

Discussion Questions for *The Dowry Bride*

Book Club Guide

1. The Dowry Bride has the familiar echo of domestic violence. How different is the danger element surrounding Megha from what American or European women experience and why?
2. Megha says to Kiran, "You and I . . . we were born in an orthodox Brahmin caste and culture that is mired in a swamp that goes back a thousand years. The world goes around, but our traditions remain static." How does the story portray this sentiment and the inherent contradictions of contemporary Indian culture?
3. Although Megha has two older sisters, they never appear in the book. So why are they important to the story, and what kind of impact do they have on her life?
4. Despite her trust in Kiran and knowing it's the safest place to be, Megha is reluctant to stay in his home. Do you think she is justified in feeling that way and why?
5. At one point in the book, Megha almost succeeds in committing suicide. Why does she consider death better than living, especially after discovering the joy of knowing a wonderful man loves her and she returns his feelings?
6. Amma has been looking for a bright and good-looking wife for her son for a long time, and yet, when she finds the ideal wife, why is she dissatisfied? What part does her own past play in her reaction to Megha and how does this play out through the entire book?
7. Discuss Megha's father-in-law, Appaji's role in her life. Despite his lack of involvement in her daily life, how does he exert a strong influence on her?
8. Would you describe the Ramnath family as dysfunctional? Although they live together as a family unit, what is the nature of their relationship that makes them different from most traditional families?
9. Megha has always suspected that she was given the name "Megha" or "Cloud" for a reason. Is Megha justified in thinking that? Does that name really live up to its meaning in the story?
10. Do you think the old adages of "love conquers all" and "good triumphs over evil" are portrayed in this novel? If yes, how, and to what degree?
11. There is a family secret revealed in *The Dowry Bride*. Was it wise for the person holding the secret to divulge it? Should the secret have been revealed to the one person who would be most affected by it? Did the secret-keeper do a favor or a disservice to that person by withholding the truth? Who paid the ultimate price of this long-held secret?
12. The book sheds some light on mother-in-law/daughter-in-law relationships in general. Compare and contrast this type of relationship with that between father-in-law and son-in-law.
13. Discuss the relationship between Megha and Kiran. How do their feelings for each other affect them and those around them? What are some of the potential consequences of the choices that are available to them?