

PROFILE OF MARRIAGE IN DARD TRIBE: A STUDY

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Abstract

In Dard tribe, marriage is a permanent socio-legal union between a man and a woman and it also has been associated with religion and culture. There are several features that make Dard (Shin) wedding institution quite distinctive from the rest of the society. The Dard (Shin) tribe practices both endogamous as well as exogamous marriages. Negotiation for a marriage is initiated on behalf of the bridegroom parents through mediator locally called '*Dakoo*' a close relative or friend, who is supposed to be impartial and capable of bringing the two parties to an agreement. The parents of bridegroom seek date for marriage from the parents of the bride through the mediator (*Dakoo*) who also negotiates the amount of *Maher* (bride price) with the parents of bride and finally a religious leader would be consulted to fix the proper date and day for marriage in accordance with Islamic culture. Divorce is very rare, as it is considered unacceptable in their community. Based on a sample of 300 respondents selected from thrust areas of Dard tribe from Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh region, the study describes the marriage profile of Dard tribe in J&K. A multi-stage sampling technique was used to collect information from Dard respondents. For the present study, a descriptive research design was used. The paper provides useful insights into the marriage profile of Dard tribe, and in identifying the social causes and trends of change in the institution of marriage among the Dards.

Keywords: Profile, marriage, polyandry, maher, divorce, Dard tribe, J&K.

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1. Introduction

Herodotus was the first to write about the *Dards*, Francke maintained that the country of gold digging ants mentioned by Herodotus is the land of Present *Dards* on the Indus. Dard is a group of people predominantly found in the northern areas and North West frontier province of Pakistan and in the Indian state of Jammu and Kashmir. The word 'Dard' has a long history and the people who bear the name are very ancient, who are referred as *Darada* in Sanskrit literature. The Greeks and Romans included in the *Dard* country the whole mountainous tract between the Hindukush and the frontier of India.¹ Kalhana in "*Raj-Tarangini*", refer to them (*Dard*) as *Darads* inhabiting the country where we now find the shin. W.G Leitner called *Shina* speaking tribes of *Gilgit*, *Chilas* and *Astor* areas down the Indus from Ladakh as *Dards*. *Dard* is an Aryan race inhabiting the different areas of the state; in spite of interaction with other ethnic group they have been able to retain their cultural identity.²

The Himalaya is the original home of many ancient tribes, like other tribes *Dard* migrated to inner and outer Himalaya from various entrance points beginning from pre-history to early Christian era. In the early period they came to western Himalayas and settled down along the fertile Indus valley. Thereafter some of them migrated to Ladakh region and some settled in *Gurez* and *Tulail* area in Kashmir region and some of them settled in *Chanderkote* area of Ramban district of Jammu region. Dardistan was a district of *Dards* comprising the whole of *Chitral*, *Gilgit*, *Hunza*, *Nagar*, *Punyal*, *Yasin*, *Koh*, *Gazar*, *Ashkoman*, *Chilas*, *Astor*, *Iskardu*, *Guraiz* and *Kargil*, including the Indus Valley from *Bunji* to *Batera*, the *Kohistan-Malazai*, i.e. the upper reaches of the *Panjhora* River and the *Kohistan* of Swat. In fact their major area of concentrations or their homeland is in Dardistan now in Pak occupied Kashmir.³ To the Greek and Roman writers, the word had a wider application and included not only the predecessors of *Shin/Dard*, but the whole mountaineer's tract between the Hindukush and the frontiers of India. In the words of Litener, *Dards* belong to Aryan stock; Dr Litener visited Dardistan in 1866, and having supplemented his inquiries of that time by investigations into *Dard* dialectic and customs made through men of the race whom he gathered round him at Lahore. While Ray also endorses this statement by saying that the *Dardic* Aryans parted from the Aryan mass just after their entrance into India. *Dardic* Aryans than colonized *Pamir* region from where they spread to *Chitral* and *Gilgit*. Ptolemy in his writing 'Almagast' has used the word *Daradari* for *Dards* and

thus they have long history of occupancy of the Kashmir valley. At present they are concentrated in Dardistan (*Dardesa*), especially in the catchment areas of Kishanganga north of *Sardi, Gurez* and *Tulail*.⁴ The existence of the *Dards* as a separate race, as well as something of their language, have for good many years been facts within the reach of readers of travelers; but the information made known about them has been extremely meager.

Dardistan was one of the frontier district of Kashmir with capital *Gilgit* in the north of Kashmir. Most of its area is presently under the direct control of Pakistan under the name of Northern areas. *Shina* is spoken over a vast area of 12,352 square miles. Dardistan starts from *Gurez Bandipora* and on other side its boundaries are up to *DrassKargil*. Famous silk route traverses through the whole of *Dardistan*, *Gurez* Valley also falls along the same.⁵

According to Gazetteer of Kashmir and Ladakh (1974), *Brokpa* is a name given by the *Balti* and *Puriki* to the *Dard* communities dwelling among them in the country south-east of *Harmokh*. *Brokpa* comprises of two words ‘*Brok*’ meaning ‘hill’ and ‘*pa*’ means ‘dwellers’ thus the meaning of *Brokpa* is hill dweller or high lander. In *Dardistan*, or the area where *Balti* dominance is not so prominent, the tribe is known as *Dard* or *Shin*.⁶ The tribe is also known as *Dard*, *Shin*, and *Brokpa*. *Dards* are mainly Muslim and *Noor Bakishs* following the *Sunni* sect of Islam, In *Kargil* district they constitute a religious minority as against *Purki* and *Balti* follow the *Shia* sect. After Muslim invasion in the 19th century, *Dards* who were settled in *Drass* and its adjoining areas embraced Islam. The *Dards* of *Da Hanu*, *Darchik* and *Garkon* neither accepted Islam nor Buddhism. *Dards* are found in *Drass* and in several places along the Valley of *Drass* River and again in few villages in the valley of the *Indus*, interpolated between the *Baltis* and *Ladakhis*.⁷

The dress of the *Dards* is woolen, except among the affluent people, who wear cotton clothes for the summer; the dress consists of *pajama*’s, *Choga* (or gown-coat), a waistband to confine this, and lastly, a cap and chasseur, both of peculiar construction. The cap is a bag of woolen cloth half a yard long. This is rolled up upwards at the edges until it gets to the size to fit comfortably to the head. For their feet strips and scraps of leather are put under and the foot and a long thin strip wound round and round to keep all these in place. The head-dress is thoroughly

characteristic of the *Dards*.⁸ Now due to impact of modernization the dress up of *Dard* tribe has totally changed, the young people wear jeans pants and shirt and old and middle aged people wear *kameez*, and pajama. Women also wear *shalwar* and *kameez*. They wear their traditional dress on the special cultural programmes and occasions.

The *Dard (Shin)* people speak Shina language within the community and use Urdu, Balti, Kashmiri and Dogri language, with other people to communicate. People in Chilas and Gilgit have switched to Urdu in a bigger way because their area is not as inaccessible from the plains of Pakistan as the Gurez valley is from rest of India. This language and the related culture are somewhat better maintained in Gurez, and have flourished best in Kargil (Ladakh). *Dard* habitats are relatively cut off from larger cultural influences, have relative cultural homogeneity and a simple technology, generally occupy common geographical areas. The main source of their livelihood is agriculture, government job and trade.

In *Dard* tribe, marriage is a permanent socio-legal union between a man and a woman and it also has been associated with religion and culture. There are several features that make *Dard/Shin* wedding tradition quite distinctive from the rest of the society. The *Dard/ Shin* tribes practice both endogamous as well as exogamous marriages. Marriage usually take place after attaining adulthood. Generally, it would be performed after the harvesting of the crops when everybody is free from agricultural engagement. Prior to the actual marriage bride is invited by their respective relatives for get-together. The *Nikah* ceremony is performed by a religious leader (*Molvi*) AND two persons from bride's side seek the consent of the bride, while as bridegroom's consent is sought there. A formal agreement (contract) is written there by religious leader (*Molvi*) which is called *Nikhanama* and the fixed *Mehar* is written on the *Nikhanama*. Suited to marriage the verses of the holy *Quran* would be recited and translated by *Molvi*. Ceremony would end after the blessing for the couple.

2: Research methodology

2.1: Universe of the study

The universe of the present study constitutes the *Dard* tribe households of Jammu and Kashmir. As per the census 2011, the total population of *Dard* tribe in Jammu and Kashmir was 48,440.

The male population was 53 percent and female population 47 percent, respectively. The total number of households of *Dard* was not available as no information is recorded in censuses of Jammu and Kashmir or other official documented sources.

2.2: Sampling plan of the study.

The study is based on multi-stage sampling. In the first stage, the Dard tribe was located in all the three regions of Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh and three districts with dominant Dard population were selected - one from each region i.e., *Ramban* from Jammu region, *Bandipora* from Kashmir region and *Kargil* from Ladakh region. In the second stage, 3 blocks of Dard tribe were selected i.e. *Drass* from Kargil district in Ladakh region, *Gurez* from Bandiopra district in Kashmir region and *Chanderkote* from Ramban District in Jammu region. In the third stage, it was found that there are 48 villages in total with Dard population in these blocks (i.e., 28 villages in *Gurez* block; 20 villages in *Drass* block; and one village in *Chanderkote* block. Later on, it was decided to take 50 percent sample villages giving equal representation to each block (i.e. 14 villages from *Gurez* block, 10 villages from *Drass* block, one village in *Chanderkote* block. Finally, 12 households were located randomly from each village i.e. ($25 \times 12 = 300$) which formed the sample of the study.

2.3: Techniques of data collection

To carry out the study, the techniques of interview schedule and observation were used to get objective and reliable data. The reason for such kind of choice was mainly sociological and methodological. Since 26.67 percent respondents were illiterate. The relevant literature was reviewed and analysed to provide some direction in drafting schedule. Several questions were framed on the basis of themes.

2.4: Sources of data collection

The present study involved both primary and secondary source of data collection. For primary sources, first-hand information was collected through interview schedule and observation in the field. The secondary source of information is based on books, book chapters, journal papers, unpublished thesis and newspaper articles etc. Facial expression, body language was given due importance and informal talks with the respondents helped in enriching the study. The American

psychological Association 5th ed. (APA) style was used in the present study for citation and references.

2.5: Hypothesis of study

In Dard tribe, there are several features that make Dard/Shin wedding institution quite distinctive from the rest of the society in J&K. The Dard/ Shin tribes practice both endogamous as well as exogamous marriages. Mehar is usually paid to the bride's party and dowry is emerging as a phenomenon in Dard tribe. The institution of divorce is very rare.

2.6: Objectives of study

1. To trace the nature of marriage among Dard tribe in Jammu and Kashmir,
2. To analyse the marriage profile of Dard tribe i.e., their distinguishing features; types of marriage; mehar; dowry and divorce,
3. To identify the social factors and trends of change in the institution of marriage in Dard tribe.

3: Results and Analysis

Marriage is a legally and socially sanctioned union between two opposite sexes, i.e. by bringing together the two distinctive halves of lives- man and woman. Marriage is a relationship established between two partners, usually and traditionally, a male and a female which gives the social, legal and religious right to sexual intimacy. It is a social union or legal contract between individuals that creates kinship. It is an institution in which interpersonal relationships, usually intimate and sexual, is acknowledged by a variety of ways, articulated through mutual accepted cultural practices and shared values of the community. Such a union may be called matrimony, while the ceremony that marks its beginnings is usually is called a wedding and the marital structure created is known as wedlock. Marriage is, therefore, a permanent legal union between a man and a woman. It is distinguished from mating which is a temporary union and socially not permitted⁹. Marriage all along has been associated with religion and culture. It is both as religious as well as social institution. The society as well as religion has given it a proper recognition. There are several features that make Dard/Shin wedding tradition quite distinctive from the rest

of the society. The Dard/ Shin tribes practice both endogamous as well as exogamous marriages. The types/practices of marriage of the Dard tribe are revealed as under:

Table 3.1: Types of marriage

Theme	Response	Number	Percentage
Type of marriage	Monogamy	246	82.00
	Polygyny	54	18.00
	Polyandry	00	0.00
Total		300	100.00

Source: Field work carried out in Dard tribal areas of J&K, 2015

The above table 3.1 clearly shows that majority of the respondents among Dard tribe practise monogamy type of marriage; out of 300 respondents 246 (82 percent) said that monogamy type of marriage is in vogue, whereas 54 (18 percent) respondents affirmed polygyny types of marriage are practised. None of the respondents accepted the practises of polyandry. It was also observed from the study that marriage usually takes place after attaining adulthood. It is a general rule that age of the bride should not be more than that of the bridegroom. Negotiation for a marriage is initiated on behalf of the bridegroom parents through mediator locally called 'Dakoo' a close relative or friend, who is supposed to be impartial and capable of bringing the two parties to an agreement. Negotiation usually continues for many weeks or months. After having received the consent of the two parties a convenient date is fixed for a formal announcement, which is locally known as 'saale'. After a few months or a year the parents of bridegroom seek date for marriage from the parents of the bride through the mediator (*Dakoo*) who also negotiates the amount of *Maher* (bride price) with the parents of bride and finally a religious leader would be consulted to fix the proper date and day for marriage in accordance with Islamic culture.

Generally it would be performed after the harvesting of the crops when everybody is free from agricultural engagement. Prior to the actual marriage bride is invited by their respective relatives for get-together. The study further revealed that the Nikah ceremony is performed by a religious leader (*Molvi*) two persons from bride's side seek the consent of the bride, while as bridegroom's

consent is sought there. A formal agreement (contract) is written there by religious leader (*Molvi*) which is called *Nikhanama* and the fixed Mehar is written on the *Nikhanama*. Suited to marriage the verses of the holy Quran would be recited and translated by *Molvi*. Ceremony would end after the blessing for the couple.

Table 3.2: Practices of marriage

Theme	Response	Number	Percentage
Practices of marriage	Endogamy	155	61.67
	Exogamy	80	26.66
	Both	65	21.67
Total		300	100.00
Theme	Response	Number	Percentage
If endogamous, is it acceptable	Willingly	120	80.64
	By force	00	00.00
	Motivation	35	22.48
	Any other	00	20.00
Total		155	100.00
Theme	Response	Number	Percentage
If exogamy, cite the reasons	To get suitable partner	47	58.75
	Wider choice	33	41.25
	Caste system	00	00.00
	Any other	00	00.00
Total		80	100.00
Theme	Response	Number	Percentage
Community reaction to person who marries on his own choice	Disowned	204	68.00
	Resented	73	24.03
	Accepted	23	7.07
	Any other	00	100.00
Total		300	100.00
Theme	Response	Number	Percentage

Age of marriage	Below 18 years	00	00.00
	19-25years	187	62.33
	25-30 years	103	34.34
	30- 35 years	10	3.33
	35 years above	00	0.00
Total		300	100.00

Source: Field work carried out in Dard tribal areas of J&K, 2015

The above table 3.2 shows that 155 respondents (61.67 percent) affirmed that they perform endogamous marriages; whereas 80 respondents (26.66 percent) claimed that they perform exogamy and 65 respondents (21.67 percent) said that they do not give any consideration to it. They perform both endogamous as well as exogamous types of marriages. This reveals that majority of the respondents go for endogamy type of marriages and endogamy is still dominant among Dard tribe. In order to know the acceptability of the endogamous marriages among the children within the community, the study reveals that among 155 respondents i.e. (100 percent); 110 respondents (70.96 percent) stated that their children opined such decisions willingly whereas 45 respondents (29.04 percent) accepted that they need to motivate their children to accept the marriage proposals in case of endogamy. None of the respondents said that they use force to impose their decision upon their children to marry within the community. This reveals that young generation of the community have regard for traditional practices and that they value their parent's decisions in respect of marriage.

In response to the question of exogamous marriage, it is evident from the table that those who go for exogamous marriage are 80 respondents; out of 80 respondents; 47 respondents (58.75 percent) affirmed that to get a suitable partner their children prefer to go for exogamy, whereas 33 respondents (41.25 percent) acclaimed that it provide a wider choice to their children to select their life partner of their own choice and satisfaction. This reveals that children are not getting much wider choice to select their life partner within their tribe due to which they prefer to go for exogamous type of marriage.

In a supplementary question about the community reaction to the persons who marry of his/her own choice, it was found that majority of the respondents 204 respondents (68 percent) stated

that such marriages are disowned by the group, which is in contradiction to their tradition. However such marriages are very rare in the community. Familial ties are severed permanently with those, who marry on their own choice without their parent's consent, whereas only 73 respondents (44.03 percent) said that marriages by choice are first resented in their community but are later tolerated to some extent. Only 23 respondents (7.07 percent) claimed that love marriages are absolutely acceptable among them. The study also reveals that Dard (Shin) is strict about the performance of the marriage of their children and give great importance to their traditional modes of life.

In response to the question of preferable age for marriage, 187 respondents (62.33 percent) said that age of marriages in their community is between 19 to 25 years. They opined that marriage at a younger age is preferred among the group because a young couple is much more capable of shouldering matrimonial responsibilities than their old counterparts and also it is prescribed by their religion to go for early marriage. It also prevents immortal sexuality among youth as per their culture. 103 respondents (34.34 per cent) replied that they marry their offspring when they are aged 25-30. Male heads who are traditionally responsible for the family affairs, delay their marriages due to unemployment, whereas females cited reasons of education, failure to find a good match, dowry, etc. as some of the causes for late marriage. Remaining 10 respondents (3.33) revealed that they prefer to marry their children at the age between 30-35 years. It was found that none of respondents responded in affirmative that marriages occur before the age of 18 or after the age of 35 because they think that marrying before the age of 18 is frustrating for the couple as well as for the family. Those who wish to marry too late fail to find a good match. A general observation was made that among the Dard, girls are married at a younger age as compared to boys. This is because the parents want to get relieved of their social responsibility at the earliest.

Table 3.3: Expenditure on marriage

Theme	Response	Number	Percentage
Expenditure on marriage	Below 100,000	15	5.00
	100,000, to 200,0000	52	17.33
	200,000, to 300,0000	157	52.33
	300,0001, to 400,0000	63	21.00

	400,0001 and above	13	4.34
Total		300	100.00
Theme	Response	Number	Percentage
Paid Maher (Dower)	Yes	300	100.00
	No	00	00.00
Total		300	100.00
Theme	Response	Number	Percentage
If, yes how much	Below 20,000	00	0.00
	20,000 to 40,000	105	35 .00
	40,000 to 60,000	120	40.00
	60,000, above	75	25.00
Total		300	100.00
Theme	Response	Number	Percentage
Females get share in parents property after marriage	Yes	200	66.66
	No	100	33.34
Total		300.00	100.00
Theme	Response	Number	Percentage
Dowry paid/received	Yes	40	13.33
	No	260	86.67
Total		300.00	100.00
Theme	Response	Number	Percentage
Divorce in your community	Yes	18	6.00
	No	282	94.00
Total		300.00	100.00

Source: Field work carried out in Dard tribal areas of J&K, 2015

In response to the question on marriage expenditures, the above table 3.3 shows that majority of the respondents i.e. 157 respondents (52.33 percent) spend 200,001-400,000 rupees on their marriages, 15 respondents (5 percent) spend less than 100,000 rupees. Similarly, 52 respondents (17.33 percent) spend in average range of 100,000-200,000 rupees; 63 respondents (21 percent) said that their expenditure ranged from 300,001-400,000 rupees and only 13 respondents (4.34

percent) said that they spend 400,001-500,000 rupees on their weddings. From this data, it is clear that despite having low income, a large number of the Dard (Shina) indulge in extravagant marriages. However, it was observed that the total expenditure on marriages does not exceed more than five lack rupees in any case.

Regarding the payment of *Maher* (dower) an amount in cash paid by bridegroom to his bride at the time of their marriage according to his financial position) to the bride, all the 300 respondents (100 percent) responded in affirmation. None of them denied the payment of *Mehar* to their brides. This indicates that 'Mehar' is regarded an important prerequisite and religious duty for the legitimization of a marriage in Dard/Shin community. It was further observed that *Mehar* is usually fixed before *Nikah* ceremony and 100 percent respondents reported that they pay it in cash. The amount of *Mehar* varies from household to household as per their financial position and custom which they follow. Out of 300 respondents; 100 respondents (33.33 percent) said that they paid Rs 20,000 to 40,000, 125 respondents (41.66 percent) paid Rs 40,000 to 60,000 whereas remaining 75 respondents (25 percent) acclaimed that they paid more than Rs. 60,000.

The respondents who were asked whether they give share of their property, (movable or immovable) to their daughters or sisters, an overwhelming majority that is 200 respondents (95.67 percent) replied that they do give share to their daughters and sisters after marriage, indicating women's improved status in the *Dard/Shin* community with respect to property matters. However, the remaining 13 respondents (4.33 percent), which is comparatively a low percentage, replied that they do not believe in giving a share of their property to the women. They argued that since they take care of their daughters and their expenses of marriage and their nourishment, hence girls are not entitled to property share after their marriage.

In response to the question on dowry, it was found that out of 300 respondents; the majority of 247 respondents (82.33 percent) said that they neither give nor take any item or amount of dowry. Whereas 53 respondents (17.67 percent) said that they practise dowry tractions in the form of cash or luxury items. However, it was observed that a very meagre number of the respondents are of the view that they take and give several items/amount with mutual consent. They argued that dowry is helpful in maintaining a cordial relationship between the families. Out

of 300 respondents majority of the respondents 273 respondents (91 percent) affirmed that they do not face any problem of dowry in their society. However, the remaining 27 respondents (9 percent), which is comparatively a low percentage replied that they face some problem of dowry in community. The study clearly show that evil practice of dowry is still insignificant and yet to emerge as a social problem.

In response to the question of divorce, 278 respondents (92.67 percent) completely denied that divorces occur in their family saying it is considered unacceptable in their community. However, 22 respondents (9 percent) who said that separation and divorces do take place in their families, contradicts the claim of the majority. They opined that causes of divorces are many i.e., lack of understanding between husband and wife, adjustment problems faced by the daughter-in-law, communication gap, financial issues, un fulfilled expectations, different priorities and interests, inability to resolve conflict and so on. Domestic violence is the main cause of divorce found in Dard tribe. It is one of the most pervasive of human rights violations, denying women and girl's equality, security, dignity, self-worth, and their right to enjoy fundamental freedom. Domestic violence takes place across all groups and cultures¹⁰. The traces of human rights violations associated with domestic violence cannot be negated in Dard tribe.

4. Conclusions

Dard is a group of people predominantly found in the northern areas and North West frontier province of Pakistan and in the Indian state of Jammu and Kashmir. The Himalaya is the original home of many ancient tribes, like other tribes *Dard* migrated to inner and outer Himalaya from various entrance points beginning from pre-history to early Christian era. In the early period they came to western Himalayas and settled down along the fertile Indus valley. Thereafter some of them migrated to Ladakh region and some settled in *Gurez* and *Tulail* area in Kashmir region and some of them settled in *Chanderkote* area of Ramban district of Jammu region. In Dard tribe, marriage is a permanent socio-legal union between a man and a woman and it also has been associated with religion and culture. There are several features that make Dard/Shin wedding tradition quite distinctive from the rest of the society. The Dard/ Shin tribes practice both endogamous as well as exogamous marriages. Marriage usually take place after attaining adulthood. Generally, it would be performed after the harvesting of the crops when everybody is

free from agricultural engagement. It is a general rule that age of the bride should not be more than that of the bridegroom. Negotiation for a marriage is initiated on behalf of the bridegroom parents through mediator locally called '*Dakoo*' a close relative or friend, who is supposed to be impartial and capable of bringing the two parties to an agreement. Negotiation usually continues for many weeks or months. After having received the consent of the two parties a convenient date is fixed for a formal announcement, which is locally known as '*Saale*'. After a few months or a year the parents of bridegroom seek date for marriage from the parents of the bride through the mediator (*Dakoo*) who also negotiates the amount of *Maher* (bride price) with the parents of bride and finally a religious leader would be consulted to fix the proper date and day for marriage in accordance with Islamic culture. The marriage at a younger age is preferred among the group because a young couple is much more capable of shouldering matrimonial responsibilities than their old counterparts and also it is prescribed by their religion to go for early marriage. Regarding the payment of *Maher* (dower) an amount in cash paid by bridegroom to his bride at the time of their marriage according to his financial position) to the bride, The '*Mehar*' is regarded an important prerequisite and religious duty for the legitimization of a marriage in Dard/Shin community. They also give share of their property (movable or immovable) to their daughters or sisters indicating women's improved status in the *Dard/Shin* community with respect to property matters. Divorce is very as it is considered unacceptable in their community. However, in case a divorce takes place, the reasons are considered many i.e., lack of understanding between husband and wife, adjustment problems faced by the daughter-in-law, communication gap, financial issues, un fulfilled expectations, different priorities and interests, inability to resolve conflict and so on.

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