

# Pledges in Response to Manushi's Call for Boycotting Dowry Marriages



WE HEAR from many readers of Manushi that they actually practise boycott of dowry marriages but have never made a public statement regarding this issue. We feel that a public commitment is necessary:

— to provide an alternative role model in a situation where “every-one” seems to be giving and taking dowry.

—to assure each other that we are not alone in taking what is often a difficult decision.

—to build a moral pressure. So far, only women who do not bring dowry are condemned by society or rather by the vocal section of society. Do we not need to become a visible and vocal body of opinion to condemn those who participate in giving and taking of dowry, and to publicly support and encourage those who refuse to participate in such degradation of women?

We also feel that if anyone who makes such a commitment ever changes her mind for any reason, she should make another public statement explaining why she has changed her position.

## Some More Pledges

The Chattisgarh Mahila Jagriti Sangathan held a women's action camp for women activists from March 1 to March 10. The following pledges were taken by women :

After much discussion and thought, today on international women's day 1981, I solemnly vow that I will not accept dowry when I get married. I am a middle class girl and a native of UP where the devilish custom of dowry is widely prevalent. If I cannot marry without dowry I will stay unmarried. I will oppose

the giving and taking of dowry in my family. I will boycott dowry marriages and will openly say why I am doing so. I will educate as many women, men, girls and boys against dowry as I can. I will oppose dowry marriages in my neighbourhood.

**Vimla Ram**

I vow to oppose the giving of dowry at my marriage and not to participate in any marriage where dowry has been demanded. I will tell my friends that dowry marriages are a kind of trading in women due to which women have to face many problems and are often made victims of atrocities, are murdered or driven to suicide...

**Sandhya Kiran**

I vow that when I marry I will refuse to take dowry from my family and I will not participate in marriages of my friends, relatives and neighbours, where dowry is given. I will try to spread consciousness against dowry giving and taking because it is the cause of much misery...

**Shailakshani Dean, Teresa Tinni, Hemkumari Masih, Celestina Khalko**

Today on March 8, 1981, I vow that if I come to know that a woman is being tortured or deserted by her husband for not having given dowry, I will try my best to get justice for her. I will boycott dowry marriages. I will not accept dowry when my sons get married.

**Leela Bai, Lucy Marian**

I will refuse dowry at my marriage and will try to spread consciousness against

dowry, because I do not want to take my parents' property at the cost of my own degradation. I want to be self-dependent, live and work independently and I want to see my sisters also living self-dependently.

**Jacinta Kinho**

I am opposed to the giving and taking of dowry because I have in my own life seen and experienced how many women are driven to suicide because their parents could not give them enough dowry. So I swear that I will oppose dowry give and take in my family and community...

**Dolly Nath**

I promise that from today I will not attend any dowry marriage in my family or community. And I will also openly say that I am not participating in this marriage because dowry is being given and taken whereas I am opposed to dowry and want to eradicate it. I promise to implement this in my own life and family. I will also try to inspire others to do the same.

**Seema Gupta**

I had already decided in my own mind a long time ago, but today I am vowing in writing that in future I will never participate in dowry weddings and I will also oppose them. I will implement this not only in the case of others' weddings (e.g. sisters, friends, brothers) but I myself also will not take dowry and will not allow other unnecessary expenditure in marriage.

**Uma, Delhi**