



# A STUDY OF SOCIOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF MASS MARRIAGE IN KARNATAKA

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## Abstract

This article is a study of accessing the social program of Karnataka State Government. The purpose of the study is to evaluate the mass marriage program, identify factors that have led to high marital breakdowns, identify the impacts of failed marriages on its victims, and recommend measures on how to reduce the incidence of marital breakdowns in Karnataka State. Six officers of the Karnataka State Muzrai Board and 100 beneficiary women were given questionnaires in English and Kannada respectively. The results show that the mass marriage program is accepted by the majority of the target population, has a high success rate, and that it has reduced poverty levels among beneficiary women. The study recommends extending the mass marriage program to other states in India and countries with similar social problems.

Key Words: Mass Marriage, Sociological. Analysis. Spinsters.

## Introduction

There is no consensus about the definition of family by scholars. However family has been defined as a group of two or more people related by birth, marriage or adoption and residing together, all such people are considered as members of the family. The family is a central institution in all human societies, although it may take many different forms. Similarly, family is still regarded as an important source of help and support and that family contacts are still maintained even though family members tends to leave further apart. Marriage on the other hand has been defined as a union between man and a woman. Marriage is an important social institution which promotes procreation, peace and a disciplined society free from all kinds of indecencies and vices. There are basically two types of marriage: Monogamy; this refers to a marriage of two individuals, while Polygamy, refers to a marriage where a man or a women have more than one spouse. However, despite its religious and social significance marriage as an institution is today facing serious problems. One of these challenges is the alarming rate of “menless” women existing in our society who are divorced from their previous marriages or have ever not been married (Spinsters).

Many populist schemes formulated by Raman Singh led Government received desired response in midway of its first term, inspired it to carry them on in to its third term also. 'Mukhyamantri Kanyadaan Yojana' is also one such scheme which brought smiles on countless face in rural and urban populace in almost all sections of society in the State.

### **Mass Marriage in india**

CM Raman Singh said that mass marriage ceremony is a far better alternative to the expensive and luxurious weddings. Mass marriage ceremonies save poor families from unnecessary financial burden.

Keeping all its advantages in view, Chhattisgarh Government has initiated Mukhyamantri Kanyadaan Yojana to support poor families in getting their daughters married. This scheme is being successfully operated since last nine years. This scheme is playing an effective role in eradication of social evils like dowry system, promoting social equality and goodwill, said Dr Singh while addressing the mass marriage ceremony organized on Monday under 'Mukhyamantri Kanyadaan Yojana' at PG College Ground in Ambikapur Headquarters of Sarguja Revenue Division.

CM Singh extended blessings to the 566 couples, who tied nuptial knots at the mass marriage ceremony, and suggested the newly-weds to keep their families small, following the concept of 'Hum Do-Humare Do'.

In the mass marriage ceremony, the couples were wedded as per their respective religious and social rituals. 453 couples tied nuptial knot as per the Hindu customary rituals, while 113 couples were married as per the norms of Christianity. This mass marriage ceremony was jointly organised by Women and Child Development of State Government and Sarguja District Administration in association with local NGOs.

He said in his address to the gathering that it is always heartening to be a part of such ceremonies and programmes that promote social equality and harmony. This scheme has blurred the differences between rich and poor, establishing social harmony and fraternity. The scheme has helped us in fighting the social evils like dowry system. CM Singh appealed people of all sections of society to take advantage of the scheme.

On the occasion, Home, Jail and Public Health Engineering Minister Ramsevak Paikra Paikra said that Mukhyamantri Kanyadaan Yojana was started with a noble intention of saving the poor from debts and financial burden, caused due to the heavy expenses on marriage ceremonies of their daughters. Minister Paikra extended hearty wishes to the newly-weds of all communities. Jila Panchayat President Pushpa Netaam also blessed the newly-married couples and said that it is a commendable and inspiring initiative of the administration.

Collector Ritu Sen said on the occasion that this important scheme of State Government is a relief to poor families, as now they don't have to spend their lives clearing the debts taken for their daughters' marriage.

In the ceremony, MP JP Nadda, former Minister Ramvichaar Netaam, Jila Panchayat Vice-President Omprakash Jaiswal, Mayor Prabodh Minj, Ex-Chairman of Handicraft Development Board Anil Singh Major along with other public representatives, Sarguja Division Commissioner BS Anant, Inspector General of Police TJ langkumer, Superintendent of Police Sunderraj P, Project Officers of Women and Child Development Projects and a large number of people were also present.

## Causes of Divorce

Divorce rate is also very high in India the research literature on divorce suggests that there are three broad groups of factors associated with marital dissolution. One relating to the characteristics of the individual partners, including various demographic and socio-economic characteristics, which differentiate between people in terms of their propensity to divorce. A second group relating to family structure and the internal dynamics of a relationship that may lead to partnership breakdown. And, a third group of contextual factors that shape the structure of constraints, incentives and opportunities that affect decisions to end a partnership (South, 2001) The phenomenon of divorce, however, is not new to India, and it has existed at all times in known history. But it was resorted to only in extreme cases where there was unbearable cruelty, desertion, mental illness, impotency/infertility, and infidelity. But it is no longer so. With the new strains and challenges that have emerged for the Indian family, the latter has been going through a new kind of transition. It has been wavering between traditional and Western models. The fast-changing social and family environment has thrown up new challenges, particularly to the young people, like growing instability, lack of communication, changing attitude towards sex, changing roles of husband and wife, and tensions of fast life. All these have resulted in the lack of harmony among married couples. The decline in harmony can be associated with values that emphasize individualistic, materialistic and self-oriented goals over family well-being. Not only is the incidence of divorce in Indian society increasing but also the underlying causes of divorce have been assuming a new dimension or getting a new impetus, if not entirely changing. An extensive study of the working of family courts in urban India by a Mumbai-based legal activist indicated that whereas in 1995, 2055 couples filed for divorce in Mumbai, in 2004, the number went up to 3400 in that city alone. In the eight matrimonial district courts of Delhi, averages of 25 divorce petitions were filed every day in 2004. In Bangalore the number increased three fold from 653 in 1988 to 1861 in 2002. In Kolkata the number has gone up from 1633 in 1966 to 2388 in 2003. Seventy per cent of these figures represent divorces in the age-group of 25-35. In Kolkata, divorce cases have gone up nearly 200 per cent in the last few years. According to a consultant psychiatrist of Kolkata's Belle Vue Nursing Home, nearly six out of ten married couples now require counseling to prevent breakups and for every five weddings registered in Mumbai in the past five years, there have been two divorce applications an increase of nearly 50 per cent. A very recent report points out that of the 1.3 lakh marriages registered every year in Delhi, about 10,000 do not live happily ever after. Alarmed by this, the Delhi Commission for Women (DCW) has set up a pre-marital counseling cell where young men and women and their parents can call for help and guidance. (Hindustan Times, July 29, 2008) Because of increasing number of young couples resorting to divorce, six more family courts have come up in Delhi since the late nineties to deal with over 9000 cases of matrimonial disputes. Divorce is still not as common in India as it is in western countries. While 50% of marriages in US end in divorce, 1 out of 100 couples in India seek divorce. Although the rate of divorce in India is not as high as in Western countries, the number of divorce cases is definitely increasing due to various social and economical changes. Even though India still enjoys a low divorce rate, the rapid increase in the number of divorce petitions being filed in Indian courts is certainly a matter of concern. The Indian divorce rate is although the lowest in compared to the rest of the countries of the world, but the present marital scenario

in India is likely under a threat. The very will to keep on with the sacred union even under numerous marital disputes and disparities has mellowed with time and transformation of ideologies.

### Methodology

The research was conducted at Muzrai Board in Karnataka. The research targeted 200 women randomly selected out of the 350 "men less" women married off as at July 21st, 2020. Six officials of the Muzrai Board in charge of the "Muzrai" mass marriage programme were selected for the study. In carrying out the research one set of questionnaire and an in-depth interview in online were used. The questionnaire for the beneficiary women was administered by the researchers in English Language while the in-depth interview with the Muzrai board officials was conducted in English Language. The questionnaires were analyzed and the results presented in a table with the women responses coming first, followed by the interview conducted through by online with the officials of the board.

### Data Analysis Women Responses

**Table I: Reason for Separation from Previous Marriage**

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Death of former husband (widows)	43	21.5
Divorce	100	50
Spinster	10	5
Total	200	100

Table I above, indicates that (50%) of the respondents cited divorce as the main cause of marriage break ups. Divorce as a result of so many reasons (such as abuse of religious and Islamic tenets governing marriage and divorce, lack of patience by the couples, poverty etc.). These factors constitute the major reasons for marriage break ups in our society today. 21.5% of the respondents lost their marriage unions due to death of their husbands (widow ship). Death is a natural end and therefore does not constitute a social problem. However, there is the need to evolve a program like the mass marriage project to cater for their (i.e. widows) interest. It is however interesting to note that 5% of the respondents are spinsters i.e. those girls who for whatever reason could not find a suitor on their own; but had to enlist the support of Muzrai board to achieve their goals. It is now a global phenomenon, for girls/women to spend a lot of year searching for an appropriate partner/husband. So many factors account for this ugly situation: women population relative to that of men, unreasonable/tall ambition of the women to marry readymade husbands who are rich, the economic downturn and unemployment associated with men who cause delayed marriages and the fact that men nowadays are not interested in marrying more than one wife. This is causing Karnataka Societies to experience similar divorce problems, India and Karnataka had been experiencing for many decades. The responses also collaborated with the views of the Muzrai board officials where they cited divorce, death of husbands and spinsters as the major causes of "menless" women in Karnataka state.

**Table II: Hardships "Menless" Women Experienced**

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Lack of Security and respect	15	7.5
Lack of care and maintenance	48	24
Separation from children Difficult in raising up children as single parent	11	5.5
	10	5
Total	200	100

Table II above, indicated that majority of the respondents (24%) said they experience lack of care and maintenance and 5.5% of the respondent reported lack of security and respect from the society. While (11%) reports experiencing difficulty due to separation from their children. Similarly (5%) reported difficulty in rising up their children as single parents.

**Table III: Factor Leading to Breakdowns of Marriages**

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Lack of Islamic knowledge governing rules of Marriage	36	18
	17	8.5
Lack of Patience	4	2
Misunderstanding/communication gap between couples	55	26.5
Abandonment of marriage responsibilities		
Total	100	100

**Table III** above, shows various reasons accounts for marriage breakdowns: (26.5%) of the respondents said the abandonment of marriage responsibilities by the husbands (i.e. lack of feeding, shelter, education of children etc.) as one of the major factor causing marriage breakdowns. While (18%) of the respondents stated ignorance or lack of respect to religious teachings governing marriage, thus making the men not take marriage as an important institution in the society. (2%) of the respondents however, reported lack of patience especially during periods of misunderstanding and quarrels which are unavoidable in marriage relationships. Similarly (2%) of the respondents stated lack of understanding and proper communication between the spouse which often leads to quarrels.

**Table IV: Ways to Strengthen the Mass Marriage Project**

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
More support from nongovernmental organizations/wealthy Individuals	30	15
Enactment of appropriate legislation to safeguard marriages	28	14
Expansion of mass marriage to local government headquarters	14	7
To Provide a forum to attract educated and working class "menless" women	3	1.5
Total	100	100

**Table V** above, indicates that (15%) of the respondents urged for more support of the mass marriage program from private organizations and wealthy individuals to compliment the efforts of the government. (14%) of the respondents called for enactment of an appropriate Law by the Karnataka state government to guarantee the continuation of the program after the tenure of the present administration in view of its importance to the society. Furthermore (7%) of

the respondents advised that the mass marriage programme should be decentralized to the 44 local governments of the states in order to accommodate more women and ease the hardship of travelling to **Muzrai** board headquarters for those coming to benefit from the program. However, (1.5%) of the respondents, urged the **Muzrai** board to create a forum to encourage highly educated and well placed "menless" women in the state to benefit from the programme, as most of them feel shy to go to the **Muzrai** board to register. A website and an email address should be opened where such women can register.

**The respondents said:** "Under the phase I and II of the mass marriage program, a total number 350 couples have been joined to marriage, adding that a plan has reached an advance stage to marry off one thousand one hundred and eleven (1111) suitors by the board". In respect of problems encountered by the board, the officials reported that:

"Even though the state government is doing its best in funding the project, which has so far released 76 million naira for the project, the board has to appeal to wealthy individuals in the society to give a helping hand as the government cannot shoulder all the responsibilities alone. So the problem of finding the project is still one of the problems facing the board. Some other minor problems include insincerity by a very small percentage of the public who either "impersonate" or are just interested in collecting the token material and financial assistance rendered to the couples by the board." Furthermore, the officials said "wealthy individuals have made wholesome contributions of materials and money running into millions of Naira".

### **Measures to Strengthen the Project**

The officials believe this is an important social program which should be encouraged not only the government, by wealthy individuals and united nations. This is because marriage breakdowns/failures are now a universal phenomenon which directly threatens our society in many ways such as increase in rampant prostitutions, existence of delinquent and unproductive youths that contributes in no small measures to increase in crime rate. Therefore, all hands must be on deck to tame this monster of family breakdowns. The respondents specially said "there is the urgent need to have a holistic approach by all stakeholders, especially religious leaders, parents and schools in solving this problem. This can be achieved through the enactment of legislation to ensure continuity of the program after this administration of **Governor Shri. Anil Baijal**, more support from private individuals and organizations.

Financial assistance rendered to the couples

### **Discussion of Findings**

Major findings of this research would be discussed in line with the objectives of the study which are: To evaluate the mass marriage programme, Identify factors responsible for mass marriage breakdowns, to identify the effects of failed marriages on its victims, families and society and to recommend appropriate measures on how to reduce the incidence of marriage breakdowns in the states; and the relevant conceptual frame work. The data collected and analyzed from the research seems to justify the objectives of the study. These are analyzed as follows: The study highlighted the importance of the mass Marriage programme due to the existence of an alarming number of "Menless" women in Karnataka state, as a result of frequent Marriage break ups due to a number of factors. In fact this lead to the threat of one million protest match by divorcees in Karnataka state in 2009 to voice their anger and frustration on men and the government as they could not find husbands, some of them for many years after their divorce or death of their

husbands. The mass Marriage programme initiated and executed by the Governor **Shri Anil Baijal** state government is indeed a stitch in time, which has greatly given hope to those frustrated "menless" women in the society. The programme has also achieved other objectives such as reduction in prostitution, youth crime, and truancy and depression amongst the target population and their families. As part of the objectives of the study, the findings identified so many factors that precipitate marriage breaks down thus leading to an alarming rate of "menless" in the society. The factors include high rates of divorce, widow-ship and so many spinsters. The consequences of having many "menless" women in any society are many and they include increase in prostitution, increase in crimes and delinquency particularly amongst the affected women and their children. For example divorce accounts for (57.5%) amongst the factors that causes marriage break ups in **Karnataka** state. The Karnataka state mass Marriage programme is really in line with the views of structural functionalist theory which emphasises the importance of family in the stabilization of family and society which is done through a number of means ; sexual regulation which is done by every society in accordance with its own values, often through marriage; reproduction and replacement to guarantee the existence and continuity of society as children are made to replace members who die as well as to keep family lineage, inheritance clear; provide emotional support and protection, as family provides source of love, and belonging, security, protection and safety from harm, economic support etc. In fact according to a **BBC** documentary tagged "collapsed marriages" in **Karnataka**, "that 32% of all marriages in **Karnataka** survive only a period of 3-6 months, and that there are more divorce than weddings in **Karnataka** every week". Furthermore, Widow-ship, this is another factor that leads to separation, thus adding to the growing number of "menless" women in the state by (34%). Spinsters, this are young girls who have never been married although they are interested in getting married but could not do so due to some reasons. These reasons varies from lack of finances by their parents to carry out the marriage rituals, lack of suitable suitors and their high economic expectations i.e. getting readymade men who had made it in life economically and socially, this perhaps proves the argument of Rational Choice or Exchange Theory which evaluates the costs and rewards of engaging in an interaction to try to find the "best deal". This group of people according to the research finding constitutes (8.5%). This findings seems to support the conflict theory which argues that conflict in families is as a results of struggle for power and control in the family unit and in the society at large. Family was seen as the chief source of female oppression and that until basic resources were allocated within the family women would continue to be oppressed. The study identified various effects "menless" women experienced from their husbands. 41.2% of the respondents cited increase in poverty due to lack of care and maintenance, while 20% reported lack of security and respect from the society. Sociologists have reported various consequences /hardships associated with divorce. "First there are the emotional aspects of divorce, since divorce is seen as a failure, rejection and even punishment. More often than not divorce involves splitting with family and many close friends There are also costs for children, as children lives are turned upside down; thus" Many children move to new houses/Locations, leave one parent and friends and make adjustments to new schools. Divorce lowers the well-being of children in the short term, affecting school achievement,

## CONCLUSION

Family break-ups constitute one of the serious problems facing marriage as an institution, all over the world today. In view of the important role family plays in the society, there is the urgent need for governments and other stakeholders to evolve ways of saving families from frequent marriage break ups. One of such initiatives was the introduction of mass marriage project by the Karnataka state government in collaboration with **Karnataka state Muzrai** Board. The program was designed to provide a forum where women and men can interact and eventually get married. So far the project has recorded a lot of success stories i.e. it has reduce the number of men less women in the state; as well as achieved poverty reduction amongst the beneficiaries. Other states in the India and Countries where high incidence of divorce/ separations/ and Spinsters are common, need to have a critical look at the **Karnataka** state mass marriage project as a panacea in solving similar problems in their States/Countries.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- Expansion/decentralization of the program to Local Government Area of the state.
- “Menless” women who desire a separate forum to be establish to give chance to “menless” educated women to find suitors.
- Parents to take marriage of their children too seriously especially in selecting a partner for them.
- Women to be encouraged to acquire education and skills to make them economically productive, thus reducing their dependence on their husbands and parents.
- Since the problems of “menless” women cut across most of the northern states and indeed the country as a whole, the Karnataka state governors to implement similar social program in their states. Similarly, the Federal Government under its ministry of women affairs should introduce a similar program for whole the country. This is because family as an institution must to be safeguarded and protected by all means and sundry in order to have a decent and productive society.
- The prospective couples should be encouraged to uphold the importance and advantages of medical test before marriage.
- Our religious / traditional teachings about marriage, how marriage should be conducted, conflict resolution between spouses and divorce should be respected by all parents. This would ensure that marriages are done base on love and not materialism, beauty or lust.
- Husband and wife should learn to forgive each other and approached each other more gently and lovingly when reconciliation was required, as a forgiving heart always brings healing to wounded relationships



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