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PAKADWA VIVAH: An empirical study on social acceptance of such marriages

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Abstract: The study on GROOM KIDNAPPING, popularly known as 'Pakadwa Vivah' or 'Jabaria Shaadi' (with special reference to Bihar), is a research work done to study the rise in the number of forced marriages at gunpoint in Bihar and to analyze the reasons behind its occurrence. This research work has been carried out with certain objectives highlighting its existence in the society, the actual reason behind this practice, knowing the Government's stand/laws on Pakadwa Vivah, analyzing the success rate of such marriages and reaching out to the victims of this evil practice.

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For this, the hypothesis of our research work has been listed below:

- 1. The number of cases of Pakadwa Vivah is on the rise
- A boy from a well off family / highly educated is abducted for Pakadwa Vivah
- 3. To escape dowry, Pakadwa Vivah is practised

We have used two major methodologies for our study:

- 1. Primary research
- 2. Secondary research

Referring to the Primary Research, we have carried out a survey among the masses, talked to victims of Pakadwa Vivah and recorded opinions from professionals in this field. Also, we went door to door for collecting the data for our research project.

In the context of Secondary Research, we took reference from the Hindu Marriage Act, 1955 and The Dowry Prohibition Act 1961. We collected information from video clippings of different news channels, movies like Antardwand and Jabariya Jodi and from one of the episodes of Satyamev Jayate (a program which was broadcast on Star Plus).

After the completion of our research work, a conclusion would be drawn depending upon the outcome, that is, on the basis of our hypothesis which would either turn out to be correct or incorrect.

Keywords: Pakadwa Vivah; Jabariya Shaadi; gunpoint; groom kidnapping; bride; forceful marriage; dowry; illiteracy; uneducated; Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961; bahubalis.

Introduction:

"Coming together is a beginning; keeping together is progress; working together is success." - Henry Ford

Marriage marks the beginning of a new phase of life. Making it work is the duty of both the individuals as it depends on both of them if they wish to make it a successful one or a failure. It is, therefore, necessary for both the souls to know each other well before they finally take the seven vows for a lifelong relationship.

Most of us have heard stories of girls being forcefully married to boys of parents' choice but very few of us have heard of a boy being forcefully married to a girl. This is true for the 'to be grooms' in Bihar. For them, marriage turns out to be a nightmare. They might never wish to appreciate the concept of marriage.

Eligible bachelors are kidnapped and then forced to marry a girl at gunpoint. They are held captive, beaten up and tied up with rope around their waists so that the boy cannot run away from the marriage. This is a common practice in some parts of Bihar, namely, Hajipur, Muzaffarpur, Khagaria and Saharsa (to name a few). This forceful marriage is popularly known as Pakadwa Vivah or Jabariya Shaadi or Chorua Vivah.

The practice of *Pakadwa Vivah* first came to light in the 1980s, as the outcome of dowry becoming prohibitive with the passage of the Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961. Consequently, people started ganging up together and kidnapping grooms to escape dowry. Such people came to be locally known as Bahubalis.

The parents of the bride initiate this act and get the groom, who seems to be a perfect match for their daughter abducted. Such parents are generally uneducated and consider their daughter to be a burden. They try to marry off their daughter as soon as she attains a certain age i.e. 18 years or above, so that the marriage stands legal.

A well-established boy who is either working in the Government or the Corporate Sector is preferred for *Pakadwa Vivah*. He is later married off to a girl who is not properly educated and hails from a poor background. If the groom tries to end the marriage, he has to go through legal battles and criminal charges under the Indian Dowry Act, which protects the rights of women in the marriage. With the passage of time, criminals are hired for such abductions for a fee who also guarantee

post-marriage compliance by the groom. Therefore, many such marriages are not reported as the groom and his family continue to fear violence from local criminals.

The bride's family believes in the practice of *Pakadwa Vivah:*

- To look out for an educated son-in-law Since the bride is not educated, her family looks out for a groom who is well settled. This is done to ensure a safe and comfortable life for the bride.
- Poverty—The parents of the bride who are too poor to arrange for lavish wedding, end up indulging in *Pakadwa Vivah*. This cuts short their unnecessary spending. Therefore, they simply abduct a guy and forcefully get him to marry their daughter.
- 3. To avoid dowry One of the reasons of *Pakadwa Vivah* is to get rid of giving away dowry to the groom's family. The groom's family remains unaware of such marriages and thus the question of asking for dowry does not exist. However, in some of the cases, the bride's family offer gifts to the boy, who is in his early 20s, to lure him into marriage.

In order to go deeper into the concept of *Pakadwa Vivah*, we decided to carry out a survey and later proceed with our research work by talking to the relevant people and gathering other useful information on *Pakadwa Vivah*. Hence, the data that we have presented will hopefully turn out to be an asset in the broader study of the concept of *Pakadwa Vivah*.

Rationale of the Study: The number of men being kidnapped for marriages at gunpoint has increased in the past few years. According to Crime Record of Bihar Police, it says that the number of such marriages is -

Year	Figures
2014	2533
2015	3001
2016	3075
2017	3678
2018	4301
till June, 2019	1097

The extensive study of the reports propelled us to delve deeper into this matter. The widespread practice of

this phenomenon in the society even in the 21⁻⁻ century, further motivated us to highlight this issue and make others aware of the same.

The reasons behind a steady leap in the cases of Jabran Shaadi have come out to be poverty, illiteracy, dowry, social status and the security of the girl child. Due to poverty, the parents do not wish to spend much of their income on the education of their daughter. But they wish to bless their daughter with every facility that they have been deprived of. Another reason for Pakadwa Vivah is illiteracy. Being not educated forces the parents to marry off their daughter to an educated and well established boy, who can ensure a comfortable life. To avoid dowry, which is deeply rooted in the core of our society, such marriages take place. At times, parents look out for young boys of 18 to 25 years, so that they can allure them for the marriage with beautiful gifts. These cut down their expenses of giving cash and other expensive gifts, unlike in love or arrange marriages. The parents often hire bahubalis who can check the profile of the eligible bachelors and suggest the most appropriate ones to them.

This cruel practice in Bihar has been appropriately highlighted in some of the movies, TV serials and in videos. The movies like 'Antardwand' projected the pain and the agony of the kidnapped groom and 'Jabariya Jodi' gave a comic punch to this ill practice. An episode in 'Satyamev Jayate', hosted by the actor Aamir Khan, touched the emotional aspect of *Pakadwa Vivah* where the boy was asked to marry the girl at gunpoint. Another reason for choosing this topic for our research work is the fact that this has been less researched upon and a large section of the society still remains unaware. Our main motive behind carrying out this research work is to reach out to people and speak to them about it. It is expected that an increased awareness about this will bring down the number of such incidents.

Objectives: The research study aims to achieve the following objectives -

 To find out if Pakadwa Vivah still exists in our society: We are living in the 21-century, planning to reach to the moon and the stars. Also, we are amongst the fastest developing countries. Therefore, it becomes difficult for us to believe that Pakadwa Vivah i.e., groom kidnapping still exists in our society. We live in a patriarchal society where men are considered to be superior and on the contrary these men are kidnapped and threatened for the sake of marriage with a girl. It is an unfortunate reality of our society and such an evil practice still persists.

- To dig out the actual reason behind Pakadwa Vivah.: Marriage is a usual practice that every individual does as per his/her choice and wish. But Pakadwa Vivah is a forced marriage that happens at gun-point and without the consent of both. It is, therefore important to study the root cause behind such marriages. There are several reasons like illiteracy, dowry, poverty, superstitions which result in the occurrence of such forced marriages.
- To know about the real victims in Pakadwa
 Vivah: The boy from a very good family, who
 is highly educated and earns fairly well, is
 kidnapped and asked to marry a girl. This
 shows that the life of a boy is destroyed by
 handing over to him a random life partner who
 is a stronger to him.
- To find out the Government's Policy and Laws on Pakadwa Vivah: Pakadwa Vivah is an evil practice. It is not wrong to call it a criminal offence. A boy is forced and badly beaten up if he refuses to marry; he is threatened with death if he is not ready to get married. What is the government's stand on this heinous act? Is there any specific Act or law to rescue the victim of such marriages or any provision of punishment enshrined in the constitution for those who are behind Pakadwa Vivah?
- To know if such marriages are successful in the long run: Pakadwa Vivah is a form of marriage that happens without the consent of the groom and his family; it is a forceful marriage. So, the success of such marriages is always doubtful. Sometimes groom denies to accept the bride or may be his family is not ready to accept a girl whose identity and background they are not aware about.

Hypothesis:

- The number of cases of *Pakadwa Vivah* is on the rise: As per our study, the Crime Record of Bihar Police says that the number of cases of *Pakadwa Vivah* is increasing year by year. The figures are shocking. This might be a tip of an iceberg as many do not wish to indulge themselves in the long process of seeking justice from the courts, thereby, do not file any FIR against the same.
- To escape dowry, Pakadwa Vivah is practised: Another reason for Pakadwa Vivah is dowry which is demanded by most of the grooms' families. It becomes impossible for the poor to meet such demands. Pakadwa Vivah makes it possible for them to marry off their daughter in a well off family without spending much on marriage as they do not have to give anything to the abducted groom.
- The boys from well-off families are targeted and therefore they are the only victims: Generally, well-educated and high salaried boy is kidnapped and asked to marry a girl who might not be as educated as the boy is. If the boy tries to put an end to the marriage, he is charged with the criminal offence. No such charges are put on the bride or on her family.

Scope of the Study:

The areas of our study on *Pakadwa Vivah* in Bihar have been less explored and thus require special attention. This has been in practice in Western Bihar and Eastern Uttar Pradesh for long. With each passing year, the number of cases of groom kidnapping has increased. The eligible bachelors are abducted and then forced to marry at gun-point. This type of marriage is accompanied by domestic abuse against the groom, while the bride has to go through mental trauma.

According to a report published in the Times of India, till June 2019, the number of marriages through abduction has only gone up in Bihar. As many as 4301 grooms were forced to tie knots in 2018 and the number is increasing with each passing year.

Our study includes data from online and as well as from offline sources. We received responses from

different college students and also through a door-to-door survey. We also spoke to one of the police officials. Our study also includes information by one of the lawyers of Patna.

Limitations:

Little research has been done on *Pakadwa Vivah* by others and we faced difficulties in gathering data from any book or news articles.

Another limitation was the ignorant behaviour of people who got married forcefully, as they were not ready to spare time for this topic. We contacted some of the victims of *Pakadwa Vivah* who refused to divulge information about their conjugal life. They considered it to be insignificant and even refused to give correct information. They wanted their names to be kept anonymous. Trying hard, we somehow managed to talk to one of the victims who shared his experiences comfortably.

Our study includes the number of FIRs filed in different police stations. This was one of the most difficult tasks as the constables and SHOs did not provide us with the updated records. We gathered them from different websites.

Theme of the Study:

While every other state in India considers two types of marriages, i.e. Love or Arranged, Bihar is a state where a third type of marriage exists. This type of marriage is known as Pakadwa Vivah or Jabran Shaadi. Marriage is considered to be a ritual, which brings two individuals together in a lifelong relationship. But this has changed over time. Pakadwa Vivah not only forces the boy to marry a random girl but also encourages the bahubalis to carry on with their profession of kidnapping grooms, thereby, increasing the number of crime in our society. The girl on the other hand faces mental trauma as she has to tie the knot with someone who may or may not accept her as his wife.

Pakadwa Vivah helps in serving the needs of those parents who either themselves are uneducated or their girl child is. They prefer kidnapping an eligible bachelor and forcefully asking him to marry their girl at gunpoint. This helps them from escaping dowry. The poor families, who cannot afford to spend much on the marriage of their girl child, also indulge in Pakadwa Vivah. They

consider their girls to be a burden and so marry them off with anyone, seeking help from the bahubalis.

Pakadwa Vivah breaks families. The groom's family remains unaware of the fact that their son has been abducted for marriage. On the other hand, the girl gets no information about the boy or his background. Two complete strangers are compelled to live under one roof. The bride might not respect the groom or even his family and vice-versa, thereby creating friction between the two families.

Such an evil practice still persists in our society. For some, it has become a part of their custom and barely bother about its legality in our state. Some places like Begusarai, Muzaffarpur, Hajipur and Khagaria have recorded a number of cases of Jabran Shaadi, yet many go unnoticed or people do not raise their voice against it and simply continue to live with their partners.

Methodology:

We started our research work by reading various news articles on internet as hardly any book was available on this issue. With the help of those news stories we prepared a questionnaire which consisted of 10 questions for our survey. We carried out the survey online as well as offline for maintaining the authenticity of the research project. We even talked to one of the experienced lawyers and SHOs who gave much of the information off the record. We spoke to one of the grooms who had faced *Pakadwa Vivah* in real. We further talked to their family members and friends. We made a visit to one of the police stations but there we could gather only off the record information. We conducted in-depth interviews, watched films and television shows based on *Pakadwa Vivah*.

Data collection

Primary sources: The required information on *Pakadwa Vivah* was collected with the help of a survey. We conducted an online survey of 456 people of different age groups and an offline survey of 144 people from different localities. All the 10 questions were answered by 600 respondents in total. We took the interview of one of the grooms of *Pakadwa Vivah* and he shared his experience with us.

Secondary sources: We read a number of news articles reported by various news organizations and agencies on internet and we also referred to the Hindu Marriage Act, 1955 and the Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961. We took references from films and television shows. We also consulted several lawyers and judges about the legal provisions regarding forced marriage i.e. *Pakadwa Vivah*. We also collected information from different administrative people.

Data Analysis and Interpretation:

We carried out our survey on 600 people who mainly hailed from different parts of Bihar like Bhagalpur, Saharsa, Lakhisarai, Begusarai, Hajipur, Motihari, Katihar, Muzaffarpur, Purnea, Buxar, Chhapra, Darbhanga, Munger and other places. People from Jharkhand, Kolkata, Delhi and UP also participated in our survey to put forward their opinion regarding *Pakadwa Vivah* in Bihar. Majority of them were students (pursuing Bachelor, Masters courses or preparing for the competitive examinations) while others were engaged in professions like Journalism, Academics, Engineering, Banking, Business, Jewellery Manufacturing, Health Professional, Cabin Crew, Advocacy and others.

1. Do you know the concept of Pakadwa Vivah?

Options	Responses (Number)	Responses (Percentage)
Yes	347	57.9%
No	67	11.2%
Heard but never researched	156	26.0%
Have complete information about this concept	29	4.8%

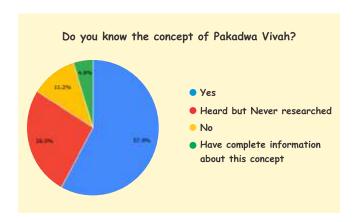


Diagram 1 – Majority of the people had a vague impression of *Pakadwa Vivah*. Some even had the knowledge of the same, while others had just heard of *Pakadwa Vivah* and did not have much idea of the practice.

2. Who is the victim in Pakadwa Vivah?

Options	Responses (Number)	Responses (Percentage)
Bride	45	7.5%
Groom	235	39.3%
Both	286	47.8%
Hardly matters to me	32	5.4%

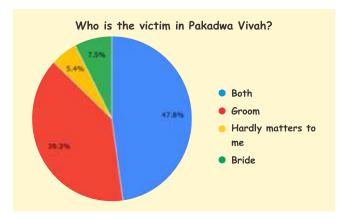


Diagram 2 - The number of people who considered both Bride and the Groom to be the victim in *Pakadwa Vivah* was much more than the ones who thought only Grooms are the victim.

3. Is Pakadwa Vivah a boon for the poor?

Options	Responses (Number)	Responses (Percentage)
Yes	83	13.9%
No	253	42.2%
Maybe	217	36.2%
May not be	46	7.7%

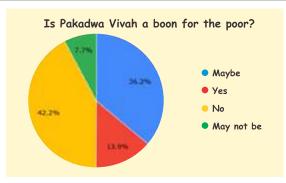


Diagram 3 - While majority of them thought that *Pakadwa Vivah* cannot prove to be a boon for the poor, there were people who thought it might be a boon for the poor.

4. Which type of marriage do you support?

Options	Responses (Number)	Responses (Percentage)
Love marriage	346	57.9%
Arranged marriage	299	38.3%
Pakadwa Vivah	04	0.7%
Any of the above	19	3.2%

Diagram 4 - 346 people voted for Love Marriage and 299 people voted for Arranged Marriage. Surprisingly 4 of them voted for *Pakadwa Vivah* as well.

5. Are *Pakadwa Vivah* and Early Marriage synonymous?

Options	Responses (Number)	Responses (Percentage)
Yes	58	9.7%
No	337	56.3%
Maybe	103	17.2%
Not sure	101	16.9%

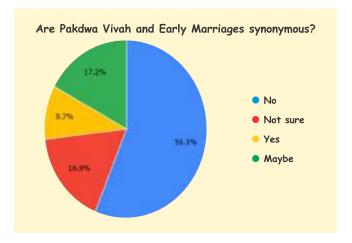


Diagram 5 - People were sure that *Pakadwa Vivah* is not at all synonymous to Early Marriage. But there was another group of people who thought they might be used synonymously.

6. Have you witnessed any incident of *Pakadwa Vivah*?

Options	Responses (Number)	Responses (Percentage)
Yes	79	13.2%
No	292	48.8%
Heard of	154	25.8%
Watched in movies	73	12.2%

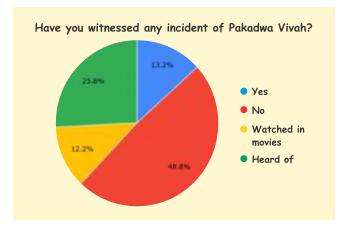


Diagram 6 - Shockingly, only 79 people had witnessed *Pakadwa Vivah* in real while a little less than that, i.e., 73 people watched it in movies. 292 people refused to have witnessed any such practice in Bihar.

7. What could be the main reason behind *Pakadwa Vivah*?

Options	Responses (Number)	Responses (Percentage)
Illiteracy	109	18.2%
Dowry	96	16.1%
Poverty	29	4.8%
All of these	364	60.9%

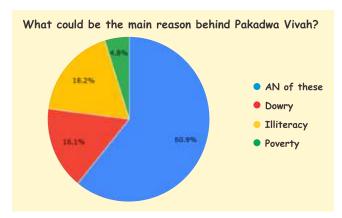


Diagram 7 - Majority of the people blamed a number of factors like illiteracy, dowry and poverty behind the practice of *Pakadwa Vivah*. Others blamed just illiteracy for this practice.

8. Do you think *Pakadwa Vivah* has proved to be successful in the long run?

Options	Responses (Number)	Responses (Percentage)
Yes	21	3.5%
No	352	58.8%
Maybe	157	26.2%
May not be	69	11.5%

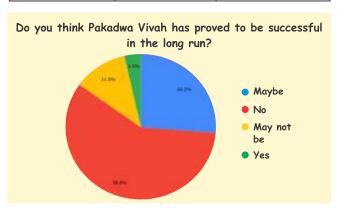


Diagram 8 - 352 out of 599 respondents said that *Pakadwa Vivah* fail to establish a lifelong relationship between the two individuals 157 said *Pakadwa Vivah* might prove to be everlasting.

9. Does Indian Law (Marriage Act) have any provision in this forced marriage?

Options	Responses (Number)	Responses (Percentage)
Yes	79	13.2%
No	157	26.2%
Not sure	290	48.4%
Exists but not practised	73	12.2%

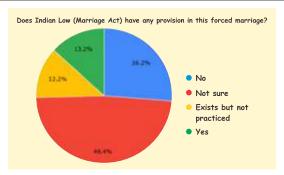


Diagram 9 - Majority of the people were not sure of the existence of any laws against *Pakadwa Vivah*. While, there were a few people who agreed to the existence of such laws, there were others who said that the laws exist but they are not put to practice.

10. Have you watched any movie on *Pakadwa Vivah*?

Options	Responses (Number)	Responses (Percentage)
Yes	242	40.6%
Not sure	64	10.7%
No	275	46.1%
Never heard of	15	2.5%

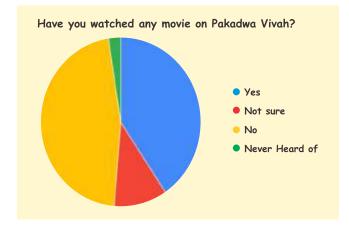


Diagram 10 - Majority of the people did not watch any movies on *Pakadwa Vivah*. However, there were people who had watched such a movie. Some never heard of such movies while others remained unsure.

Findings:

The focus of our study was to find out if *Pakadwa Vivah* still exists in our society. We tried to dig out the major reasons which resulted in the practice of such forced marriages in Bihar.

As per data analysis of primary sources, out of the total 600 respondents, 456 people of different age groups and ideologies registered their responses online and 144 people of different localities and background in Patna registered their responses offline. In context with the primary sources of our study, we eventually got to know that the concept of *Pakadwa Vivah*, i.e., groom kidnapping, is quite prevalent in Bihar. Surprisingly, still very few people have complete information about such

marriages. It was found that both the groom and the bride were seen as the victims of the forced marriages in Bihar.

Since 2014 the cases of *Pakadwa Vivah* is on the rise in Bihar (according to the data that we could gather). The reasons that compelled the ongoing persistent practice of such marriages was found to be complex as majority of the people had voted for illiteracy, dowry and poverty at the same time which reflected their dilemma about the concept.

With reference to secondary sources, we collected information from the Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961. The different news reports and articles published by various news organizations and TV channels on the internet were of equal importance. We also went through different movies and video clips of Pakadwa Vivah and talked to the lawyers and police officials regarding our study. We also collected much of the information about our research project from off-the-record sources and consulted some of the administrative people as well.

Recommendations:

The Constitution of India does not provide any exclusive law against *Pakadwa Vivah*. Since it is not just confined to Bihar as Uttar Pradesh also faces the incidents of *Pakadwa Vivah*, it is important for both the state governments to formulate a strict law against the same.

The stories of *Pakadwa Vivah* are given less space in the media. Till date, only a few stories have been highlighted in the media, while the rest have gone unnoticed. Such cases must be given enough coverage so that the authority concerned can take appropriate action against it.

Awareness must be spread around regarding the practice of *Pakadwa Vivah*. At places where such practices are frequent, people must raise voice and take a stand against it. Raising the level of education in rural Bihar can also act as an asset for the fight against *Pakadwa Vivah*.

Limitations:

The subject of our research work, *Pakadwa Vivah*, has been less researched upon by others and thus we faced difficulties in gathering data from any of the books or news articles.

Another limitation was the ignorant behaviour of people who got married forcefully, as they were not ready to spare time for this issue. We contacted some of the victims of *Pakadwa Vivah* who refused to divulge information about their conjugal life. They considered it to be insignificant and even refused to give correct information. They wanted their names to be kept anonymous. Trying hard, we somehow managed to talk to one of the victims who shared his experience comfortably.

Our study includes the number of FIRs filed in different police stations. This was one of the most difficult tasks as the constables and SHOs did not provide us with the updated records. We gathered them from different websites.

Conclusion:

Pakadwa Vivah has been in practice in Bihar for long and the number of cases lodged against Pakadwa Vivah has taken a leap in the last 4-5 years. People of Bihar have heard this concept but very few have complete information about the 'How' and 'Why' of Pakadwa Vivah.

Bahubalis or the bride's family abducts the boy who has a secure job. The family background of the boy is of equal importance for the bride's family. The boy is tied to the chair and asked to marry a random girl. Moreover, the boy is tortured until all the rituals of the marriage get over. Upon dissolving the marriage, the groom is charged with criminal offences and has to fight a long legal battle. On the other hand, the groom's family may not like the girl as she is not of their choice and class. In that case the girl has to face disrespect and torture throughout life. This marriage also results in lifelong torture for the bride as she will have to spend her life with a stranger. Thus, our study proved that not just the groom but the bride too is equally a victim in a *Pakadwa Vivah*.

The practice of *Pakadwa Vivah* started as a way out to fight against dowry. The bride's family started kidnapping grooms for their daughter so that they can avoid giving away any expensive gifts or cash to the boy's family. Till date, *Pakadwa Vivah* is carried out to avoid the expenses of the marriage.

Moreover, poverty and illiteracy have also contributed to the rise of the cases of *Pakadwa Vivah*. The poor cannot afford to marry off their daughter to a

rich family as they remain status conscious and wish to look for a girl who is educated and can match their status. Therefore, *Pakadwa Vivah* proves to an easy method for poor families.

The literacy rate in Bihar is very low. Their thinking and ideologies remain very backward. Here, people consider their daughter to be a burden and do not wait for her to complete the studies and grab a decent job rather they are in a hurry to marry her off as soon as possible.

After collecting the data of *Pakadwa Vivah* from the official website of Bihar Police, it became clear that such cases are on the rise. Hence, this data proved that *Pakadwa Vivah* still takes place in a few pockets of Bihar.

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