



# Mysore Marriages of Kerala: A Study on the issues and concerns of deserted women

Muhammed Jabir M.M.<sup>1</sup>



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**ABSTRACT:** This paper explores the issues and concerns of deserted women in Mysore marriages of Kerala. The deserted women; a group of women who were abandoned or left out by their husbands and have returned back to natal home in Kerala from their marital home in Mysore district of Karnataka state. There are various media and survey reports which show the traumatic life situation of the victims without having proper resources for their livelihood and maintenance of daily needs. The children left out with them are another story of deprivation and poverty in these marriages. The parental families are also poor and not in a position to look after them and providing adequate help. The government of Kerala has not given proper attention and taken action on the problems of this section. Not much of research work has been attempted on Mysore marriages and its impact on the deserted women. This paper aims to highlight consequences of Mysore Marriages in the lives of the deserted women and children. It also explores issues of factors which lead to leave the marital home, Problems they have faced in marital home and after, coping mechanism of these women after return to natal home.

**Keywords:** Marriage, Mysore Marriage, Deserted Women, Issues and Concern, Coping Strategies.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Marriage is a universal phenomenon and one of the great events in human life. Marriage migration across region and borders has been pervasive all over the world recently. Massive interstate movements of both males and females to be spouses have received increasing attention among scholars and policy makers.

The number of interstate marriages has been steadily growing since the 1970s and has witnessed a rapid increase in the flow of Interstate marriage migration, particularly between the Kerala and Karnataka, Haryana and Tamil Nadu. There exist different types of interstate marriages which commonly called as Haryana marriage, Mysore marriage, Mali Kalyanam and Arabi kalyanam, etc. and a large number of women migrated to the nearest states of Kerala as brides. Cases of women being subjected to cruelty of false marriage, cheating, dowry extortion and desertion have increased in proportion to the growing number of interstate marriages like Mysore marriages in State recently. Desertion of women is one of the major issue has been highlighted by the forum of women activists, medias and NGOs for the past few decades in northern part of Kerala which have the high incidences of young girls and women falling victims to Mysore marriages in the State.

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<sup>1</sup>Research Scholar, Delhi School of Social Work, University of Delhi, Delhi-110007;  
Telephone: +91- 9560754557; Email: jabirpeta@gmail.com

Mysore marriages are interstate marriages in between the brides of northern Kerala and bridegrooms from Mysore District of Karnataka state. Dilshad (2014) in his study used the term 'Mysore Kalyanam' as the specific type of interstate marriage in which the brides from poor socio economic background and belong to rural remote areas of northern Kerala are married to bridegrooms who are residents of Mysore (Karnataka State) and demand comparatively lesser dowry.

According to a survey conducted among the victims of Mysore marriage by the State Women Commission (2001), most of these marriages are forced marriages and poverty, illiteracy and social backwardness push economically-backward families into marrying off their daughters to men from other States. The legal validity of many of these marriages is questionable and the problems such as violence towards brides, ill-treatment, desertion and non-payment of maintenance to wife and children crop up are common. Majority of the women have been deserted and divorced by their husbands after they faced different types of violence from their husbands.

The study of Mahila Samakhya Society (2008-09) on status of women in Nilambur Gramapanchayath of Malappuram district highlights the issue of dowry as a major cause for interstate marriages (Mysore Kalyanam) and the subsequent desertion of women by their husbands. Once a girl reaches the age of twenty, she is considered as overage for marriage, which demands too high dowry for an alliance within the state. Hence the parents are compelled to take the painful decision to marry their daughter to the neighboring state with comparatively lesser dowry demands and send her to a totally strange, far-off place.

Women in inter-state marriages will have to face serious problems like unfamiliar language, culture, poor life situations, economic dependence and domestic violence. Being not capable to face the social stigma of having an unmarried daughter in home, the parents are ready to go any length to get a daughter married. Moreover these women do not speak about the violence/crimes they have been subjected to, because of the social stigma attached to the divorced/deserted women. Besides, they want to protect their family. Hence the majority of the deserted cases were not exposed.

As an impact of this marriage even after experiencing painful life situations, the married girls never get any security from their husbands or in laws. Most of them are treated brutally with violence. A few numbers of girls are living with their husbands fighting a life at the strange place with strange language and customs. Most of them are deserted, but not legally divorced and get nothing for their survival. So far no scientific studies have been conducted on the event of interstate marriage to Mysore, its specific features, causes, and impacts. It was under these circumstances that the investigator, decided to conduct a study to explore issues and concerns of women back to natal home in this marriage.

## **2. Review of Literature**

Marriage remains, for the most part, an institution that promotes economic improvement and personal happiness. (Parker, 2000). Marriage is an institution which admits men and women to family life (Mazumdar, 2001). Different societies have different views for the social recognition and approval of marriage. That is the reason why we find different of marriages such as Monogamy, Polygamy, Polyandry, etc.

## **2.1 Interstate Marriages**

The term interstate marriages emphasize the crossing of state boundaries for the purpose of marriage within cultural or ethnic group as well as those between cultures and ethnic groups. With regard to the national level analysis In India, marriage migration has been the most significant type of migration for women.

Fulford (2013) have stated that the largest permanent migration in the world occurs as women in India move to live with their husband's family on marriage. Across India three quarters of women older than 22 have left their place of birth, 87% on marriage and in the large northern states more than 90% of women migrate for marriage. In 2001, 42 out of 65 million female migrants cited marriage as the reason for migration.

There is increasing number of young women engaged with interstate marriages like Tamil Nadu marriages, Haryana marriages in Kerala. Most of the brides are from most backward classes of people. There are different types of interstate marriages in the State which called as Haryana marriages, Mysore Kalyanam, Mali Kalyanam and Arabi Kalyanam etc. The Haryana marriages are common in some region of Kannur district in Kerala (Shekhar, 2010).

## **2.2 Why Interstate Marriages?**

The reason behind interstate marriages are different and many. Kaur (2004) has observed that the interstate marriage is a consequence of a combination of factors like adverse sex ratio, acute poverty and the desire of parents to escape dowry. Kukreja, Kumar (2013) have also examined the same poverty as the most compelling factor that prevents the people from meeting the high dowry demands made by local grooms. Other reasons are may be escaping a violent marriage, wishing to enter a second marriage, or rejecting stifling caste or gender norms enforced by communities and families. Dowry system exists in the country also contributes as one of the push and pull factor for the cross border marriages in different states (Singh, 2004).

## **2.3 Mysore marriages in Kerala**

Mysore marriages are interstate marriages exist in some northern part of Kerala. The marriage occurs in between the brides of Kerala and the grooms of Mysore in Karnataka state. The studies and literature on such marriages are not available and only few survey and media reports are there.

Jayarajan (2008) has examined in a study on what is known as 'Mysore kalyanam' in local parlance, conducted for the State Women's Commission ,that matrimonial alliances involving bridegrooms from Karnataka are concentrated in the Malabar region especially in Malappuram district of Kerala. He found that the majority of the women have studied up to middle school, while only few numbers reached the graduation level. A large number of these girls belong to families living far below the poverty line.

A study conducted by the special correspondent of 'The Hindu' news paper (November 30, 2008), 'Marriages cross the border as men seeks more'. The main reasons for these marriages are poverty, educational backwardness and heavy dowry demands, etc. The heavy dowry demands in the local marriages push the parents to marry off their children under Mysore marriages.

Centre for Women Development Studies (2010) has examined that the cross regional marriages

between brides from Kerala and grooms from Mysore indicated that escalating dowry in Kerala had compelled the search for grooms from Mysore who were ready to accept smaller dowries.

### **3. Objective of the Study**

The primary objective of the research is to study the issues and concerns of women back to natal homes by Mysore marriages of Kerala with specific reference to Malappuram district. For getting a deeper understanding the sub objectives are framed as to study: socio-economic profile of the victims women, reasons for leaving the marital home in Mysore, varied problems faced by the women respondents, coping mechanisms adopted to deal with the marital situation, sources of livelihood after return, future aspiration and areas of support (social, economic and legal) required after return back to the natal home.

### **4. Methodology**

The study has been carried out among the poor deserted Muslim women in Malappuram district of Kerala. The Malappuram district was selected for the study because the district has the largest concentration of women entering to Mysore marriages in the state (Jayarajan, 2008).

A total sample of 100 selected and the two categories of respondents are; 75 deserted women who have returned back to natal home and 25 Key informants. The district of Malappuram has been selected by purposive sampling method. Random samples of 75 women were selected from the list of deserted women from the source list of Kerala Mahila Samakhya Society (KMSS). Convenient sampling technique has been used to select the key informants. In order to prepare the sample frame, the investigator contacted a couple of NGOs and women departments from Malappuram district. The list of women which has in Kerala Mahila Samakhya Society; they are working among the victims of Mysore marriage were used. Respondents were arranged according to the areas they reside and selected by using systematic random sampling method.

Both Quantitative and Qualitative data has been collected for the purpose of the study. The information has been gathered from women respondents by using the structured interview schedule. Interview guide was used as tool to collect data from key informants. The software SPSS was used for undertaking quantitative analysis of the collected data.

### **5. Results and Discussion**

The information provided in this segment is based on the interview schedule administered with 75 women who returned back to natal home and 25 key informants from NGOs and other professionals.

#### **5.1 Social Profile**

The issues and concerns of the deserted women are correlated with their current social and economic status after return back to natal home. The mean age of the deserted women is 33 years. So, it can be understand that the desertion in these marriages generally takes place within few years of marriage. All the respondents are from Muslim community. The marital status denotes that the majority (90.6) of these women are in the category of deserted women. Only 5.3 per cent respondents were separated with legal procedures or divorced.

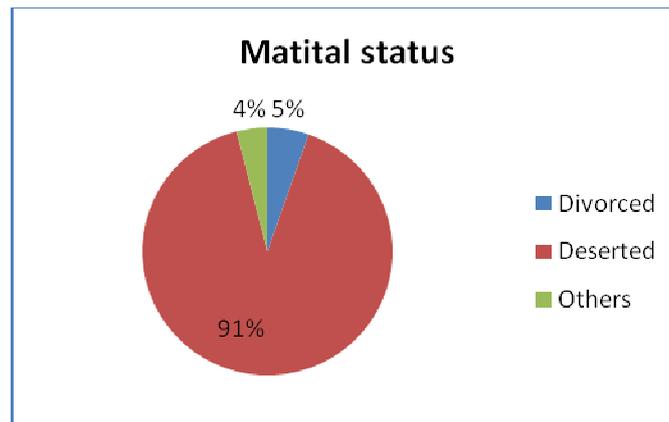


Figure 1: Marital status of the respondents

The educational status shows the low literacy among these women as compared to their counterparts in the general population of the state. Most (69.3%) of the respondents had education up to high school. Regarding to their residence large number (64%) of women depend their parents or brothers for residence or accommodation and maintenance.

## 5.2 Economic Profile

The study found that the majority (64%) of the women are engaged in some kind of labour or the other activities for their livelihood. The others are restricted to do any employment due to lack of support from family or skills and education. It was also observed that the lack of ownership to productive assets such as land, cattle or housing thereby leading to increasing insecurity and vulnerability of women.

Children in Mysore marriages are one of the important aspects which has to be studied properly. Majority of the women had children who are studying and educational cost has become high. A large number (70.6%) of the respondents are being supported by their parents after return back to natal home. They are being supported with financial help, space for stay, or land and any other by the parents.

It was clearly indicative in study that the livelihood profile, which is largely dependent on wage labour. Most (42%) of the victims have an average monthly income only in between 4500-6000. The victims revealed that 89 percent of them do not own any house at all. They are either living on rent, or are residing within the joint family set up with their parents or kin.

**Table 1: Employment status of the respondents**

Occupation	No. of Respondent	Percentage
None	27	36.0%
Wage labour	38	50.6%
Self employed	10	13.3%
Total	75	100%

### 5.3 Reason for return back to natal home

The study indicates that a large percent (32.4%) of women respondents faced the problems of violence like being insulted, harassment and beating. At the same time another most commonly reported (32.3%) reason for the return back was their husband's illegal contact with other women, which they find difficult to accept. It was found that dowry issues has played little (7%) role in desertion or return back to natal home. In some cases husband vanished when the girl was in pregnancy period and she was staying in natal home.

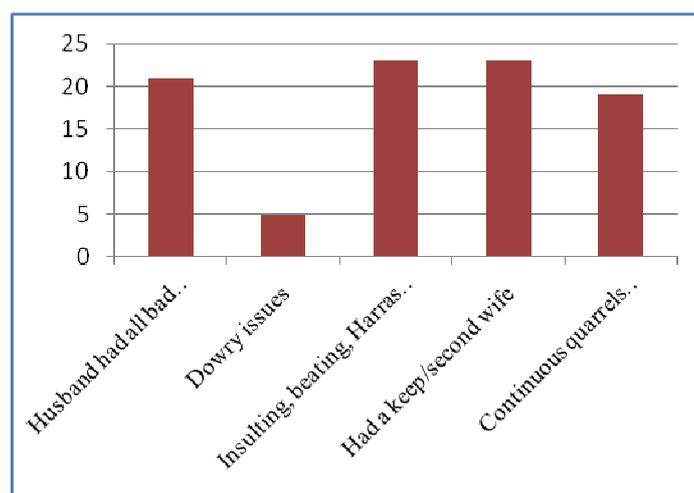


Figure 2: Reason for return back to natal home

### 5.4 Problems faced by the respondents

The deserted women are more vulnerable to various kind of problems in their life. The study found that majority (89.3%) of the respondents faces various types of financial problems. Other problems are problems in bringing up their children; adjustment problems; Emotional/psychological problems and socio-cultural problems, etc. Although, a majority of the respondents were working on daily or contract or salary basis, their financial condition was very weak and pitiable. A large portion of the earnings was spent on food, Education of the children and other purposes and many of them are depended upon their parents for all the expenditures which they need.

The coping strategies which they adopt to cope with problems determines their capacity to struggle with the current situation in their life. The most frequently used coping strategy to cope with financial problems were depending their parents for the financial support. Majority of the women (63%) ask money from parents. The most frequently used coping strategy to cope with emotional/psychological problems was 'discuss problem with family'.

### 5.5 Future aspiration

The future aspiration is an important motivational factor which determines the life of the women victims. Attitude to the reintegration with marital family is one of the important variables. A large number (94.6) of the respondents don't want to make reunion with their prior marital family. The majority (75.4 %) of the women reported that they cannot adjust with their husband. Now a Most of them (69.3%) wants to file case against their husbands. But they either do not have resources

to fight the case or do not know the legal procedure. Their ignorance about the legal formalities made them more vulnerable. They face financial constraints to deal the cases and the absence of proof of marriage also reason for uninterested in withdrawal from filing case against husbands. It was also found that a large number (56%) of respondents feel unfavorable to remarriage and preferred unmarried and they are not interest in a second marriage on grounds of the past experience they have got. Regarding to the stay in future, majority (58.6%) of the respondents wants to reside in separate home with children.

**Table 2: Attitude to remarriage**

<b>Response</b>	<b>No. of Respondent</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Favorable	21	28%
Unfavorable	42	56%
No response	12	16%
Total	75	100.0

### 5.6 Support Required in Post Desertion Period

An attempt was also made to interview the respondents from NGOs, women activists and professionals dealing with such cases in the State of Kerala. The following synoptic table shows the major supports required by the desertees in port desertion period.

<b>Support Needed in Post Desertion Period</b>	
<b>Census and Registration of Women Desertees</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not an adequate data about the women victims under the Mysore marriages in the state. No other systematic researches on the subject than certain media reports and documentaries.</li> <li>• Needs the registration of women desertees in Mysore marriages. Regular socioeconomic surveys of women desertees should be conducted by the government itself.</li> </ul>
<b>Livelihood Support</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Livelihood security is one of the main concerns. Every woman is under continuous poverty and economic crisis and has to develop an approach to solve it.</li> <li>• Proper services in the form of credit and skills training programme. It may create the income security for these women.</li> </ul>
<b>Accommodation</b>	Most of them are staying with their parents and have no accessibility for their own houses.
<b>Support through Governmental Schemes</b>	A large number of women are not benefitted by the government schemes. So, need to implement separate schemes and pension for these women. Give most priority to include them in the BPL lists.

<b>Promotion of Associations and Organizations</b>	Women victims are not organized in nature. So, need to be organized in a common platform by creating associations so as to enable themselves to fight for their rights.
<b>Support to Children's Education</b>	Women have not been able to provide for their children's education and other expenditure. Most of the women send their children in orphanages and other boarding school. The state should recognise the need of women and provide for free education for children of these women.
<b>Legal Support and Awareness</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Most of the victims could not make any legal claim for maintenance or other any legal action against their husbands. In number of cases these marriages are not being registered and have not adequate proof for their marriage.</li> <li>• The state should have to develop a maintenance fund to support the deserted women and save them from the tedious procedures of securing maintenance.</li> </ul>

## 6. Suggestion and Recommendations

On the basis of the interviews with the deserted women in Mysore marriages, and discussions with officials, counselors, representatives of NGOs, social workers and lawyers some measures are being suggested that can be taken in order to rehabilitate, and secure justice for, these deserted women and provide some safeguards that would ensure that these incidents do not occur in the future or are at least minimized. The suggested solutions which emerge from the study are as under:

### 6.1 Recommendations for Rehabilitation of Women Victims

a. Rehabilitation and Support Services: the services should be provided to deserted women such as shelter homes, legal aid, vocational/ skill training etc. Family courts and women's protection cells may be established in the affected districts. Lok Adalats could also be conducted frequently in the affected regions to bring about speedy settlement of disputes.

b. Maintenance and Compensation: Family maintenance is one of the major problems among the women respondents. Most of them depend upon their parental family for immediate support. Therefore, an adequate amount should be given to the girl as maintenance and compensation. The compensation should be given either in terms of money or land.

c. Counseling Services: The deserted women in this marriage are in traumatic life situation due to their position in the society without the absence of their husband. They do felt more emotional or psychological problem after coming back to natal home. Therefore, The traumatized girls should be provided counseling to enable them to come out of the trauma and face the unpleasant situation.

d. Training: Economic independence is extremely important for rehabilitation. Such girls could be trained for teaching or provided training in skills, such as, computers, stitching and sewing, etc., and also in entrepreneurship. Loans should be sanctioned for them by the banks on a priority basis so that they could start some small business on their own.

e. Special Cell: An anti-fraudulent marriage cell against Mysore marriages should be established in each district. They would have the responsibility of registering marriages with brides from other states.

### *6.2 Legal Recommendations*

The following recommendations are being put forth in order to provide legal safeguards for such marriages in the future:

- a. The strictest legal measures need to be taken to provide relief to the married women deserted in these marriages.
- b. The government should set up an agency to undertake the compulsory registration of all interstate marriages and law should be enacted to make registration.
- c. Registration of all property as well as gifts given to the girl and all items given to the boy and his family at the time of marriage should also be made compulsory and it must be made obligatory to return it at the time of separation.
- d. Registration of FIRs should be made mandatory in cases of desertion.
- e. There should be a provision of legal aid cell in all district headquarters to provide information regarding matters related to dowry, divorce, maintenance, child custody etc.

### *6.3 Safeguards through Social Awareness*

- a. Creating awareness among people regarding laws and realities could be a great help in reducing the malaise. Social awareness programmes to inform the people regarding marriage, divorce, custody of children, maintenance, etc. should be organized.
- b. This can be done by media particularly vernacular newspapers, television, radio and drama/plays. Media must play a pivotal role in creating awareness regarding such fraudulent marriages to ward off adverse situations.

### *6.4 Safeguard through Social Security Schemes*

- a. The government should have to make new scheme for the welfare of these women. More schemes that provide pensions to the deserted women after return back to natal home.
- b. Most of these women work solely as wage laborers getting hardly more than 100 days of wage work in a year. Lack of mobility and skills restricts their income earning opportunities. Women therefore have demanded soft loans for goat rearing and raising local breed of chicken. One can go further and say that women need support both in the form of credit and skills training if opportunities of diversification have to open up.
- c. Women have not been able to provide for their children's education. Those who have valued education have taken loans to provide for hostel and school fees. Women have demanded that the state recognize this need of women and provide for free education for children of these women.

## 7. Scope for Further Research

The women involved in Mysore marriage face traumatic life experiences like poor life situations, domestic violence, negligence, economic dependence and finally desertion. This study explores the issues and concern of women who are back to natal home as an impact of these marriages. The study is expected to develop interest among researchers for similar studies. Since marriage is considered as the main goal of woman's life, and there are similar other type of interstate marriages like Mali marriages, Arabi kalyanam, and Haryana Marriages occurring in different places of Kerala. The experiences narrated in this study can be applicable for all these interstate marriages with regard to their causes, features, gender issues and impacts on human lives. The study is hoped to be an eye opener to the grave situation of rural women which remain unnoticed in certain pockets of the state. The study will be helpful to make strategic plan and policies for the targeted women in the study.

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