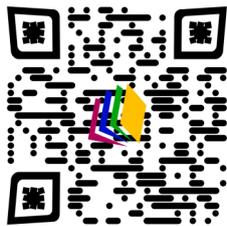


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Spatial Structure of Marriage Circles Among Hindus in Uttar Pradesh: A Case Study of Mathura District

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ABSTRACT:

The paper explores the ground truth of adverse sex ratio and changes in spatial practices of marriages in Mathura district. Marriages generally operate within a limited region or radius defined as a marriage circle. Marriage circles are developed by the norms and rules of marriages in a region. The questions explored are the reasons why men bring brides from the other regions Are there spatial preferences, are these marriage circles expanding over a region or shrinking within a region, and what are the changes in intergenerational marriage circles. This study uses a number of quantitative and qualitative techniques: In-depth interview of villagers in the form of semi-structured interview; interview of key respondents; Questionnaire survey; Focused group interview.

KEY WORDS: Marriage, Mathura, Hindu, Uttar Pradesh.

Introduction

“Marriage has been considered a ceremonial gift of the bride by her father or other appropriate relative to the bride groom in order that both may together fulfil their *Purushartha* (duties) which are necessary for human existence. These duties are "*Dharma, Artha, and Kama*". *Dharma* is a religious duty based on ethical values that is to do well and attain salvation. *Artha* is the economic aspect of life and *Kama* is the physical or sexual duties to the partner and to produce children to perpetuate race” (Ahuja, 1993).

According to Koos (1953), marriage is a dividing line between the family of orientation and the family of procreation in terms of the nature of roles that one performs in the two families. The roles in the family of orientation vary in infancy, childhood and adolescence and carry no responsibilities and obligations. But the roles one performs in the family of procreation after marriage as a husband/wife, a father/mother, a wage-earner, a grand-father/grand-mother, a retired person etc. have different expectations and obligations.

Indian marriages, especially in rural areas, are still practiced by traditional rules of caste and community. These are Caste endogamy (marriage within one's own caste group), Gotra exogamy (marriage outside one's own 'gotra'-clan), Hyper gamy (the status of bride taker is upper than the bride giver both socially and economically). Geographically, the rule of village exogamy (marriage performed outside one's own village) applies in north India. So, there are so many rules developed by the different castes and communities. These rules are formulating two type of marriage circle – Circle of Inclusion and Circle of Exclusion for son and daughter marriage.

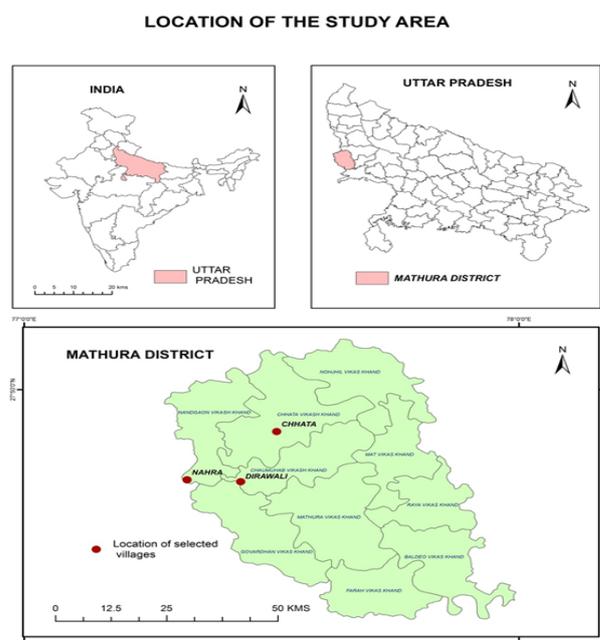
The questions explored are the reasons why men bring brides from the other regions Are there spatial preferences, are these marriage circles expanding over a region or shrinking within a region, and what are the changes in intergenerational marriage circles. Intergenerational change means that the changes between the following two age group marriage circles. First generation refers to older people of village between the age group of 45- 65 years above. They are more experienced and spatially well-known for each practice of marriage and their circles. Second generation is the newly married people about the age group of 18 – 30 years above.

Study Area

Mathura lies in North West of Uttar Pradesh and is part of Brij region. It is one the seven holy cities of India and has been an ancient inhabited place of Uttar Pradesh. The district is situated the north – western part of the Agra Division and lies between 27°14' to 27°58' north latitude and 77°17' to 78°12' east longitude. In shape it is like an imperfect crescent, the horns looking up towards the northeast. It has an area of 3340 sq. km. It lies in

the Yamuna basin. River Yamuna divides districts into two physical units- eastern or Trans Yamuna region and Western Yamuna region. Climate of the district is featured by hot intensive summer and cold winter and general dryness throughout the year except during south west monsoon. Vegetation cover is lacking now but earlier place used to be known for significant forest cover historically.

Mathura encompasses three tehsils- Mathura, Mat and Chhata. Chhata has lowest sex ratio for three decades which includes three villages of lowest sex ratio-Chhata (Rural), Dirawali, Nahra. villages were selected for the study area.



Source: Census of India 2011

Material and Methods

Data for the study was drawn from both primary as well as secondary sources. Data pertaining to the study was collected from the census of India (1991-2011). In the selected villages, five percent of households was selected through cluster-cum – random sampling method. Total size of the sample was 114 households. Cluster sampling has been deployed in selected villages because households in villages are patterned on spatial segregation based

on caste parameters. For mapping inter-generational change in the marriage circle, the research method is interviewed through questionnaires with two age groups of married male and female (18-30 above years) and 45-65 above. We also spoke to other members of the conjugal household- mother –in –law, father-in-law, and husband’s brothers’ wives and so on. Due to ethical considerations, names of all respondents have been changed.

Norms and rules of marriage (Hindu)

The Hindu concept of marriage is that it is a religious sacrament, not a contract. “The marriage rules are based mainly on considerations of consanguinity. The ancient rule in the Hindu religion of avoiding marriage with somebody who is removed by less than seven degrees from the father and five degrees from the mother, when asked about marriage practices. The actual rule of marriage is however that a person (1) must not marry in his parti family which can be called the patri- clan in some cases and (2) must also avoid marriage (a) with the children of his mother’s siblings and cousins and (b) with the children of his father’s sisters and the children of his father’s female cousins. This rule is the same as in the ancient northern India. A person must not marry in his patri family and must avoid marriage with the spinda-kin.” (Karve, 1994).

According to the interview of Brahmans (well-known as priestly caste), they follow the four gotra system. Gotra is a group whose members are believed to have descended from a common mythical ancestor. According to the rituals, one must not arrange marriages into (1) his father’s i.e. own gotra (2) his mother’s gotra and (3) his dadi (father’s mother’s) gotra and also avoid the (4) nani (mother’s mother’s) gotra. It denotes that they are operating marriages in other gotra except these

above gotra. In conventional arranged marriages in India, are preferably regulated by locally certain marriage rules i.e, the marriage customarily takes place between individuals belonging to the same region, religion, caste and class. Marriages are mostly hypergamous and involve dowry. They do not conform to the majority rule of arranging marriage relations in particular directions as in eastward or westward. The families of the groom and bride may or may not know each other prior to arranging the marriage but they ensure that rules of caste endogamy, gotra exogamy, and other important rules such as village or territorial exogamy are followed.

Other castes like Jats (well known for the landowning caste), and Balmiki follow the three gotra system for marriage practices. But Chamar as scheduled caste communities have some different marriage rules as compared to the above castes. In this caste, Direction is given importance in deciding the circle of inclusion for sons and daughters as well. Daughters are married in the westward direction whereas the brides are brought from east. So basically, in both the cases daughters move into westward direction. The reason for these phenomena is the fact that western region is more prosperous and economically developed in comparison with eastern region, in the juxtaposition of the tendency of hypergamous marriage for daughters. Bride are brought in comparatively less develop eastern region which was culturally more sophisticated at one point of time and still is .so a daughter is send to prosperous westward but a bride is welcomed from culturally more prosperous eastward to instil and maintain cultural and tradition in family in particular and in society in general. Though gotra of paternal and maternal side are avoided in marriage relation but gotra has not been given due significance vis-à-vis

the direction of the marriage.

Jadhaun Thakur community does follow caste endogamy and gotra endogamy in the demarcated fifty-two villages for the purpose of daughters and son’s marriage. But one (son) can get married outside Atri gotra i.e, non Arti women, though has to follow caste endogamy. So this is how this community maintains their caste exclusivity.

Mapping ‘Circle of inclusion’ and ‘Circle of exclusion’ of Mathura villages.

In the study villages (Chhata, Dirawali and Nahra) , caste composition (Brahmans, Jadhuan Thakur, Jasvant Thakur, Jats, Kumhar, Baghel, Jatav, Valmiki and Muslims) and their marriage rules are follows:

Table no 1. Copping strategy of different caste towards marriages.

CASTES	COPPING STRATEGY OF DIFFERENT CASTE TOWARDS MARRIAGES
BRAHMAN	Dissolving direction but maintaining four "Gotra" systems.
JADAUN THAKUR	Practices marriage in same 'Atri' Gotra and dissolving directions. Engage marriage among the 52 village of jadaun Thakur.
JASVANT THAKUR	Dissolving direction maintaining four gotra systems. They avoid twenty four demarcated villages wherein daughter and son are not getting married.
JATS	Dissolving directions but maintaining three gotra systems.
KUMHAR	Dissolving directions but maintaining four gotra system
JATAV	Dissolving gotra but maintaining direction east for sons and west for daughters' marriage.
VALMIKI	Dissolving directions but maintaining four gotra system
BAGHEL	Dissolving directions but maintaining three gotra system
KOLI	Dissolving directions but maintaining four gotra system

In the past 30 years, marriages were practiced according to the marriage rules of different castes and communities.

Change in rules of marriages:

In the intergenerational change in marriage circles, we found that marriages in the first generation (45-65 above) were practiced according to coping strategies of different castes and their marriage rules. Nature and direction of the marriage were not affected by the low sex ratio. Mostly marriages

were performed within Mathura in every caste. While in second generation (18-30 above) the scenarios of marriages practices are diverse. Marriage circle of inclusion of son’s marriage are found expands towards the eastern states of India such as West Bengal, Bihar and Odisha especially in Jadaun Thakur, Jasvant Thakur, Jatav, Jats and Brahman. Due to effects of long standing sex ratio imbalance the known rules of caste endogamy, gotra exogamy, village exogamy and hypergamy are being negotiated or compromised. Marriages circles are also shrinking into gotra system. Marriages within Nahi and Dadi gotra is to be possible in castes who follows four or three gotra system such as Brahmans, Jats in circle of inclusion of son’s marriage.

Reasons for the change

The scarcity of brides in Mathura is a serious implication of the low sex ratio leading to increasing numbers of unmarried young men. Since, the number of girls are already fewer and they are nowadays better educated than men. So, a girl's parents find a better match for her daughter. If a person in a village had five sons and had five acres of landholding while distributing among all land to their sons, they got only one acre each. Their land holding capacity has become small. In this case, they do not find a good match for their sons because their status in society becomes low. Due to hypergamy, marriageable girls could not be easily found. So that they break their marriage circles and rules move forward and to cope up the situation men across caste lines are found brides from the other region such as Bihar, West Bengal, and Orissa etc. A person named Sagar Singh (67 years) from Chhata village said that, *“jadhuan Thakur mai 10- 12 percent logo ki shadi other states se hue hai. jinka samaj mai raag thik nhi hai or wo kam zameen wale hai. jin ladhko ki*

shadi humare 52 villages se nhi ho pati unki shadi Bihar, Bengal, Jhansi, Orissa se kar laate hai".

(there were approx. 12 percent men getting married from others state in Jadhun thakur because of tainted reputation in the society or they do not find matches within fifty-two villages, so they bring brides from Bihar, Jhansi, Orissa and west Bengal)

Men enter into other regions for getting marriage because of unemployment, lack of education, shortage of girls and having small or no landholding, physical disability, tainted reputation. Marriages from other regions are engaged by the go – between. A person named Kanhiyalal Sharma (61 years), Chhata village said that, "*Yaha phele se hi bihar or Bengal se shadi ho kar aayi hai. Matlab 10-15 saal phele se hi. Wo hi ladkiya yaha jin logo ki shadi nhi ho pati unse apni behano ki shadi fix karti hai. Ya toh wo log yaha aa jate hai shadi kar jate hai. Nhi toh wahi (Bengal) se hi shadi karke le aate hai ladke ki.*"

Brides from other regions are culturally different from Mathura customs. They face lots of difficulties to cope up with new regions such as language, customs and rituals, food habits etc. Marriage of their children has not become an issue among people while, in earlier they faced problems finding match for their children within which caste they got married. A man from Nahra village named Roop singh (68 yrs.) said that,

"inke bacchan ke vihah gale gale (every place) ho rahe hai" (they find brides from every place of Mathura) Women from other regions are acceptable in the society by reason of necessity of marriage. On the other hand, they wish to marry according to their marriage circles.

Conclusion

Marriage circles of inclusion for son's marriage is

affected by the declining in the sex ratio in Mathura district which causes expansion in inter - generational marriage circles. Marriages from other regions are now possible. Caste endogamy, gotra exogamy, hypergamy all are being compromised and forces men to bring brides from other regions. These rules of marriages are only made for the demonstration of caste existence. Nowadays marriage circles are expanding and shrinking as per the utility. These all types of marriage rules are being only for who restricts or bounded with the rules of marriage circles. Prosperity breaks the limitation of marriage circles. People who are wealthy could be arranging marriages from any region. On the other hand, men who are poor or tainted in society are forced to find brides for other reasons because of the necessity of marriages. From the interviews of people about child preference, we conclude that despite that daughters are eliminated but nowadays people expressed positive value for them. They like female children because she maintains discipline in the family and is very close to parents.

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