

Consequences of Skewed Sex-Ratio on Bridal Trafficking and Non-Marital Unions in Haryana State of India: Its Socio-cultural and Economic Dimensions

By

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Haryana- one of the states of India has the unconvincing distinction of having the most awful sex ratio. Sex-selective abortion and female infanticide have led to unbalanced sex ratio which is cruel and discriminatory. According to Census of India 2011 sex ratio of Haryana is 877 females per 1000 males. As a consequence in many villages boys are not finding girls for marriage and thus the bridal immigration move is on in Haryana. The demand for bride in Haryana is also being fulfilled by human trafficking. The main objectives of the present paper are: (a) to examine the pattern, trends and factors responsible for bridal trafficking in Haryana; (b) identify the bridal traffickers and analyses the immigration route as well as transit points for bridal trafficking; (c) analyze the process of non-marital union and fertility behavior among bridal trafficking women; (d) to look in to the special measures undertaken by governmental and non-governmental organizations as well as other stakeholders to address the plight of these trafficked brides; and (e) suggest plan of action to address the problems of trafficked brides in the region.

The study is based on the collection of primary data from 300 women who were trafficked to various villages of Haryana state of India. Both quantitative and qualitative techniques adopted for the collection of data from the respondents. During the field investigation besides demographic, socio-cultural and economic dimensions detailed information on trends and patterns of enforced bridal immigration and their socio-economic and psychological condition at the place of origin prior to movement in state of Haryana was collected from the respondents. Attempt was also made to know how they were recruited for the purpose bridal trafficking, transported and current control mechanism at the place of destination as well as their adjustment in the new environment.

The findings of the study show that in many parts of Haryana the trafficking of women and girls has become a profitable and growing business. The majority of the women brought to Haryana are from other States of India like Assam, West Bengal, Jharkhand, Bihar and Andhra Pradesh. Large numbers of women are trafficked to the districts Karnal, Mewat, Rewari, Kurukshetra, Jind, Yamuna Nagar and Hisar of Haryana. There is also prevalence of trend toward polyandry i.e., sharing of one woman among brothers. Such factor generates an environment which is unsafe for women. It is violence against women. The practice of bride buying is common in Haryana and known here as the *paro trade*. These girls are traditionally known as "*paro*". During the human trafficking process women are lured by pimps and sold in villages and towns where there are more men than women of marriageable age. These girls are negotiated at prices depending on their age, beauty and virginity and are exploited. These women are forced to get married or live in the family against their desire without performing marital ceremony.

According to India's National Crime Bureau Record (2012) about 45,000 women were kidnapped for the purpose of marriage excluding unreported. Even the young girl of less than 10 years are kidnapped and sold to the villages. The problem of bride selling is increasing in several parts of Haryana where there is scarcity of girls and high demand of marriageable age females. It is to caution that current child sex ratio in Haryana is already low and this cohort of population with low sex ratio will continue till it reaches at the marriageable age. As such even if sex ratio situation improves in Haryana the demand for marriageable age girls would continue to be high in the coming 10 to 15 years. In fact, in Haryana the bridal trafficking primarily is a human rights concern as it violates the fundamental human rights of all those who are trafficked. As such the governments in these regions should ensure legislations which protect the rights of women and curb human trafficking. Though, Government of Haryana has initiated various schemes for the care and protection of trafficked victims, more efforts need to be made to tackle such problems.