

# Extravagance and Prodigal Expenditures for Ostentatious Ostentation in Kashmiri Muslim Weddings: A Study to Determine the Department Patterns of Evolved Kashmiri Psyche from Social Psychology Standpoint.

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**Abstract:** In the pursuit of connubial bliss, populace across the globe irrespective of race, religion, color, caste, creed, age, gender etc. aspire for a wonderful nuptial ceremony. In its manifestation, people from all walks of life from their early adulthoods strive hard to congregate ample resources in order to attain this status symbol. Factually elite class spend proportional wealth on their weddings, and those belonging to average income group or simply economy class splurge enormous wealth disproportionately in order to compete in this arena. In Kashmir context this is generally referred to as evolved psyche for an extravagance via prodigal expenditures merely for ostentatious ostentation. This piece of research work aims to ascertain the reasons and aphoristic wisdom behind the Kashmiri mindset that impels Kashmiri society as a whole to splurge disproportionate assets and wealth for their marriage ceremonies. This study is an attempt to comprehend the financial implications and expenditure patterns in Kashmiri weddings and also its direct cause and effect on social stratification and cultural dynamics of Kashmir. This paper also unfolds key issues and complexities created by ostentatious ostentation in Kashmiri Muslim Weddings and its veridical ramifications evocative of gender inequality, female infanticide and tardy marriages etc., hence this study adjudicates to present a strenuous elucidation to counter and castigate this jeopardy that creates distortion and tenderness in the social fabric of Kashmir and thus leading to a concrete social reform.

**Keywords:** Kashmiri Weddings, Extravagance, Gender Inequality, Female Infanticide, Tardy Marriages, Social Stratification, Kashmir Social Psychology.

## Introduction:

Dynamics in the social structure is an inevitable universal social reality. And maturity of the society is gauged to be directly proportional to the consciousness and awareness of general masses. As true with nationalities world over, Kashmiri society too witnesses' transformations be it in social, political, cultural, economic aspects etc and as such the dynamics in social patterns affects the fundamental bottom-line of each and every facet of life. These scenarios explicitly prevail in the practices, rituals, values and norms of marriage; and in general, its index is found in the social-psyche of the population that is subjected to transformation. Marriage as an institution in Kashmiri society is commonly perceived as a cornerstone in one's pursuit of existence. Since times immemorial, marriage is considered as an act by virtue of which two individuals make their relationship manifest in terms of a bond that putatively lasts for life time. As a sacred institution of accord, marriages usually fetch paramount importance centering every aspect of life on it. Marriage is an institution that sanctions the relationship of man and woman and binds them in a system of mutual obligations and rights essential to the functioning of family life. The marriage ceremony is a ritual that announces and signifies the recognition of both the husband and wife of their new status in the community. It also signifies the social approval and support of their new status. It is an institution where interpersonal relations, both intimate and otherwise, are acknowledged depending on the married couple's culture and preferences. It is a commitment where couples share the events in their partner's life until separation. Apart from its psychological aspects, marriage is a legal agreement that allows couples to live together, engage in sexual activity, procreate, coexist, share and benefit from mutual income and property. Its purposes, functions and

forms may differ from society to society but it is present everywhere as an institution. Marriage is one of the universal social institutions established to control and regulate the life of mankind. It is closely associated with the institution of family. Spiritually, marriages are believed to be settled in heavens and solemnized on Earth. This metaphoric scenario is often practiced other way round in the valley of Kashmir. Reason being the process of seeking a life associate and its consolidation in terms of marriage is so cumbersome and unenviable that it often leads the wedded lot of Kashmir to catastrophic situations. Avowedly, societies change when mindset of masses changes. From socio-psychology standpoint, Kashmiri diaspora adapts everything that it could fetch from the vicinities of influence but at a price unbearable in diverse social context. As such Kashmir is a classic example of an old civilization of diverse cultures. Many cross currents of thought, custom, arts, ideas, & languages have contributed in making & shaping the contemporary warp & woof of Kashmiri social & cultural life. In the past, marriage processes used to be very simple in all aspects and endeavors. True with the concept of the articulation of marriages in Kashmiri society, marriage psychology in Kashmir has passed the stringent test of time. Everything in its conception changed, new thoughts, new beliefs, new rituals all experimented and gradually evolved into what is commonly found in today's Kashmiri contemporary society. In the recent past marriage was considered as a mini aspect of life or just the means of furthering progeny so as to fetch the means of solace. But as of now, things have changed, so has the human cogitate nature. Marriages are nowadays considered as value addition processes in the endless pursuit of self actualization. In Kashmir context, the changes in the past few decades have been so rapid and far reaching that

many social scientists look upon this as a new era in Kashmir. The processes of urbanization and liberalization have catalyzed so many socio - psychological changes in the belief and value system of the people with direct and severe financial implications. Factually, Kashmiri weddings have experienced lot of changes since the last six decades and now it is considered as an awful act of expensive affair. Traditionally, the Kashmiri weddings used to be an uncomplicated affair, the weddings used to be conducted in a simple manner with the groom's side taking care of nearly all the expenses, a trend that went on till the 1950's. Thereafter, the trend of carrying out the lavish and extraordinary weddings in Kashmir started and it assumed a dangerous proportion. From expensive clothes and jewellery for the bride and the groom to an extravagant feast- the wazwan, prepared in traditional Kashmiri style for the guests, Kashmiri weddings are a unique entity of fashion and passion of extravaganza. Although considered to be an occasion that strengthens the bonds of kinship, but over the years this social event has become more about show boding and lavish spending, thus, transforming the Kashmiri weddings into a burlesque that has become too expensive for common masses to afford. Starting from elaborate pre-wedding functions to customary post-wedding rituals, Kashmiri weddings are spaced through several days. Events - vibrant and full of ardour such as traditional Kashmiri songs and dances are integral part of the celebration. And every event incurs substantive costs of resources (tangible and intangible). Kashmiri weddings are truly the celebration of tradition and beauty. Kashmiri wedding are a thing to behold, with the bride and groom resplendent in tasteful traditional dresses and oodles of glittering gold jewelry. From rituals to décor to food, Kashmiris take high pride in their traditions. The process begins from hiring a *Manzimyor* - 'Manzimyor' is the Kashmiri word for a local and professional matchmaker. Families hire matchmakers to make a profile of the girl/guy and spread an official word out that, i.e. the family is looking for a rishta (a match). *Parché Traavun* - After the 'Manzimyor' makes a profile of the girl or the guy, his/her next job is to present their details at a compatible family's disposal. He/she leaves the details of the guy/girl at the interested family's house giving them time to decide whether to take it forward or not. This process is called 'Parché Traavun'. The interested family then enquires about the whole matter on a personal level. *Vichni Gasun* - Once both the families are satisfied after enquiring about each other, the next step is to see the potential bride or groom. Sometimes this procedure is carried out with the parents accompanying the girl or the guy but sometimes it constitutes secretly barging into each other's workplace without revealing one's identity. Some families choose to organize a formal meet of the bride and the groom at *astaans* (shrines) or restaurants. The method may vary but a rishta is only finalized after the 'vichni gasun' tradition. The consent of both the potential bride and groom are equally important. *Thap Traavin* - After the approval of both the guy and the girl, the family of the groom gifts the bride a lot of gold usually in the form of necklaces and King Edward stamped gold coins which are locally called 'Poend' in the valley and this is how they officialize the match. Later 'majmas' (huge spread out copper plates) of sweets, dry fruit and confectionery is sent to all the relatives to

announce the wedlock. *Nishayn* - Nishayn or engagement may be a simple one or may be a *Nikah Nishayn*. In *Nikha Nishayn* *Nikah* is read, and the relation is fully legalized. In *Nishayn* close relatives both men and women from the boy's side come to the girl's house. The girl side also invites close relatives, friends and neighbors. Since the boy does not come to the function the girl's side sends a *trami*, *Kokur daeg*-cooked chicken to the boy's side along with *Chochi-special* bread to groom. The boy's family distributes this among their relatives, neighbors etc. this is reciprocated by sweets from the boy's side. The girl's family distributes these sweets to its kith and kin. After *Nishayn* its ok for the bride to be and groom to be to go for dates officially. Post *Nishayn* is followed by customs lie "*Roz-Kushada*" – which is something sent (like money, gold, wazwan etc.) by the boy's family to girl's family during *Ramadhan*, *Eid* visits where the girl/boy get tons of eidi by the in-laws and other customs like exchanging *Halwas* and *Harissas*. Throughout the engagement period, the girl's family does shop for *Wardan* items like shoes, bags, clothes, shawls -things that the bride would take to her new home, while as grooms family purchases gold to be gifted to bride during wedding.

*Saatnaam* - When the families finalize the dates for the wedding then a get together called 'Saatnaam' is held at their respective places. It's a function to announce the wedding dates amongst close relatives and is celebrated with the women showering blessings on the couple in the form of *Wanwun* (Kashmiri songs sung on auspicious occasions) and a feast. *Tomul Tchatun* - Quintals of rice is bought a few months before the wedding. The females of the family sit together and clear the rice of all kinds of impurities. This is done on traditional Kashmiri 'shups' (Wired planks made out of wood from willow trees to separate edible rice from impurities). *Malmaenz* - The 'Malmaenz' (Also called 'Mayun' and 'Haldi' in other countries of South Asia) starts off the main celebration of the wedding. It is characterized by the traditional '*Mas Traavun*' (Letting down the bride's hair). The elder women of the family oil the bride's hair and tie it into various tiny braids (Locally called 'Waankh') and wrap them with colorful ribbons. Then these women sing the famous Kashmiri wedding songs and undo these fancy braids one by one. *Maenzraat* - The night before the *Nikah* is called the 'Maenzraat'. The bride's hair is tied in many tiny braids. In a ritual called *Mas Muchrawun*, her friends and family members start to open the braids and comb her hair. On this night, the bride applies henna on her hands and feet while near and dear ones apply a teeny meeny amount of henna on the groom's little finger too which is followed by wrapping it with a 500 or a 2000 currency note as a sign of good omen. The local wedding singers are called and songs are sung throughout the night until dawn. *Aab Shehrun* - On the morning of the *nikah* the bride does 'ghusl' that is, she takes a bath and cleanses herself for the new beginning of her life. She is usually accompanied by her mother or an elder sister or a friend. After the bath, she wears the traditional Kashmiri *Pheran* with *tilla* work done

on it (Hand woven embroidery done with silver or gold thread) and offers two rakath of namaz and recites verses from the holy Quran.

*Nikah Khwaani* - The Nikah is carried out modestly and can be done both 'asaalatan' (in the presence of both the bride and the groom in close proximity) and 'wakalatan' (in the presence of their witnesses). The Qazi recites the Quranic verses and makes dua for the newlywed couple. Usually the Nikah Khwaani is carried out on the morning of the wedding lunch but some do it the first thing after the Mahraaz (groom) arrives. *Yini Wol* - The Yini Wol is the day when a large number of people including relatives, friends, neighbors, colleagues and acquaintances gather for lunch/dinner and bless the couple. The guests are served a magnanimous feast called 'the Kashmiri Wazwan' which consists of a long list of mainly non-vegetarian delicacies. *Mahraaz Saal* - The groom and the people with him are together known as the 'Baraatis' and they're given a very royal treatment. Groom is made to sit on Masnand- a platform made of the finest silk carpets. The copper plates that they're served food in are beautifully carved and polished. The menu they are served has a lot of add-ons other than the regular food items. Right from the appetizers to the desert, everything is a superior version of the lunch served in the daytime to other guests and relatives. This grand feast is known as the '*Mahraaz Saal*'. *Ruksati* - After the 'Baraat' comes and has dinner, the bride finally has to bid farewell to her family members and leave for her new abode called '*Waeriv*' (The husband's house) in the local Kashmiri language. She permanently moves out from her house to live with her husband in his house. The farewell of the bride is a very emotional moment for the entire family, especially the bride and her parents. *Kadal-e-Taar* - During the return journey of Baraat, the groom's vehicle is stopped by his friends at a bridge crossing and they demand money from him. They don't let him pass the bridge until he pays them (Kadal-e-taar). *Muhar Tullen* - After reaching the groom's house, bride is welcomed by the mother in law and a goat is slaughtered in her honour. The mother in law lifts the veil of the bride (Muhar Tullen) so that she is seen by the gathering. The close relatives give her gifts. Women in the gathering sing traditional marriage songs. *Walima* - The following day the groom's family hold a feast called the 'walima' where they invite their family, friends and people from their community. *Khabri Gasun* - All through the following days brides relatives except parents visit the couple and give them gifts mostly in shape of cash. It is at times very embarrassing situations for the brothers of the bride to visit her on this occasion on the pretext of the custom as to see if their sister is doing well after losing the virginity and to fetch information about the potency of the groom. *Quran Booznavun* - A local priest called molvi sahib or an elderly pious relative is invited by the groom's family so as to put the newlywed bride to examination for Quranic

Recitation in Arabic language and she is also at times asked the questions pertaining to basic tenets of Islamic faith. Usually she passes the test, and thus she is gifted a gold coin for her passing the test. *Phiri Saal* - A few days after the bride has moved in with her husband in his house, the bride's family invites the couple and the groom's family members and near ones for a meal at their house. This invitation is that of 'Phiri Saal'. The guests are attended with a lot of sophistication and with the best of hospitality. *Satum Doh* - Following the Phiri Saal, the couple goes back to the groom's house. The immediate seven days after the wedding are also considered festive and are celebrated. It's a famous Kashmiri tradition that the bride wears seven different colors on these seven days and does not do any regular household chores. On the seventh day of the wedding, guests from the bride's family are invited over for a feast at the groom's house. This day is known as the 'Satum Doh'. Once the function has ended, the bride takes permission from her husband and in-laws to go and live with her parents for a few days and then come back to her so-called '*Waeriv*' which is now considered to be her new home. *Phirraa Khaber* - After bride returns to her inlaws, all aunts and cousins visit her just to make sure she is doing ok, this is referred as Phirra Khaber. This marks the end of the festivities and the wedding celebrations. Kashmiris are very fond of this rich culture and associated rituals. Though each ritual lays a payload in terms of monetary burden on families particularly bride side.

With extravagant spending on weddings and associated function cum ceremonies, those who can afford to spend set a bad example for those who cannot. Ostentatious ostentation is all what defines a marriage in Kashmir, while rich can afford all this, a poor is left high and dry by the society's new definition of marriage. As a result, laying the foundation of a ridiculous trend for those who intend to go for simple weddings but often succumb to societal pressures and finally adapting the trend if nor a norm to go for a lavish wedding just for the fear of being seen as an outcast in the society. Those wishing to go for simple weddings often fall prey to the societal model and even run into debts to meet the expenditures. Now adapted as a custom, people are compelled to spend whatever amount of money they have for a grand wedding; as such it has become a status symbol and a point of prestige for everyone in Kashmir Valley. The extravaganza in Kashmiri weddings and other related functions are perceived as self-induced nuisance which are believed to eating into the vitals of society, since marriage functions have become an exhibition of pomp and show and occasions for crude display of wealth. This unnecessary spending becomes a cause of social imbalance and burden for others those who are compelled to imitate thus leading societal system to fetch veridical ramifications such as tardy marriages, gender inequality, female infanticide etc. Serious attempts

should be made to understand the conceptual reason behind this redundant imitation of this evolved psycho frenzy attitude leading to ostentatious ostentation.

### Significance of Study:

Negligible research has been carried out so far and rarely any literature is available on the subjects revolving around extravagance and prodigal expenditures in Kashmiri Weddings. Any significant research and scientific studies that has been carried out in this regard were all focused on the post-effects of extravagance in Kashmiri weddings. The prime focus of these studies so far has been on the consequences of this newly adapted norm in socio-cultural context and its implications in the system that lead to the factors responsible for their mega-complexity. More often the orientation of these studies has so far been carried either from economics or financial paradigms. Nappingly, very less or insignificant research has been carried out from socio-psychology standpoint. It is in the fundamental importance and interest of the intelligentsia to study the brains and rationale behind the factors that ultimately lead to the ostentatious ostentation in Kashmiri Muslim weddings. Scientifically, it would be appropriate to understand the naturally inculcated thinking of general masses in order to ascertain those pragmatic influences that lead to such thinking and hence the origin of the criterias that often lead to ostentatious ostentation. By and large this topic is fetching lot of attraction and attention from Indian as well as western social scientists, that they have started paying special attention to the analysis of the dynamic social system and the changes that are taking place therein. In the recent past, research wise some attention has also been paid to study and understanding of the socio-cultural life of Muslim community that constitute the largest minority in India and the majority in a state viz. Jammu and Kashmir.

In reference to Kashmir, more often the research in these parameters and references have been carried out by outsiders who predominantly were either lacking knowledge about the basic instincts or the DNA composition (behavioral aspect) of the Kashmiris. And it is evident that they either had time scarcity or lack of patience to dig deep into the grass root levels. No better can anyone claim to understand their culture rather than the subjects themselves. Essentially, in the search of factual and competent research outcomes in psychological gist the Kashmiri society has to introspect within and this introspection would be of paramount importance because no one would understand Kashmiri psyche better than the subject themselves. As a colligate fact, the socio-cultural study on Kashmiri Muslims has also come to the forefront in the development of sociological literature especially in India today. Dabla et. al (1999, 2009 & 2010) has contributed immensely in this field. According to their findings from

sociology viewpoint, there are five major reasons of late marriages in Kashmir Valley viz. poverty, dowry considerations, un-employment, conflict situation and caste system. This study primarily focused on the underlying factors and their structural hierarchy in the establishment of the ecumenical practice called tardy marriages. No points in reference to the factors such as patterns of evolved Kashmiri psyche were brought in the light of psychological aspect as such.

Wani et. al. (2013) has also attempted to study social stratification among Muslims in Kashmiri society. The contemporary Kashmiri society was studied on the basis of Caste, Class and Power. In the findings, caste system was found to be radically different from caste system in Indian society. In Kashmir Valley, the rigid aspect was missing and very few people were ready to attach any importance to ascribed status. Like all other societies, in Kashmir also there exist various forms of social stratification among the Muslim community. However, historically a shift is witnessed from one form of stratification to other. According to the 1921 census of India, majority of the Muslims in the Indian sub-continent in general and Kashmir in particular are the descendants of locals who changed their religion from Hinduism to Islam. Hence some Muslims and non-Muslims say that these local Muslims who originally converted to Islam individually or in large groups consciously or unconsciously brought into their practice of Islam, their former Hindu caste practices and customs.

Likewise, according to Haque Gazala et. al. (2014) in Kashmir, rising cases of divorces, domestic violence and loose bond relationship between husband and wife are assertive feature of the whole institution of marriages. Though such cases were also present in previous times, but the rate and nature were somehow slow and stable. Late marriages are now a trend, which in the earlier social context was considered a taboo. Economic compulsions and rising customs and extravaganzas have paved the way for this. As a consequence of this pre-marital sexual relations are at higher rate. So, the undesirable and unprecedented change in the vital institution of marriage, which for better or worse, was long been expected to satisfy a wide range of needs from intimacy, affection, and sex to domestic stability, family, and economic partnership provide a fertile ground for sociological investigation.

The topic "Extravagance and Prodigal Expenditures for Ostentatious Ostentation in Kashmiri Muslim Weddings: A Study to Determine the Department Patterns of Evolved Kashmiri Psyche from Social Psychology Standpoint" is completely unexplored from the socio-psychology perspective. Factually, this is the first study of its kind that directly makes an attempt to explore this matter in reference to context. The study of extravagance and

prodigal expenditures for ostentatious ostentation in Kashmiri Muslim weddings, a study to determine the department patterns of evolved Kashmiri psyche from social psychology standpoint is of greater importance and requires systematic enquiry at different modes and levels of investigation for understanding this phenomenon from socio-psychology standpoint. The focus of the study provides a comprehensive depiction of the patterns of psychological transformation and potential influences that lead to prodigal expenditures for ostentatious ostentation Kashmiri Muslims weddings. The study also tries to throw light on the ramifications and aftermaths of department patterns of evolved Kashmiri psyche in Kashmir valley. The consequence of this trend in reality is becoming an enormous burden as one finds it tough to meet the expenses of marriage. Thus, it is important to pay due consideration to find the causes and consequences of shifting attitude from traditional ways of marriages to the modern trends. Study avenues are released to draw inferences from the research based on scientific parameters and to find out what, how and where the psychology of general masses is heading towards. This is a modest attempt in this direction; it surely would create an interest among the social scientists and policy makers about this alarming social situation and its implications. It is crystal clear and evident from the facts and references remarked so far that there is an extreme requirement for research on this topic that fascinates academicians, practitioners and social scientists even at local levels.

### **Research Methodology:**

Studying human nature and its underlying influences in reference to "Extravagance and Prodigious Expenditures for Ostentatious Ostentation in Kashmiri Muslim Weddings" is in fact the topic of much importance to Kashmiris as well as much interest to the social scientists, politicians, philosophers, social activists and intellectuals at international level. The proposed study is on this important topic i.e. "Extravagance and Prodigious Expenditures for Ostentatious Ostentation in Kashmiri Muslim Weddings - A Study to Determine the Department Patterns of Evolved Kashmiri Psyche from Social Psychology Standpoint". This topic has been dealt many a time before though the researchers have either concluded on undertaking only consequential factors or it has not been researched from social-psychology outlook. There is always an unremitting scope for more and more of quality research on this particular topic.

### *Hypothesis*

Like all societies world over, Kashmiri society too is transforming in every aspect and eventually evolves with consolidation over time. Extravagance and Prodigious Expenditures for Ostentatious Ostentation in Kashmiri Muslim Weddings must substantiate the reasons to prevail and

exist. And also must logic the virtue in its prospect of being acquired cum accommodative in the contemporary Kashmiri society. The reasons and axiomatic ramifications that lead to Ostentatious Ostentation among educated Muslim Women folk in Kashmir valley must be ascertained in the light of potential factors that influence psychology of general masses, so that a strategic arduous solution to counter and castigate this imperil that creates distortion and soreness in the social fabric of Kashmir is fetched.

### *Universe and Sample of the Study*

The universe or the population is aggregate of all units, possessing certain specific characteristics of which the sample seeks to draw conclusions. The universe of the study means exact area where from the individuals for the sample are selected. The universe for this study is the Kashmir Valley Indian controlled. The choice of Kashmir Valley as the universe of the study was selected because this area is completely unexplored and no such study has been conducted which provides information regarding the reasons and axiomatic ramifications of ostentatious ostentation among educated Muslim Women folk from social psychology standpoint and secondly, researcher nativeness - personal acquaintance with the place and familiarity with its languages and peoples way of life.

### *The Collection of Data*

Collection of data for the study under reference began with secondary sources. The information gathered from secondary sources provided an in-depth understanding of the historical account of the transformation of Kashmiri society. These sources proved fruitful in building some theoretical assumptions and parameters for the method of inquiry. Before going to the field and actually interviewing people the research work began with a pilot study which starts before the field work. For pilot study, researcher took 50 Kashmiri Muslim educated males and females from different areas and a focus group to infer the meaning and underlying reasons for prodigious expenditures for ostentatious ostentation. And also, to understand the cyclic ramifications that effectuate due to prodigious expenditures in their marriages and the department patterns of evolved Kashmiri psyche from social psychology standpoint.

The analysis of the pilot study helped the researcher to form the basis of an outline including the desirable items to be included in the in-depth study of extravagance and prodigious expenditures for ostentatious ostentation in Kashmiri Muslim weddings from socio-psychology outlook. On the basis of this pilot study, a sample of 500 individuals was selected accordingly representing all areas of Kashmir Valley and also belonging to all walks of life. The pilot test was carried for the questionnaire and minor modifications to reduce the

saturation and history effect were undertaken. Thereafter, field work was carried out by the researcher. A standard questionnaire was designed and administered to 500 potential respondents and was used as a tool for primary data collection. Data was analyzed to fetch information. Finally, the research findings were drafted in detail, and presented in the form as a report/paper. Thus, the information collected from primary and secondary sources about extravagance and prodigal expenditures for ostentatious ostentation in Kashmiri Muslim weddings and to determine the department patterns of evolved Kashmiri psyche from social psychology standpoint were put in pre-determined theoretical framework which became the basis of our observation in the findings. These findings were analyzed in the context of socio-psychological framework and conclusion were drawn in relation to the findings on which hypothesis were based. Researcher was also conscious about the bias which generally creeps in the study framework. Hence, the scientific method was incorporated and such problems were solved and thus research goals were all achieved.

## Result and Discussion:

It is observed that in Kashmir Valley the prevailing instances of extravagance in Muslim weddings are not only infested in illiterate or underprivileged class but also in educated and elite lot too. This sparks cynicism in general and as such this psyche need to be studied and explored thoroughly, the reason being to notice zero correlation between education, status, profession, wealth, class, domicile etc under consideration and their respective spending on their marriages. Numbers of other related changes have also been observed such as the patterns of marriage, age of bride & groom to enter wedlock, inter-caste marriage, customs, practices etc. A congeneric augment is also observed like for example tardy marriages, divorces, mate selection process, dowry issues, domestic violence, gender bias and inequality, fragile family ties etc. As per traditional social structure it was observed that the families were more stable and provided adequate security in terms of physical, social and emotional needs to brides and grooms. Current trends however indicate that there are changes in the basic system of family orientation, especially in the institution called marriage. The evident transition is due to educational advancement, economic development, a new wave of modernization, western adaptation, and cultural mixes, loosening gap of communication, internet, social networking media and opportunities.

It is inferred from the analysis of the data that general Muslim population in the Kashmir valley can be arranged and represented in six groups as per their overall expenditure array in their weddings. Among them only 3% on an average espouses to spend 0-2 lacs Indian rupees in each wedding. Likewise, 6% of the Muslim population in the

valley acknowledges spending 2-5 lacs Indian rupees on a wedding. 16% of the said population incurs an expenditure of 5-8 lacs Indian rupees on a wedding. Alike 28% of said population follow the trend by spend 8-11 lacs of Indian rupees on a wedding. Similarly, 27% of the referenced population splurges 11-14 lacs of Indian rupees on a wedding and this course is followed by 20% of the stated population that spend 14-20 lacs or more Indian rupees on a wedding. Arriving at six expenditure ranges and their mapping with espousing percentage populations leads into analysis phase of the social-psychology factors that basically yield to such a result in exhibit. If given opportunity and privilege, each entity in the stratum would prefer to jump to next higher hierarchy of the strata under consideration and spend accordingly in their weddings.

On minutely examining each spectrum independently, it is noticed that 3% of muslim population in question factually belong to BPL- Below Poverty Line index and generally represent economically weaker sections and under privileged class of the society that include so called lower castes – urban & rural, people belonging to far flung areas, illiterate class categorized by zero income group. This observation is absolutely in tandem with the authentic report of Planning Commission of India. As per the estimates of the Planning Commission of India, BPL figures for J&K for Rural and Urban areas stand at 3.97 percent and 1.98 percent respectively while as for Rural/ Urban (Combined), it stands at 3.48 percent. The rationale behind spending life time earnings on their weddings by this group

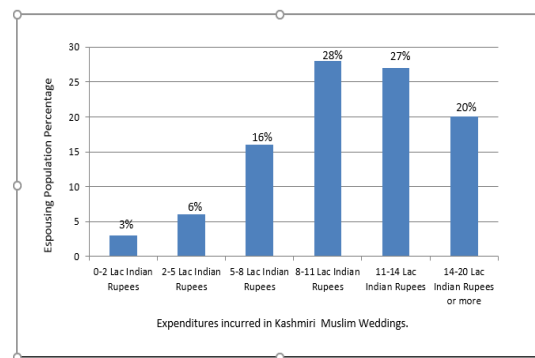


Fig 1: Expenditures incurred in Kashmiri Muslim Weddings and population percentage coding.

is simply to prove their presence in the society and factually competing within social strata in order to follow the traditions of the society. This group prefers to live their lives on day to day basis, with least planning of future endeavors as such keeping no high expectations in any essence. These people get happiness from fringe things that normally happen in their domains, though they keep hope for the best time to arrive and this scenario literally persists lifelong

Next segment i.e. 6% of muslims in Kashmir valley though a step higher in terms of spending acknowledges spending 2-5 lacs Indian rupees in their wedding and this lot is generally referred to as conscious strugglers of the

society. This portion is also categorized by low income group usually considered to be brooded from psychology standpoint. Majority of the female folk in this group remain wholly and solely dependent on their husband's earnings. Unemployment, large family to support, educationally deprived or early dropouts etc. are some of the traits of this class. All such attributes are usually found in unskilled casual laborers of Kashmir Valley and they only make seasonal earnings for their livelihood. Health domain wise, their physical and mental stress levels are in equipoise. This stratum prefers to maintain the status quo in terms of disposal of wealth in their marriages, else they would be considered to belong to the lower class which their ego and self-esteem levels can't compromise at any cost.

Another class that is subjected to spend on average of 5-8 lacs of Indian rupees on their weddings constitutes 16% of the Kashmiri Muslim population in the valley. These belong to middle category economic order or average income group and are predominantly represented by artisans and service class. Their educational background is average, though female are academically more qualified than their husbands yet majority of them after marriages are not allowed by their respective family members specially husbands to pursue their careers and professions. This is due to peculiar conservative attitude carried by husbands and associated apprehension of losing spouse if given ample freedom to decide about advancing career and profession. Female folk exhibit peculiar psyche, the most pompous attitude towards social customs. They often compel their husbands to pool up money from any means irrespective of source - legal or illegal for the extravaganza. This is because the female folk in this group pretend to carry lot of social exposure at times true, though in eruditeness they are lagging far behind. In true essence, the attitude by the female folk in this segment is to compete with higher stratum in order to prove their pseudo worth that exactly comes in tandem with Maslow's theory. For them there is no other way to explicitly express their feelings of being and existence other than the compulsion to dispose of major earnings of husband's income for ostentatious display.

A step further in terms of the order of spending is the spectrum constituting 28% of valley's Muslim population that espouses to dispose of 8-11 lacs of Indian rupees on their weddings. This is consortium to upper middle class carrying adequate education level, serving either government or private sector or even local businessmen as well. They settle down immediately after completing their basic education and focus on establishing nuclear family. The main aim of this lot is to be prosperous in quick intervals of time. Their female folk are too much stingy hoarder of money and possessions so as to keep resource entities handy in order to compete in society, but the only difference lies in the orientation of spending especially in weddings. They are focused on fetching utilities rather than

one time outgo shots. Majority of them give gold jewellery and cloths their first preference in shopping. Female folk in this group are so obsessed for ostentatious display that they often fall into the trap when the competitors put on display their wealth in occasion of social gathering especially engagement and marriage ceremonies.

Following the trend in the pursuit of exhibition of wealth, 27% of Muslim population on an average spends 11-14 lacs of Indian rupees in their weddings. This is the most gregarious and the second wealthiest of all the class groups. They work in traditional professions and socialize with a wide variety of people, and take part in a wide variety of cultural activities. Often referred to as established upper middle class, many of these require high expenditures, so wealth is typically needed. Many aristocratic peerages and their homes are parts of estates, owned and run by the title holder with moneys generated by the family traditional businesses and other sources of wealth. Both genders in the segment are amply educated, highly motivated professionals with lot of factual social exposure. Perception wise, disposing expendable wealth is just a normal affair for them but for others a matter of great concern for imitation. This group tends to maintain dignity cum esteem needs and associated status quo. Their female folk traditionally develop a concern of getting recognition, status, importance, and respect from others. Most among them encompass to have a need to feel respected; this includes the need to have self-esteem and self-respect. Thus, spend disproportionate assets on their weddings, as they see this as only opportunity to satisfy their psyche.

Those holding disproportionate amount of wealth, privilege, political power in Kashmiri society and such families are considered the best or most powerful as compared to others and are referred to as elite class. 20% of stated Muslim population of Kashmir valley spends 14-20 lacs or more Indian rupees on their weddings. In extreme cases, it has been noticed that the expenditure crosses millions of rupees. These include top business tycoons, top bureaucrats, importers & exporters, real estate professionals, land brokers, mafia dons, politicians, industrialists, defense suppliers, contractors, brokers etc. Such entities are neither bothered about the inflow of wealth nor concerned about its dispensation. Their existence is based on luxury and the display of it helps them to keep this status quo maintained. The extravaganza and crude display of wealth fetches them the recognition they expect and this is the only motivational factor in their pursuit. For the elite, life is just a true picture of an effortless existence, as such the maximum level of ostentatious display is observed here. In this stratum, most of the disproportionate wealth is accumulated by illegal and corrupt practices. Women folk are least bothered about the financial implications or post considerations of married life. What matters for them the most is the pleasure and

enjoyment of luxury life without any kind of exertion and the legacy of eliteness to be carried and continued forward from one generation to other. Majority of the female folk in this segment are obsessed for pleasure in all essence, and majority of them opt for unethical ways to satisfy themselves.

On analyzing the data for the expenditure patterns in Kashmiri Muslim weddings and its related functions, it is observed that the general strata keep up piling resources and money for marriage expenses like jewelry, bridal cloths, marriage function expenses, dowry, gifts etc. Keeping limited earnings and avenues into consideration, the savings actually takes years to compile. This scenario is noticed particularly in middle income group families of Kashmir valley. In Muslim weddings, on an average 39.41% of the funds in terms of accumulated resources over the time are utilized for the procurement of jewelry items for the bride that includes ornaments in platinum, gold, precious stones, silver etc. Apart from this, 13.86% of resources on an average are spend on cloths & cosmetics. In some cases, the best of the make-up artists are hired so that the bride looks stunning on her wedding and the wedding dress itself is custom designed by some reputable designer. This includes bridal wear and tassel apparels for pandering the dignitaries and guests in general on the occasions of celebrations especially wedding and engagement ceremonies. Utility items bestowed to bride by the family consume 10.15% of funds allocation for marriage. The items usually include refrigerator, washing machine, microwave oven, rice cooker, gas range, LED TV, copper and ceramic utensils, furniture and furnishing equipment etc. Dowry considerations are still ubiquitous in Kashmiri society. On an average 10.38% of pecuniary resources are consumed to fetch dowry items for the bride to take along and this is as a customary norm from cultural standpoint. Dowry and compulsory gift items include property ranging from luxury car, residential flats, cash certificates, wrist watches, gold biscuits, mobile phones, laptops, expensive Kashmiri shawls to prepaid honeymoon coupons for international destinations etc. Often these items are demanded from the bride's family in advance and delivered before hand to the in-laws' family as per commitments. Occasions and functions are meant for the celebrations, so are engagement and marriage ceremonies in Kashmiri culture. Contrary to this thought, such juncture are teemed by the female folk to display everything they could in their capacities be it in the context of beauty and boldness, wealth and health, pride with prejudice, complex of superiority with tantrums, pernickety attitudes etc. On an average, 20.25% of the funds are allocated to be utilized for

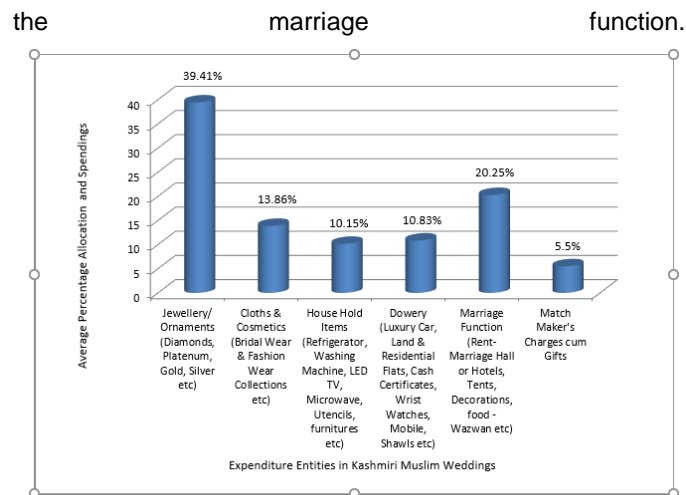


Fig 2: Proportional disbursements of resources in Kashmiri Muslim Weddings.

This includes renting a marriage hall or hotel, decorative tents, traditional food- wazwan, gifts for the guests. It is observed, that in terms of ratio, this spending pattern is uniformly followed by each and every class irrespective of the quantum in their education, status, profession, wealth, class, domicile etc. Social recognition is considered to be of prime importance, and every act of spending revolves around it and as such marriage functions have become an exhibition of pomp and show and an occasion for crude display of wealth. An average Muslim wedding in Kashmir costs around Rs.10-15 lakhs that goes upto a crore if the family is well-off, monetary figures that are well beyond a common man's reach and often drives him into heavy debt in order to pay for the wedding expenses.

The wazwan, a specially prepared multi-dish cuisine prepared on special occasions by the traditional Kashmiri chefs (waaza), remains one of the most expensive commodities when planning the budget of a wedding. High society weddings in Kashmir are on a whole new level, exotic locations and posh marriage halls are booked to conduct the ceremonies and detailed attention is paid to the ambience of the place as a bright and vibrant décor beautified with majestic lighting is put into place. Professional music bands are hired to play at the weddings, baskets of flowers and bouquets are used extensively to adorn the place where the groom is supposed to sit and professional photographers/videographers replacing the local shooting walas are flown in from outside the state to capture the wedding in an artistic manner. Colossal Shamyanas made of a special fabric, embellished with intricate hand work designs and fitted with multi-colored lights are put up and expensive catering services are hired who besides serving the traditional wazwan, serve continental and other Indian cuisine to the guests. Grand and colossal white-houses (Shamyanas), special wedding feasts, costly gifts exchanged, post-wedding feasts/parties,



etc have resulted in enormous rise in wedding expenses. The introduction of elements from other cultures such as majestic lighting, music and sound arrangements, hiring of catering services, trend of hiring wedding planners, etc have only added to the grandeur and ultimately the expense on weddings.

In Kashmir context, professional match makers are considered to be very ghastly, they fetch a good prospect only on the condition that if they are promised and paid handsome amount of money. They often don't fetch a good prospect instead they keep demanding money on every home visit; their expectations can't be turned down for obvious reasons. It is they who actually sort the profiles first and refine them and bring them for a particular prospect. On an average 5.5% of the total allocation are consumed by the matchmakers. They bargain, demand and gobble it in the form of cash, gold and gifts etc.

Keeping all the factors into consideration such as class in the society, the consociated patterns and quantum of expenditure in the weddings and the level of extravagance for ostentatious ostentation, it is obvious to discover ample ramifications of the distorted social ethos. From gender discrimination to gender inequality, from female infanticide to tardy marriages, every aspect of its ill effect revolves around women. They are considered to be excogitates of this predicament and are themselves a suffering lot, they realize it not. Sex ratio decline is one such illustration of gender discrimination. Some of the factors which are responsible for decline in sex ratio are: son preference and sex selective abortions, neglect of females in nutrition and health care resulting in higher mortality and other socio-cultural practices. Sociological and economic research has concentrated on analyzing the reasons for the low and declining sex ratio. Demographers have focused on the number of 'missing women' pointing to fertility decline and son preference as causes; sociologists have analyzed son preference in terms of low status of women, caused by social practices of hypergamous and exogamous marriage systems; and economists focus on lower labor force participation and the consequent need for dowry as compensation. Females are constructed as the inferior, less valuable sex and are often projected as burden on the family while sons are considered valuable for various reasons such as support to parents in old age, continuing the lineage, inheriting property etc. while daughters are constructed as being dispensable (Kaur, 2004:2595) and as a net drain on parental resources in patrilineal and patrilocal communities (Dasgupta, 2000:643-689).

The problem of imbalanced sex ratios exists because sons are associated with prestige in the community and social power. Through sons, a family can

perpetuate the family line and ensure the continuity of the family name. Furthermore, any lands given to a son will most likely remain within the family (Bandyopadhyay, 2003:910-27). In agrarian societies, sons are desirable as hands to work in the field, and small towns value sons as an asset in the fight against the "encroaching" urban society (Khanna, 1997:171-80). In addition, many couples depend on a son to care for them in their old age and assist in the financial stability of the family (Sheth, 2006:185-86). The fact that the contribution of female as daughter, sister, wife and mother in taking care of family members especially in the contemporary society cannot be denied but what is unfortunate is that it is not recognized in the similar way as that of their male counterparts (Abbott, 2005:171-97).

The conformity to the persisting gender bias in Kashmiri society is substantiated by the observations in the current research. As per Kashmiri Muslim women folk, 85% of the Muslim brides would like to have a baby boy in their first issue. The reasons hence forth consolidated are too speckled in nature. The rationale given is that having a baby boy holds the relation fast between husband and wife. The other logic specified being that it affirms the continuity of family line and thereby ensures the continuity of the family name. It also gives mothers an authoritative say in the domains of family matters. Usually sons receive a privileged right on the ancestral property and mother remains the custodian of the son's welfare and interests. Predominantly, the sons are perceived to be the moral supporters of mothers and are tended towards them in all essence as they are emotionally more so attached to mothers. Moreover, no motherhood likes her offspring to traverse through tedious situations in life like usually a female's face in contemporary Kashmiri society.

Upbringing a female is considered a tedious job and requires lot of responsibilities and requires dedicated parental care. And having a baby girl mean setting the timer to start accumulating wealth and resources for her marriage centering dowry aspects, as such females are considered to drain resources out of the family. In such psychological understandings, girls are considered as extraneous wealth that is the reason rarely any bride wishes to have a baby girl. Merely 8% of the Kashmiri Muslim brides wish to have a baby girl in their first issue. It is so because this bunch either belongs to elite class or such brides carry very less exposure about true realities of life. And for elite class girl upbringing is neither a big deal at all nor is disposing any quantum of wealth for their marriage of any grave significance. However there are few exceptions to it e.g. those who don't conceive for a pretty long duration prefers to settle down for any gender, just for the sake of preventing the relation between husband & wife from getting ruined. Only 7% of the brides preferred not to disclose their thoughts and viewpoint about it.

As far as the thought process about the second issues is concerned, it is observed that the bride's psychologies are tuned with conditionality. 17% of them would again prefer to have a baby boy. 73% would like to have a baby girl on the condition that their first issue is a baby boy. This is because most of the females (mothers) consider their daughters as true companions and are well thought-out to be lifelong supporters for mothers.

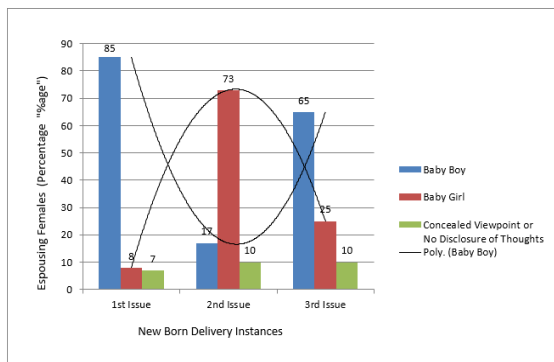


Fig 3: Gender Preferences as per Educated Muslim Women Folk of Kashmir.

Strong correlation is ascertained in gender preferences for boys. Again 10% of the female folk preferred not to disclose their thoughts and viewpoint about it. It is observed that as time passes by in post marriage scenarios, brides tend to become mature, enough to understand factual and at times bitter realities of life and society. They eventually reach to the same point where from they began their journey in terms of the rationale and parameters of socio psychological. Based on their earlier expressed paradigms of conditionality, 65% of the women folk would still prefer to have a baby boy in their third issue. 25% would prefer to have a baby girl and 10% would still keep the opinions confidential. Thus the decline in sex ratio is an issue of great concern as it depicts that our society is still dominated by patriarchal values, beliefs and practices manifesting itself in the form of discrimination against females. Among the population, there are approximately 5% hardcore people (women) who would prefer to go by any number of conceptions in order to get a baby boy, for them baby boy is a must what so ever. In the recent times, infanticide has taken the shape of female foeticide, i.e., killing of baby inside the womb, more popularly known as feticide. The decline in sex ratio has been interpreted as the consequence of more sex selective abortions of the female fetuses. Because of the sophisticated procedures in medicine, it becomes easier for parents to get rid of their "unwanted girl child" because it is the girl child which has to bear the brunt of gender bias and deep-rooted prejudice as inferior sex.

It is certain from the discourse presented so far that it is actually a 'women' - be it in the capacity of daughter, sister, wife, mother, grandmothers, or aunt etc. who is involved and is at the center stage of each and every

issue pertaining to distortion of the society, so are considered aberrated lot. In spite of the fact that religious scriptures too adumbrate to make marriages an inexpensive affair, yet it is very much opposite in reality. Brides, who are subjected to bring dowry along and later on becoming mother in-laws themselves, tend to proceed with same yardstick and norm with their daughter in-laws, and the cycle continues. This malevolence practice is continued and brought forward from one generation to next. Female mindset is so adamant in this and no one opts to settle down for less. And if a male member of the family tries to intervene in order to bring them out of this dingy mind set, he is censured, reprimanded, often penalized and at times made an outcaste within his own kin. This is the reason why women folk remain pissed off in the context of social sufferings and its epitomes.

In the anticipation of endorsements for a happy married life with the tendency of zeroing risk factors, the dingy psycho-evolved system that is dominant now-a-days leads the Kashmir phratry towards the manifestation of tardy marriages. The magnanimity and complexity of the problems and issues as discussed poses a serious threat to the institution of marriage in Kashmiri culture. It can be understood by the fact that there is no readymade or time bound solution available to these problems. Even if the solution is proposed by the social scientists, it is often difficult to implement the remedies in the social system because the causes of problems are embedded in the deepest levels and constructs of social psychologies and the symptoms of it are just revealed as a tip of an iceberg.

### Summary and Conclusion:

Irrespective of class, status, caste, demography, economic dispensation etc. every household in Kashmir valley indulges in extravagance and prodigal expenditures for ostentatious ostentation in their festivities and ceremonies. It is observed that the prevailing instances of extravagance in Muslim weddings are not only infested in illiterate or underprivileged class but also in educated and elite lot too. This sparks cynicism in general as zero correlation is found between education, status, profession, wealth, class, domicile etc under consideration and their respective spending on their marriages. The field is open to draw inferences from this research based on quantitative parameters and to find out where Kashmiris are heading to. Extravagance is demonstrated in varied forms and female folk are entirely responsible for it. Each class of the society exhibits different forms of extravagance within their capacities, adroitness and social trammels. Extravaganzas and prodigal expenditures are merely meant for ostentatious ostentation. And this evolved Kashmiri psyche is the root cause of many problems and issues in the social context. It is certain from the discourse presented so far that it is

actually a 'women' - be it in the contour of daughter, sister, wife, mother, grandmothers, or aunt etc. who is involved and is at the center stage of each and every issue pertaining to distortion of the society, so are usually considered as an aberrated lot. Gender inequality, female infanticide, dowry system, tardy marriages are few of the manifest ramifications brought forth by this evolved mindset.

Nearly all communities in Kashmir valley practice the custom of dowry. The dowry is usually given either to show off and maintain family's honor or as a necessary condition for a suitable mate for the daughter. Custom of dowry is found to be main culprit behind daughter disfavor. The custom of dowry is practiced in the Kashmir valley though its degree and kind varies across region, religion and social categories. It has changed its form from being mere voluntary gifts to huge demands made by bride's in-laws in the form of cash and kind. In paying this dowry, many families exhaust their resources and many have to borrow funds either from relatives and friends or in some cases from commercial banks to fulfill the demands. Accordingly, families avoid these situations by carefully monitoring the number of daughters in their family. This process can take many forms and can vary from subtle neglect to outright cruelty in the forms of feticide or infanticide. Dowry has now become a social problem reflected in bride burning, harassment and physical torture of the young brides and various kinds of pressure tactics being adopted by the husband and/or in-laws that affect the well being of the victimized women.

If such a trend continues, in the near future one should not be incredulous to find people preferring to have living relationship rather than getting married and a society full of legal brothel centers. Due to the soaring unemployment rate in Kashmir, many of the youth who cannot find a good match are getting married to girls from outside particularly West Bengal known in Kashmir as 'Bengali brides', as it has become a handy choice for them to marry off without any extravaganza. Majority of the Bengali brides who marry the Kashmiri men belong to poor families as they find a Kashmiri person a good choice without paying any dowry. Generally, the men who are not able to compete in the local marriage market are forced to look outside the state and West Bengal is a popular destination for seeking brides. Reasons are insufficient financial status, joblessness and over-age. "To marry a Bengali girl is far cheaper as compared to marry a local in Kashmir. What impact it would carry in the long term is a matter to ponder upon.

What is truly required in contingency approach to counter and castigate this psycho-epidemic cum imperil that creates distortion and soreness in the social fabric of Kashmir,

these redressal essences are summarized in the following observations and suggestions as follows:

1. Lot of scientific study and quality research is required to explore further and dig deep into the social constructs of the Kashmiri society, in order fetch practical and result oriented methodologies to pull back the 'altered mindset' from extreme end to normal. Strategic research is also required to minimize the ill effects of extravaganza and prodigal expenditures in marriage scenarios.
2. Overhauling social-psychologies and building a strong vibrant knowledge society for the transformation of mindsets of general masses and to create a strong will power to face any eventuality and challenges. This can be achieved by women empowerment in particular.
3. Economic support in the form of scholarships, free health care and education and social support at the time of marriage should be provided to families with a greater number of girls.
4. Intelligence agencies to monitor all weddings and reporting extravaganza and prodigal expenditures to law enforcement agencies so that the source for disproportionate assets accumulated by elite class could be ascertained.
5. Extend moral support for encouragement of social boycotts against families indulging in extravaganza and prodigal expenditures for ostentatious ostentation.
6. Introduction and setting of penalties and severe punishments for individuals and families who seek dowry or supernormal bridal money (mehr). Incentives by government and private sector to facilitate marriages at appropriate ages like e.g. increments in salary etc can also help.
7. In all essence, marriages need to be made too simple so much so that it would be exceptionally inexpensive to tie a knot rather than visiting or indulging in prostitution.
8. Enforcement of law enacting guest control and curtailed food menu in weddings ceremonies needs to be swiftly incorporated.
9. Self-abnegation or willful pecuniary penalties must be accepted as a social norm and must be opted by those individuals and families who wish to prefer extravagant wedding events. E.g. sponsoring 'n' number of brides from economically underprivileged class for their wedding ceremonies.
10. Bayt al-Maal - "House of Wealth" need to be properly institutionalized in Kashmir Valley. Focus should be on eradicating the means and source of poverty rather than feeding poor and needy on regular basis. Elite and well-off class need to be encouraged for establish more than one family by having more than one wife especially one spouse from poorer or underprivileged background.

Those grooms who are obsessed with greed for lucrative relation (affluent brides to fetch huge dowry) are bestowed with either maximum number of daughters or no children at all. It is with this deterrent example that God keeps a balance and check on human instincts. And no one can challenge the supremeness of one true God - The Creator and Owner of seen and unseen.

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