

Bride Buying: Response to Bride Shortage in Rural Haryana

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Shortage of brides is a consequence of lesser number of females in Haryana over a long stretch of time. If men don't choose to remain unmarried, those who don't get the wife locally buy brides from other states. The men who need to buy brides are typically rural, uneducated, less educated or unemployed. Sufferers of low sex ratio belong to lower socio-economic strata. In rural Haryana, extent of bride buying is reported in 3.18 per cent households, which amounts to a large number. Practice is widespread which continues for a long time. This study reports the cases even upto 45 years and extent of such marriages is growing over time. Average amount the bride's family receives is not very high, just about ₹ 40,000/-, out of which nothing goes to the bride. Cross border wives are not well accepted and respected in the community. They are treated with prejudice. In spite of it the practice persists and brides come from all over India. If decline in child sex ratio continues across the country, it will be hard for future generation men in Haryana to buy cross border brides.

I Introduction

Male – Female Imbalance

In India, number of women *vis-à-vis* number of men is not equal. Reasons behind this imbalance lie in the lower status of women and gender inequality, which is manifested in son preference. Sons are considered as assets and daughters a liability. Therefore, a strong desire for sons leads to daughter aversion which ultimately eliminates the unwanted daughters. These practices on a large scale give rise to a distorted proportion of males and females in the population.

Sex ratio has always been unfavourable for females in India. When the British conducted the first ever census in India in 1872, they were shocked to see the deficit of females in the population – the situation contrary to their country. In the past century sex ratio in India has gone down from 972 in 1901 to 940 in 2011, which has improved by seven points during 2001-2011. Child sex ratio has

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