



Exclusion of Low Caste Groups in Marriages: A Village Study of Rural Kulgam

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ABSTRACT: Marriage is such an institution that sanctions the relationship of a man and a woman. And this relationship binds them in a system of mutual obligations and rights essential to the functioning of society. The marriage ceremony, when performed publicly or by representative of the community, is a ritual that provides recognition to the husband and wife of their new status achieved in the community. Marriage is a rite of passage whereby an unrelated woman and man leave their family of origin and begin their own family of procreation. High castes follow exogamy while as low caste people had to follow endogamy in village Shurat of district Kulgam. They are excluded from marrying in other caste groups and especially with high castes. Reason is that they belong to low caste category and they are restricted from this choice as compared to high castes in same village. In this paper, main aim is to observe type of marriage followed by these low caste groups and marriage invitations received by low castes from high castes in attending marriage parties in said village. This paper is based on primary data and includes secondary data as well wherever necessary.

KEYWORDS: Obligation, Functioning, Rite, Procreation, Exogamy, Endogamy.

Introduction: It is through institution of marriage that men and women establish sexual relations and family comes into existence. Main components of marriage are procreation of children, intercourse and living together with mutual obligations and responsibilities to the care of children's. Marriage lays down basic building material of society and forms foundation of the family so marriage is beneficial to society. It is ideal for raising of children and brings stability and meaning to human relationships. Marriage plays an important role not only in transferring culture to future generation but also civilization so it is not a private contract but a social institution of great public value and concern (Available at: <http://wikipedia.org/wiki/marriage>).

Definitions of Marriage

Marriage is such an important institution of human society and it has been defined by Sociologists as well as by legal personalities in various ways. Some of the important definitions are given below:

George A. Lundberg, defined marriage as “a set of rules and regulations which define the rights, duties and privileges of husband and wife, with respect to each other”.

Another Sociologist Mazumdar, defined marriage as “a socially sanctioned union of male and female for the purpose of establishing household, entering into sex relations, procreation and providing care for the offspring”.

Objectives:

- i. To understand the concept of marriage.
- ii. To examine through observation type of marriages taking place in village.
- iii. To examine through observation are all low caste groups invited in marriage ceremonies of upper castes in village.
- iv. What are factors responsible for being excluded in marrying outside their castes?

Methodology:

As the present paper is primarily a village study based on primary data for studying exclusion in marriages in village. I have used observation as a technique of data collection in this paper. This paper also includes secondary data in terms of articles, books and research papers.

Social Exclusion Meaning and Definitions

Social Exclusion or Marginalization is simply the social disadvantage first used as a term in France and defined as the process in which individuals or people are denied access to various rights, opportunities and resources that are normally available to the members of a different group such as healthcare, employment, housing and democratic participation (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/social/exclusion>). The consequence of social exclusion is that communities or individuals affected are prevented from taking part in social, political and economic life of the society in which they live (ibid). Social exclusion is defined as “the inability of an individual to participate in the basic political, social, economic and social functioning of society” or “the denial of equal access to opportunities imposed by certain groups in society on others” (Cited by Thorat, Sabharwal & Yaqoob, 2010). Social Exclusion Unit (SEU’s) defined social exclusion as ‘a shorthand for what can happen when people or areas suffer from a combination of linked problems such as unemployment, poor skills, low incomes, poor housing, high crime environments, bad health and family breakdown’(SEU, 1997). The literature says people may be excluded from: a livelihood; secure, permanent employment the minimal or prevailing consumption level; earnings; property ,credit or land; housing education, the benefits provided by the welfare state skills and cultural capital; citizenship and equality before the law; public goods participation in the democratic process; the nation or the dominant race; the family and sociability; humane treatment, respect, personal fulfillment, understanding’(Silver, 1994).Marriage as a social institution comes under social sphere where low caste groups are not permitted to marry outside their caste but within the caste and in village Shurat in district Kulgam is not an exception.

Description of village Shurat

Shurat village lies in Kulgam block which is three kilometers away from district headquarters Kulgam. It is given status of model village. In village total population is 2000 persons and total number of households is 330 (<https://villageinfo.in/jammu-&-kashmir/kulgam/kulgam/surat-jagir-html>). Out of these households 200 belong to upper caste as being economically and socially sound and 130 households belong to low caste category as they are following occupation associated with their castes.

These low castes include Ahanger, Najar, Shaksaaz, and Kumar. Ahanger are blacksmiths, Najar are carpenters, Shaksaaz are weavers and Kumar are potters. Among high castes are Bhat, Lone, Dar, Mir etc. These castes mostly marry according to their choice not only within their castes but also outside their castes that are high not low (Field work, 2018). I will show through percentage in table's number of persons from both high castes and low castes in favour of endogamy and exogamy. On marriage invitation separate table will be provided. High castes are agriculturalists as compared to low castes that do not possess any land and mostly work on the fields of higher castes and they are called 'Nongars' in local language. People belonging to high caste category are working in service sector as compared to low caste that are mostly illiterates and are labourers.

Table 1: Marriage within or outside the caste

| Marriage within or outside the caste | No. of Households in high castes | | | | |
|--------------------------------------|----------------------------------|----|-------------------|----|-------|
| | Within the caste | % | Outside the caste | % | Total |
| | 60 | 30 | 140 | 70 | 200 |

Source: Field Study, 2018.

Table 1 show that most of high castes in village Shurat follow exogamy as compared to endogamy. 30 percent marry within the caste and 70 percent marry outside their caste. These high caste people have their own choice in getting married.

Table 2: Marriage within or outside the caste

| Marriage within or outside the caste | No. of Households in low castes | | | | |
|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------|-------|-------------------|-------|-------|
| | Within the caste | % | Outside the caste | % | Total |
| | 100 | 76.92 | 30 | 23.07 | 130 |

Source: Field Study, 2018.

Table 2 show that low castes mostly marry within their castes than outside their castes.76.92 percent of persons from lower caste follow endogamy and 23.07 percent follow exogamy in village Shurat.

Table 3: Marriage Invitation by Upper Castes to lower castes

| Marriage Invitation by Upper Castes | No. of Households | | | | |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------|-------|-----|-------|-------|
| | Yes | % | No | % | Total |
| | 20 | 15.38 | 110 | 84.61 | 130 |

Source: Field Study, 2018.

Table 3 shows that only 15.38 percent of low caste people are invited in marriage ceremonies of upper caste and 84.61 percent of persons from lower castes are not invited in marriage ceremonies of upper caste in village Shurat.

Factors Responsible for Exclusion in marriage ceremonies and marriages are:

Poverty: it is main factor responsible for being excluded in attending marriage parties in upper caste households and marrying with the people of same castes.

Low Caste: In village Shurat these people face exclusion at the hands of upper caste as these caste belong to low caste status.

Social and Economic status: these factors also not permit lower caste people to attend marriage parties in high caste households and not marrying outside the caste.

Dress Patterns: this also has influence on the attitude of low caste groups from the type of dresses worn by high caste (Field study, 2018).

Conclusion

Caste is main factor responsible for stratifying society into high and low and in India exclusion mainly revolves around this caste. This existence of caste among Muslims of Kashmiri society is not particular. So in my study carried in one village of District Kulgam is primarily based on the caste based exclusion existing in marriages. Like low caste untouchables among Hindu society are excluded in marrying outside their caste same case exists among the low caste groups residing in village Shurat. So this excluded minority will only be included into the society when equal rights are given to them in all aspects of life like political, economic and social.

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