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CHILD MARRIAGE A CURSE TO INDIAN DEMOCRACY: A CASE STUDY OF MURSHIDABAD DISTRICT

Dibyendu Das

Guest Lecturer (Lalgola College)

ABSTRACT:

Restraining measures, constitutional and sub constitutional to dissuade people from endorsing and involving in child marriage mostly failed to seize the practice or decrease its rate in social frame in India. A deep rooted patriarchal society which is the chore influencer of it, shines from the different facets like prejudices, beliefs, social pressure and many others. As ignorance always welcome and take side of conventional rituals without dissecting its vices and virtues, here we see in west Bengal the same picture in rural and backward communities. Hence girl child still here accounted as burden and marrying them off is rendition, should be take care of as stress buster.



KEYWORDS: Restraining measures, child marriage, backward communities.

INTRODUCTION :

None of globalization or synchronization mechanisms could derail them from this heinous act. It is still a process that make children victims and parents ancillary victims. They sometimes fall under the pressure of social customs, sometimes financial insecurities play the role or the dowry work as catalyst and sometimes just mere followers of the practice, happily surrendering their children's fate in dark without surprise. Some researches has been made along with Census data and few corresponding secondary resources that attempt analyzation of gravity, causes and consequences of early marriage in west Bengal, with particular reference of

rural murshidabad district.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY:

1. To find out the present scenario of child marriage in murshidabad.
2. Who practice child marriage.
3. What is the consequence of child marriage that child is deprived of rights?
4. Cause of child marriage.
5. How much effected democracy by child marriage.

SURVEY LOCATION AND METHODOLOGY OF DATA COLLECTION:

METHODOLOGY:

The methodology used in this dissertation is explained in detail. Based on the report from different department of the

government, census report 2011, journal and field survey. My research work is basically based on Analytical and Empirical examination in nature. The present study is intended to identify that how dangerous child marriage is in democracy. For this purpose, I collected data from both the primary and secondary sources. The present study was conducted during January - December, 2018.

Selection of Blocks: There are 27 blocks, out of 27 Blocks there are 4 Blocks are purposively selected for the investigation, these are lalgola, bhagawangola-1, sagardighi, and beldanga -ii.

Sampling Design:

I had visited these places and collected the list of beneficiaries

from the panchayat office, information provided provided by the teachers, ICDS workers, social workers. It was randomly selected for the analysis. The total sample size is $4 \times 50 = 200$ respondents.

Gender development scheme:

Few strategies like swabalamban, Swayamsiddha, NHDFC – a self-employment scheme, Beti Padhao, Beti bachao, working women's' Hostel (wwh), Support to training and employment Programme (STEP) for women started speeding up its pacing throughout India to make walls against the practices like child marriage, gender discrimination, social inequality etc. and aiding women empowerment by promoting women education, financial help to poor and backward communities. In this regard not only nation wise but also in states some purifying programmes has been set out to eradicate such vices from the social frame. In west Bengal Those are, Kanyashree, Swabalamban, Muktir Alo, Anti trafficking units etc.

Now the question appears here that, though such initiatives has been operating for long, still there's no rewarding result came out of the efforts, provided. Districts like Murshidabad regarded as the hub of preserving such exploitation in West Bengal. Survey proposes that instead of those schemes, the tally has been achieved to differ the condition from yesteryears is hardly perceived.

Age at child marriage in murshidabad:

Child marriage is a violation of human rights perpetuated by a lack of adequate and enforced democracy, rights and governance system, such as birth and marriage registration system and laws related to inheritance and divorce, among others. Child marriage is often exacerbated by poverty, but is not an inevitable result of poverty. Instead, child marriage practices are deeply rooted in gender inequality, including legal structures that devalue women and girls, such as women's instability town land or benefit from inheritance, have equal rights to shared assets, and / or seek divorce or protection against violence. Majority percent of research scholar mentioned that most child marriage has been done for the lack of knowledge on family planning and societal pressure. As a result, a generation is going to completely damaged. West Bengal has now topped of the case of child marriage in the country. In west Bengal, Murshidabd district tops with 39.9%(NFHS-4). According to census report 2001, women who married before age 18 is 52.85 % in Bengal. National family health survey 2015-16 mentioned that the percentage of marriage before the age at 18 has come down to 47.3% in Bengal.

Ever married and currently married population by age at marriage: Murshidabad.

Age	Number : male	female
Less than 10	263606	401820
10-11	19216	231407
12-13	32517	931356
14-15	150662	7381293
16-17	519235	5710593

Source: census 2011

Child marriage in study area:

Age	Lalgola	sagardighi	Beldanga ii	Bhagawangala ii
Below 10	00	00	00	00
11-12	6	4	2	3
13-14	11	15	11	15
15-16	20	14	21	15
17-18	6	12	8	8

Source:Field survey

The age of marriage, I divided into five classes. Most of the girl child in Ialagola got marriage at the age between 15-16. By the survey I noticed that majority of girl child got marriage at the age 15 to 16 in study area.

who do people practice Child Marriage today?

Study estimated few dominating strands that plays crucial roles in prevailing and sustaining child marriage in rural areas. Following discussion will be consisted of that factors, compelling parents to marry off their girl child or to blindly support the practice being a puppet in the hands of age old culture and tradition.

i) Vices of patriarchy: Even in 21st century still our society couldn't make a shift from patriarchy to equality, though the metropolitans experiencing some changes, but overall we are still in the cage of patriarchy. Willingly or unwillingly our conscious or sub conscious mind addicted to this evil. Child marriage is the top-tier outcome of this practice. The most powerful strategy to end all the perspective of a girl at the very beginning stage of her life. On a surprising note sometimes women are encrypted into this in such a manner even if any outer force tries making them take out of it they are the first opposing force to attack it. For example, sometime mother raises the topic of their girls' marriage before any other at a very early age in areas where it is normal to do so.

That patriarchal mind set which still believe in conversation of virginity is the only way to save women's chastity, still count women body as a sheer reproductive organ that doesn't need much education and their existence should spin around household stuff, are still composing, conducting and canalizing that legacy from fathers and forefathers.

ii) Deceived Responsibility: Marring off daughters is still a matter of concern irrespective of social status. Though its acuteness varies place wise but from the birthday of a girl parents recruit an extra load in mind about their daughter's marriage. That pressure leads over any other, like their education, career etc. To get a hold over their freedom, early marriage plays the best role to cover all that insecurities that a prospective parent deal with their daughter to be married. It gives an insurance to preserve the chastity of a girl leaving least chance to raise question about their character. It helps seizing them from inter cast marriage, it saves them from contemporary spell of western culture also hand cuffs their desire of their own choice before it could bloom.

As early marriage has become a ritual, especially in rural areas it is like cornering one's self if someone tries to keep his daughter unmarried and follow a different path to bring her up in life. Unlike cities boys here boys also get married before the approved legal age appear, so for parents it is hard to bypass that pressure which comes from different layers of society like neighbor, relatives. Even rural match makers act as a fantastic catalyst to expedite the compulsion.

iii) Economic manipulation: Economic status in especially rural area highly effect in making child marriage a stronghold in social frame. As a result of child marriage girls do not get the opportunity to find any other income option which accelerate their subordination. So far girls are considered as burden and economically unproductive, poor and backward communities prefer to marry them off as early as possible. Some crisis, for example, poverty, unemployment, rising cost of marriage, job loss, job insecurity or agricultural stagnation became the constraints in way to find a suitable groom for a daughter's family. As a result, augmentation for dowry in a parallel ratio with the rising degree of suitability of a groom has stretched and to escape from this again child marriage is chosen for relief.

iv) Lack of Education: Low rate of literacy among girls in rural area, particularly among the SC, ST and Muslim females in the murshidabad district is a major factor promoting child marriage. As per the NFHS-3 data, 67.9 percent of the women marrying before 18 in Bengal were illiterate. A close survey reveals that more than 78 per cent of girls married before the age of 18 were either illiterate (39.26 %) or have studied up to the primary level (38.45 %). Only 13.84 percent of women in this category have crossed the Secondary stage. This means that very few of the girls are withdrawn from schools just before the marriage. Rather drop-out from school due to factors like poverty, long distance of the secondary school, poor transportation, absenteeism from school due to household chores, poor performance in school examinations and unwillingness of the parents crucially influence the institution

of marriage. For children in the 10-14 age group, withdrawal of educational opportunities also makes them vulnerable to iniquities like child labour and trafficking.

v) **prevailing prejudices:** under the spell of corollary, especially in rural areas, it is deemed that girls' marriage should precede all other criteria of their life even ignoring the prescribed legal age as there is an age old misconception that all conjugal attainments should be acquired before they reach the declining age of their physical attraction. Legal and scientific rules were overruled on the ground of social pressure and prejudices. As there is no distinct age here to benchmark adulthood, it streams through the age group of 14 (for child labour), 18 (voting age for adult) and 21 (legal age of marriage for the boys) to raise the confusion high and unabated beliefs continue to persist.

vi) **Few more integral factors:** Some more prevailing determinants are still to be mentioned apart from the above said orientations. This enterprise is an association of many socio-cultural, economic, demographic and psychological factors. Lower age at marriage for boys, trafficking in women and children, family size and religious reasons are also prompting the rate of child marriage. Boys here starts earning at a very early age just after leaving school and reach their adulthood by the age of 17-18. Now they are considered as prospective groom and hence age limit for girl's hits maximum up to 14-15 for marriage.

As it is considered a stigma to be a single lady in rural area, parents feel ashamed if they are incapable of arranging marriage for their daughter. Traffickers take advantage of this situation. They come offering money to the poor families with an add-on reward of ditching dowry which appear as an irresistible composition to the poor family, cunningly making it a safe game for traffickers as well as the recruiters of the sold girls. Parents trapped in this, get hand cuffed of reputation which seize their lips for the sake of image and for other girls in family to be married. Sometimes father's death intensifies the occurrence too.

Individual rights denied by child marriage:

1. **The right to an education**
2. **The right to be protected from sexual abuse, physical and mental violence.**
3. **The right to the enjoyment of highest standard of life and health.**
4. **The right rest and leisure and to contribute freely in cultural life.**
5. **Right to protection against all form of exploitation.**
6. **Right to employment.**

Interception of child marriage:

To get a grip on the matter like child marriage or gender inequality one needs to put his hands deep into decay to uproot its establishment. Constitutional amendment at each level, procedural installation, relevant laws are some most important mandates that could secure the change as well as challenge gender inequality. Hence a rigorous attempt will be expected for the following steps:

1. A regular campaign with an easy and attractive approach that could reach and make impact to all the targeted people should be attained to spread the awareness. A superficial image of do and don'ts is not what it need but the penetration of knowledge in the minds that are encrypted with misconceptions, should get purified with the information, like dangers of early pregnancy and health issues encompassing it, through documentary films, roadside theatre etc. Governmental, non-governmental, professional agencies, colleges and universities that are honored with social science departments are mostly expected to head the way of enlightenment.

2. Need to provide economic support and incentives to girls and their families.

3. To stop the child marriage there is need to high quality education of girls.

4. After completion of education, there should be an opportunity to get job.

5. Human rights, marriage related laws and policy must be promoted.

6. An injunction of compulsory registration of all the marriages from the end of the supreme court has been made, which will come under the surveillance of panchayat and other local bodies as it is

impossible to appoint that huge number of marriage registration officers to cover entire population. Registration fees had been made so minimal to make it affordable to all the classes. Legislations to act against offender should get activated to expedite and popularize marriage registration in rural area.

7. A compulsory Birth registration should join that process too by implanting authorizations into hospitals for issuing requisites.

8. To secure 100% enrolment at primary level few measures such as Sarvasiksha Abhijan, Mid-day-meal are in action which also started influencing rural and backward communities. Steps, such as upgrading of primary and secondary schools to higher secondary to secure more years in schools for both the girls and boys, scholarship for girls belonging to poor SC, ST and other BPL families, employment of at least 33 percent women teachers in schools, improved quality of education, vocational courses for the dropouts should be taken to serve the purpose more successfully.

9. Initiatives like awareness generation, motivation building and adult literacy etc. are some important keys of women empowerment which are needed to improve status and conditions of rural women. Providing micro-credits to self-help groups, take action on rural industrialization and upgradation of infrastructure will support to procure the goal fast.

10. Reward system could be implemented in family welfare programs. To sustain affordability of necessary education and training, the flow of education should stream from small size family to poor ones.

11. Educating the minds about knowledge of Human rights, social problems, social life, reproductive and health matters, gender issues etc. should get started at an early age in the classes through subject like Social Science, making it compulsory. Growing process should be endowed with information of civics and laws of child marriage and labour.

Jangipur subdivision of Murshidabad has come under the wing of "Shisumitra project", pertaining to Unicef 2005, a model of child friendly village, where birth registration, enrollment in school for age group of 6-14, children's immunity, marriage approval to the only authorized age group are mandatory.

12. To brief it could be proposed that in this context media, political parties, NGOs could play a vital role to change the color of the social sanctuary, becoming the voice of powerless, non-vocals, vulnerable groups, eliminating gender discrimination and inequality in contemporary Bengal as well as Indian society.

All people should come forward to save democracy. The child is unit of future nation building. Without the contribution of women never a democratic country practice successfully. In my study area, I observed that, few people, aware of such malpractices and some schools in different parts of villages in murshidabad are making efforts to prevent child marriage by connecting with police and administrative bodies. They are amalgamating committees for taking care of this issue, escalating awareness among the people for the advancement. To be mentioned, women from self-help group also came into the front, started evoking sense to censor unaesthetic part from social platter.

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