

Bride Buying In Rural Haryana

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ABSTRACT: Haryana is a prosperous state economically but on social front the state is known for its patriarchal social structure where, a woman is considered as the weak sex. The advent of technology resulted in the tilting of sex ratio towards masculine population. This tilting of sex ratio toward masculine population resulted in Male marriage Squeeze in the state of Haryana. To meet this shortage of girls, due to rampant female foeticide, families in Haryana using different tactics to meet this shortage of girls. Buying a bride from states is one of the tactics that the Haryanvi families are using to meet this shortage of marriageable girls. Bride buying is not a new phenomenon. The pre-colonial literature highlights that earlier, it was prevalent in the state of Punjab. However, recently it has become a common feature of rural area in the state of Haryana. In villages, approximately 50-60 men have crossed their right age to get married and do not find a suitable match for themselves. If the number of bachelors is aggregated then the number will become large. Thus with the backdrop of this problem, the present research paper is based on the phenomenon of bride buying in Haryana. The major focus will be on exploring the reasons why the men in Haryana opt for such kind of a marital alliance. The universe of the study is state of Haryana and further qualitative research methodology was used due to sensitivity of the topic.

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I. INTRODUCTION

The dismal sex ratio in the state of Punjab and Haryana is not a new problem. There are multiple factors like preference for son, huge dowry demands and considering daughters as a liability/burden. With coming of modern and new technique, people opted for illegal sex selection. Studies too have highlighted that pre-natal sex determination is the main reason for low sex ratio. Studies have pointed out that decades of unchecked sex-selective abortions have led to draught of brides in Punjab and Haryana. Due to this low sex ratio there is a shortage of girls in the marriageable age group. Due to the shortage of girls there is a male marriage squeeze in the state of Haryana. Studies by Ahlawat (2009), Kaur and Larsen (2013), Mishra (2013), Darling (1928), Kaur (2004) found that men of marriageable age are facing a problem of shortage of brides in their local market. The studies highlighted that the declining sex ratio and child sex ratio has led to the problem of shortage of brides in Haryana. The declining sex ratio had social consequences in the economically prosperous states, Punjab and Haryana. Men remained unmarried and crossed their right age to get married. In the villages, it was found that approximately 60-70 men are bachelors and have crossed the marriageable age. This shortage of women, in these prosperous regions has led to the import of girls/women from poverty ridden areas. Haryana, specifically with the lowest child sex ratio, i.e. 774, a substantial number of men have bought women from West Bengal, Bihar, Jharkhand, Assam, Hyderabad and Nepal. Study by Devi and Parihar (2014), too highlighted that thousands of women from rural areas of other states including Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Odisha, Bihar, Jharkhand, West Bengal, Kerala, Assam, Uttar Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh etc., have either brought or 'bought' for marriage purpose. In all the cases, money is involved either directly or indirectly. With this background the research paper based on the phenomenon of bride buying in Haryana. With special emphasize on exploring reasons why men are opting for such kind of marriages. The paper also tries to answer the question that is it only due to low sex ratio that the marriageable age men are not able to find a bride in local area or are there any other factors that are also responsible for the phenomenon of bride buying in Haryana

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II. OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

1. To examine the reasons why men from Haryana are marrying girls from other states i.e. of different ethnicity, caste, religion, background etc; and
2. To find out the causes why girls from different states are getting married to men in Haryana

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted in the state of Haryana. Exploratory research design has been used to conduct the study. Due to the non-availability of sampling frame, snowball sampling method has been used for the present study. Qualitative research methodology has been used to study the phenomenon due to sensitivity of the topic. Forty-one case studies from the four divisions of Haryana have been selected for the study. The respondents for the study were the purchased woman and their husbands. Method of Triangulation has been used in order to collect the data. Interview Guide and in-depth conversational interviews has been conducted to collect data from brides and their husbands.

IV. DISCUSSION

It is very important to trace down the reasons behind the phenomenon of bride buying in order to study it in a comprehensive manner. During fieldwork, the researcher gathered the information by interviewing the husband of purchased bride, community members irrespective of age, caste and gender, members of Panchayats and members of Khaps. After an in-depth conversational interview the following reasons were explored which are described below.

Sex Ratio

During the field work it was found that sex ratio is the reason behind shortage of girls in the marriageable cohort. Shortage of girls further leads to Male Marriage Squeeze in the state of Haryana. Therefore the men in Haryana were not able to find brides in the local area. Except sex ratio there are other reasons also due to which the men in Haryana were not able to find bride in the local marriage market.

Poverty

Studies have indicated that poverty is one of the reasons why a man is unable to find a suitable match in the local marriage market. During the fieldwork, too it was found that parents are not willing to get their daughters married to a person who is financially weak, leading to involuntary bachelorhood for the male in the rural areas of Haryana. One of the respondents said, '*Gareeb aadmi ko mewat mien koi ladki na dewe, bahar se lawe khareed kar, 8-10000 me lawe, thodi malook cchahiye to 20000 ki lawe, maa baap lewe hai paise, kayee kalkatta se aayee hai, kayee heydrabad se, bihar se aur Jharkhand se*' (Nobody gives his daughter to poor man in Mewat so he has to purchase a wife from outside the State. So the men who are not able to find brides in the local area left with no other option to purchase brides from other states. The price of such brides starts from Rs.8000-1000.

Land Ownership

Since Haryana is an agrarian society therefore at the time of match making Land ownership plays a pivotal role. A person with large landholding is able to secure a good match for him whereas a person who has less or no land has to resort to purchase a bride from outside regions. No one is ready to give their daughters to these men, thus compelling these men to go to other states in search of bride. A respondent from the field highlighted that,

(Only those get daughter-in-law from other states)

Jin ke pas ya to property nahi ha ya to vo apahij hai'

(Who do not have any property or suffer of any deformity)

Fragmentation of land among land owning families too is one of the reasons responsible for such kind of marriages. No one wants to marry their daughter to a person who have half to four acre of land.

Unemployment

Apart from poverty and landownership, unemployment is also one of the reasons behind phenomenon of bride buying. Unemployment also contributes to weak financial condition for men which prevent them from finding a good match for them. During fieldwork the community members revealed that both land ownership and sound social-economic background is sort after traits by the bride's parents at the time of groom's selection for their daughter. Respondent narrated why men are not finding match for themselves in local marriage market: '*Berozgaari (Unemployment) ke karan, bahar ke pardesho se laa rahe hai, 10-12 bihar mein se laa kar rakhi hai, kuch paise deke laaye hai, 30000 rupaye deke le ke aate hai, umar nikalne lagi thi, service ke wajah se, Plus 2 se neeche ladki nahi milti hai isiliye Jameen or service dono bahut jaroori hai rishta karne ke liye apne*

pardesh mein” (The girls are bought from outer states like Bihar because of unemployment of men. Approximately Rs. 30000 is spent on while arranging a match. There are multiple reasons for this, i.e. over age, unemployment, less land holding and educational background. A person below senior secondary school does not get a girl in Haryana. Thus land and employment both play a pivotal role while arranging a match). The respondents of different age group narrated that: “*Ab jameen ko nahii dekhte hai, sarkaari naukari ko dekhte hai*” (Now during the selection of groom people do not look at the land rather special emphasize is on Government Job). Thus it can be said that in Haryana, the girl’s family members keep into account the boy’s employment status while arranging their daughter’s marriage.

Physical Deformity

Physical deformity is also found to be why males are unable to find native bride for them. During fieldwork in district Kaithal, although a man had a good social standing, good landownership but due to his amputated four arm he still could not find a bride in his local area. This case substantiated that along with poverty, no landownership, weak financial set, physical deformity also responsible for this phenomenon of bride buying. Two cases were found where the male were handicapped and were not able to find bride in the local area.

Desertion or Death of Wife

During fieldwork it was found that death of the first wife or desertion from the first marriage too becomes a reason for the phenomenon of bride buying. A male respondent from Nuh town narrated ‘*kisi ki barbani(wife)chood jaya ya pehli bahu mar gayee ho, unhe mewat mien ladki nahi milti, ye aadmi heydrabad se shaadi kar rahe hai, hedrabad ke gareebi ilaako ladki ko laya jata hai paise dekar 10000, 20000 aur kayee cases main 50000 bhi lag jaate hai, mahilao ka soshan ho raha hai*’ (ones who are deserted by their first wife and ones whose first wife died, left with no choice are forced to get a woman from poverty ridden areas of Hyderabad. The price ranges from Ra. 10000-20000 but in a few cases it goes up-to Rs. 50000. These women who are bought from other states are exploited by their family members).

No Sister for Exchange (Satta Batta)

It was found that in a few communities in Haryana, people prefer to have their marital partner from the same community to which they belonged to. It is also known as the custom of *Satta-Batta*, which means a custom, involves the simultaneous marriage of a brother-sister pair from two households. During the field work it was found that it becomes difficult for those men to get girls for marriage who have more brothers and no sisters to give in exchange. In villages of district Yamunanagar, the husbands of the purchased bride during discussion clearly stated that ‘*Satta Batta Chalta hai hamara yahan, Behan nahi thi to... Bihar se laaye the, sara kharcha paani humne uthaya tha*’(Exchange of bride is done; no sister hence got bride from outside; All the Expenditure was borne to get the bride). Another respondent from Gujjar Muslim community told, ‘*Haamaare yahaan par shaadiyaan satte-batte me hoti hai>To jinke paas ladkiyan nahi hoti, Wo baahar se karte hai. Maine bhi shaadi tabhi baahar se ki hai*’(Here in our community marriages are preferred on exchange basis i.e. give and take. All those who do not have girls for exchange, they go outside caste and State. I too got married on this basis). Thus it clearly indicates that people who have more brothers and a few sisters in some communities of Haryana, find it difficult to find a match for their marriages. Due to which, they cross their age of marriage and it would become difficult for them to find a bride in the local area.

Crossed Right Age of Marriage

In Indian society, it is found that marriage of a person is also related to age of an individual if a person has crossed the right age of marriage, then it is very difficult for him to find a match for himself/herself. The community members irrespective of age and gender, highlighted that an aged person do not find a match in local marriage market and had to go outside their state to buy a bride for himself. During fieldwork a respondents narrated, ‘*Jinki umar jyada ho jaati hai, Unko koi ladki nahi deta, Islie unhe baahar se karwani padti hai*’(All those who gets older, they too do not get girls here in villages, they have to go out to other States/caste to get married).

Parents not Alive at the time of Marriage

Parents play a vital role in an individual life. It was found that men who did not have parents crossed the right age and there was no one to look for match for them or put a word in search of a girl. In addition if one of the parents is step mother or step father then also they were not able to get a bride in local area. In one of the cases in district Yamunagar, it was found that the step mother got all her sons married and only one son who was eldest was left unmarried. Ultimately he had to take help of a middle man to find a bride for himself from poverty ridden states. In another case a respondents highlighted that, ‘*Mere maa baap nahi the, Na behan thi to*

satta - batta nahi ho sakta tha, Isliye maine Bihar mien ja ke shaadi ki'(I was orphan child, I had no sister for exchange, Hence I got Bride from Bihar)

V. CONCLUSION

From the above findings, it can be concluded that sex ratio is the main reason behind the phenomenon of Bride Buying in the state of Haryana. Poverty, landownership, unemployment, physical deformity, alcoholism, death of first wife, no sister for exchange, no parents and presence of step parent all served as the reasons for not getting brides in the local areas. The earlier studies pointed out that sex ratio and land fragmentation were the main reasons behind this phenomenon where as the researcher during the fieldwork was able to trace down few more reasons which were responsible for this phenomenon. During the field work it was found that the brides who are entering into such kind of alliances are not treated equally with the local brides. They face problem of different language culture and food eating pattern. The onus of adjustment at their matrimonial home is totally on these brides.

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