



Child Marriage in India: A Geographical Description

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Abstract:

Child marriage is the worst form of exploitation in India. Because, it happens in front of our eyes, sometimes in the name of patriarchy, traditions and sometimes in the name of security and future of the girl child. A vast majority of girls in the country are being married much before the legally permissible age for marriage. Mostly this article discuss about the highest and lowest numbers of states which are affected by child marriage systems.

Key Words: Child, Marriage, age, Female, Health

Introduction:

Generally a known fact that, India was the first developing country to embrace a positive Population Policy from 1951-52. Despite our interference of policy at such an early stage of our after Independence history, our triumph on demographic front have not been very satisfactory, when it is compared with China, which turn to such mediation much later. Age at marriage is one such credit, which if manipulated advantageously could yield rich dividends in the area of control in birth rate and health operation. Increased age at marriage can effectively reduce fertility and help improve health of mother as well as children.

The National Family and Health Survey (NFHS) conducted a major survey of ever-married females in the age group of 13-49 in India in 1992-93 under the directions of Ministry of Health and Family Welfare. The Survey was funded by USA Agency for International Development. The IIPS Mumbai coordinated and the East-West Centre, Hawaii and Macro International, USA provided the technical assistance. According to this survey, the mean age at marriage for Indian Women was 20 years. In rural areas it was 19.3 than that in Urban areas is 21.5. The legal age of marriage for women is 18 and 21 for men in India. Mainly Govt. of India is planning to make 21 for both men and women. Recently, the median age for marriage among women aged 20-49 in India is 19.2 years, and 24.9 years among men of age 25-49.

Rules and Regulations against Child Marriage:

➤ ***Child marriage Restraint Act of 1929:***

This acts also called as Sarada Act, was a regulation for restrict the practice of child marriage. It was enacted on 1st April 1930, extended across the entire country with the exception of some princely states like Jammu and Kashmir and Hyderabad. The act defined the age of marriage to be 18 for males and 14 for females. After the Indian Independence in 1949 the minimum age was increased to 15 for females and in 1978 it was increased again both for females as 18 and for male is 21 years.

➤ ***The Prohibition of Child Marriage Act 2006:***

The Govt. of India brought the prohibition of child marriage act in 2006, and it came into effect on 1st November 2007 to address and fix the short comings of the child marriage restraint act. The change in name was meant to reflect the prevention and prohibition of child marriage, rather than restraining it. This act kept the ages of adult males and females the same but made some important changes to further protect the children. Any male over 18 years of age who enters into a marriage with a minor or any one who directs or conducts a child marriage ceremony can be punished with up to two years of imprisonment or a fine.

Child Marriage in India:

Generally Goa had the distinction of having lowest incidence of child marriage 7.2%. on the other hand Madhya Pradesh where such an incidence was as high as 73.3%, that ten times higher than that in Goa. The inter-state variations reveal that one half to three-fourths of the marriages solemnised in Nine major states were in fact child marriages. Madhya Pradesh (73.3%), Rajasthan (69.5%), Bihar (69.1%), Andhra Pradesh (68.6%), Uttar Pradesh (63.9%), Haryana (57.3%), West Bengal (56.4%), Maharashtra (53.9%), Karnataka (51.2%).

Child Marriage rates in Major states of India

Madhya Pradesh	73.3%
Rajasthan	69.5%
Bihar	69.1%
Andhra Pradesh	68.6%
Uttar Pradesh	63.9%
Haryana	57.3%
West Bengal	56.4%
Maharashtra	53.9%
Karnataka	51.2%

By contrast, six states including Goa (7.2%), Mizoram (13.3%), Manipur (14.3%), Punjab (14.9%), Nagaland (16.4%), Kerala (19.3%) comparatively low incidence of child marriage. Between these two extremes were the states like those of Odisha (45.5%), Assam (44.4%), Arunachal Pradesh (43.95%), Tripura (41.1%), Tamilnadu (36.1%), Gujarat (33.4%), Delhi (28.7%), Meghalaya (28.1%), Himachal Pradesh (24.2%), Jammu and Kashmir (20.5%).

Lowest Child Marriage rates in States of India

Goa	7.2%
Mizoram	13.3%
Manipur	14.3%
Punjab	14.9%
Nagaland	16.4%
Kerala	19.3%

Conclusion:

The personal and official claims about the age at marriage notwithstanding, a vast majority of girls in the country are being married much before the legally permissible age for marriage, real programmes aimed at improve the status of women, female literacy rates, female participation in labour force and in day to day decision making and programmes aimed at changing family structure and relationship between parents and children could be a great help in this regard. Hence there is a great need to create awareness about the poor impacts of the early child marriages and also about the legal implication of the early child marriage.

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