

## Marriage Arrangements and Customs in India

Nelson Franklin Soy\* and Harihar Sahoo\*\*

### Abstract

*The present study attempts to analyse the marriage arrangements and customs in India using the data from India Human Development Survey II (2011-12) and Census of India. The result shows that age at marriage for males and females has increased by 3 and 5 years respectively during 1960-2011. The bivariate analysis discloses that two-thirds of women in India met their husbands only on wedding day or the day of Gauna. Only 5 per cent of them have chosen their husbands independently. The prevalence of inter-caste marriages is observed to be 5.4 per cent at the national level. Results of multivariate analysis indicate that marrying outside the caste and blood relations is influenced by socio-economic factors. Results also show that marriage expenditure for girls is higher than for boys.*

Key words: Age at marriage, marriage arrangements and customs, inter-caste marriage, marriage expenditure.

### I. Introduction

Marriage is an important social institution in India. The country is divided into two regions with respect to marriage practices and customs, the north and the south. Other variations in marriage practices can be seen among various ethnic and tribal groups in the central, mountainous north and eastern regions. In the northern part, it is seen that brides, especially Hindu brides, have to go and live with strangers in a home which they have never visited. The natal family is usually geographically distant. In central India, the pattern is similar to that of the northern part. Here marriages outside the village are more common. Daughters are often given to lineages or villages where other daughters of their lineage or village have earlier been wed. However, in the southern part of India marriage practices are very different. Marriages are generally preferred between cousins. Cross cousin marriages and marriages between uncles and nieces are also common here. The major reason for the prevalence of this type of marriage practice is that the family that gives a daughter expects one in return if not immediately, then in the next generation. Here the bride moves to her in-laws' home, which is usually the home of the grandmother or her aunt's home. Hence, she is often comfortable in there.

Other changes in the marriage system are that love and mixed marriages have been on the rise in India. A mixed marriage is the term often applied to a marital union of two individuals from different races or religions. It also describes the marriage of a couple which has different cultural, ethnic or national backgrounds (Rodman, 1965). An increasing number of people, especially among those who are college educated, are finding their own spouses. Another important aspect of marriage in India is dowry. In various communities, dowry has traditionally been given by a bride's kin at the time of her marriage. Since the late twentieth century throughout many parts of India dowry payments have risen enormously. Some dowries demanded are oppressive, amounting to several years' salary in cash as well as items such as motorcycles, air conditioners and fancy cars. Among some lower-status groups, large dowries are currently replacing traditional bride-price payments.

---

\* Nelson Franklin Soy, M. Phil. Scholar, International Institute for Population Sciences, Mumbai-400 088. Email: nelsonsoy4@gmail.com

\*\* Harihar Sahoo, Assistant Professor, Department of Development Studies, International Institute for Population Sciences, Mumbai-400 088. Email: hariharsahoo@gmail.com

This research was carried out as a part of the course curriculum of Masters in Population Studies at the International Institute for Population Sciences (IIPS), Mumbai, India.

The authors thank the referees of the journal for their comments on the earlier version of this paper.

## II. Review of Literature

Research on marriage in developing countries has been somewhat narrow in scope because of both conceptual and data limitations. Marriage has historically been universal and remains so (Das & Dey, 1998). While age at marriage has risen slowly largely through decline in child marriages, mean age at marriage remains low. India has been a country with low age at marriage, where marriage is universal. India follows the Hajnal's Non-European pattern (1965) which is characterized by universal marriage and very low age at marriage among females. The pressure to marry early persists with rising dowry and marriage expenses in several parts of the country.

Decision making regarding choosing one's spouse, whether arranged by parents or self-arranged love marriage, may have drastic and long-lasting implications for later family life. In India women have a very low role in choosing their husbands and in decisions regarding marriage practices and customs to be followed. Indian women have long been recognized as having low autonomy and decision making power (Bloom, Wypij & Das Gupta, 2001; Jejeebhoy & Sathar, 2001; Mason & Smith, 2000; Desai, 1994). Women's limited empowerment within the household is associated with a vast number of outcomes which are higher fertility levels and discrimination in resource allocation inside the household (Basu, 1992; Dyson & Moore, 1983; Doan & Bisharat, 1990), higher child mortality (Bloom, Wypij & Das Gupta, 2001; Durrant & Sathar, 2000) and lower contraceptive use (Dharmalingam & Morgan, 1996; Kishore & Subaiya, 2005; Visaria, 1996). Lack of choice in marriage partners may set the pattern for a subsequent lack of decision-making power in the marriage.

Historically most Indian marriages have been arranged by the couple's parents and extended family. India has long been associated with the institution of parent arranged marriages where parents exert a strong influence over the choice of partner for their son or daughter. A 1993-94 a survey of 1,842 over 1,800 ever-married rural women aged 15-39 years confirm that few women have a say in the choice of their husbands (Jejeebhoy & Sathar, 2001). Even today a clear majority of Indians first meet their spouses on their wedding day (Desai et al., 2010). While a life-course perspective has been widely used in the Western literature on marriage and family transitions, its application to non-Western settings is far more limited. While Indian women's autonomy has long been recognized to grow over her lifetime (Das Gupta, 1995), the path of dependency of later events on how earlier events transpired is not as well documented. According to Rathor (2003), inter-caste marriage has been on the rise, especially among certain socio-economic groups such as the urban youth. Mixed marriages have been increasing due to modernization and socio-economic development. Various socio-economic differences are seen among inter-class marriages and it also affects their pattern of marriages (Singh, Goli & Sekher, 2013).

According to Srinivasan and Lee (2004), a dowry may also have been a way of compensating the groom and his family for the economic support they would provide for the new bride because women had little or no role in the market economy and would be dependent upon their husbands and in laws (p. 1108). Dowries are still a common affair despite the significant changes that have been brought about in India. Even though many more women have been brought about in the work force, dowry still prevails in the society. Hypergamy which is defined as the practice of marrying a partner whose social status is higher than that of hers is one of the main reasons why dowry is much in many communities. Larger dowries mean increasing the family's rank in the society. To add to that, families are motivated to provide generous dowry for their daughter to ensure her safety and respect by in-laws (Srinivasan & Lee, 2004).

## III. Rationale and objectives

Marriage is the basis of social life and is a very important part of our life which accelerates procreation and which helps in adding up the family members. Age at marriage is affected by the socio-economic and demographic factors. The prevalence of early marriage is a cause of concern for planners and policy makers in several countries. It is believed that an increase in age at marriage can

significantly reduce the fertility level which, in turn, can reduce population growth. Therefore, an in-depth study of age at marriage is needed. There are few studies which have focused on the marriage arrangements and practices in India, and which include its customs, inter-caste marriage, marriage expenses and dowry. Therefore, the present study attempts to understand the marriage practices, decision making process involved in the marriage and expenditure incurred. Its specific objectives are: (a) to study the trend and pattern in the age at marriage by sex; (b) to analyse marriage arrangements; and (c) to trace out the pattern of marriage customs by regions.

#### **IV. Data Sources and Methodology**

##### *Data Sources*

The study uses data from the available secondary sources, i.e., Census of India and India Human Development Survey (IHDS) II. To find out the trend and pattern of age at marriage, data have been gathered from census reports of 1961, 1971, 1981, 1991, 2001 and 2011. The IHDS-II is a nationally representative survey of 42,152 households, covering many dimensions which makes it a multi-topic survey. It covered 384 districts, 1,420 villages, and 1,042 urban neighbourhoods across India. The IHDS-II is a panel data, around 83 per cent households interviewed in IHDS-II were also interviewed for IHDS-I in 2004-05. The first round of IHDS was completed in 2004-05 which covered 41,554 urban and rural households in all states and union territories of India (except Andaman & Nicobar Islands and Lakshadweep). Two sets of questionnaires covering topics like health, education, employment, income, consumption, economic status, marriage preferences, fertility, gender relations, and social capital were administered to each household. IHDS was jointly organized by researchers from the University of Maryland and the National Council of Applied Economic Research (NCAER), New Delhi. The IHDS-II data are assembled into several data files such as eligible women, household, individual and so on.

The present study utilizes household and eligible women dataset collected from 42,152 households and 39,523 eligible women. From the household dataset, variables of marriage practices and from eligible women dataset variables of marital history have been taken for analysis. Questions related to marriage practices asked were: (a) Whether marrying daughter in the natal village is allowed? (b) Whether marrying her to a cousin is allowed? (c) Whether widow remarriage is permitted? (d) Has anyone done inter-caste marriage? (e) How much money is usually spent by the boy's and the girl's family on the wedding? and (f) How much cash is given at the time of the daughter's marriage?

The questions asked to gain information on marital history of women were: (a) Is the husband's family of the same caste as the natal family? (b) Does the woman has blood relation with her husband? (c) At the time of marriage, were the natal family and the husband's family economically of the same level or the natal family better off/ worse off? (d) How long did the woman know her husband before marrying him? (e) Who chose the husband? and (f) Did the woman have any say in choosing her husband? These questions are analysed with the help of background characteristics such as age at marriage, caste, religion, education, place of residence and region.

##### *Methodology*

To study the trend and pattern of age at marriage, Singulate Mean Age at Marriage (SMAM) has been computed. SMAM is the average length of single life expressed in years among those who marry before the age of 50.

The method of analysis consists of bi-variate and multivariate analysis. Bi-variate analysis is one of the simplest forms of analysis which explores the relationship between two variables. Binary logistic regression is a form of multivariate analysis used to measure the relationship between the categorical dependent variable and one or more independent variables. Independent variable can be continuous or categorical, while dependent variable must be dichotomous. Woman's role in

decision making to choose her partner, woman marrying outside her caste and woman marrying outside her blood relation have been considered as dependent variables for performing a binary logistic regression analysis. Different background variables which have been considered as independent variables are age at marriage (less than 18, 18-21, 22-24 and 25 years and above), caste (scheduled caste, scheduled tribe, other backward classes and others), religion (Hindu, Muslim, Christian, Sikh and others), educational level (illiterate, primary, secondary and higher), current place of residence (residing in the same village/town, another village/town and metro city), and region (north, central, west, east, north-east and south). North has been categorized by clubbing the states of Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, Punjab, Chandigarh, Uttarakhand, Haryana, Delhi and Rajasthan, while the central region includes Uttar Pradesh, Chhattisgarh and Madhya Pradesh. West includes Gujarat, Daman and Diu, Maharashtra, Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Goa, whereas Bihar, West Bengal, Jharkhand and Odisha are covered in the east. North-eastern region includes Sikkim, Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram, Tripura, Meghalaya and Assam, while south includes Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Pondicherry.

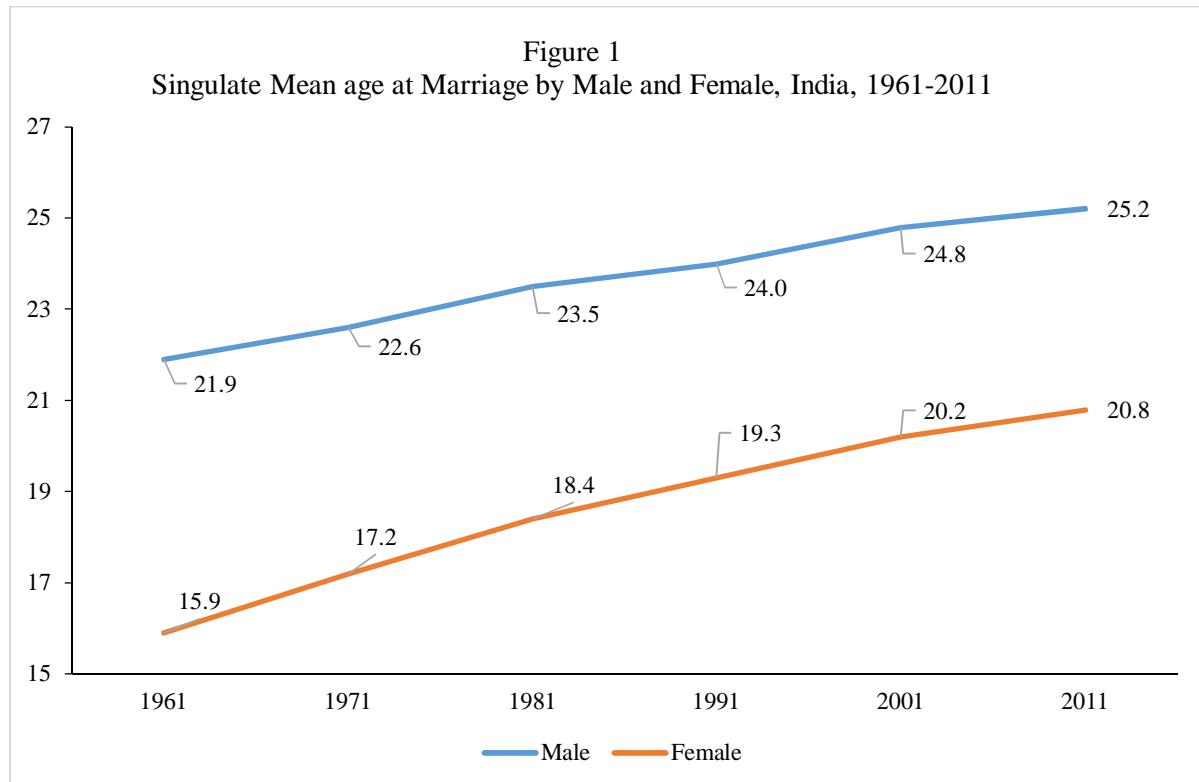
Wedding expenditure of boys and girls has been taken by averaging both minimum and maximum values, and then their average wedding expenditure is being analysed at a regional level, namely, south, north, east, west, north-east and central. The same methodology of averaging the income given in cash as a wedding gift has been adopted. SPSS version 20 is used for data analysis.

## V. Findings and Discussion

### *Trend and pattern of age at marriage in India*

Table 1 shows the SMAM among males by state from 1961 to 2011. It has been the highest in Kerala with 26.6 years in 1961, which further increased to 28.7 years in 2011. Madhya Pradesh has the lowest of 18.7 years in the year 1961 which went up to 24 years in 2011. In Uttar Pradesh SMAM stood at 19.4 years which is below the national average in 1961 and went up to 24.4 years in 2011. Orissa matched up with the national figure in 1961 at 21.9 whereas it increased by 5 years to 26.8 years, ahead of the national figure of 25.2 years. Among southern states Andhra Pradesh's estimates were 22.3 years in 1961 and had an increase of 3 years to 25.4 years, followed by Karnataka and Tamil Nadu with 24.7 and 25.3 years in 1961 and an upsurge of 2 years each by the year 2011. In north Delhi and Himachal Pradesh had 23.3 and 22.2 years in 1961 which had gone up by 3 and 4 years respectively in 2011. The north-eastern state of Assam at 25.9 years, occupying the second position in 1961, saw an increase of 0.8 years at 26.7 in 2011 which is ahead of the national average. With increases in state figures, the national figures have also gone up by 3.3 years from 21.9 to 25.2 years 2011. The eastern states of Bihar and West Bengal have shown estimates of 18.9 and 24.3 in 1961 which have gone up to 23.8 and 25.7 years respectively in 2011. The western states of Gujarat, Rajasthan and Maharashtra stood at 21.7, 19.6 and 22.6 years, which increased to 24.1, 22.9 and 25.5 years respectively in 2011.

Table 2 shows the SMAM among females by state from 1961 to 2011. The SMAM for females has been the highest in Jammu & Kashmir with 24.3 years 2011. The lowest is followed by Madhya Pradesh at 13.9 years in 1961 and went up by 6 years to 20.3 years in 2011. The national average stood at 15.9 years in 1961 and has risen to 20.8 years, almost an increase of 5 years. Among other southern states, Andhra Pradesh estimates were at 15.2 years in 1961, saw an increase of 5.4 years to 20.6 years in 2011. Karnataka and Tamil Nadu stood at 16.4 and 18.4 years in 1961 and have seen an increase of 4.4 and 3.3 respectively. The northern states of Himachal Pradesh and Delhi were estimated at 15.6 and 18.7 respectively for 1961, and for Haryana at 17.7 for 1971. The three states saw an increase of 6.8, 4.0 and 2.8 years at 22.4, 22.7 and 20.9 years for 2011. The north-eastern states with Assam show an estimate of 18.6 years in 1961 but moved up by 2.5 years to 21.1 years in 2011. The eastern states with Bihar, West Bengal and Orissa showed 14.3, 15.9 and 16.4 years in 1961 which increased to 19.5, 19.9 and 21.8 years in 2011. The SMAMs in western states, namely, Gujarat, Rajasthan and Maharashtra were 17.1, 14.2 and 15.8 years respectively in 1961 and have gone up to 20.7, 19.5 and 20.8 years in 2011.



### *Marriage Arrangements in India*

Social norms and family structure lead to the persistence of traditional form of marriage in India. It was normal in the ancient times for a girl to marry someone without meeting at all. Table 3 presents the specific duration a woman knew her husband with background characteristics. Around two-thirds of the women know their husbands only on the wedding day or the day of Gauna. Women married before the age of 18 years reported that around 73.3 per cent of them met their husband on the wedding day or at the time of Gauna, whereas 7 per cent of them who married before the age of 18 years reported that they knew their husbands since childhood. With an increase in the age at marriage, there has been a shift in the duration which has declined drastically for women meeting their husbands directly on the wedding day to more than a year. Therefore, we can conclude that an increase in age at marriage has led to an involvement of a thinking process among women to take some more time in knowing their life partners and then proceeding towards marriage.

Among the social groups, Scheduled Tribes depict a different story with 58 per cent of the women reporting meeting their husbands on the wedding day, whereas 6 per cent of them knew their husbands since childhood. Christian women had a privilege over the women belonging to other religions with only 37 per cent of them having met their husbands on the wedding day and 54 per cent of them had known their husbands for more than a year. Educational status of the married women revealed that those more educated enjoyed the benefit of having a say in their marriage by getting to know their life partner for a longer duration, women having completed higher education reported that 56 per cent of them have met their husbands on the day of marriage and 38 per cent of them knew their husbands for more than a month.

Women married in another village/town were in a less comfortable position as compared with the ones married within the same village. Almost half of the women who met their husbands on the day of marriage belonged to the same village or town, whereas 15 per cent women knew their husbands since childhood. The region shows a stark difference with around 80 per cent of the women belonging to Central India having met their husbands on the wedding day and around 16 per cent of the women belonging to southern region knew their husbands since childhood.

The right to choose a spouse and enter the contract of marriage with full consent is one of the key rights which is articulated in the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (United Nations, 1979). However, a young man practicing it is considered to have a better adulthood as compared with others (Lloyd, 2005). Table 4 depicts women's role in choosing their husbands by background characteristics. Only 5 per cent of women in India chooses their husbands themselves and about 27 per cent of them had a role in deciding their partner either herself or with parents/relatives. With the increase in age at marriage, the level of autonomy among women also increases, for women marrying above the age of 25, 10 per cent of the women reported that they had chosen their husbands independently. Decision making either herself or along with parents or relatives has increased from 21.8 per cent among women marrying less than 18 years of age to 41.4 per cent among those marrying above the age of 25 years. There are several evidences to explain the ongoing shift in the marriage practices with the involvement of both the parents and young people in selecting their life partners, or on the contrary self-arranged marriages are on the rise.

Women belonging to Scheduled Tribes and Christian society are better off than other women with 13.9 and 15.8 per cent of them choosing their husbands themselves respectively. Women with higher educational status are in a commanding position of taking their own decision (8.6 per cent) as well as joint decision (40.3 per cent) along with the family members and relatives. Women marrying in their own villages enjoy more autonomy in selecting their husbands (11.6 per cent). Women of north-eastern region enjoy a higher autonomy in having a say in the selection of their husbands (33 per cent). The involvement of a parent's decision on the selection of spouse is preferred due to his/her knowledge and wisdom in selecting a good spouse (Medora, 2003) which further ensures stability and security (Abraham, 2001) than love marriage. A study noted that parents arranged marriages have been substituted by semi-arranged other than self-arranged marriages (Banerjee *et.al.* 2008).

Marriage happens in the purview of caste system, but does it account for the economic status and blood relation. The women who married outside the same economic background, outside their caste, outside blood relation are presented in Table 5. The higher age at marriage is characterized by greater chances of marrying outside their caste (7.6 per cent), outside blood relation (95.1 per cent) and higher likelihood of marrying within the same economic status (76.9 per cent). Among the social groups, Scheduled Tribes have a higher chance (75.4 per cent) of marrying within the same economic status, 94 per cent of the ST women marry outside their blood relation and other caste have a higher chance (6.5 per cent) of marrying outside their caste. Around 83 and 98.8 per cent of Sikh women marry in the same economic status and outside their blood relation. Christian women have a higher chance (9.9 per cent) of marrying outside their caste. Women married in the same village/town are more likely to marry within the same economic status which can be attributed to a good social network in the village/town. Women married in a metro city have a greater chance of marrying outside their caste (10 per cent) and women married in another village/town are more likely to marry outside their blood relation (93.2 per cent). Marrying a person with the same economic status matters in the southern region (81.1 per cent), whereas the proportion of inter-caste marriages and marrying outside blood relation is higher in the north-eastern region (9.5 and 99.3 per cent respectively).

#### *Determinants of women's role in choosing their partners, marrying outside their caste and outside blood relation*

Logistic regression analyses have been carried out to find out the determinants of women's role in choosing their husbands, women marrying outside their caste and outside their blood relation. The odds ratios are presented in Table 6. The results indicate that after controlling the effect of other variables, women's role in choosing their husbands increases with the increase in age at marriage. With respect to religious groups, women's role in choosing their husbands is higher among Christians than Hindus. Educational level of women shows a significant positive effect in choosing their husbands. As the educational level of women increases, their decision-making power in choosing the husband increases. Their role in choosing their partners is lower if they reside in a

different village/town and not in the same village/town. Controlling the effect of other variables, women's decision in choosing their husbands is substantially higher in the northeast, west and southern regions than the northern region.

Controlling the effect of other variables, age at marriage, religion, educational level, place of residence and region have statistically significant effect on inter-caste marriage. As the age at marriage increases, the likelihood of marrying outside the caste increases. The likelihood of inter-caste marriage is higher among Muslim and Christian women and lower among Sikh women compared with Hindu women. The likelihood of women marrying outside their caste is lower among women with primary and secondary levels of education than illiterate women. Inter-caste marriage is likely to be less if both husband and wife are in different villages/towns than those who are from the same village/town. The likelihood of inter-caste marriage is lower in the central and southern regions as compared with northern region.

The probability of women marrying outside the blood relation increases with increased age at marriage. Among various social groups, women belonging to OBC and other castes are more likely to marry outside blood relation than of the scheduled caste. Christian women are more likely to marry outside their blood relations than the Hindu women, while Muslim women are less likely to marry outside their blood relations. With reference to illiterate women, higher educated women are more likely to marry outside their blood relations. This reflects that improvement in the social status of the women is directly linked to their autonomy and their ability to marry outside the blood relation. Compared to women residing in the same village/town, those residing in metro cities are more likely to marry outside their blood relations. With reference to the northern region, women of north-eastern region are more likely to marry outside their blood relations while those of southern region are substantially less likely to marry outside their blood relations.

#### *Marriage customs in the community*

Table 7 depicts whether it is permissible to marry a girl in her natal village, marry her to a cousin, for a widow to remarry and whether anyone in the community had an inter-caste marriage by regions in India. Around 89 and 25 per cent of the respondents from the north-eastern and northern regions respectively reported that it is permissible for a girl to get married in her natal village. Marriage between cousins is highly permitted in the southern region (78 per cent) whereas the practice is least in the northern region (only 11.6 per cent). This study corroborates with the results of another study which found that marrying girls to distant places was evident in northern region as compared to southern region (Karve, 1965). The large chunk of respondents in the Central region (80.7 per cent) stated that it is permissible for a widow to remarry, on the other hand only 50 per cent of the respondents belonging to north-eastern region stated that widow remarriage is permissible. About 50 per cent of the respondents from southern region have reported that they have known someone who had an inter-caste marriage whereas only 8 per cent of the respondents knew about someone who has had an inter-caste marriage in the central region.

Average marriage expenditure (in Rs.), number of guests invited and cash given as gifts in a daughter's marriage by regions in India is presented in Table 9. The average marriage expenditure is higher for the females (Rs. 2, 28,470) as compared with males (Rs. 1, 47,979) in India. Expenditure in a daughter's marriage is highest in the northern region (Rs. 3, 11,960) and lowest expenditure incurred in north-eastern region (Rs. 1, 55,155). The number of people invited for reception also seems to be higher for girls (316) than boys (303) in India. There is a clear variation across the regions. Western region shows that the highest number for both girls (466) and boys (422). Cash given as a gift is much higher in the southern region with Rs.1, 21,743 in the daughter's marriage as against only Rs. 14,180 in the north-eastern region.

## V1. Conclusions

Marriage is a social phenomenon which extends the lineage network. The SMAM in India has been increasing from 21.9 to 25.2 for males and from 15.9 to 20.8 for females during the period 1961-2011. Around two-thirds of the women know their husbands only on wedding day or the day of Gauna. Only 5 per cent of them choose their husbands at their own and about 27 per cent have some role in deciding their partners either themselves or with parents/relatives. This reflects that the involvement of parent/relative's decision on selection of spouse is still preferred. Women's role in choosing their husband increases with the increase in age at marriage and with a higher level of education. Marriage in India is still considered as endogamous and therefore the prevalence of inter-caste marriage persists to a very small proportion. With changing socio-economic conditions, there may be some changes in marriage practices in future. As per the traditional norms, the expenses of women's marriage are much more as compared with men's marriage. It increases the cost of marriage which results in dowry inflation and parents fear to marry their daughters late due to inflated dowry and with less availability of suitable grooms. The tradition of marrying outside the blood and economic groups has been followed historically. The practice of hypergamy is not only limited to social status, but also to the factors associated with age, education and economic status (Bhagat, 2016). South Indians still follow the tradition of marrying their daughters to their close relatives to ensure that the inherited social network takes care of the daughters if married closer to the family. This also helps them ensure the safety and no feeling of home sickness in the groom's house. Results revealed that the average marriage expenditure is higher for the females as compared with the males. This may be due to the practice of dowry. Available literature shows that over the last fifty years the size of dowry payments has increased and communities which paid the bride price are switching to dowries (Rao, 1993). The present study revealed that the cash given as a gift is much higher in the southern region compared with other regions of India.

## References

Abraham, L. (2001). Redrawing the Lakshman Rekha: Gender differences and cultural constructions in youth sexuality in urban India. *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies*, 24(S-1), 133-156.

Anderson, S. (2003). Why dowry payments declined with modernization in Europe but are rising in India. *Journal of Political Economy*, 111(2), 269-310.

Banerjee, M, et al. (2008). Is education associated with a transition to self-arranged marriages? Paper presented at the International Conference on Changing Transition to Marriage: Gender Implications for the Next Generation, New Delhi, 10-12 September 2008.

Basu, A. M. (1992). *Culture, the status of women, and demographic behaviour: Illustrated with the Case of India*. England: Clarendon Press.

Bhagat, R. B. (2016). The practice of early marriages among females in India: Persistence and change. *Working Paper No. 10*. Mumbai: International Institute for Population Sciences.

Bhat, P. N. M., & Halli, S. S. (1999). Demography of bride price and dowry: Causes and consequences of the Indian marriage squeeze. *Population Studies*, 53(2), 129-148.

Bloom, S. S., Wypij, D., & Gupta, M. D. (2001). Dimensions of women's autonomy and the influence on maternal health care utilization in a north Indian city. *Demography*, 38(1), 67-78.

Das, N. P., & Dey, D. (1998). Female age at marriage in India: Trends and Determinants. *Demography India*, 27(1), 91-115.

Desai, S., & Andrist, L. (2010). Gender scripts and age at marriage in India. *Demography*, 47(3), 667-687.

Desai, S., & Johnson, K. (2005). Women's decision-making and child health: Familial and social hierarchies. In S. Kishor (Ed.) *A focus on gender: Collected papers on gender using DHS data* (pp. 55-68). Calverton, Maryland: ORC Macro & Measure DHS.

Dharmalingam, A., & Morgan, P. S. (1996). Women's work, autonomy, and birth control: Evidence from two south Indian villages. *Population Studies*, 50(2), 187-201.

Doan, R. M., & Bisharat, L. (1990). Female autonomy and child nutritional status: The extended-family residential unit in Amman, Jordan. *Social Science & Medicine*, 31(7), 783-789.

Durrant, V. L., & Sathar, Z. A. (2000). Greater investments in children through women's empowerment: A key to demographic change in Pakistan? New York: Population Council.

Dyson, T., & Moore, M. (1983). On kinship structure, female autonomy, and demographic behaviour in India. *Population and Development Review*, 9(3), 35-60.

Gupta, M. D. (1995). Life course perspectives on women's autonomy and health outcomes. *American Anthropologist*, 97(3), 481-491.

India, Registrar General. (2008). Census of India 2001, Marital status and age at marriage ó An analysis of 2001 Census data, New Delhi: Registrar General of India.

International Institute for Population Science (IIPS) and ORC Macro (2000). *National Family Health Survey (NHFS-2), 1998-99, India*, Mumbai: IIPS.

International Institute for Population Science (IIPS) (1995). *National Family Health Survey (MCH and Family Planning), India, 1992-93*, Bombay: IIPS.

Jejeebhoy, S. J., & Zeba A. S. (2001). Women's autonomy in India and Pakistan: The influence of religion and region. *Population and Development Review* 27(4), 687-712.

Karve, I. (1965). *Kinship organization in India*. Bombay: Asia Publishing House.

Kishore, S., & Subaiya, L. (2005). Household decision making as empowerment: A methodological view. Paper presented at the 2005 Meeting of the International Union for the Scientific Study of Population (IUSSP), Tours, France.

Llyod, C. B. (Ed.) (2005). *Growing up global: The changing transitions to adulthood in developing Countries*. Washington, DC: National Academic Press, National Research Council and Institute of Medicine.

Mason, K. O., & Smith, H. L. (2000). Husbandsø versus wivesø fertility goals and use of contraception: The influence of gender context in five Asian countries. *Demography*, 37(3), 299-311.

Medora, N. P (2003). Mate selection in contemporary India: Love marriages v/s arranged marriages. In H. R. Hammom & B. B. InGoldsby (Eds.), *Mate selection across culture* (pp. 209-230). Thousand Oaks, CA, London, New Delhi: Sage Publications.

Rao, V. (1993). *The Rising Price of Husband: A Hedonic Analysis of Dowry Increase in India*, *Journal of Political Economy*, 101(4):666-677

Rathor, A. (2003). *Slum dwellers: curse on development*. New Delhi: Sarup & Sons.

Rodman, H. (1965). Technical note on two rates of mixed marriages. *American Sociological Review*, 30(5), 776-778.

Sen, M., Rastogi, S., & Vanneman, R. (2006). Disempowered by whom? Gender vs. generation in family decision making. Unpublished manuscript, Department of Sociology, University of Maryland, College Park, MD.

Singh, D., Goli, S., & Sekher, T. V. (2013). Exploring the myth of mixed marriages in India: First time evidences from a largescale survey. *Journal of Comparative Family Studies*, 44(2), 193-206.

Srinivasan, P., & Lee, G. R. (2004). The dowry system in Northern India: Women's attitudes and social change. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 66(5), 1108-1117.

United Nations (1979). Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women: Article 16 (1, b). Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. Retrieved on January 24, 2017, from <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/draw/cedaw/text/econvention.htm> Article 16.

Visaria, P., Visaria, L., & Jain, A. (1995). *Contraceptive use and fertility in India: A case study of Gujarat*, New Delhi: Sage Publications.

Table 1: SMAM among males by States, India, 1961-2011

States	1961	1971	1981	1991	2001	2011
Andhra Pradesh	22.3	22.8	23.1	23.5	24.2	25.4
Assam	25.9	25.8	U	U	27.5	26.7
Bihar	18.9	20.0	21.6	22.1	23.1	23.8
Chhattisgarh	*	*	*	*	23.7	24.6
Delhi	23.3	24.0	24.3	24.2	25.2	26.3
Gujarat	21.7	22.4	23.3	23.4	23.9	24.1
Haryana	U	20.9	25.2	22.8	23.6	24.6
Himachal Pradesh	22.2	23.5	24.2	24.5	25.8	26.5
Jammu & Kashmir	U	U	U	U	26.6	27.1
Jharkhand	+	+	+	+	24.2	24.5
Karnataka	24.7	25.2	26.0	26.2	26.7	26.8
Kerala	26.6	27.0	27.5	27.7	28.2	28.7
Madhya Pradesh	18.7	19.5	20.8	21.7	23.0	24.0
Maharashtra	22.6	23.8	24.4	24.8	25.4	25.5
Odisha	21.9	22.7	24.3	25.0	26.5	26.8
Punjab	22.6	24.1	25.0	24.3	24.7	25.6
Rajasthan	19.6	19.9	20.6	21.3	21.1	22.9
Tamil Nadu	25.3	26.1	26.1	26.4	26.8	27.2
Uttar Pradesh	19.4	19.8	21.3	21.9	23.4	24.4
Uttarakhand	#	#	#	#	25.4	25.9
West Bengal	24.3	24.6	26.0	25.9	26.0	25.7
India	21.9	22.6	23.5	24.0	24.8	25.2

Note: \* Included in Madhya Pradesh, + Included in Bihar, # Included in Uttar Pradesh, U - Not available

Sources: For 1961-81: IIPS (1995), 1991: IIPS and ORC Macro (2000), 2001: India, Registrar General (2008), 2011: Computed from Table C2, Census of India 2011.

Table 2: SMAM by Females by States, India, 1961-2011

States	1961	1971	1981	1991	2001	2011
Andhra Pradesh	15.2	16.3	17.3	18.3	19.4	20.6
Assam	18.6	18.7	U	U	21.7	21.1
Bihar	14.3	15.3	16.6	17.5	18.6	19.5
Chhattisgarh	*	*	*	*	20.1	21.2
Delhi	18.7	20.0	20.5	20.6	21.5	22.7
Gujarat	17.1	18.5	19.6	19.9	20.4	20.7
Haryana	U	17.7	17.9	18.8	19.7	20.9
Himachal Pradesh	15.6	17.8	19.1	20.3	21.7	22.4
Jammu & Kashmir	U	U	U	U	23.1	24.3
Jharkhand	+	+	+	+	19.6	20.2
Karnataka	16.4	17.9	19.3	20.1	20.9	21.0
Kerala	20.2	21.3	22.1	22.2	22.0	21.6
Madhya Pradesh	13.9	15.0	16.6	17.8	19.1	20.3
Maharashtra	15.8	17.6	18.8	19.7	20.6	20.8
Odisha	16.4	17.3	19.1	20.2	21.7	21.8
Punjab	17.5	20.1	21.1	21.0	21.6	22.5
Rajasthan	14.2	15.1	16.1	17.5	18.5	19.5
Tamil Nadu	18.4	19.6	20.3	20.9	21.4	21.7
Uttar Pradesh	14.5	15.5	16.7	18.0	19.6	20.9
Uttarakhand	#	#	#	#	21.2	22.0
West Bengal	15.9	18.0	19.3	19.7	20.0	19.9
India	15.9	17.2	18.4	19.3	20.2	20.8

Note: \* Included in Madhya Pradesh, + Included in Bihar, # Included in Uttar Pradesh, U - Not available.

Sources: For 1961-81: IIPS (1995), 1991: IIPS and ORC Macro (2000), 2001: India, Registrar General (2008), 2011: Computed from Table C-2, Census of India 2011.

Table 3: Per cent distribution of women who stated that the specific duration they knew their husbands before marriage by background characteristics, 2011-12

Background characteristics	On wedding day or Gauna	Less than one month	More than a month but less than a year	More than a year	Since childhood
<b>Age at marriage (years)</b>					
Less than 18	73.3	11.6	5.2	3.2	6.7
18-21	64.2	15.2	8.8	5.7	6.1
22-24	57.5	18.5	11.7	6.5	5.8
25 and above	52.6	22.2	11.6	10.2	3.5
<b>Caste</b>					
Scheduled Castes	69.9	11.7	7.5	4.5	6.5
Scheduled Tribes	58.0	18.5	8.5	9.2	5.8
Other Backward Classes	68.6	14.7	6.6	3.6	6.4
Others	67.1	13.5	8.2	5.3	5.9
<b>Religion</b>					
Hindu	69.4	13.4	7.5	4.3	5.4
Muslim	61.1	15.3	6.4	4.9	12.3
Christian	37.1	31.3	11.2	13.7	6.8
Sikh	75.7	9.1	6.9	7.0	1.3
Others	59.6	19.3	5.9	9.7	5.5
<b>Education</b>					
Illiterate	75.6	10.1	5.0	2.8	6.5
Primary	67.6	14.1	6.5	5.2	6.6
Secondary	61.6	17.2	9.2	5.9	6.1
Higher	56.2	18.4	13.6	7.3	4.5
<b>Current place of residence</b>					
Same village/town	49.6	16.7	10.3	8.1	15.2
Another village/town	72.1	13.4	6.6	3.8	4.0
Metro city	60.1	12.3	11.8	8.3	7.5
<b>Region</b>					
North	77.3	5.8	8.8	4.9	3.2
Central	80.2	4.8	6.6	4.2	4.2
East	77.0	12.0	5.0	3.1	2.8
Northeast	29.1	32.8	7.6	24.6	5.9
West	75.8	8.3	8.8	4.0	3.0
South	40.5	31.2	8.6	4.0	15.7
Total	67.6	14.0	7.4	4.7	6.2

Table 4: Distribution of women who chose husbands by themselves or by others and those who did not choose but said yes in choosing husbands by background characteristics, 2011-12

Background characteristics	Women who chose husbands themselves or by others				(per cent)	
	Respondent herself	Respondent & parents/other relatives together	Parents/other relatives alone	Others	Women's role in choosing husbands	Women who did not choose but said yes when parents/others chosen their husbands
					1	2
<b>Age at marriage (years)</b>						
Less than 18	3.8	18.0	78.0	0.2	21.8	33.9
18-21	5.8	24.6	69.3	0.3	30.4	53.4
22-24	7.8	30.4	61.5	0.3	38.2	69.8
25 and above	9.9	31.4	58.0	0.6	41.4	73.5
<b>Caste</b>						
Scheduled Castes	4.8	20.6	74.5	0.2	25.4	43.6
Scheduled Tribes	13.9	20.0	66.1	0.1	33.9	45.3
Other Backward Classes	2.9	22.5	74.4	0.2	25.4	40.8
Others	6.5	23.4	69.5	0.5	29.9	53.2
<b>Religion</b>						
Hindu	4.9	21.8	73.0	0.3	26.7	44.2
Muslim	4.7	21.7	73.2	0.3	26.4	46.1
Christian	15.8	39.6	44.2	0.3	55.5	72.9
Sikh	3.6	10.4	86.0	0.0	14.0	46.9
Others	13.0	28.6	58.3	0.0	41.7	61.9
<b>Education</b>						
Illiterate	3.3	17.2	79.3	0.2	20.5	29.4
Primary	5.2	20.6	74.0	0.2	25.8	43.1
Secondary	6.5	26.1	67.1	0.4	32.5	59.6
Higher	8.6	31.8	59.5	0.2	40.3	76.3
<b>Place of residence</b>						
Same village/town	11.6	26.0	62.1	0.3	37.6	58.2
Another village/town	3.6	21.1	75.0	0.3	24.8	42.1
Metro city	6.3	24.3	69.4	0.0	30.6	65.5
<b>Region</b>						
North	1.9	14.7	83.4	0.1	16.5	31.4
Central	2.0	10.4	87.5	0.1	12.4	23.1
East	7.3	16.9	75.5	0.3	24.2	42.5
Northeast	33.0	35.8	27.1	4.1	68.8	62.1
West	3.8	40.6	55.5	0.1	44.3	52.8
South	4.8	29.2	65.8	0.1	34.1	82.4
<b>Duration of knowing their husbands before marriage</b>						
On wedding day/Gauna	2.4	17.2	80.3	0.2	19.5	35.8
Less than one month	5.0	33.4	60.8	0.8	38.4	75.5
More than one month	7.6	38.2	53.9	0.3	45.8	70.9
More than one year	31.7	28.6	39.5	0.1	60.3	63.7
Since childhood	13.2	26.4	60.4	0.0	39.6	71.7
Total	5.2	22.1	72.4	0.3	27.3	45.0

Table 5: Women who married outside the same economic background, outside their caste and outside blood relation by background characteristics

Background characteristics	Comparison of economic status of natal family and husband's family			Women married outside their caste	(per cent) Women married outside blood relation
	Same	Natal better off	Natal worse off		
<b>Age at marriage (years)</b>					
Less than 18	72.6	17.8	9.6	4.8	91.1
18-21	73.8	16.3	9.9	5.7	91.8
22-24	76.6	15.1	8.3	6.4	92.5
25 and above	76.9	14.4	8.7	7.6	95.1
<b>Caste</b>					
Scheduled Castes	74.9	15.4	9.7	4.6	91.9
Scheduled Tribes	75.4	17.0	7.5	6.0	93.9
Other Backward Classes	72.8	17.5	9.7	5.1	90.5
Others	73.1	17.0	9.9	6.5	92.6
<b>Religion</b>					
Hindu	73.5	16.7	9.7	5.2	92.6
Muslim	72.0	18.5	9.5	6.5	84.9
Christian	82.5	13.1	4.4	9.9	91.5
Sikh	83.0	8.4	8.6	2.5	98.8
Others	69.6	22.3	8.1	6.6	91.8
<b>Education</b>					
Illiterate	74.8	15.7	9.4	5.6	91.6
Primary	72.4	17.9	9.8	5.2	91.1
Secondary	72.2	17.9	9.9	5.2	91.6
Higher	77.1	15.0	7.9	5.9	93.7
<b>Current place of residence</b>					
Same village/town	75.0	16.2	8.8	7.1	85.2
Another village/town	73.2	17.1	9.7	5.0	93.2
Metro city	74.1	12.7	13.2	10.0	89.6
<b>Region</b>					
North	77.0	14.0	8.9	6.8	96.8
Central	69.9	15.4	14.7	2.5	96.1
East	68.5	20.1	11.5	8.2	96.2
Northeast	78.9	14.8	6.2	9.5	99.3
West	70.5	20.5	9.0	5.6	90.9
South	81.1	15.1	3.9	4.0	79.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>73.6</b>	<b>16.9</b>	<b>9.6</b>	<b>5.4</b>	<b>91.6</b>

Table 6: Odds ratio showing the effect of background variables on women's role in choosing husbands, marrying outside their caste and marrying outside the blood relation: Results from Logistic Regression Analysis

Background variables	Women choosing husbands	Women married outside their caste	Women married outside blood relation
<b>Age at marriage (years)</b>			
Less than 18®			
18-21	1.301***	1.236***	1.115**
22-24	1.426***	1.523***	1.304***
25 and above	1.408***	1.922***	1.989***
<b>Caste</b>			
Scheduled Castes®			
Scheduled Tribes	0.974	1.112	1.059
Other Backward Classes	0.894***	1.114	1.159***
Others	1.013	1.105	1.165**
<b>Religion</b>			
Hindu®			
Muslim	0.981	1.714***	0.368***
Christian	1.420***	1.509***	2.245***
Sikh	0.442***	0.336***	1.173
Others	1.259**	1.269	1.582**
<b>Education</b>			
Illiterate®			
Primary	1.124***	0.769***	1.181***
Secondary	1.292***	0.803***	1.277***
Higher	1.818***	0.877	1.585***
<b>Place of residence</b>			
Same village/town®			
Another village/town	0.690***	0.635***	1.715***
Metro city	0.873	0.861	1.262
<b>Region</b>			
North®			
Central	0.616***	0.258***	0.949
East	1.266***	0.959	0.897
Northeast	7.368***	1.160	6.019***
West	3.129***	0.916	0.311***
South	2.166***	0.450***	0.126***
Constant	0.236***	0.087***	16.777***

Note: ®: Reference Category, Number of cases =39163; \*\*, \*\*\*: 5% and 1% level of significance respectively.

Table 7: Respondents stating that it is permissible to marry a girl in her natal village, marry to her cousin, widow to remarry and know anyone who has had an inter-caste marriage by regions, 2011-12

Region	Marry a girl in her natal village	Marry to her cousin	Widow to remarry	(per cent)
				Know anyone who has had an inter-caste marriage
North	25.2	11.6	74.2	16.8
Central	31.4	23.5	80.7	8.1
East	55.0	22.7	60.1	39.9
Northeast	88.7	35.7	49.9	33.6
West	73.5	69.8	67.2	38.9
South	83.1	78.0	60.1	49.8
Total	56.4	41.9	67.3	31.6

Table 8: Average marriage expenditure (in Rs.), number of guests invited and cash given as gift in daughter's marriage by regions, 2011-12

Region	Marriage expenditure		No. of people invited in reception		Cash given as gift (in Rs.) in daughter's marriage
	For boy	For girl	Girl's side	Boy's side	
North	232109	311960	310	257	29897
Central	141964	195646	353	316	38479
East	98745	157009	229	259	56873
Northeast	120471	155155	330	299	14180
West	143514	197364	466	423	60563
South	156409	304943	274	288	121743
Total	147979	228470	316	303	64054