



## **A Sociological Analysis of Child Marriage and Its Consequences**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*Child marriages still exist in some rural regions of India where this social evil is considered as the traditional rituals. There is a myth among rural people that if they don't marry before puberty then God would send them to the hell. This myth is still considered from ancient times. Due to the lack of education, the rural people follow this tradition and prefer child marriage. But these days, due to social awareness; this social evil has come to an end in many parts of India. Still, there are few rural places where this evil tradition is followed and believed as a pride to do child marriage. Earlier marriage can cause many health related problems to the girls. The current paper highlights the child marriage and its consequences.*

### **KEYWORDS:**

*Child, Marriage, Girl, Rural*



## **INTRODUCTION**

Child marriage is very serious problem of our society. In child marriage, children are married before the age of 18. This is illegal in India as according to Indian law, the age of boy and girl must be equivalent or higher than 18. In India, child marriage is mostly reported in the rural regions of Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar and Jharkhand. According to a report, about 40% of all cases of child marriage are noticed in Rajasthan. While, 39.6% and 34.1% of all cases of child marriage were observed in Bihar and Madhya Pradesh respectively.

In child marriage, the children are allowed to marry before they can achieve the mental and physical maturity. The impact of child marriage on girls is very painful as they have to suffer from much health related issues throughout their lives. In some cases, it is observed that girls fall in depression due to early marriage.

Due to child marriage, the girls get pregnant at the small age. At the age, when they should go to school and play; they get the responsibility of taking care of their own child. In most of the cases, it is also observed that the girls who are married earlier; have to face domestic violence within the home.



There are many factors which are responsible for the child marriage. Poverty of girl's family could be one of the reasons for earlier marriage as the girl's parents don't have enough financial status to lift the burden of girl member.

Social insecurity is the other factor for child marriage as Indian society considers a married woman much safer than the unmarried woman. A married woman is supposed to be much socially secured as most of the crimes like rape and assaults are reported for the unmarried women. So, girl's parents think it safer for their girls to marry as earlier as possible so that there should be no issue of insecurity.

In some rural people, it is considered that if they marry their girl child at small age then they would have not to spend money on their expenditures like education, clothes, food and other daily things. Traditionally, girls are supposed to be a burden on the patents and unfortunately, this narrow thinking still exists in Indian society which is a big factor for the child marriage.

Regardless of its roots, child marriage constitutes a gross violation of human rights, leaving physical, psychological and emotional scars for life. Sexual activity starts soon after marriage, and pregnancy and childbirth at an early age can lead to maternal as well as infant mortality. Nearly 80 percent girls are facing the domestic violence



(beaten, slapped or threatened), health problems. Most of the girls who are married before 18 year are likely to get pregnancy problems and there were death case reported.

The age group below 18 year has high fertility. Child brides often show signs symptomatic of sexual abuse and post-traumatic stress such as feelings of hopelessness, helplessness and severe depression.

### **CHILD MARRIAGE AND ITS CONSEQUENCES**

The scenario of higher fertility rate is related with early marriage where a woman marries at the small age has the more tendency to give birth to a number of children which consequently may lead to her health issues in the longer period.

It is observed that the young brides are given more pressure in order to prove their level of fertility and they are even forced to give birth to child as soon as possible. In some cases, they are demanded to give birth to only sons although it is not in their hands.

If they give birth to the girl then they are beaten as it is supposed that the girl children are burden on the parents as they can't help their parents in earning money. Therefore, in many cases, these newly born girls are killed just after their birth.



Such kind of poor mentality of Indian society has certainly disgrade our society in a bigger way. Much health related complications are found as a result of earlier pregnancy in the lives of a woman. Due to lack of information about her physical condition, she has no idea how to deal with such kind of body changes.

Now, the older women of their families are not so much supportive that they can even guide them properly in this kind of situation. In older days, there had to be an elderly woman whose responsibility was to monitor all the physical changes happening in the pregnant woman.

But now, the elderly women have no much knowledge about the delivery situations and times. They have even no tendency to look for the proper medical treatment in case of emergency. Sometimes, local bodies are used to provide help to the pregnant woman.

Females have to face unwanted pregnancy when they are forced to marry below the age of 16 years and generally, they give birth to more children due to higher rate of fertility at that young age. Due to lack of awareness, these females have no idea about the pregnancy and they are allowed to give birth at shorter age.

These young mothers have less control over their children and they have no idea about the nutrition level in their children. Hence, in many cases,



It is found that their children have to face lack of proper nutrition's in their bodies.

Psychological immaturity is also found in the girls married in younger ages. The physical pain during the sexual intercourse is the main reason for this physical immaturity among these females. Also, at the time of pregnancy, the complications like obstetric fistula are observed in the pregnant women of younger ages.

It is also reported that the reproduction level and sexual health are mostly affected among the females who are forced to marry earlier in their lives. Many side-effects like retardation in growth, hypertension, higher rate of mortality etc. are commonly found in these kinds of females.

The mortality level among the newly born infants is also found to be on higher side as a result of the premature delivery. Also, the body-weight of new infants of these females is slightly lower than that of an average infant.

Thus, earlier marriage is not only dangerous for the female herself but her newly born infant also as it may cause many vital diseases among the younger mother and her infant. According to a report, one in 15 children dies before reaching to the age of one in India and this statistics in the world is one in 200 children.



There is a tremendous pressure on young wives to bear a child. Early sexual activity also exposes adolescents to a greater risk of contracting Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs), including HIV/AIDS. Early marriage and pregnancy is one of the major causes of maternal mortality in India.

Child brides often have to give up on education as they are expected to take up household responsibilities. This denies the girls the opportunity to be independent and to empower herself. While it is believed that educating a woman can help educate future generations, the opposite also is true. An uneducated woman will not be able to educate her own children in case of financial difficulties or other adverse conditions. Illiteracy also results in that the child is dependent on her family for sustenance and this puts her in a powerless situation leading to easy exploitation and abuse.

The psychological and physical implications of forced sexual relations at an early age cannot even be estimated. Young girls are vulnerable to sexual abuse by their own partners and have no way of defending themselves or approaching anybody for help. They are also vulnerable to diseases that are transmitted sexually.

Early motherhood is one of the most adverse effects of child marriage and often leads to the death of the young mother during child birth. Too



young, mentally and physically to become a mother, early motherhood puts the health of the mother and child in danger.

## **DISCUSSION**

According to research, girls younger than 15 years old are five times more likely to die during childbirth than girls above the age of 20. The Infant Mortality Rates in such cases also is very high and their underdeveloped bodies are not ready for maternity and the challenge that come with maternity.

Once married, the girl child is forced to leave her home and inhabit another place altogether wherein she is forced to take up roles that she isn't mentally prepared for. Huge responsibilities like that of mother and a daughter-in-law are too much for a minor girl. It eventually leads to isolation and depression. For the males, taking up a responsibility as critical as that of wife as in to take of her finances and share your own finances also becomes taxing.

Childhood is lost and the freedom to play and learn is also snatched in the process. Early marriages also carry with them excessive risk factors. There is a greater risk of contracting sexual diseases like HIV. Also, girls who marry early are less likely to be updated about pregnancy and





related subjects. Infants born to such mothers are more likely to suffer from malnutrition, low birth weights.

In India, child marriages are still prevalent in the state of Kerala, the state with the highest literacy rates. According to a UNICEF report, in India there were more child marriages in rural areas than urban. Bihar has the highest incidence of child marriage at 68 per cent while Himachal Pradesh with around nine per cent has the lowest incidence as per the report.

The Indian Constitution provides for prohibitions against child marriage through various laws and enactments. The first law that was designed was the Child Marriage Restraint Act of 1929 which extended to the whole of India except Jammu and Kashmir. This act defines the ages of an adult male and female. If there is a marriage taking place between a boy who is aged between eighteen to twenty one years and a girl below the age of eighteen years, it implies an imprisonment up to fifteen days along with a fine of one thousand rupees. The act was again amended in the year 1940 to rise the ages of male and female children.

Another law that exists is the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006. This act addressed the flaws contained in the child Marriage Restraint Act. Thus, this act was meant to strictly prohibit the marriage rather than merely restricting it. Under this law, the children have the choice to



declare their marriage as void up to two years of reaching adulthood. But, this law does not extend to the Muslims which is a major shortcoming of the law as this law is binding to all citizens of India. Also, sex with minors is a criminal offence under Section 376 of the Indian Penal Code. The issue of confusion over marital rape is also a factor which proves as a hindrance to curb this menace as marital rape is not illegal in India.

## **CONCLUSION**

A major obstacle in curbing the evil is that most of these marriages are carried out informally and thus remain unregistered. Most of the times, it become an uphill task to decipher the correct age of the children as they do not have birth certificates as proofs or even if they have, that happens to be a fraudulent one since it establishes the age inappropriately as an adult. There needs to be mechanisms much stronger than these laws in order to put a stop on child marriages. Immediate reporting to the police needs to done as and when one hears of child marriage taking place.

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