

Adjustment and Assimilation of Inter-State Migrant Brides in Haryana: A Case Study of Village Kharainthi

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ABSTRACT

In Haryana, pressure of continuing the family tree is so enormous that people who are incapable of finding a bride locally, create a nexus (network) of contacts in other states and bring brides from different parts of India. Such long distance, inter-state, inter-racial, inter-culture, and inter-caste marriages have been generating a unique type of culturally disparate marriage system in the state. This study examines socio-cultural attributes including lifestyle, customs, rituals, and behavior etc. of inter-state migrant brides for measuring their adjustment and assimilation in the host society for betterment of their lives. It has been observed that majority of such brides are poor and they have been brought/bought (*mole ke*) from distant states including Empowered Action Group (EAG) states of Bihar, Assam, Orissa, Uttarakhand, Chhattisgarh, Uttar Pradesh etc. The study is based on primary data collected from the village Kharainthi by conducting interviews and making observations by visiting individual households selected for this purpose.

Key Words : Adjustment, Assimilation, Socio-Cultural, Inter-State Migrant Brides

INTRODUCTION

Haryana has been suffering from low sex ratio from a very long time. Sociologists, economists, and demographers have identified various practices such as female feticide, female infanticide, and deliberate neglect of health and nutrition of the girl child, etc. that have contributed to the masculinization of the sex ratio (Agnihotri, 1995, 1996, 2000). Haryana has a dominance of patrilineal tradition, where the son bears the responsibility of carrying forward his family lineage through his progeny. The link between skewed sex ratios and bride shortage is acknowledged locally (Chowdhry, 2005 and Mishra, 2018). Basis for arousal of strong feelings of 'son preference' and sexual mores that lead parents to kill unborn daughters has also been discussed by Patel (2007). In Haryana pressure of continuing the family tree is so immense that people who are unable to find a bride locally create a nexus of contacts in other

states and import brides from different parts of India. Caste endogamous marriages are customarily conducted within the same jati or sub-caste group while following the rules of both clan groups (*Got or Gotra*) and village or territorial exogamy. Inter-caste marriages are considered taboo, and individual autonomy in mate selection is usually overridden in favor of pragmatic matrimonial choices to ensure that caste hierarchies that otherwise might get eroded are maintained (Reena Kukreja, 2018). In Haryana, lack of education made it difficult for men to find local wives (Kaur, 2004). The institution of marriage from time immemorial has been a subject of critical investigation owing to its close and intimate relation to human happiness. In that large segment of an individual's life, which constitutes his social life and involves a relationship with another individual, this institution assures extreme significance. Parties involved undergo a very complex experience in marriage, particularly in contemporary marriage. During its course,

individuals engage in ordained and purposeful activity in order to obtain biological, psychological and social satisfaction through constant meaningful interaction (Ahlawat, 2009). The impact of such migration in changing the social structure at the micro level holds immense significance for understanding the regional picture. Such a long distance, inter-state, inter-racial and inter-culture marriages have been generating a unique type of culturally disparate marriage migration in the state. In these marriages most of the females marry not based on their own decision, but on their parent's decisions. Some of them are widows, teenagers, and some of them are forcefully pushed into such marriages by the known and by the agents. Similarly, in her work among 'across-region' brides in Haryana, Kaur found that one marriage leads to more marriages, resulting in a network. Many brides act as go-betweens accompanying aspiring grooms to their natal homes and getting marriages performed with sisters, cousins, neighbors' daughters, creating fairly dense networks (Kaur, 2004). This paper is an attempt to investigate the status of adjustment and assimilation of inter-state migrant brides in Village Kharainthi.

Existing literature:

In majority of the Indian states, the patriarchal nature of our society necessitates the migration of the new bride to her marital home. In the conventionally arranged marriages the bride is, however, familiar with the broad cultural environment of her marital home (Mishra, 2017). In contrast, the cross-region or across-state bride who has been wedded into a culturally different and geographically distant family is unfamiliar with the socio-cultural environment of her marital family. These marriages which transcend the boundaries of language, region, culture, and sometimes that of caste, religion and economic status are widely prevalent in Indian states with a numerical deficit of females in their population. Jaat brothers (due to poverty and small landholdings) purchased lower caste women belonging to the sweeper or tanner caste, shared her and maintained a common family (Hershman, 1981, pp. 179–180).

Within the context of Indian society as the number of cross-regional marriages rise, it becomes imperative to investigate whether and to what extent the experience of acculturative stress influences the well-being of the cross-region brides. As has been documented in ethnographic studies (Kaur, 2010; Mukherjee, 2013; Ahlawat, 2016), these brides who have been 'imported'

to compensate for the deficit of women in the host culture, are living in a situation of multiple disadvantages (Singh, Dangi and Bandyopadhyay, 2011).

Although a number of studies have explored the phenomenon of cross-regional marriages through various academic prisms (Premi, 1980; Kaur, 2004; Ahlawat, 2009; Chaudhry and Mohan, 2011; Kukreja and Kumar, 2013), there has been a paucity of psychological investigation into the impact of long-distance marriage migration on the well-being of cross-region brides. However, globally there have been a number of studies on the impact of migration on wellbeing (Vathi and Duci, 2016; Close *et al.*, 2016). Many of these studies have used acculturation as the broad theoretical framework for examining the link between migration and well-being. Acculturation is viewed as an inevitable process human species undergo in an effort to manage and cope with stressors and changes brought upon by migration and by being in a prolonged contact with a new, host culture" (Kuo, 2014, p.17). This process of cultural adaptation has been shown to have a relationship with the psychological health, socio-cultural adaptation, quality of family relationship and acculturative stress experienced by migrants (Yoon *et al.*, 2012, Ward and Kennedy, 2001; Hwang, 2006; Kuo and Roysircar, 2004, Torres and Rollock, 2004).

Study Area:

The present study pertains to village Kharainti that falls in Rohtak district of state Haryana. It is located in the southeast Haryana and northwest of Delhi. Social set up of village has changed with the time, and this process is continuing. This change is now not on village level but its link with other states as well as national level through the social association between different communities.

Objectives:

1. To identify the attributes of social-identity of migrant's brides in village Kharainthi.
2. To understand how the migrants' brides have adjusted in the host society in the context of social attributes mention above.

METHODOLOGY

Study is based on primary data. Primary data were collected through the field survey with the help of structured interview schedule. Some information was

collected through observation method as well. The data were processed and presented through tables, bar diagrams. The analysis was conducted by interpreting the data and describing the tables and diagrams.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

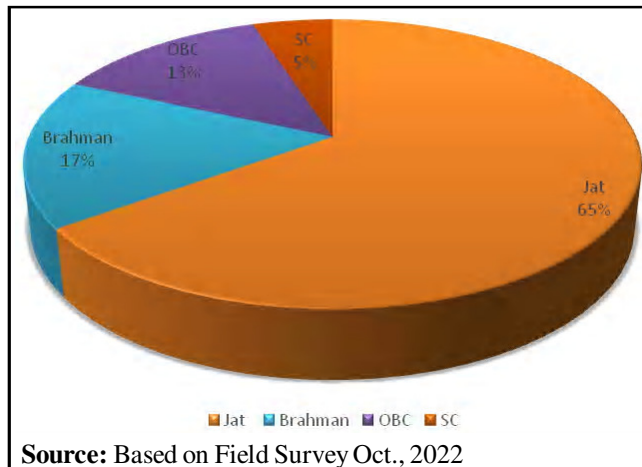
Scenario of Inter-State Marriages in Kharainthi:

Primary Survey of the village Kharainthi village revealed that inter-state marriages are prevalent in all the categories in the villages *i.e.*, General, OBC and SCs. Number of inter-state marriages in each category was different. Inter-state marriages have resulted in change in the social set up of the village over the time and the process of change in social fabric is continue. Change in the social set up caused by inter-state marriages is taking place not only in the village but also in the state. Scenario of inter-state marriages in the villages is evident from the table given below. This change is reflected in terms of intermixing of foods habits, cultural aspects and many other dimensions. Brides from other state bring the culture of their native places to Haryana and they also learn the culture of Haryana.

It has been found that the highest number of inter-state migrant brides belong to Jaat community. They constitute 65 per cent of total number of inter-state marriages (Table 1). The small size of agriculture land holding among jats was largely responsible for high incidence of marriage migrants among them. Many respondents who own small agriculture land, revealed that they were not able to find brides because of small size of landholdings. Due to non-availability of brides such peoples have to move outside the state for marriage. As compare to Jats, Brahmans have only few marriages outside the state. The major reason behind this is the strictness of their customs which do not allow them to marry in disparate area without considering the clan. Number of Inter-state marriages in OBC is even lower

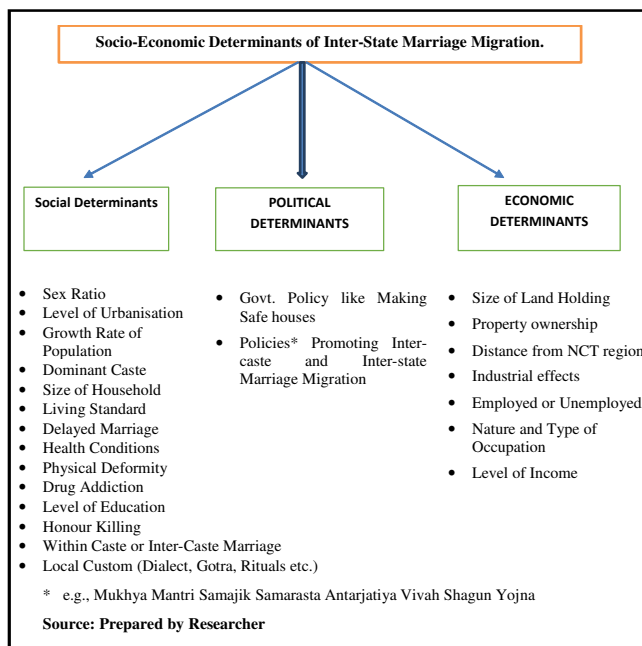
Caste	Numbers of Brides	Percentage
Jat	39	65
Brahman	10	17
Other backward class (OBC)	8	13
Schedule cast (SC)	3	5
Total	60	100

Source: Based on Field Survey Oct., 2022



Source: Based on Field Survey Oct., 2022

Fig. 1 : Village Kharainthi : Caste-wise distribution of Migrant Brides



than Brahmans. Low percentage of inter-state migrant brides is in Scheduled Caste in the village.

Attributes of social-identity of migrant’s brides in village Kharainthi:

Whenever a human being leaves his birth place and moves to some other place for some specific motive he or she has to face and undergo a lot of problems in the new environment. Similarly, the brides have to face many problems in place and atmosphere which are new to them. The culture, custom, dialect, and the dressing sense of each place and each area is different from another area

and because of the different lifestyle; the brides face difficulties in adapting and adjusting in a completely new environment.

Some problems faced by brides due to migration in a different socio-cultural environment. Brides coming from different states have been faced a lot of problems to settle with Haryanvi environment. Some problems which happen in dialect they cannot understand some words of Haryanvi dialect. The main problem they faced is of food habit. The main food of Assam, Bengal, Chhattisgarh, Bihar etc. is rice and fish. But in the village of Haryana the main food is chapati and vegetables Ghee Milk Curd etc. are their favorite dish. That's why brides face problems.

Food Habits:

The main difficulty faced by the bride's experience is the one related to the change in food habit. The food habits also vary state to state. Those brides who came from West Bengal, U.P. and Bihar they used to take fish and rice in their staple meal but the staple meal of this village does not include non-vegetarian food and rice. The villagers take only chapatti, vegetables milk, curd, and lassi etc. Those brides who came from Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, and Uttar Pradesh have taken rice, fish, Sambhar, Choka, Chawal, Pohva in their daily meals too. Therefore, the main problem faced by them is the changing food habit. They also face problems in cooking the local dishes.

Dressing and clothing:

The clothing and the fashion also vary from one state to another state. Before marriage girls wear the different kinds of cloths. But this freedom is restricted once they get married. Brides from Assam and West Bengal who are used to wear saris in unmarried life but after marriage in this village the brides have wear salwar suit.

Language and dialect:

The dialect spoken in this village of Haryana is Haryanvi. The brides who come from Bihar speak Bhojpuri and Bihari dialects and brides who come from Uttar Pradesh speak Bundeli, Awadhi, and Brij Bhasha. Those brides come from Assam and West Bengal they speak Assamese and Bengali. The brides face difficulties in understanding many typical or classic words of the Haryanvi dialect and therefore this is another problem

faced by them. The brides usually take some time before they can completely understand the words in the dialect. Since brides from other state cannot understand the local dialect properly, they face the problem of lack of communication and expression. Many times, they are not able to express their thoughts and feelings as they feel shy because their language is not understood by them in laws and *vice versa*.

Performing local Customs and Rituals:

The women in the village have to remain under the veil; they cannot talk to their father-in-law and brother-in-law and have to follow various other customs and traditions. The brides who belong to Haryana can adjust easily here because they grow up in such environment and are already aware of this custom. But the brides who come from other state face difficulty in learning and adjusting the customs are completely different from the ones they have been experiencing before. Remaining covered with a veil is one of these problems.

Cultural and social structure of village is very different from the social set up of other states. Every state or region has their own customs and way of living in which; dialect, clothing sense, food habit, and customs all are different. When the social set of two different regional societies merge with each other some adjustment or problems also take place.

Not familiar with local festivals, rituals performed on different occasions like on the birth of child, Local indications like watching someone with empty pot on the time of travel, local proverbs and sayings, local famous persons and their contributions in various fields, folk songs of different festivals and occasions like 6th day of birth of child, songs on marriage and so on.

The migrants' brides have adjusted in the host society in the context of social attributes mention above :

It is very difficult for the girls from other region to adjust in Haryanvi culture, but slowly they become used to it. Besides coming from very poor families, they don't have any choice, but to learn to live in new environment. While majority of the brides have adjusted themselves to the Haryanvi lifestyle, there are also instances of women not being able to adjust to the customs and traditions of the state.

Initially, some brides had problems with other members of the marital household. Santosh told us that

when she came here as a new bride from West Bengal 20 years ago, her mother-in-law refused to accept food cooked by her because she is Bengali and ate fish. The couple separated from the joint family and set up a separate household. There were caste prejudices as well, for instance Santoshdevrani asked us to ask Santoshif she belonged to a lower caste. The mobility of the brides was also restricted. We noticed that Aparna's mother-in-law would not let her out of the house or allow her to talk to the other Bengali brides in the village.

In some cases, brides become common property of male members in the family. Since these brides are poor and illiterate in most cases, they allow themselves to be subjugated and exploited. Family of grooms who procure wives from other states never accepted that they have actually paid money.

Adjustment in food habits:

Food is also directly linked with the social set up of any community or state. Different states have different identical dishes. The people have simple food habits in village. Brides don't know how to make traditional Haryanvi food items. Brides coming from different states migrants' brides don't know how to cook traditional Haryanvi food items. Brides have brought different kind of traditional food items along with themselves from their native places such as, Sambhar, Choka, Chaval, Pohva. These food items are now cooked in Haryanvi kitchens in the village. Through the food items, not only the food habit of the bride's is changing, the food habits are also changing in the bride's in-laws. Brides make different kind of food item in her in-law's kitchen and the in-law's family is eating different kinds of food. So, we can say easily the food habits have changed not only of groom family but also of the brides.

Adjustment in Language and Dialect:

In the vast country like India, different cultures and languages exist within it. When brides come from outside the state of Haryana they speak their local language like Bengali, Assamese, Bagheli, Bihari, and Bhojpuri. In the village Kharainthi children are also learning Bengali, Assamese, Bagheli, Bihari, and Bhojpuri from their mothers. Brides are using words such as "*chaiakhabe,*" "*panipeeba.*" These are the words from west Bengal and Assam. Their children are learning these words from their mothers. On the other hand, the bride's in-laws also learn their local language specially the bride's mother in-

law and the bride's husband try to speak pure Hindi with her. So, dialects are the identity of any society, with the different dialect a new mix dialect is emerging in the village.

Adjustment in Social Relationships:

Change has also taken place in the social relations after the migrants of these brides. These brides are coming from other states do not visit their own home after getting married, in some families only once in a year they are going to meet their family. That's why their children do not know the love and affection of maternal grandparent. These children remain unaware of relations such as maternal grandparents, maternal uncle-aunt, and cousins. The children are unaware about the roots of their mother, about the cultural aspects of the maternal side. Most of the brides who are coming from different states, are not treated well by the husband and in-laws.

Some of the women said that the villagers refer to their children as 'children of Bihari and Bengali mothers.' Her husbands of some of the brides said that due to their difficulty in finding a bride, they were compelled to ignore rules of caste endo-gamy. In some cases, the caste of the woman was unknown or difficult to ascertain. Some men justified these marriages by equating their caste with the caste of the bride.

Adjustment in local Customs and Rituals:

The Indian society is a complex social system with different caste classes, creeds and tribes. Haryana has always been the hub of social and cultural activities in India since times immemorial. They have preserved their old religious and social traditions. They celebrate festivals with great enthusiasm and traditional fervor. The region has its popular folklores, folksongs and musical instruments. The women are devoted and diligent and assist men on the farms.

With the passage of time, now there is a link between different culture and society of different states. In village Kharainthi brides coming from different states are also linked their folklores, folksongs with Haryanvi folklores and folksongs. Social customs such as dowry system, Khotli, bhat, pelia, sidha etc. are very common. Village kharainti a positive social change has taken place in village Kharainthi, along with the inter-state migrants Brides social customs such as Khotli, bhat, pelia, sidha, dowry system etc. are not followed by the bride's parents. It is a harsh tradition in Haryana, specially jat community that

the, Bhat, pelia, Tika and wedding should happen in a grand manner so as to reflect the richness of the family and culture. While it is easy for a richer family to do so, but the poor families suffer a lot for the same. Even poor and middle-class families who have less money, these families take loan from banks or some relatives for doing Bhat, pelia, Tika, wedding, etc. in a grand manner. Marriage of a girl is taken as a symbol of pride. Folk culture and folk forms in village are rich and diverse. Due to the recent explosion village culture and customs are changing.

Conclusion:

Inter-state migrant brides face many difficulties in the new socio-cultural environment of the Haryana state. They face problems with respect to the food habits, dressing, festivals, customs, rituals, and language. At the initial phase, it becomes difficult for them to acclimatize themselves as per the new environment, but over the time, they learn the customs and rituals along with the language and the dialect of the state. In laws of the brides from other states also attempt to learn the language, fashion, customs, rituals, and festivals of the native states of the migrant brides. Bagheli, Bihari, Bhojpuri Assemise etc. all these dialects are getting mixed with Haryanvi dialect. Food items like rice Sambhar, Choka, Chaval, Pohva all are now cooked in Haryanvi kitchens. Many new recipes are also going to make way in village. In village Kharainti brides coming from different states also linked their folklores, folksongs with Haryanvi folklores and folk songs. It results in the positive externalities in terms of intermixing of cultures which make them more diverse and richer.

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