



BRIDE PRICE Frequently Asked Questions

QUESTION: What is Bride Price (Lobola in the South, Mahari in the East or Wine carrying in the West)

ANSWER: Bride price is an amount of money/property/wealth paid by the groom or his family to the parents of a woman upon the marriage of their daughter to the groom.

The agreed bride price is generally intended to reflect the perceived value of the girl or young woman.

QUESTION: Why is Bride Price paid?

ANSWER: Bride price payment is practised by many different cultures around the world today for so many reasons.

In Africa originally it was meant to be a token appreciation to the family of the girl for bringing her up well. It was also seen as strengthening the bond between the two families.

QUESTION: Does it matter who receives the Bride Price?

ANSWER: It would not matter who receives Bride Price but what matters is how it is given and under what conditions it is given.

QUESTION: Does it matter how much Bride Price one pays?

ANSWER: It may matter how much Bride Price one pays basing on the condition of payment and the economic status of the person paying Bride Price. This is because one may be told to pay an amount one is not able to pay and thus causing economic burdens. For some the amount reflects the value of the bride to be.

QUESTION: Does Bride Price reduce wives to being the property of their husbands?

ANSWER: It does because of the bargaining that is done before it is paid and this makes the men think that they bought the wives like a commodity bought from the shop. This makes the women to be submissive to the men and this leads to domestic violence.

QUESTION: Does Bride Price discourage people from getting married? How?

ANSWER: Basing on the economic life today it discourages people from getting married because the first thing that comes into ones mind when they think of marrying is where shall I get the money to pay bride price? Many poor people elope rather than suffering the burden of paying bride price.

QUESTION: Do I lose my African identity by not paying Bride Price?

ANSWER: One does not lose his or her African identity even if they do not pay bride price. It is only a belief which is not true. Although it is a cultural norm that any African man needs to pay bride price just in order to be recognized in the cultural setting.

QUESTION: What is wrong about collecting my Bride Price when the woman leaves?

ANSWER: Asking for the return of bride price when the woman leaves simply means that the bride price was not an appreciation because a gift is never refundable. In communities where it is a mandate by culture where a man has got to sign for refund of the bride price when the woman leaves, the refund then becomes necessary being an agreement from time of the payment.

It looks so embarrassing to go and ask for what you gave to the parents of the girl in happy moods and later on when you get your misunderstanding with the woman you instead look at the Bride Price you paid instead of finding the real solution to the problems in your house with your wife. Basing on the mere fact that you did not just take those animals to be kept for you at your in-laws place then I don't see the reasons as to why one should dare ask for them. This is on the fact that for example if one stayed with the wife for over ten years before the marriage finally breaks down, these animals would have died or been used for other things and they are not there any more.

Suppose a woman produced say five children in the ten years, would you expect to refund her labour and also the costs for each child that she had with you?

If the refund is unable to be paid, it is likely that the woman is forced to stay in an abusive relationship.

QUESTION: Does non payment of Bride Price make a man lose his dignity or status in the community?

ANSWER: A man still remains a man even without the payment of bride price but it may vary from community to community. In some communities where one must pay the Bride Price, he may lose some prestige because it is considered so essential in that particular community.

QUESTION: What is wrong with Bride Price if it can be made affordable for all instead of abolishing it?

ANSWER: Bride Price should not be demanded and should be non refundable. The current situation of bride price is that it is not affordable by all.

QUESTION: Does Bride Price need government involvement to regulate it? Isn't it going too far by making this cultural practice a constitutional matter?

ANSWER: The constitution is for all Ugandans. Many people are affected in Uganda. As questions of human rights and equality have been raised, the government must be involved.

QUESTION: Is Bride Price really dangerous? Can it lead to life threatening situations such as sickness and death?

ANSWER: Yes; when men pay Bride Price, they consider their wives as property so they have no say, no decision. To enforce this power and control, often domestic violence is used. Injuries are common and death can happen. It also leads to forced marriage since the parents force their daughters into marriage to get wealth and this is unhealthy.

QUESTION: How can you remove a culture that has been there for ages like Bride Price?

ANSWER: It lost its original value. It is now a commercial business.

QUESTION: Does Bride Price cause domestic violence?

ANSWER: Yes.

QUESTION: Does Bride Price make women lose power and dignity?

ANSWER: Women are considered to be property once Bride Price is paid so they have less decision making and less confidence. If a woman is battered all the time, she loses her self esteem and dignity because of low respect from the man.

QUESTION: Does a woman need to be paid for, to ensure she is recognized as officially married?

ANSWER: No. Religious and civil ceremonies do not require bride price to be paid and yet these marriages are official.

QUESTION: What is wrong with it if it is given back to the groom to help him develop?

ANSWER: Bride Price normally goes to the father of the bride and does not help the newly married couple.

QUESTION: Does Bride Price infringe on human rights?

ANSWER: It causes death, sickness, degrades the woman to property, denies the woman freedom to own property, causes forced marriage, brings girls out of school, encourages widow inheritance, spreads HIV / AIDs and poverty among others.

QUESTION: Does Bride Price lead to polygamy?

ANSWER: Bride Price is an underlying factor in polygamy if a man believes that women are valued in terms of Bride Price.

QUESTION: Does Bride Price affect our economy?

ANSWER: It affects the development of our economy as viable things would be done with resources that people waste and miss-allocate in paying Bride Price. Women whose Bride Price is paid tend to lean a lot on the man for dependency which results in domestic violence and affects her productivity.

QUESTION: Is it true that men who have not paid Bride Price are cheap and want free things?

ANSWER: Men who have not paid bride price value women as human beings and usually invest in more viable ventures to develop their families like good education, assets etc.

QUESTION: Does Bride Price influence the way parents view their daughters?

ANSWER: The majority of African parents still value their daughters in terms of Bride Price, despite all the evils associated with the institution.

QUESTION: Bride Price is naturally fading out in Africa, why should we seek to ban it before its time?

ANSWER: We are not sure of the pace as Bride Price is now a price not a gift. There are too many negatives associated with the institution to keep it in its present form.

QUESTION: How does Bride Price increase on the spread of HIV/Aids?

ANSWER: Bride Price positions a man to have power and this can lead him to have multiple partners which renders the couple vulnerable to contract HIV. Older, possibly infected, men can pay bride price for young girls thus increasing the likelihood of transmitting the disease. Wife inheritance can also play a part in the spread of HIV / AIDS.

QUESTION: Does Bride Price promote gender inequality?

ANSWER: Bride Price is an underlying factor of gender inequality. It is a means to disable women and turn them to subjects in relationships.