



Changing Trends of Muslim Marriage in Contemporary Kashmir: A Sociological study

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ABSTRACT

Marriage is one of the universal social institution but it's very difficult process to live together forever when their culture and mindset is different. But over the past several decades lot of changes has been taken place in Muslim marriage in Kashmir. The objective of the research is to study the changing trends of Muslim marriage in Kashmir. The study was exploratory in nature and random sampling method was used for analyzing the data. For collecting the data a framed scheduled was prepared and 400 respondents were interviewed for the purpose of collecting of data. The author found that there has been a significant impact on these variables.

Introduction

Marriage is one of the oldest socially recognized institutions. "Marriage is the civil status of one man and one woman united in law for life, for the discharge to each other and the community of the duties legally incumbent on those whose association is founded on the distinction of sex." (Black's Law Dictionary, 1991). The study of changes in marriage practices, including an increase in age of at marriage women, who may even be married before puberty, has great significance. If a girl marries before she achieves puberty and moves to her in laws house, she is more likely to have difficulty in adjusting to the new household. Such adjustment may be even more difficult if the age gap is between spouses. There is also an adverse effect on the physical wellbeing of mother and child as universally high infant mortality has been documented for teenage mothers. Socially, marriage at an early age contributes to the low status of a woman. Her entry into the husband's family as an inexperienced and uneducated person means that she commands no respect and generally occupies the position of lowest status in the family. She is treated as an unpaid helper for the mother-in law, made to do the hardest and most tedious work, and trained to instantly obey and not to talk back, as the displeasure of any family member may jeopardize her precarious position in the husband's household (Agarwala, 1962).

Review of literature

Damle (1965) in his study "Divorce in Poona District" included 363 cases of legal divorce and permanent desertion. The survey included seventy-five cases in which divorce was taken through court, thirty-four cases which were registered in the office of the registrar of marriages, Poona, and 254 cases which were reported at the community level that is, in which divorce was granted through the Gram

Panchayat. He found that in 0.82 per cent cases, the partners had lived together for less than one year, in 25.35 per cent cases between one to six years, in 23.41 per cent cases between seven to nine years, in 28.10 per cent cases between ten to fifteen years, and in 10.20 per cent cases for more than fifteen years. In 12.12 per cent cases, years passed between marriage and divorce desertion were not given. The mean marital span was thus 8.9 years. This shows that people do not rush for divorce but try to adjust. Only when they fail in adjustment, they break their marital bonds. He also found that in 21.48 per cent cases, they had no children, while in the remaining 78.52 per cent; they had one or more children.

Hooper (1990) in his study, *“Divorce and Your Children”* examines how the experience of a parent’s divorce during adolescence affects young adult women’s attitudes about relationships, marriage and divorce. Research questions looked at how participants felt about marriage, their relationship with their parents following the divorce, and how the experience of parental remarriage shapes attitudes about marriage. Fifteen young adult women were interviewed. The most significant findings were that experiencing a parental divorce leads to feelings of ambivalence about marriage. Religious beliefs and positive role models can alleviate some of the negative feelings about marriage that may be present following a parental divorce. Experiencing parental conflict and acting as a middleman between parents during the divorce process contributed to negative feelings about relationships and marriage. Many of the women had negative experiences with their father’s remarriage and yet they wished that their mothers would remarry.

Menon (1981) in his study *“Status of Women in India: A Case Study of Kerala”* reveals that traditionally marriages customs and practices centering around marriage gives Muslim women an inferior status in society the reason behind this was early marriage, absence of a voice in the selection of husband, ritualization of the Mehar, polygamy and arbitrary divorce by men, attitude towards widows including widow remarriage, this type of inferiority complex are prevalent in most of the parts of the society but the graph of such problems are declining. A new custom, viz., payment of dowry has an important place in the Islamic society but it has no basis in the Quran or tradition of the Prophet.

Objectives

The present study was carried out to explore the changing trends of Muslim marriage in Kashmir.

Research methodology

The study was exploratory in nature. This study has an exploratory research design and is based on a sample of 400 households respondents (one married member from every household was randomly selected for the study by using simple random sampling and due representation has been given to each respondent). To have a representative sample, 10 thrust areas of the Srinagar city in Kashmir were located i.e., *Saidakadal, Nawakadal, Bagat Barzalla, Nowgam, Khanyar, Nowhatta, Rainawari, Batamaloo, Zainakote, Habbakadal*. Out of the thrust areas, 40 households were selected from each area (40x10=400) were selected as a sample for study. For each thrust area, a random sample technique was used to select respondents.

Findings of the study

The findings of the study are as follows:

Procedure of mate selection

The main emphasis in this table will be to spell out the procedures of mate selection who initiated the proposal; what relatives’ role/roles the kinsmen, parents, other intermediaries or parents played in the finalization of marriage proposal. The agents of mate selection play their roles singly or in combination to

finalize the marriage proposal and their roles differ in every society. Broadly, there are two systems for selection of marriage partners i.e., 'Self-selection' and 'Kin selection'. The marriage in the City is mostly expensive and family affair and on modern lines. Although the changing economy has transformed the priorities of marriage process, so the search of soul mate for both boy and girl is done by the parents and their family members and by themselves. It is given in the following table who arranges marriage for the respondents (Table 1).

It is clear from the Table 1 that out of 400 respondents (53.75 per cent) affirm that their marriage are usually love marriages who they decide themselves for that followed by (22.5 per cent) who affirm that their family heads are having the sole authority in arranging the marriage. Moreover 45 respondents (11.25 per cent) said that close relative of the boy and girl themselves work for the matchmaking of their children. It was found that if there is a proposal from any other family which is not known till then, both the parties make inquiries about one another on their own with the help of friends, relatives and, sometimes, even from the neighbours. In the Srinagar City there is a role of third gender, middle man or professional match makers into service to search for a match. It was observed by the researcher that the boy's family traditionally approaches the parents or elders of the girl to ask of her hand in marriage.

4.2. Ceremony performed before Marriage

In every community so in Muslim Community, marriage encompasses a double ceremony which comprises the formal betrothal and wedding rites. It ranges across cultures from very elaborate ceremonies including the performance of religious rituals, dancing, music, feasting likewise gift exchange over several days. It is given in Table 2.

In the above Table 2 it was observed that (100 per cent) i.e., 400 respondents agreed that various ceremonies were performed before formal marriage like *Hiring a 'Manzimyor'* (hiring a middleman), *Parchatraavun* (Sharing prospect details), *Vichni Gasun* (To go and see), *Thap Traavin* (Officially saying Yes), *Nishayn* (Engagement), *Saatnaam* (Announce the wedding dates), *Tomul Tchatun* (Rice Cleaning function), *Malmaenz*, *Maenzraat* (Henna is applied), *AabShebrun* (Special bride bath and Nimaz), *Nikah Khwaani* (Qabool hai Qabool hai), *Yini woi* (Day of barat), *Mabraaz Saal* (Baraat and grand Wazwan), *Ruksati* (farewell of the bride), *Kadal-e-taar* (groom pays money to pass over bridge), *Mubar Tullan* (lifting the veil of the bride), *Zaem Braentt* (sisters ask for gift from groom and then left him in his room), *Kehwa Khabar* (brother visits bride), *Walima* (feast by grooms family), *Khabri Gasun* (brides relatives visit the couple), *Phiri saal* (functions at brides place for groom's family and near ones), *Satim Dob* (on 7th day guest from brides side are invited to groom's), *Phirraa Khaber* (aunts and cousins visit to see if bride is ok).

Interval between engagement and marriage

An Engagement or betrothal is a period of time between a marriage proposal and the marriage itself which is typically but not always commenced with a wedding. During this period, a couple is called to be as fiancés, engaged to be married, or simply engaged. Its duration varies vastly, and is largely dependent on cultural norms or upon the agreement of the parties involved. It is given in Table 3.

The Table 3 depicts about the time gap between the engagement and marriage among Muslims in Srinagar City. Out of 400 respondents a majority of the respondents i.e. 320 (80 per cent) said that they keep a gap of one to two years between the engagement and the marriage. They revealed that it is much better to tie knot immediately between the girl and boy after engagement. The aforesaid respondents said that Nikah is prophet's Sunnah and there is no proof which will reveal that to keep a gap between engagement and marriage is somewhere proven. So it is against the Islamic teachings. 60 respondents (i.e., 15 per cent) said that they keep a gap of two to four years between the engagement and marriage and 20 respondents (5 per cent) affirmed that the gap between the engagement and marriage remains

from four to six years and pronounced to keep a high gap provides an opportunity to understand each other.

Criteria of mate selection

Broadly, there are two main considerations for choosing the spouse: (1) Family, and (2) Individual. These can be further divided on the basis of their social, economic and personal characteristics. Family criteria refer to family background, family reputation, and size of the family, educational level of the family, socio-economic status, dowry consideration and kinship affinities. The individual criteria include age, physical appearance, health, character/conduct, temperament, education, occupation, income and capacities and capabilities including the knowledge of household. I have collected data on these counts, which will be presented in the Table. The main forms of marriages can be of three types. In the first category are those where the settlement of the marriage proposal is entirely in the hands of parents and guardians. Second, where the selection of the spouse is entirely the business of the concerned boy and the girl, and third, where the selection is made both by the parents and the parties concerned with each other's consultation and approval. The Table depicts the criteria for the selection of soul-mate.

It is clear from the Table 4 (Table 4) that out of 200 respondents (100 per cent) a vast majority of the respondents' i.e., 55 respondents (i.e., 27 per cent) affirmed that the first and the foremost criteria for the selection of a bridegroom is income. It was mentioned by the respondents that to give hand of a daughter to person who is not economically well off may become the cause of unhappiness of their daughters; 50 respondents (i.e., 25 per cent) affirmed that age is the precondition criteria for the selection of bridegroom; 30 respondents (i.e., 15.00 per cent) agreed that family background is the important criteria for selection as a bridegroom. As mentioned by them, if a boy belongs to a good family in terms of behaviour, moral values, there is very less chances of family disputes between the husband and wife after the marriage. Out of 200 respondents; 65 respondents (i.e., 32.50 per cent) said that morality is the one of the main criteria for selecting a bridegroom. It was observed by the researcher that according to the respondents the morality includes tell a truth, behave politely with the parents, is not quarrel some, is helpful to everyone; keeps promises and lives a chaste life and so on. Out of total 400 respondents (100 per cent); only 20 respondents (i.e., 10 per cent) conceded that education is the criteria for selection of a bridegroom. Furthermore it is revealed in the table that selecting a girl as a bride is given to morality (i.e., 32.5 per cent) followed by age (i.e., 20 per cent) which is followed by family background (i.e., 22.5 per cent). Education is the least preferred criterion which amounts to (i.e., 15 per cent). Unlike bridegroom, income is not the criterion for selecting a groom. It was observed that people prefer their girls to work outside their homes. Earning of girls outside their homes is not necessary a lot but they remain busy with work. That is why income is not so important criterion for selecting as a groom.

Concluding remarks

Marriage among Muslim in Kashmir has undergone through significant changes from time to time and place to place. These changes are in the way of nature of performance of marriages, in customs and rituals related to marriage in mate selection, age of marriage and so on. The social issues with marriage are also increasing day by day like confined to inter caste marriage, dowry, and the relationship of girl with her in laws and impact of modernization on marriages. In Islam a marriage (*Nikah*) is a civil contract (which comes into immediate effect) between two persons of opposite sex for mutual sexual enjoyment and legalized procreation. It is a contract of a permanent nature, unless dissolved by divorce. Besides being a civil contract, it has attracted to it a notion of sanctity as well, since every step in its materialization and dissolution is guided by religious dictates. Marriage is an institution ordained for the protection and development of society and as a shield against sexual weakness, foulness and unchastely. No other sacrament has maintained its sanctity since the earliest

times. In this context, the present study, “*Changing Trends among Muslim Marriage in Kashmir*” was taken in consideration to study the customs, rituals, practices, beliefs and changes brought in the institution of marriage among Muslims in Kashmir.

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Tables

Table 1: *Who arranges marriage for you*

Theme	Response	N	%
Who arrange marriage for you	Middle man	25	6.25
	Parent	90	22.5
	Relatives	45	11.25
	Himself	215	53.75
	Any other	25	6.25
Total		400	100.00

Source: Field work 2021

Table 2: *Ceremony performed before Marriage*

Theme	Response	Number	Percentage
Do you perform any ceremony before Marriage	Yes	400	100.00
	No	00	00.00
Total		400	100.00
If Yes, how many ceremonies you performed	1	20	5.00
	2	80	20.00
	3	100	25.00
	4	200	50.00
Total		400	100.00

Source: Field work 2021

Table 3: *Interval between engagement and marriage*

Theme	Response	N	%
How much time you keep between engagement and marriage	1 year -2 year	320	80.00
	2 year-4 year	60	15.00
	4 year-6 year	20	5.00
	6 year-and above	00	00.00
Total		400	100.00

Source: Field work 2021

Table 4: *Criteria of selection*

Theme	Response	Number	Percentage
Criteria of selection in the boy as bridegroom	Age	50	25.00
	Education	20	10.00
	Income	55	27.50
	Family background	30	15.00
	Morality	45	22.50
Total		200	100.00
Criteria of selection in the girl as bride	Age	40	20.00
	Education	30	15.00
	Morality	65	32.50
	Family background	45	22.50
	Income	20	10.00
Total		200	100.00

Source: *Field work 2021*