



# INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF CREATIVE RESEARCH THOUGHTS (IJCRT)

An International Open Access, Peer-reviewed, Refereed Journal

## TRENDS OF CHILD MARRIAGES IN THE WORLD, INDIA AND KARNATAKA

Dr.C.V.Kalburgi\*

\*Associate Professor, HKE'S SP & JMB Degree College, Shorapur, Karnataka

### Abstract:

Child marriage refers to the practice in which a young child, usually a girl below the age of 18, is married to an adult man or a boy. Child marriage is a global problem. It is spread across India. Child marriage is not only a gross violation of human rights as per the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discriminations against Women, but also undermines progress towards developmental goals. The consequences of child marriage are often far wider than just their impact on the individual children affected. The marriage of children has negative effects on families and communities. The practice thrives on poverty and impacts adversely on a country's health and education sectors. Young brides and young mothers are overlooked and invisible in national policy and programmes on health, education, employment and overall empowerment of women.

### Introduction:

Children are the supreme asset of a nation, they being the greatest gift to humanity. They are the ultimate optimism that the present day could have for the future. They are to be nurtured, loved and protected. They have an inborn right to justice, freedom and opportunity for development irrespective of their nationality, caste, creed and sex. Investment in terms of providing protection and opportunities for the growth of the children is *sine qua non* to ensure their development to full potential. One of the greatest achievements of progressive democracies in the last century is to have recognized the rightful place of the child in the societal fabric both in the international forum as well as in the domestic arena. Positive action towards realisation of child rights is evidenced by way of various United Nations Conventions, domestic legislations, and judicial interpretations and pronouncements. Child jurisprudence has given a new dimension to the role of law in social engineering.

Starting with the Declaration of the Rights of the Child, adopted in 1924 by the League of Nations that says "mankind owes to the Child the best it has to give", there have been endeavours by the international community in protecting the interest of the child.

The Declaration of the Rights of the Child, 1959 and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989 of the United Nations, ratified by our country as well in 1992, contain legal standards necessary for realising social, economic and cultural rights of children. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, 1966 are the other instruments that reinforce the rights of the child.

At the domestic level, the country has been making efforts to place the child in a better position. In this regard, reference can be made to the 86th Constitutional Amendment that made education a fundamental right for children in the age group of 6 to 14 years. Policies, legislations, schemes and programmes are also in place so that the rights of the children are respected and children really enjoy them.

Children are the potential and useful human resource for the progress of the country. We should remember and remind ourselves that it is only the strong, knowledgeable, and virtuous children who can make the country strong and great. Art. 39(f) states that children are given opportunities and facilities to develop in a healthy manner and in conditions of freedom and dignity and that childhood and youth are protected against exploitation and moral and material abandonment.

Children cannot and should not be treated as cattle or saleable commodities or playthings. Children are also capable of becoming as great, as good or as useful as elders and even more. If we neglect and do not provide for even basic needs such as good food, health, and education of children, a heavy price will have to be paid in future. It is appropriate that the people are aware of the rights of the children and they realise the importance of their growing as responsible and productive citizens. As per the Census 2001, children below the age of 6 years were 158.8 million, accounting for 15.24% of the country's population. (*The census 2011 data for the child population was not available till the writing of the report*). Their holistic development should be of great concern in their interest and in the interest of the country as well. The Constitution of India reflects the concern for the children as is evident from Articles 15, 24, 39(e), 39(f), 47 and 51(A). Children are to be looked after and groomed well not merely on the basis of the constitutional or statutory provisions, but also with great human touch and concern. It is good to remember that we have both obligation and duty towards their wellbeing.

Child marriage still remains a common phenomenon in India and other parts of the world, despite endeavours on the part of the Governments and civil society. Marriage at an inappropriate age, before children are physically, mentally and emotionally developed for it, robs the children of their normal childhood and deprives them of their basic human rights, which they rightfully deserve and are entitled to. It also compels them to take on the responsibilities meant to be taken by adults, maybe even leading a child to bear a child and take care of it and the family. In India, where illiteracy, ignorance and poverty are primary causes for the practice of child marriage, cultural values coupled with blind beliefs, saving or retaining the property or expenditure of marriage, unburdening the so called the responsibility of parents, mind-set, sentiments and emotions etc., provide further impetus to it. Added to the existing legal framework, of late there has been an increasing concern among the community, civil society and the State with regard to continued prevalence of child marriages and to make invigorated efforts to put effective and adequate measures in place to eradicate this practice.

### Trend of Child Marriage Practice based on Secondary Data

**Table-1: Comparative Statement of number of Child Marriages prevented during 2010--11 & 2011-12**

Sl. No.	Name of the District	2010-11	2011-12	2021-22
1	Ramanagar	0	0	9
2	Chitradurga	0	0	9
3	Bellary	52	7	17
4	Bagalkot	6	2	45
5	Tumkur	0	2	11
6	Gulbarga	0	2	7
7	Haveri	0	2	0
8	Mandya	2	5	71
9	Koppal	108	99	0
10	Bidar	0	1	0

11	Raichur	25	75	6
12	Bijapur	2	8	26
13	Chikmagalur	0	2	17
14	Kolar	0	0	6
15	Dharwad	55	15	10
16	Mysore	4	5	33
17	Bangalore(U)	1	1	10
18	Davanagere	1	6	6
19	Chamarajnagar	12	57	5
20	Hassan	10	6	36
21	Gadag	51	2	2
22	Shimoga	3	0	17
23	Mangalore	0	0	0
24	Chikkaballapur	0	0	24
25	Belgaum	1	16	16
26	Yadagiri	0	0	3
27	Udupi	1	0	0
28	Kodagu	0	0	3
29	Karawara	0	0	0
30	Bangalore R	0	1	10
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>334</b>	<b>314</b>	<b>399</b>

**Table 2: STATISTICS ON CHILD MARRIAGE IN KARNATAKA**

YEAR	COMPLAINTS	PREVENTED	HAPPENED	FIR's
2019-20	1779	1623	156	130
2020-21	3007	2711	296	239
2021-22	2816	2395	415	323
Total	7602	6729	867	692

The table shows that 6729 child marriages were prevented in the entire state during the 2019-22. While the number of child marriages happened during this period is 867. This was a result of awareness generated through various consultations.

In sociological terms, marriage is a formalised binding partnership between consenting adults, it is a respected and valued social institution throughout the world and may take different forms in different cultures. Child marriage, on the other hand, involves either one or both spouses being children and may take place with or without formal registration under civil, religious and customary laws. Throughout the developing world, millions of girls are married while they are still children. The practice of child marriage spans in diverse cultures and societies with its variants in terms of causes and stimulators.

Child marriage can be defined as a phenomenon where a child is married before he or she attains adulthood. Since the Convention on the Rights of the Child defines a child as any human being below the age of eighteen, any marriage in which either the boy or the girl is below that age can be referred to as child marriage. However, in Indian context, as per the Child Marriage Prohibition Act 2006, a marriage can be defined as child marriage if the girl is below 18 years of age or/and the boy is below 21 years. Hence, In India any marriage carried out below the age of 18 years for girls and 21 years for boys, is defined as child marriage.

A closer look at the prevalence of child marriage world over reveals that it is more widespread in the developing countries. The table below shows that it is mainly seen in South Asia, Africa, and Latin America.

### Worldwide Scenario of Child Marriage

**Table-3: Child Marriages around the World Top 20 Countries with highest rates of Child Marriages Percentage of Married Women Younger than 18**

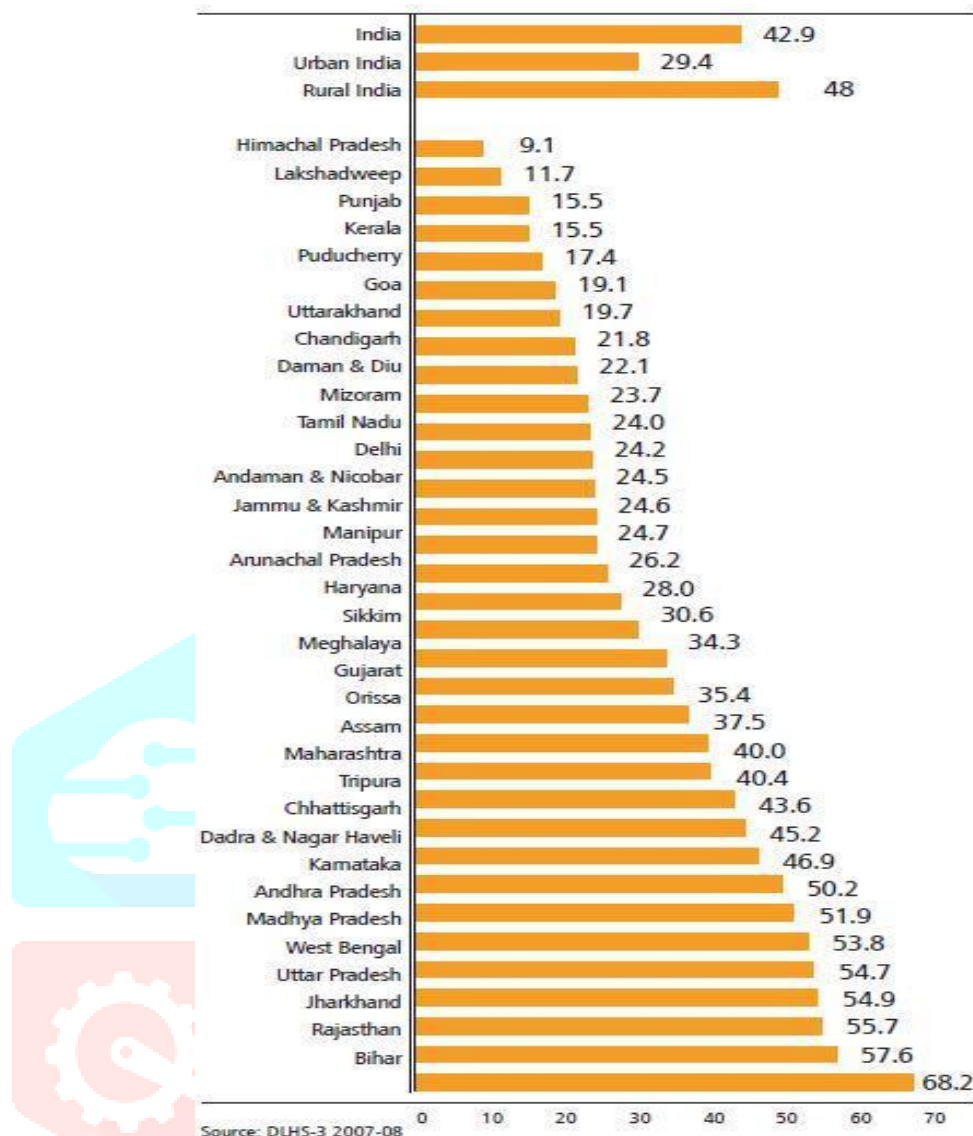
Name of the Country (Ranks)	Percentage
1. Niger	76.6
2. Chad	71.5
3. Bangladesh	68.7
4. Mali	65.4
5. Guinea	64.5
6. Central African Republic	57.0
7. Nepal	56.1
8. Mozambique	55.9
9. Uganda	54.1
10. Burkina Faso	51.9
<b>11. India</b>	<b>50.0</b>
12. Ethiopia	49.1
13. Liberia	48.4
14. Yemen	48.4
15. Cameroon	47.2
16. Eritrea	47.0
17. Malawi	46.9
18. Nicaragua	43.3
19. Nigeria	43.3
20. Zambia.	42.1

\* United Nations Population Division, 2000

Child marriage continues to be a widespread social evil in India. In the year 2000, the United Nations Population Division recorded that 9.5% of boys and 35.7% of girls aged between 15-19 were married. The National Family Health Survey (NFHS-III) of 2005-2006, which provides the latest statistics available on the occurrence of child marriage carried out in 29 states, confirmed that 45% of women were married before the age of 18 years. The NFHS III findings further revealed that 16% of women aged between 15-19 were already mothers or pregnant at the time of the survey. It was also found that more than half of the Indian women were married before the marriageable age as per law as compared to 16% of men. The incidence of child marriages in India varies in different regions and states. It is worth mentioning that according to NFHS III, the percentage was much higher in rural areas (58.5) than in urban area (27.9%) and exceeded 50% in eight states. The percentage of women married by the time they are 18 years stands at 61.2% in Jharkhand followed by 60.3% in Bihar, 57.1% in Rajasthan, 54.7% in AP, and 45% in Karnataka. According to the International Centre for Research on Women (ICRW) 50% women in India get married before the age of 18 years.

## Country Wide Scenario of Child Marriage

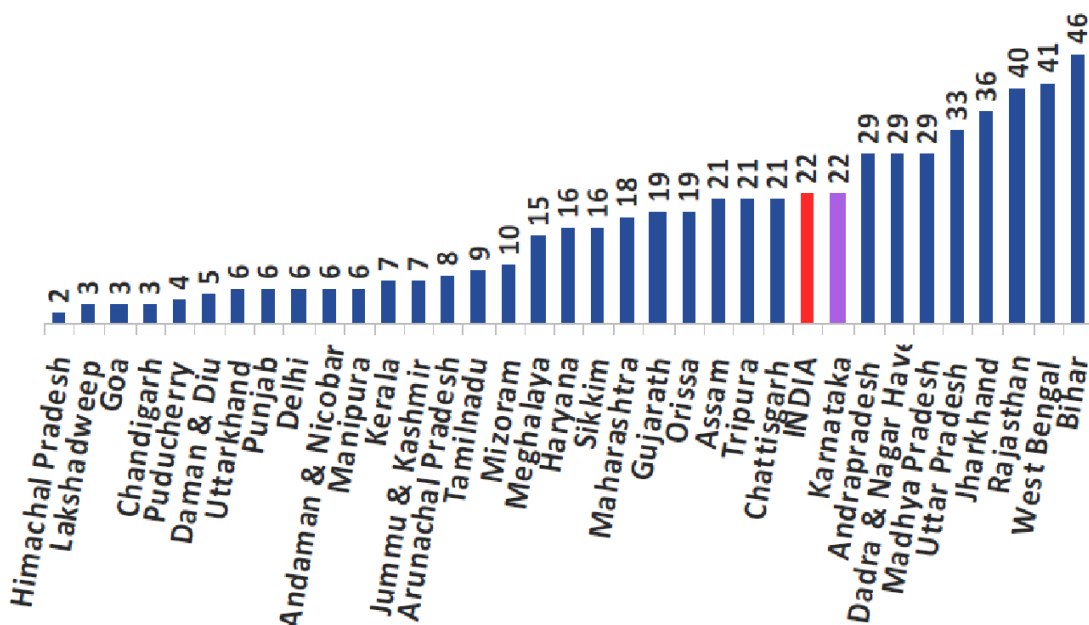
**Graph:1 Marriage Register - Percentage of currently married woman aged 20-24 years who were married before 18 years as per Marriage Registration by State Wise**



According to latest figures from UNICEF 'State of the World's Children-2011' (SOWC 2011) more than 1/4th of the marriages in the country are of girls below 18 years (27%) and out of every 1000 births, 45 births are given by girls aged 15- 19 years. In Karnataka, 22% of girls get married before they turn eighteen.

According to the census of India 2001, 300,000 girls under the age of 15 had given birth, some for the second time. The National Family Health Survey shows a slightly lesser figure than SOWC. According to the National Family Health Survey 2005-06 (NFHS-III), 22.6% were married before they were 16, 44.5% were married when they were between 16 and 17, and 2.6% were married before they turned 13.

**Graph-2 Percentage of Girls Marrying Below 18 years by States**

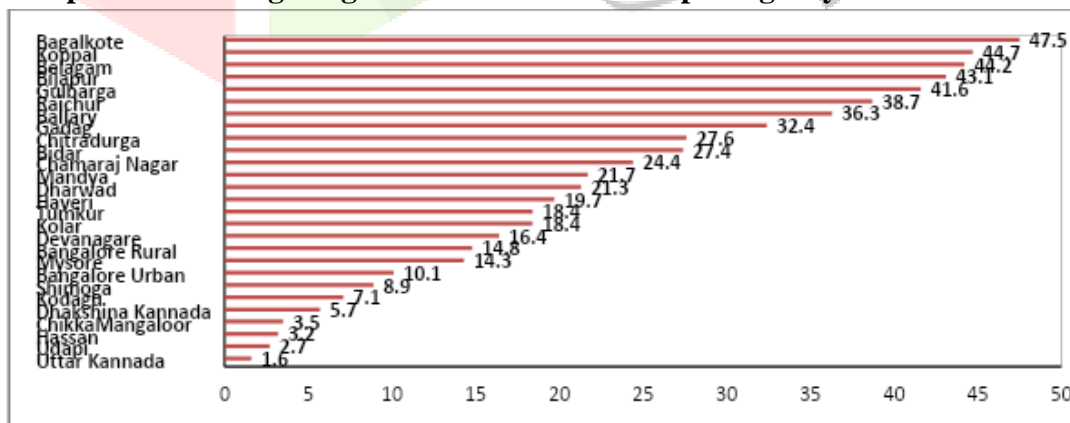


The states with a high proportion of girls getting married below age 18 are Bihar (46%), West Bengal (41%), Rajasthan (40%), Jharkhand (36%), Uttar Pradesh (33%), Madhya Pradesh, Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Andhra Pradesh (29%). In these nine states more than one-fourth of the girls are married before they are 18 years old.

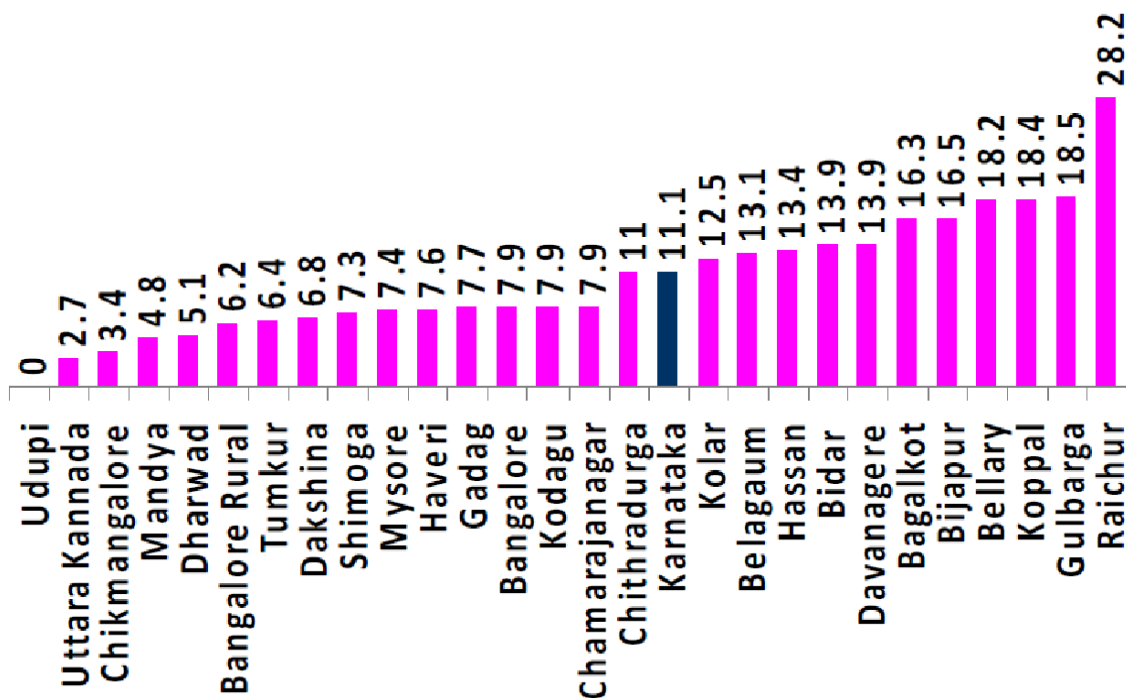
**The Child Marriage Scenario in Karnataka:**

Two out of five girls in the state are married off before they attain the age of 18. According to the census 2001, the child population (0-18 years) of the State is 41% of the total population. The population of adolescent girls in the age group of 10-18 years is 5,202,954 and the population of boys in the age group of 10-21 years is 7,200,909, both together constitute 23% of the total population of the state. The projected population of adolescents for the year 2011 is almost 26% of the total population.

**Graph-3: Percentage of girls married before completing 18 years in Karnataka**



According to DLHS-RCH 2007-08 also, nearly 1/4th of the girls in the state married before attaining their age of 18 years (22%). In Bagalkot nearly half of the girls married before 18 years and the least child marriages recorded in the state was Uttara Kannada (1.7%). The percentage of child marriages is often high in almost all northern districts of the state when compared to southern districts. In 11 districts this percentage is more than the state's average, which is 22.06%.

**Graph-4: Percentage of boys married before completing 18 years in Karnataka**

In Karnataka as shown in the graph, 11% of boys, nearly one out of ten, get married before the age of 21 years. In the state, Raichur district recorded the highest marriages among boys 28.2% and in districts like Udupi, no such marriages were recorded. This also points towards the correlation between poverty and illiteracy on one hand and higher incidences of child marriages on the other.

Eradicating child marriage has long been on the agenda of the international community and of individual countries. Early marriage is an issue of significant concern to policy-makers and human rights advocates. Governments in developing countries face increasing pressure to eradicate the practice with legal sanctions against parents who marry daughters before a standard age of consent. Proponents of “child protection” and “age of consent” laws argue that forcing parents to delay marriage will increase female educational attainment and reproductive control and decrease incidence of domestic violence. For the same reasons, social programmes such as education scholarships for girls increasingly contain program rules excluding girls who marry young in an effort to discourage the practice.

Tackling child marriage is a daunting but possible task, requiring political will and proactive multi-pronged strategies at the international, national, state and community levels. It is an irony that the phenomenon of child marriage despite all the laws and international standards and it continues to thwart the natural growth and development of children of the country thereby affecting the growth and progress of the entire nation. Governments and local civil society organisations have to actively work with greater intensity to discourage the practice by raising community awareness about the adverse consequences for children, running programmes that provide them with alternatives and by demanding more effective enforcement of the laws.

Against this backdrop, the report looks into the causes that lead to the practice of child marriage, records the severe consequences of this practice on the lives of children, especially the girl child, and identifies the bottlenecks in the implementation of relevant laws, difficulties on the ground, schemes and programmes meant to be used for eradication of child marriage, with specific focus on the state of Karnataka.

**Conclusion:**

Child marriage is widespread in India despite a law banning it, and the loser in the end is invariably the girl child given the socio-economic factors that encourage the practice. India is still unable to stop this feudal practice. Most child marriages in northern India take place on an auspicious day –Akha Teej (Akshaya Tritiya). But in the south there appears to be no special occasion for such marriages. Although the illegality of the practice and the fact that such marriages are not registered make the exact numbers hard to determine, some estimates put the number of child marriages in the country at several thousand every year. In some cases, the bride and the groom are said to be little more than toddlers, though the majority are in their teens. There is considerable evidence that child marriages contribute to virtually every social problem that affects women. However, the law alone cannot curb this harmful social practice. A change in psyche of the backward and illiterate people is required.

