

Directions:

1. Highlight your confusion, and be ready to discuss it in class.
2. Show evidence of a close reading of the **entire** texts: make connections, ask questions, summarize, **interpret**, or express confusion from **Bride-burning in India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh is Acceptable Murder**, [Aisha Saeed's blog](#), and [India's Crimes Against Women Chart](#).
3. Write a **one-page or 250-word** reflection of your thoughts or argument--**not** a summary of the article--on your own sheet of paper. TIP: Use *They Say, I Say* templates.

**Indian subcontinent:** notice how India is a large, triangular peninsula jutting out from the south of Asia. The size of this peninsula qualifies it as a subcontinent.  
**patriarchal:** a system of society or government controlled by men  
**liability:** a responsibility, debt, or obligation.

**eradicate:** get rid of  
**lucrative:** yielding lots of money  
**unscrupulous:** having or showing no moral principles  
**concur:** agree  
**dallying:** having a casual sexual relationship

## Bride-burning in India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh is Acceptable Murder

Source: *Examiner.com*, 8/18/11, Nancy Koerner

**Approximately every 100 minutes, a bride is set on fire**

Perhaps the most incomprehensible and horrific domestic violence practice the world has ever known, bride-burning is a form of acceptable murder by a husband or his family in the countries of the **Indian subcontinent**. Technically, the practice is illegal. But, because of the deeply-rooted mindset of **patriarchal** culture which sustains the basic premise of female inequality, the custom still thrives. Unfortunately, the police and judicial system are part of that culture, and those who give **lip-service** to upholding the law often turn a blind eye.

### Bride burning for dummies

1. Restrain victim in kitchen
2. Douse with kerosene
3. Light a match

Footnotes:

- looks like an "accident."
- **saris** (see image at right) are very flammable
- most burn victims succumb to infection, rarely survive
- dead victims do not prosecute.
- "divorce" equals "shame" for the family honor
- "escape" does not necessarily equal "safety"
- wife's own parents may force her to return out of "honor"



### Dowry death, most common cause of bride-burning

Also known as a bride-price, a dowry is the provision of money, gifts, livestock, gold, jewels -- and in the modern day, even cars, appliances, homes, and property -- from the bride's family to the family of the groom in exchange for the bride herself. As a wife is technically considered to be a **liability** to the husband, it is a method by which she can pay her own way. The amount of the dowry varies greatly depending on the social standing and financial position of both parties.

## Murder in the court

Statistics may vary wildly, but between 4,000 and 25,000 deaths occur from bride burning each year in India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh. Legal attempts to **eradicate** the dowry system date as far back as 1939 but that practice has continued unabated throughout the decades. In 1986, an amendment of criminal law was passed, providing:

“that where the death of a woman is caused by any burns or bodily or occurs otherwise than under normal circumstances within seven years of her marriage and it is shown that immediately before her death she was harassed and put to cruelty by her husband or any relative of the husband in connection with demand for dowry, such death shall be called as dowry death.”

However, less than 10% of reported deaths are investigated, and an unsupported law has little practicality.

## Dowry "deal-or-no-deal"

Dowry murder can become a **lucrative** opportunity for **unscrupulous** in-laws. The initial bride-price may be satisfactorily established and paid in full at the time of the marriage and later dispassionately revisited by the husband's parents as being insufficient. If the bride's parents do not pay the additional amount, the wife is victimized. At some point, the in-laws may even decide to murder her, in cold blood, so their son may marry another woman for another dowry. The son may **concur** with the solution, especially if he has already tired of his young bride as playmate and sexual partner, and if he is already **dallying** with another woman. The wife's understandable suicide might be a convenient bonus in this chain of unfortunate events.



## Response Options:

- What is your immediate response to the practice of “dowry death”?
- What circumstances must be in place in order for something like “dowry death” to happen on such a large scale in the Indian subcontinent?
- Conduct some research of your own on or related to this topic and share it in your response.

*Use some or all of the template below to support your thinking.\**

**Title:** \_\_\_\_\_

The general argument made by author X in her/his work, \_\_\_\_\_, is that \_\_\_\_\_ . More specifically, X argues that \_\_\_\_\_ . She/he writes, “ \_\_\_\_\_ .” In this passage, X is suggesting that \_\_\_\_\_ . In conclusion, X's belief is that \_\_\_\_\_ .

In my view, X is wrong/right, because \_\_\_\_\_ . More specifically, I believe that \_\_\_\_\_ . For example, \_\_\_\_\_ . Although X might object that \_\_\_\_\_ , I maintain that \_\_\_\_\_ . Therefore, I conclude that \_\_\_\_\_ .

*\* This template was created by Dr. Kathy Birkenstein and can be found in [Clueless in Academe](#), by Gerald Graff.*