious.

She died within 7 years of marriage.

She has been subjected to cruelty or harassment by her husband or any member of her in laws , at the time of her death.

That such cruelty or harassment was related with demand for dowry.

At the time of these conditions, the husband or relatives were legally considered to be responsible for the dowry death. The punishment provided was imprisonment for at least seven

⁴ Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961

⁵ Maitra Varun Chotia, “Criminal Law, Constitutional Balancing, and Gender Justice: A Doctrinal and Comparative Analysis of the Judicial Evolution of Section 498A IPC and Dowry Prohibition Laws in India with Reference to the United Kingdom,” *International Journal of Research Publication and Reviews*, Vol. 6, Issue 12, 2025.

⁶ Supra note 3

years and possibly up to life sentence.⁷

Section 304B was drafted to overcome the evidentiary challenges that typically arise in “matrimonial death”. Although many of the offences fell within the matrimonial home it would be difficult to gain any fresh or independent testimony with regard to the events occurring there. So the legislation provided these rules toward the incidents of the death and history of dowry cruelty.

Transition from IPC to BNS

Section 80 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023 (BNS) which superseded the Indian Penal Code (IPC) still preserved the offence of Dowry Death. The requirements of Section 80 are largely the same as those of Section 304B IPC, relating to unnatural death within seven years of marriage, dowry-related cruelty/harassment shortly before death, and that the husband or relative be legally deemed to have caused the death. Punishment is to be imprisonment for at least seven years and can be life imprisonment.⁸

The same presumption of evidence is now provided in Section 118 of the Bharatiya Sakshya Adhiniyam, 2023, which superseded the Indian Evidence Act, 1872. The earlier structure in the legislation continues in the current one: Dowry Prohibition Act: Regulates the issue of dowry demands, Section 85 BNS: Covers cruelty of the husband or his relatives, Section 80 BNS: Defines the term “dowry death”, and Section 118 of the Bharatiya Sakshya Adhiniyam: Imposes a presumption⁹.

3. MEANING AND ESSENTIAL INGREDIENTS OF DOWRY DEATH

3.1 Legal Definition

Section 80(1) BNS stipulates that where the death of any woman is caused by any act of violence or injury or occurs in any other manner than by normal cause within seven years of her marriage and it is shown that shortly before her death, she was treated in a cruel manner by her husband or by any relative of her husband, for or in connection with any demand of dowry,

⁷ The Indian Penal Code 1860, s.304B

⁸ Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023

⁹ Dowry Deaths in India : The unfinished battle against a social evil ; available at : www.whitecode.legal/more.com (last visited on 12/08/2026)

such death shall be deemed to be caused by dowry death.¹⁰

The reference to Dowry Prohibition Act significant since Section 80 has expressly stated that “dowry” shall mean the same as it does in Section 2 of the 1961 Act.

3.2 Essential Ingredients

Dowry death requires a statutory basis for the offence to be proved in a prosecution. The main criteria are:

- (a) There must be the death of a woman;
- (b) the cause of death is burns or bodily injury or the cause of death is otherwise than under normal circumstances;
- (c) the marriage was not registered within 7 years of the death; and
- (d) the deceased was subjected to cruelty or harassment by her husband or relative of her husband;
- (e) cruel or harassing acts committed in connection with the demand for dowry ; and
- (c) the cruelty or harassment need to have happened immediately prior to the death.

In Kans Raj v State of Punjab, in this case it was held by the court that presumption of dowry death arises not when there is an unnatural death of woman but only when the condition are satisfied in the law¹¹.

3.3 Meaning of “Soon Before”

One of the most crucial aspects of dowry death law “soon before”- the language "soon before" it means that death occurs not right then as a result of being harassed, but right prior to the death there has to be continuity of cruelty and harassment for demand of dowry. It is explained by the Supreme Court of India in the celebrated case of **Baijnath v. State of Madhya**

¹⁰ Ibid

¹¹ Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023 , s. 80 ; Kans Raj v State of Punjab (2000) 5 SCC 207

Pradesh¹², that there must be proximate link between cruelty caused with dowry death.

This principle was reaffirmed in **Satbir Singh v. State of Haryana**¹³ in elaborating the relationship between the statutory requirements and the evidentiary presumption. The requirement is then of proximity and not of a mathematical calculation of time. The court held that the facts and circumstances of each case shall be taken on holistic basis so as to evaluate as to whether there existed nexus between the dowry related cruelty and the death of the woman.

4. LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK GOVERNING DOWRY DEATH IN INDIA

4.1 Constitutional Framework

Article 14: Provides for equality before the law and equal protection of the law. Dowry violence disproportionately impacts women, thus leading to concerns of substantive equality. Criminal laws aimed at protecting women from dowry-related violence can be seen as a component of the State's duty to provide equal protection.

Article 15: No discrimination shall be made on specified grounds, which include sex. Article 15(3) however, allows the State to make special provisions for women and children. This constitutional approach includes protective and safeguarding criminal laws on dowry and matrimonial violence.

Article 21: States that nobody can be denied life or personal liberty except with due process of law. The Supreme Court has broadened the definition of “life” to encompass dignity, and conditions that allow for a worthwhile life. Dowry-related violence is a threat to these values.

Directive Principles

Article 38 and 39 are a reflection of the constitutional goal of social and economic justice. Article 39 also directs the State towards protecting citizens from conditions that result in exploitation.

Article 42 stipulates the need to provide for conditions of work which are just and humane and

¹² Baijnath v. State of Madhya Pradesh, (2017) 1 SCC 101.

¹³ Satbir Singh v State of Haryana (2021) 6 SCC 1

maternity relief. While indifferent to dowry, the Directive Principles do give the general background of the law on protection of women.

Fundamental Duties

Article 51A(e) demands citizens to give up practices that are "derogatory to the dignity of women". The provision is also of particular relevance to dowry as it underlines the constitutional expectation of halting discriminatory social practices through both the law and social change.¹⁴

4.2 Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023

Section 80 — Dowry Death

Section 80 BNS is the principal substantive provision governing dowry death. It substantially retains the structure of section 304-B of IPC. The provision covers unnatural death occurring within seven years of marriage where the woman was subjected soon before her death to cruelty and dowry harassment. The sanction is imprisonment of not less than seven years and may extend to life imprisonment.¹⁵

This severe penal code for dowry death points out that the legislature viewed this offence as a cognizable serious crime and as such an in-depth penal provision has been mandated for an effective punishment and deterrence to the society.

Section 108 — Abetment of Suicide

Section 108 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023 deals with abetment of suicide. The provision becomes relevant where the circumstances and evidence indicate that the accused intentionally instigated, encouraged, assisted, or otherwise facilitated the commission of suicide, and the essential requirements of abetment are fulfilled.

In matrimonial cases, Section 108 assumes particular importance when a woman dies by suicide following alleged cruelty or harassment. However, the mere fact that a suicide has occurred within a matrimonial relationship does not, by itself, establish abetment of suicide.

¹⁴ Constitution of India, art 14, 15, 21, 38, 42, 51A(e)

¹⁵ Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita 2023 , s. 80

Likewise, a suicide associated with dowry-related harassment does not automatically attract Section 108. The court must examine the facts and surrounding circumstances of each case to determine whether the conduct of the accused actually satisfies the legal ingredients of abetment¹⁶.

4.3 BHARATIYA SAKSHYA ADHINIYAM, 2023

4.3.1 Presumption Regarding Abetment of Suicide by a married woman : Section 117

Section 117 of BSA provides that where a married woman dies by suicide within seven years of her marriage, and evidence establishes that her husband or any relative of her husband had subjected her to cruelty, the court may, after considering the surrounding circumstances of the case, presume that the suicide was abetted by the husband or such relative. The presumption is discretionary and arises when the statutory conditions relating to the period of marriage and cruelty are established.¹⁷

4.3.2 Presumption Relating to Dowry Death : Section 118

Section 118 of BSA specifically provides for a “presumption as to dowry death”. Once the prosecution establishes that soon before death the woman was subjected to dowry related cruelty and harassment by the person concerned, the court is required to presume that the person caused the dowry death.¹⁸

The provision substantially continues the evidentiary approach previously contained under section 113-B of Indian Evidence Act.

4.4 BHARATIYA NAGARIK SURAKASHA SANHITA, 2023

The BNSS provides the procedural framework through which an allegation of dowry death moves from reporting and investigation to prosecution and trial.

4.4.1 Registration of FIR: Section 173

Section 173 BNSS deals with information relating Cognizable Offences. The registration of

¹⁶ Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita 2023, s. 108

¹⁷ Bharatiya Sakshya Adhiniyam 2023, s. 117

¹⁸ Bharatiya Sakshya Adhiniyam 2023, section 118

information is the initial procedural step through which the criminal justice system is activated. In “dowry-death” related cases, the initial information may be particularly crucial, due to the fact that the nature of the circumstances can often rapidly change at the scene of such incidents. Hence, it is crucial that information be recorded at the earliest opportunity, and the integrity of the scene of the incident be maintained¹⁹.

4.4.2 Investigation

“Section 175 and 176 of BNSS” deal with police investigation and the procedure for investigation. In a suspected dowry death, investigation should extend beyond the immediate cause of death and examine the circumstances preceding it. The relevant evidences may include statement of parents and relatives, earlier complaints, medical records, financial transactions, communication and evidences concerning previous demands²⁰.

4.4.3 Inquest Proceedings

“Section 194: Police to enquire and report in suicide , etc”

Section 194 of BNSS provides the procedure for conducting inquest into suspicious or unnatural deaths. In cases of a woman’s death within seven years of marriage, particularly When it is suspected that a crime has been committed or there is doubt as to the cause of death, it is the duty of the police to hold an inquest and draw up a report stating the cause of death as apparent and what injuries were present. In addition, Section 194(3) allows for the deceased to be ordered to undergo a medical or post-mortem examination if it is necessary to establish the cause of death²¹.

Thus, these provisions help ensure that cases involving suspicious deaths are investigated properly and that an appropriate medical examination of the deceased is carried out.

Section 196: Inquiry by Magistrate into cause of death

Section 196 provides for a Magistrate’s inquiry into the circumstances and cause of a death. This is particularly relevant where a woman dies within seven years of marriage in

¹⁹ Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita 2023, s. 173

²⁰ Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita 2023, s. 175, s. 176

²¹ Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita 2023, s. 194

circumstances covered by Section 194(3). The Magistrate may conduct the inquiry independently or alongside the police investigation, record relevant evidence, and direct that the deceased be subjected to a medical examination where necessary. The provision also requires, where practicable, that the relatives of the deceased be informed and given an opportunity to remain present during the inquiry²².

4.5 Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961

The Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961 was enacted to prohibit the illegal practice of dowry in India. Section 2 defines “dowry” as property or valuable security given or agreed to be given, directly or indirectly, in connection with a marriage. Section 3 prescribes punishment for giving or taking dowry, while Section 4 penalises the demand for dowry. The Act also provides for Dowry Prohibition Officers under Section 8-B to assist in preventing and enforcing the prohibition of dowry²³.

Thus, the Act forms the basic statutory foundation for preventing dowry demands and complements the criminal provisions dealing with dowry-related cruelty and death.

Section 3 – Penalty for Giving or Taking Dowry

Section 3 of the Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961 criminalises the giving, taking, or abetting the giving or taking of dowry. It seeks to prevent both parties to a marriage from participating in the dowry transaction. The provision prescribes imprisonment of not less than five years and a fine of not less than ₹15,000 or the amount/value of the dowry, whichever is higher, subject to the statutory exceptions.²⁴

Section 4 – Penalty for Demanding Dowry

This section makes the direct or indirect demand for dowry a criminal offence. A person who demands dowry from the parents, relatives or guardian of a bride or bridegroom, or from the bride or bridegroom themselves, is liable for punishment. The provision is significant because it criminalises the demand itself, regardless of whether the same has actually been made or received. It is therefore operates as an crucial preventive provision against dowry-related

²² Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita 2023, s. 196

²³ Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961

²⁴ Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961, s. 3

harassment and violence²⁵.

5. JUDICIAL RESPONSE TO DOWRY DEATH

Judicial interpretation has played a central role in developing the practical meaning of dowry-death legislation. The courts have particularly addressed the meaning of dowry, “soon before” requirement, the evidentiary presumptions and the liability of relatives.

Baijnath v. State of Madhya Pradesh²⁶

In this case the Court clarified that the phrase “soon before her death” requires a close and continuing connection between dowry-related cruelty or harassment and the woman’s death. The time gap between the harassment and death must not be so long that the link between the two events is lost.

In Satbir Singh v. State of Haryana²⁷, the Supreme Court observed that it is not necessary for the prosecution to prove that the cruelty occurred immediately before the death. However, there must be a proximate and continuing relationship between the dowry related harassment and the unnatural death.

In Shabeen Ahmad v. State of Uttar Pradesh²⁸, the Supreme Court considered allegations involving Sections 498A and 304B of the IPC, along with Sections 3 and 4 of the Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961. The Court said dowry-death offences were the most serious and courts had to carefully examine such allegations, particularly pertaining to cruelty or harassment on account of dowry demands. It also stated that the presumption of dowry death could not be attracted simply on the ground that the woman has died unnatural death. All the ingredients of dowry-death offence including proximate and reasonable nexus of the cruelty, harassment, harassment due to dowry demand and the death has to be first proved before presumption may be allowed to draw.

²⁵ Dowry Prohibition Act 1961, s.4

²⁶ Baijnath v. State of Madhya Pradesh, (2017) 1 SCC 101.

²⁷ Satbir Singh v. State of Haryana, (2021) 6 SCC 1

²⁸ *Shabeen Ahmad v. The State of Uttar Pradesh & Anr.*, Criminal Appeal Nos. 1051–1054 of 2025, decided on 3 March 2025, (2025 INSC 307).

Lavjibhai Sukhabhai Gohil v. State of Gujarat²⁹

In this case, the Gujarat High Court examined the circumstances in which presumptions under Sections 113A and 113B of the Indian Evidence Act might have been applicable. The Court reaffirmed that such presumptions do not arise merely on the basis of an allegation; the prosecution has to prove the existence of the foundational facts provided for by law to make the presumption of the statute operative. The evidence given by the deceased woman's family members may be significant, the Court stressed that such testimony must be trustworthy and should be assessed along with the surrounding circumstances of the case.

Parashu Ram v. State of Uttar Pradesh³⁰

The Court reiterated that the presumption of dowry death is a legal presumption and does not arise automatically in every case involving an unnatural death. Before such a presumption can be drawn, the prosecution must establish the essential requirements of the offence, particularly the existence of dowry-related cruelty or harassment soon before the death. Thus, the mere occurrence of an unnatural death within seven years of marriage, by itself, is not sufficient to establish dowry death.

Gurcharan Singh v. State of Punjab³¹

In Gurcharan Singh v. State of Punjab, the Supreme Court observed that a person cannot be held responsible for abetment of suicide merely because the victim had faced some form of harassment or adverse conduct. The Court said there must be a clear, direct or proximate link between the conduct of the accused and the act of the woman in committing suicide. In view of this fact, the court also stated that each case has to be judged on its own merits before the accused can be held to have abetted the suicide.

Mahesh Chand v. State of Uttar Pradesh & Anr.³²

The Supreme Court considered allegations of dowry death under Section 80 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023, which corresponds to Section 304B of the IPC, along with offences

²⁹ *Lavjibhai Sukhabhai Gohil v. State of Gujarat*, Criminal Appeal No. 1131 of 2003, decided on 1 August 2025, (2025 SCC Online Guj 2171).

³⁰ *Parashu Ram v. State of Uttar Pradesh*, Criminal appeal 1608 of 2007 decided on 7 May 2026.

³¹ *Gurcharan Singh v. State of Punjab*, (2020) 10 SCC 200.

³² *Mahesh Chand v. State of Uttar Pradesh & Anr.*, 2026 INSC 440.

relating to cruelty and the Dowry Prohibition Act. The Court recognised dowry death as a continuing social problem and stressed that the statutory presumption attached to such offences cannot be overlooked while considering bail. Taking into account the seriousness of the allegations and the applicable legal provisions, the Supreme Court set aside the bail granted by the High Court.

6. CONCLUSION

Dowry death remains a serious form of matrimonial violence despite the existence of a comprehensive legal framework. The Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961, provisions relating to cruelty, and the specific offence of dowry death have collectively strengthened legal protection for women. Under the present framework, Section 80 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023 (BNS) substantially retains the earlier requirements of Section 304-B IPC, while Section 118 of the Bharatiya Sakshya Adhiniyam, 2023 (BSA) continues the statutory presumption relating to dowry death. The critical analysis shows that the major difficulty is not the absence of legislation but its effective implementation. The prosecution must establish the essential ingredients of dowry death, particularly the existence of dowry-related cruelty or harassment and its proximity to the death. Many Judicial decisions demonstrate the court's attempt to balance protection of women with the requirement of proof beyond reasonable doubt. The procedural safeguards under the BNSS, including inquest and Magistrate inquiry, are important for ensuring proper investigation of suspicious matrimonial deaths. However, delays, inadequate investigation, ineffective functioning of Dowry Prohibition Officers and difficulties in preserving evidence continue to affect enforcement.

Therefore, the effectiveness of the present framework depends upon proper investigation, timely medical and forensic examination, preservation of electronic evidence, effective institutional coordination and speedy trials. Legislative provisions must be supported by effective enforcement and social change to achieve the ultimate objective of preventing dowry-related violence and protecting women's dignity and right to life.