

Emerging Factors of Across Region Marriages in Haryana: A Sociological Study

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ABSTRACT

Low sex ratio especially in North West India is not a new phenomenon. The sex ratio has been declining ever since recorded in 1871 Census. There is a great deal of concern by demographers, sociologists and policy planners on the ever declining sex ratio. Haryana is one of the economically prosperous state but when it comes to the social development, it is still quite backward as is clearly reflected in poor sex ratio of the state, i.e. 877/1000 males against the national average of 940/1000 males. It is even poorer in the age group of 0-6 and that is 830/1000 males against the national average of 914/1000 males. Not only due to continuously declining sex ratio, there are so many other factors to encourage the across region marriage in Haryana like as poverty, addiction, illiteracy and unemployment etc.

1. Introduction

In different societies, there are different forms of marriage. Some societies allow a male to marry only a single female whereas in other societies a husband is allowed to have more than one wife. In some cases the parents arrange the marriage whereas in others the boys and girls arrange for the marriage of their own. Though the majority of the marriages in rural India are between different clans or different villages, they are nonetheless between the same castes. In rural India the status and reputation of the family is of paramount importance in matters of match making, but of late there is some change in thinking and attitudes in this regard.

In some villages, marriage may be contracted between villages five to ten miles apart, whereas in some other villages this distance must not be less than forty miles. There are certain families in the village which do not accept a match for marriage who is living within one hundred miles distance from the village; it should be more than hundred miles for these people (Jayapalan 2002)

About the patterns of kinship and marriage as identified is (Karve, 1965) different for the north and the south. In the south, marriages often take place among close relatives due to which brides were known to the family. Thus 'cross-cousin' and 'uncle-niece' marriages were quite common. On the other hand, in the north, however people preferred to marry 'stranger'- those sufficiently removed in terms of both social and physical distance. The relationship between the bride givers and takers is more equal in the south and entirely hierarchical in the north with the bride takes having a permanent superiority here.

In a caste group in north Indian society, the principles of the hierarchy and equality are articulated in complex ways. The gotra is an exogamous patrilineal clan whose members are to share patrilineal descent from a common ancestor. Yet, there is a social hierarchy within the caste and especially among different gotras within a village, which involves notions rank and equality, along with the increasing differentiation of status, power and wealth developing within each caste, re-contribute to a re-evaluation of the relative status of different clans and the collapse of the earlier relativity coherent, internally consistent ideology within the caste group (Chowdhry, 2004).

The present north Indian family is patrilineal, patrilocal and patriarchal. The marriage is generally outside the kin group and the local group. It is a joint family in which the brides are brought from outside and the girls are given away. The behaviour is strictly regulated according to generations, according to whether one is born in the family or married into the family and finally according to whether one is a man or a woman. Customs like levirate and surorate by which a widow marries the younger brother of her husband and a man marries the younger sister of his wife, show that marriage is a very much important relationship between two families rather than between two individuals. Thus, a caste in a village is held to be patri-clan and so on marriage is allowed within a village. Not only are 'village', but a 'group of villages' supposed to be settled by a patrilineage and so marriage among its members is prohibited. More than one inter-marrying clan may live in one village and practise inter-marriage for generations.

In Haryana, the customary laws regulating marriages stand diametrically opposed to the law of the land. Briefly speaking, under the Hindu Marriage Act, 1955, except for the observation of the certain prohibited degree of relationship, legal restrictions on the choice of marriage partner are almost non-existent. This implies that under the law, both sagotra (kin in the patrilineal line of descent whose members claim descent from the same gotra ancestor) and inter-caste marriages are permitted (Gupta, 1982). Yet, customarily, there are a variety of rules and practices and degrees of prohibited relationships observed in respect to marriage in different regions of India. This is specially marked in the north-south divide. Customary marriage rules in most parts of north India upheld caste endogamy and adopts the rule of gotra or gotra exogamy. Most caste groups upper or lower follow a rule of three or four gotra exogamy (Lewis, 1958).

On the one hand, there is a rapidly urbanizing Haryana, with extensive consumerist culture and on the other, there is the traditional Panchayat, an extra judicial body, imposing its arbitrary will, if need be, even though violence. The sanctions imposed by traditional Panchayats against individuals, families and often caste groups or sections of its own community show that caste dynamics even in the 21st century is taking its own form. Thus, the second richest state in India emerges more

regressive than moving towards a modern egalitarian statehood (Chowdhary, 1994).

In the present study an attempt has been made to understand and examine emerging factors behind across region marriages taking place in rural Haryana. The phenomenon of such marriages is not new particularly in this part of India. These marriages have always been taking place in parts of the Haryana, Punjab, Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan.

2. Low Sex Ratio

Low sex ratio especially in North West India is not a new phenomenon. The sex ratio has been declining ever since recorded in 1871 Census. Demographers and social scientists have also focused on the phenomenon of 'missing women' pointing to small family size with at least one son in the family. It is clearly reflected in poor sex ratio of the state i.e. 877/1000 males against the national average of 940/1000 males. It is even poorer in the age group of 0-6 and that is 830/1000 males against the national average of 914/1000 males. Due to low sex ratio male marriage squeeze and it is most important factor for not finding bride in local area that's why they look after outer states for their marriage.

3. Poverty and Unemployment

Today, the burning issue which has affected the youth in Haryana is the problem of unemployment has acquired serious proportions and it is having undesirable impact on the society. The avenues for new jobs are very few and existing ones also being restricted by not filling the vacant posts. The era of Liberalization, Privatization and Globalisation has put severe constraints and led to retrenchment in various public sectors departments. The numbers of unemployed in Haryana have more than doubled in less than 20 years. Many a time in the field, the village elderly men often stated that, "how these men can get married when they have neither enough land nor any job". During the survey, it is revealed that unemployment and lower class status have resulted into such marriages where women are brought from different regions. Unable to find a girl locally, these men have taken recourse to bringing women from other regions. The parents of the girls (local level) are not ready to give their daughters to men from poor families.

Extreme poverty and adverse sex ratio are responsible for bringing women from far off places like Assam,

Bengal, Bihar and Maharashtra. The girls are from poor families. Poverty is observed in both groom and bride's parents. Across region marriage involves less expenditure than a marriage within the community, the expenses of marriage ceremony are taken care of by the groom who spends less money than he might otherwise have to do a locally arranged marriage. These men do not have sound economic condition but they are much better relatively than the women's families of other states. On the other hand, the parents of the girl being very poor are unable to fulfill the responsibility of arranging marriage within the community which compels them to arrange the marriage elsewhere. With across region marriage, the families escape both dowry and marriage expenditure (Kaur, 2004).

4. Addiction to Alcohol or Intoxicants Drugs

Another pattern of across-region marriages emerged where men did not get married due to their addiction either to drugs or alcohol. They had no commitments whatsoever towards family. Nor did they contribute in any form to help the family economically. There were such kinds of peoples met in almost every village. Some are belonged to higher caste i.e. Jats whereas some are from scheduled caste i.e. Chamar. Their families did not want to take their responsibilities to get them married and considered them as burden.

5. Conclusion

The across region marriages in no way imply that the status of local women has improved. The demand for dowry has gone up. Rather the employed male in Haryana is in a demanding position. Dowry is bargained for, keeping in view the economic position and employed status of the man. With the retrenchment of public sector services, the number of 'suitable boys' has also gone down; with the result there is tough competition to net them in marriage. The emerging situation in Haryana in general and long term consequences of across region marriages in particular indicate the sensitivity of social issues to be viewed in a time frame. Finally, it found that all these factors discussed above also play an important role to emerge the Across-region marriages in Haryana.

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