

ruling Meghalaya Progressive Alliance which comprises the UDP, KHNAM, HSPDP, besides the NCP and BJP.

Ms. Agatha wants to work with Maneka Gandhi on wildlife issues. She likes very conscious about global warming and global food shortage. She has made contain plants to reduce such obstacles.

If other lady like Agatha steps forward for the enlistment of Indian women's condition, I would like to say that the day would not so far away when each girl & women living in Indian think that they are

secured and would be in better life style. They would not be the part of exploitation.

Thanks and blessing you !!!!

*Asharfi Lal*  
Editor-in-Chief



## EARLY MARRIAGE A SILENT CARNAGE OF WOMAN...



**Birth, marriage and death are the standard trio of major events in the**

**human's life. But only one marriage is a matter of choice.**

“Har raat ki subha hoti hai aur har krodh ki shanti hoti hai, lekin meri zindagi mein aisi koi umid nahi” said Rekha unhappy with her life. From human perspective, marriage is considered as an occasion for beginning a happy conjugal adult life. But this early marriage gave Rekha no such cause for happiness and celebrations. Why women are still backward in slums? Why women are considered zimadari on their parents? Why young girls are married off under the age of 18 in slums? All these questions are still a stigma on this male-dominated society. When they want to study they are married and when they are still children they have children of their own. Isn't it a strange system of the society?

Early marriage is considered as a silent carnage of women. And, this practice is more prevalent in slum areas. Girls are forced to marry at an early age. However, a girl who is too young is not capable of taking the right decision of selecting her life partner. Poor families consider their daughters as zimadari and marriage is the only option for their survival strategy. They also think that early marriage also

provides a sort of protection to their daughters from sexual exploitation. Bhagavati, a mother, thinks that her daughter, being an illiterate, can't judge right and wrong. If the daughter gets.

Attracted to any man, then it would hurt their pride. Moreover, people like Rekha consider early marriage as a strategy to obviate their self-respect in the society. Girls are married young to ensure obedience and subservience within their husband's household and to maximize their childbearing potential.

The rapid increase in the number of early marriage over the past ages coupled with the extremely high rate of divorce within this same group makes this subject extremely important. It is quite justifiable, that early marriage ravage the life of girls. The assumption is that once a girl is married, she becomes a woman even if she is only 12. It is a state of sorrow, that girls are not having the right of choice i.e. marriage. Manorma, a village girl, says, “I wished to study but due to circumstances I stepped behind. Moreover, being an illiterate marriage seemed only option for me.”

This is not an isolated problem; there are many other victims of early marriage. Empirically, in early marriage, a girl loses every charm of her life. Early marriage is simply the end of educational opportunities and freedom of personal growth.

Would you think that as the time passes, men and women would have equal opportunities? Would there be any



solution to the problem of early marriage. It seems quite unlikely as these socio-cultural traditions are one of the major barriers for having equal rights.

**Insight team went to the slum areas and spoke to poor people about problems associated with the early marriage.....**

Bhagyavati Kumari, housewife, age 35. *Apni ijat ke khatir.....hum aisa karte hai.....*

**Insight:** Though you people are poor but still you marry your daughter at the young age? Bhagyavati Kumari was quite candid in stating that, "Jo anpad ladki hoti hai vo apne bare mn nahi sochti, unhe nahi pata ki kya galat hai kya sahai hai." Girls, who are illiterate, can't think about themselves. They can't take decisions about what is wrong and what is right? They are also unaware about their future. When they step out from their home, people often, ogle at them with wrong thoughts. My daughter, being illiterate, can't make judgments between the right and wrong. In case, if she gets fascinated by any man, then it would hurt our pride. Moreover, we consider early marriage as a strategy to obviate our self-respect in the society. Basically due to society and poverty we believe in early marriage. I don't want that any man should misuse our daughter.

**Rekha, age 19**

The last two years have been tough on 19 years old Rekha, who got



married at the age of 17 and, she depicted her life journey by just saying, Mera man tha padne ka .....magar kismat ke age har gai.....

**My childhood....**

My childhood was very good. I wished to study but my father wanted me to get married after completing my 8th class. But my mother supported me and I completed my 10th class. But due to our financial problem, I left my studies and got married.

**Circumstances...**

My father fell critically ill; I had to compromise with my life. He wanted me to get married as there were no chances of his survival.

**Marriage...**

Marriage ruined my life. I am totally disappointed with my life. My in-laws treat me very badly even they filed a case against me. I just want to say that very wrong has happened with me. Now I don't have any expectations from my parents and my in-laws.

**Society...**

The society is also responsible for my condition. Just because of the society I am not able to work anywhere. If I go somewhere I have to answer several unavoidable questions like where I went and why

did I go there.

**Future plans...**

I am planning to complete my studies to get a reputed job and provide financial support to my family.

**Insight: Do you think early marriage is right or wrong?**

Rekha said, "Ladki jab tak apne pero par khadi na ho, tab tak uski shadi nahi karni chaiye. Yeh bilkul garkannuni hai, aisa nahi hona chaiye. Ladkiyo ko pura mauka milna chaiye, taki vo apni zindgai mn kuch kar sake." I think early marriage affects the women psychologically, mentally, emotionally and socially too. It is totally against the law. Girls should be given opportunity in terms of personal growth and education. Until and unless girls are not prepared mentally and physically, they should not be married.

**Early marriage....but why???**

Key factors to early marriage are poverty and insecurity, with the marriage of children often seen as a strategy for economic survival. In addition, it is perceived as a way to protect girls and to provide some stability in situation where societies are under extreme pressure. Several causes are responsible for this problem.

**Safety and Security of females in slums, villages and small towns**

Underprivileged parents are

generally insecure for there young and unmarried daughters who tend to attract undesired and undue attention of libidinous local people. In such circumstances, parents consider marriage as the easy option. Take the case of Sunita, a pretty young girl who got married at the age of 12, putting an end to her education and improve the quality of her life. Parents do one thing wrong to combat another. Their daughters' prerogatives to choose their own lives are snubbed because of the lack of empowerment of their parents.

**Lack of education in respect of health and social problems**

The poor are denied enough opportunities for studying and getting appropriate job opportunities. Shiela Devi, a middle aged slum dweller, talks about her unmarried young daughter: "padai likhai to ki nahi hai, ab naukri bhi nahi kar sakti, isliye sochri hu iski shadi karvado". Such thoughts of poor people hamper the growth of young girls. This implies that pressure of poverty and lack of funds compels them to get their daughters married early.

**Lack of awareness:**

A common reason of early marriage in poor families is lack of awareness. Marriage is always on their mind when a daughter reaches a marriageable age. Parents do not feel the need to get their daughters consent for marriage. They are just married off when their parents want them to get married. In our country, young and





unmarried girls' character, purity and virginity are considered sacrosanct and their families are ruthlessly protective. They expect their daughters to respect their feelings.

#### Poor economic background

Economically and socially disadvantaged people can seldom afford to educate their children especially the girl children. Daughters are not often sent to school and, whenever they do, the girl children are predominantly the school drop-outs. Poor economic background is a major constraint in the educational growth of a girl child.

#### Lack of political will in enforcing laws against child marriage

There are several laws and strategies against child marriage but the intended result is abysmal. The problem cannot be solved by merely enacting laws. They have to be strictly implemented and enforced. These governmental strategies lack the strength and political will to eradicate the stigma of child marriage. No governments of different political combinations have ever shown any strong will to solve the problem.

#### Men dominated society:

Women in general especially those from economically and socially deprived communities are hardly ever allowed to play any effective role in the decision making process for the family. She is expected to play the role of traditional and conventional

homemaker by cooking food, working occasionally to supplement the meager family income and taking care of the family. Education is not considered relevant or necessary. Even now there are some orthodox and superstitious families, who consider birth of a girl child as a sin. Girls, who survive female infanticide, are considered burden on the family and are married off at an early age.

#### Need for a change.....

The practice of early marriage is intended to shield the girl from attracting the sexual attention of men. But early marriage deprives girls from the pleasure of enjoying their adolescence. There is a need for changing this traditional attitude of parents. But how??

#### Educational opportunities:

Lack of education and opportunities deprive people from thinking beyond their basic needs. The government, being the major provider of education to the underprivileged, should empower these people especially the girl children to get reasonably educated and take advantage of the opportunities available for leading a decent life that they are entitled to enjoy.

#### Vocational Training

Objective of removing illiteracy can be achieved through active and coordinated involvement of NGOs. This can be done by imparting

vocational training to illiterate's girls for their social and economic empowerment.

#### NGOs can offer various job-oriented training courses.....

- Tailoring/Dress designing
- Embroidery
- Driving (there is good demand of drivers in India and abroad)
- Plumber (Female technicians are quite common in advance countries and even in China). Maid and Servants (There is high demand of trained servants in metro cities)

#### Government support

In spite of the existence of various laws, strategies and policies for curbing this problem, it persists. It would continue to persist unless the government takes the problem seriously and also takes adequate remedial actions to stop the practice of early marriage of girls before they are 18 years of age. This practice is not only illegal but it is also a social evil. The civil society especially the media - should be actively involved in creating a conducive environment for enlightening parents to educate their children and allow them to enjoy their adolescence. The government now shirks its responsibility to provide necessary opportunities. All children, even those from financially and socially disadvantaged background, must be allowed to assert their fundamental right of being educated

and prepare for leading a better life.

#### Awareness

NGOs can play a vital role by organising several campaigns against child marriage (Bal vivah). Message can be propagated through Panchayats and other media - that no one should marry their daughters below the age of 18 yrs or till they are financially independent.

Early marriage has become an acceptable institution of child labour. Go to any village and you are likely to find a young married girl busy in the kitchen and doing other domestic chores that children are not expected to do. A variety of measures judicial and social must be taken for allowing these girls to improve the quality of their lives.

*Isha Gakhar*

