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Increase in Age at Marriage in Rural Karnataka : Evidence from a Repeat Survey

1. Introduction

THE low age at marriage of women in India has long been of concern. While social reformers in the earlier part of the century were worried about the social and psychological ill effects of child marriage, demographers have been more concerned with the effect of early marriages on fertility. For whatever reasons, attempts have been made to increase the age at marriage and some legis lations aimed at this have been enacted. This is complemented by forces of modernity which inevitably lead to an increase in the age at marriage. A steady, though slow, increase has been observed in India over the last 50 years (Agarwala, 1962; Goyal, 1975; Mitra, 1978). Recently, two studies conducted in rural Karnataka, a state in Southern India, have tried to explain, among other things, causes of marriage change. One of these, conducted around 1980 by Caldwell and others (1983, 1984), adopted what is called a micro-demographic or quasi-anthropological approach, The other, also conducted in 1980 (Rao *et* a/., 1986), was based on a fertility survey. Another study in a taluk of Karnataka has examined changes in age at marriage among two communities, but not its causes (Haiti and Ohlsson, 1984).

We now have a rather unique set of data on marriage, also from villages in Karnataka, of a slightly different nature. A survey (Shimoga Survey or the Survey) was conducted in 1963 in twelve villages of Shimoga district in the state, and the same villages were resurveyed (Shimoga Resurvey or the Resurvey) in 1980 (Jorapur, 1970; Koteshwar, 1982; Katti and Patil, 1982). Thus, we are in a position to examine marriage trends from each of the surveys independ-

ently, as well as to examine these by a comparison of findings of the two surveys. This ivould enable us to see if the correlates of age at marriage, or at least the nature of relationships, have changed over time. Moreover, we can compare these results with those of other studies in Karnataka both as regards the extent of change and possible causes for it.

2. Data

Shimoga district is situated in a region called *Malenad* on the slopes of a mountain range and receives heavy rainfall. The income and literacy levels are higher than the state average. There is heavy migration into this district with the result that it is one of the rapidly growing districts in the State of Karnataka. Clearly, this district cannot be considered as representative of the state. The villages studied by Caldwell *et al,,* are in another region of the state and the villages in the sample of Rao *et al.,* are from three other districts (Dharwad, Dakshina Kannada, Mandya). Thus, though all the studies were conducted in the villages of Karnataka, they do not necessarily come from the same physio-agronomic region. This must be borne in mind whenever a comparison is made.

For the purpose of analysis, we have data from the decennial censuses on marital status. The Shimoga Survey and Resurvey give data on marital status as well as age at first marriage of ever married women and men. The Shimoga Survey which was conducted in 1963 covered all the households in twelve villages of the district and the same twelve villages were resurveyed in 1980. A total of 1330 households were covered in the survey and 2158 households in the resurvey, the increase is mainly due to large scale migration into the district. Since information on a number of auxilliary variables is available, it is possible to study differentials in patterns of age at marriage by socio-economic variables. Besides, trends can be observed following usual procedures (Sec United Nations, 1961 : 89; Smith, 1980). The data on age at marriage were obtained by directly asking married men and women about it. in an area where most people do not know the ages correctly, the age at marriage is certainly subject to non-sampling errors, as we shall see later. In spite of this, the fact that both the Survey and the Resurvey were conducted by the same organisation makes the data very valuable for comparative analysis.

3. Changes in Proportion Single

Marriage is almost universal in Shimoga. By the age of 30, almost all the women (99 per cent or more) were married, and by 35, almost all the men (96 per cent or more) were married at least once. At the other extreme there are very few child marriages these days and from the available data for 1961 or later dates, not even one per cent of girls below the age of 10 and boys

below the age of 15 were married. Therefore, to look for a change, we should concentrate on the ages 10-29 for females and 15-34 for males.

For females, the largest change is observed in the 15-19 age group, [n the past (1961 census and 1963 survey), a majority of women in this age group were married, but more recently, in 1971 (census) and 1980 (resurvey), a majority were unmarried in this age group (Table 1). Thus, whether one looks at

TABLE 1—CHANGES IN PROPORTIONS SINGLE AMONG WOMEN IN SHIMOGA

Area	*Per cent women who were never married*			
	Rural Shimoga		*Twelve Villages*	
Source	*Census*		*Shimoga Survey*	*Resurvey*
Reference Year	*1961*	*1971*	*1963*	*1980*
Age Group				
10-14	**95.6**	**98.5**	**92.6**	**99.1**
15-19	**28.4**	**62.9**	**23.7**	**65.0**
20-24	**2.5**	**6.9**	**0.3**	**22.5**
25-29	**0.8**	**0.7**	**0.6**	**3.0**
15-49	**5.9**	**14.8**	**4.0**	**22.5**
All	**48.3**	**54.2**	**51.2**	**51.9**

SOURCES: *(a)* **For 1961 Census: Census of India 1961, Volume XI,** Mysore, **Part II-C** (i) Social and Cultural Tables, 1966.
(b) **For** 1971 **Census: Census** of **India 1971, Series-14, Mysore, Part II-C (ii)** Social and Cultural Tables and **Fertility** Tables, 1979.

the inter-censal interval or the inter-survey interval, there is apparently an increasing tendency to postpone marriages of girls from mid-teens to higher ages. The resurvey data also show a considerable proportion unmarried even in the 20-24 age group indicating that marriages are delayed into early twenties as well. The youngest group in the range (10-14) does not show much differences between the two censuses or the two surveys, but this is to be expected since almost all the girls in this group were unmarried even in early 1960s. On the other hand, the 25-29 age group also does not show much change in proportion single indicating that while there may be a postponement into twenties, marriages are not delayed beyond 25. Of course, we are looking at the pattern in villages and the above conclusion will not hold in urban areas, in villages of Kerala, or in the Dakshina Kannada District of Karnataka which stands apart from the rest of the state (see, India, Registrar General, 1983; Zachariah 1984; Rao *et al.*$_t$ 1986).

The piclure is different when one looks at parallel data on males (Table 2). The proportions single in the two censuses are quite close to each other. The

TABLE 2—CHANGES IN PROPORTIONS SINGLE AMONG MEN IN SHIMOGA

Area	*Per cent men who were never married*			
	Rural Shimoga		*Twelve Villages*	
Source	*Census*		*Shimoga Survey*	*Resurvey*
Reference Year	*1961*	*1971*	*1963*	*1980*
Age Group				
15-19	96.6	98.0	96.6	99.1
20-24	72.0	73.1	58.5	74.5
25-29	29.6	25.6	12.5	30.5
30-34	8.6	6.5	3.4	5.1
15-49	34.4	38.5	26.2	43.5
20-54	21.0	19.8	12.9	25.0
All	58.6	61.5	59.1	62.2

SOURCES: (a) For 1961 Census: Census of India 1961, Volume XI, Mysore, Part II-C (i) Social and Cultural Tables, 1960.
(b) For 1971 Census: Census of 1971, Series 14, Mysore, Part Il-C (ii) Social and Cultural Tables and Fertility Tables, 1979.

resurvey data show some increases in the percentages in 20-24 and 25 29 age groups, but these are small (16-18 points) compared to the changes in the percentages for females. The evidence for a change in marriage patterns of males is thus not clear. If the 1981 census results corroborate the observations based on Resurvey data for males, we would have stronger evidence on male marriage patterns.

We must note here that it would not have been proper to pool the census and survey data and draw inferences about trends. The survey covered only twelve villages whereas the census data are for the entire district (rural). The two sets are, therefore, examined separately for trends. However, whenever the findings are similar, greater weight can be attached to these. Essentially, then, there is strong evidence of delayed marriages of girls which are being pushed into late teens as well as early twenties. The shifts in male marriage ages are not so pronounced or clear.

4. Trends in Age at Marriage

In both the Survey and the Resurvey, age at first marriage in completed

years was obtained for all men and women and the mean age at marriage or the median can be easily obtained from this data. However, such measures based only on the experience of ever married persons would be biased since the experience of those not married by the survey date is ignored. The singu-Jate mean age at marriage (SMAM) is free from this defect since it is based on proportions single at various ages. From Table 3, we see that the SMAM of females increased by 3.6 years between the Survey and the Resurvey, from 15.7 to 19.3, This increase is higher than that experienced by the state (rural

TABLE 3—SINGULATE MEAN AGE AT MARRIAGE: SHIMOGA AND KARNATAKA

		Female	*Male*
Karnataka	1961	16.5	24.2
	1971	17.8	25.0
	1981	19.2	25,9
Shimoga Villages	1963	15.7	23.5
	1980	19.3	25.4

SOURCES: *(a)* For Karnataka 1961, Zlotnik and Visaria (1979).
(b) For Karnataka 1971 and 1981: India Registrar General (1983).
(c) For Shimoga Villages: Survey and Resurvey data.

and urban areas together). Preliminary census estimates show that SMAM of females in Karnataka increased from 16.5 years in 1961 to 17.8 in 1971 and 19.2 in 1981, an increase of 2.7 years over two decades (India, Registrar General, 1983). Other surveys in Karnataka do not, of course, give trends in SMAM. However, the mean age at marriage by marriage cohorts showed an increase of 1.8 years in three districts of Karnataka from 1950s to the late 1970s; the largest increase, 3 years, was in Dakshina Kannada (Rao *et al,* 1986). Compared to these figures, the increase in Shimoga appears larger. In the case of males the increase in SMAM is 1.9 years, about half the increase observed for females. Since the increase is large in case of females, and since changes in females age at marriage are of greater interest, we shall confine to female age at marriage for the rest of the analysis.

The singulate mean relates to the experience of a synthetic cohort and if age at marriage is undergoing a rapid change, no real cohort may experience this pattern. However, for a given birth cohort, sve can merge the information on age at marriage of those married before the survey date, and ages of those yet unmarried at the survey to obtain proportions married before a specified age (for details, see Smith 1980). We have constructed such tables for five

years birth cohorts based on the Survey and the Resurvey data for females aged 15-49 (Tables 4 and 5). Ages by which 50, 75 and 90 per cent marry (P_{50}, P_{75} and P_{90} respectively) are given at the bottom of the table for each cohort. Note that P_{50} is equivalent to the median age at marriage if it is assumed that all women will ever marry. The advantage of such tables is that the tables across cohorts can be used to examine trends.

From Table 4, which is based on the 1963 survey, we see that the five older cohorts (1913-17 to 1933-37) do not show a systematic change in marriage patterns. There are some fluctuations in the proportions, but these may

TABLE 4 — PROPORTION FEMALES MARRIED BEFORE SPECIFIED AGE BY BIRTH COHORTS : SHIMOGA VILLAGES (BASED ON 1963 SHTMOGA SURVEY)

Exact Age	*Birth Cohort (Calendar Year of Birth)*						
	1913-17	*1918-22*	*1923-27*	*1928-32*	*1933-37*	*1938-42*	*1943-47*
13.0	.336	.427	.238	.322	.238	.155	.163
14.0	.505	.556	.354	.419	.418	.287	.278
15.0	.598	.726	.594	.597	.597	.568	.452
16.0	.729	.795	.750	.784	.754	.697	.628
17.0	.850	.880	.825	.877	.852	.864	.777
18.0	.850	.889	.856	.911	.900	.916	.839
19.0	.907	.923	.913	.941	.961	.968	.877
20.0	.925	.940	.944	.953	.982	.984	—
21.0	.954	.991	.988	.996	.985	.995	—
22.0	.954	.991	1.0	.996	.991	.995	—
23.0	.963	.991	1.0	1.0	.997	1.0	—
24.0	.991	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	—
25.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	—	—
P_{50}	14.0	13.6	14.6	14.5	14.5	14.8	15.3
P_{75}	16.2	15.4	16.0	15.8	16.0	16.3	16.8
P_{90}	18.9	18.3	18.8	17.7	18.0	17.7	—
Number of Women	107	117	160	236	330	310	263

P_X = Age before which X per cent of women got married.

be attributed to the smallness of the cohort size. For the two younger cohorts (1938-42 and 1943-47), proportions married by ages before 16 and 19 respectively are lower than the proportions for older cohorts. Thus, there was a tendency to postpone marriages from early teens to late teens for these cohorts. But again, by the age of 20 almost all the women did get married. Note that the marriages of most of the women in these cohorts were performed during the 1950s and 1960s. In other words, there is a noticeable change in marriage patterns after 1950 or so.

Trends from the Resurvey data (Table 5) are more clear. For the four younger cohorts (1945-49 to 1960-64) proportion married at any given age between 15 and 19 is less than that in the older cohorts.

While a majority of the older women were married before reaching the age of 16, among younger women even at 17 or 18 years a majority were yet to

TABLE 5—PROPORTION FEMALES MARRIED BEFORE SPECIFIED AGES BY BIRTH COHORT : SHIMOGA VILLAGES (BASED ON SHIMOGA RESURVEY 1980)

Exact Age	*Birth Cohort (Calendar Year of Birth)*						
	1930-34	*1935-39*	*1940-44*	*1945-49*	*1950-54*	*1955-59*	*1960-64*
15.0	.468	.395	.460	.395	.349	.170	.110
16.0	.652	.554	.604	.585	.476	.297	.216
17.0	.781	713	.732	.699	.626	.442	.331
18.0	.867	.811	.828	.784	.743	.541	.399
19.0	.938	.910	.924	.875	.827	.646	.517
20.0	.976	.953	.944	919	.876	.702	—
21.0	.995	.987	.976	.959	.922	.751	—
22.0	.995	.991	.984	.979	.929	.786	—
23.0	.995	.991	.992	.983	.942	.830	—
24.0	1.000	.991	.996	.987	.944	.852	—
25.0	1.000	1.000	.996	.987	.960	—	—
P_{50}	15.2	15.7	15.3	15.6	16.2	17.6	18.9
P_{75}	16.8	17.4	17.2	17.6	18.1	21.0	—
P_{90}	18.5	18.9	18.8	19.6	20.5	—	—
Number of Women	210	233	350	296	393	520	617

be married. Furthermore, the youngest cohorts show that 20-30 per cent remained unmarried even at the age of 20. Clearly, marriages are pushed not just into late teens, but into early twenties as well. This is quite pronounced for girls born during 1955-64, many of whom, had they followed the pattern of older women, would have been married during 1970-80. Thus, the decade of 1970s shows a further tendency to delay the marriages into twenties. Compared to older cohorts the percentiles of the two younger cohorts are higher by 2-3 years, indicating an upward shift in marriages of this order.

To sum up, beginning with the women born around 1940, that is for marriages performed in 1950s, there has been a marked increase in age at marriage. This increase was sustained and, in fact, accelerated especially in 1970s. Initiately it was achieved by pushing many marriages from early teens to late teens, but more recently there is a tendency to postpone marriages into twenties as well.

Since the gap between the two Shimoga Surveys is only 17 years, a number of women were covered in both. It would be of interest to compare the marriage pattern of a cohort obtained in the Survey with that obtained from the Resurvey. For this purpose, data for the cohorts of 1933-37, and 1938-42 were tabulated based on the Resurvey reports and compared with the Survey patterns for the same cohorts. These comparisons are given in Table 6. It is immediately clear that the two surveys give different pictures for comparable cohorts when in reality this cannot be the case.

TABLE 6—MARRIAGE PATTERNS OF COMPARABLE COHORTS OF SHIMOGA SURVEY AND RESURVEY

Exact Age	*Birth Cohort Source*	*Proportion of females married before specified age*			
		1933-37		*1938-42*	
		Survey	*Resurvey*	*Survey*	*Resurvey*
13.0		.238	*a*	.155	*a*
14.0		.418	*a*	.287	*a*
15.0		.597	.431	.568	.411
16.0		.754	.608	.697	.585
17.0		.852	.739	.864	.728
18.0		.900	.823	.916	.842
19.0		.961	.904	.968	.955
20.0		.982	.954	.984	.962
P_{50}		14.5	15.4	14.8	15.5
P_{75}		16.0	17.1	16.3	17.2
P_{90}		18.0	19.0	17.7	18.5

'*a*'—Not available.

This discrepancy could possibly be due to two reasons : (i) there was large scale migration in the intervening period as a result of which the two cohorts did not match, and (ii) there was misreporting in one or both the surveys and that this was of a systematic nature. Though it is true that there was heavy migration into this area, the marriage pattern of migrants was similar to that of the resident population. In order to explore the possibility of the second alternative, schedules of women were matched in the two surveys for one of the sample villages. A one-to-one comparison of reported ages at marriage in the two surveys showed that a majority gave a higher age in the resurvey than that reported in the survey. It is difficult to say which reporting was more correct. Our conjecture is that due to change in norms towards a higher age at the time of Resurvey, there is a likelihood of reporting a higher than the actual age at that time. In a situation where the age at marriage is increasing, such a tendency would result in an overestimation of the increase \\hen two surveys are compared and an under-estimation if trends are obtained from a single survey. But this needs a detailed investigation. Until then, conclusions on change in marriage age arrived at by comparing indices from one survey to another (as in Table 3) would be misleading. We had noted earlier that the observed increase in SMAM from the surveys is quite large and not seen in other parts of the State.

In spite of this limitation, both the surveys independently show that there has been an increase in age at marriage of females, and this has been corroborated by the changes in marital status distribution, from the survey data as well as from the census data. The increase may not be as high as 3.6 years during the interval (the difference between Survey and Resurvey means), but about 2-3 years as the trend data show.

5. Causes of Increase in Marriage Age

What has led to this increase? A number of possible causes can be listed. We can begin with three factors one or more of which are essential for a change : (i) change in norms, (ii) compelling economic reasons, and (iii) difficulty in finding partners of socially acceptable age, i.e., marriage sequeeze, (Jones, 1978).

In the past, the general practice was to marry off girls at a very young age, preferably before puberty. This practice is clearly on the way out. The change is, no doubt, gradual since even the Mysore Population Study found that among the women born around the year 1900, less than 40 per cent had married before the age of 13 (United Nations, 1961 : 93). Among the cohorts born after 1920 this percentage had dropped to 20. Data from a recent survey in Karnataka showed that the per cent marrying before puberty has come down from 30 per cent in case of birth cohorts of 1931 40 to about 12 per cent for cohorts of 1960-64 (Rao *et al.,* 1986). We do not have comparable

data from the Shimoga Surveys. But data on age at marriage and age at consummation of marriage are available. From the Shimoga Resurvey, it is observed that among order birth cohorts (1930-34) of those women married before the age of 15, about 27 per cent had not consummated marriage at 15, as compared to only 3 per cent among younger cohorts (born in 1955-59). Clearly, the recent trend is to delay marriages even, beyond puberty, so that consummation can take place soon after marriage. Caldwell *et al.,* (1983) suggest that it has become increasingly difficult to get a groom to accept a girl of immature appearance and the inevitability of waiting to consummate his marriage. Snuh a tendency, naturally, reduces the chances of marriage of a girl before puberty since it is widely recognized that a marriage may not be consummated if the wife has not attained puberty.

We had mentioned earlier that some legislations intended to restrict child marriages were enacted. Though the well known Sarda Act, passed in British India, did not apply to the princely Mysore State (of which Shimoga wag a part), the revised Hindu Marriage Law prescribed 15 as the minimum age for the marriage of girls. This was raised to 18 by the Child Marriage Restraint Act of 1978. Naturally, this act would not have affected the age at marriage during most of the 70s.

The available data do not permit an examination of the hypothesis that compelling economic reasons have delayed marriages. Information on the financial situation of the parental home of a woman is difficult to obtain. It would not be proper to use the present economic condition of a married woman since the society in the study area is patriarchal. Though it is true that a woman's parental family and her post-marriage family would generally come from the same economic class, some mobility either way is possible and the effect of economic factors (ability or lack of it to spend on marriage) on delays in marriage, if any, would be associated with this mobility. There is evidence from other studies (Rao *et al,,* 1986; Caldwell *et al.,* 1983) that there is a general increase in both the tendency to give (or expect) dowry and its amount over the past two decades.

There is also some evidence of a classic marriage squeeze (Caldwell *et al.,* 1984). To some extent, the society adjusts to such a squeezs by changing the gap between the ages of wife and husband. We have seen that this has actually happened in Shimoga (Table 3); the gap has narrowed by over a year.

Part of the increase in age at marriage may be attributed to a new form of hypergamy. Though in the ancient Hindu society *anuloma i.*e., a woman marrying a man. of a higher *varna* was recognised and recommended, caste endogamy was generally the rule except in certain pockets. However, within a caste, a slight inferiority in status of the wife's family in relation to the husband's was considered normal, especially in northern India, though it was not universal there, and such a pattern was labelled hypergamy. In the south, on the other hand, the pattern was more isogamous, i. e., there must beequal-

ity of status between the spouses (Dumont, 1970 : 116). This was natural since a large proportion of marriages were between close relatives. There is evidence to show that there is, these days, a pronounced preference for a hypergamous union even in Karnataka, which falls in the south and where marriages between close relatives were common. This was observed by Caldwell *et al.*, (1984) and Rao *et* al., (1986) in their recent surveys in Karnataka. The preferred arrangement, preferred by men as well as by women, is that the groom should come from a family financially better off than the bride's; this is justified on the grounds that a girl from a richer family would find it difficult to live in a poorer family (husband's) after marriage. Of course, this desire might have been present even in the past, though probably it was not very strong since marriages between relatives were common. Now that such marriages are getting out of fashion, there are more attempts at selecting a groom from a richer family. Added to this is the need to find a groom more educated than the bride. Hence, if a girl has a certain level of education, her parents would have to look for only those grooms who have at least that much, and preferably higher education. Naturally, higher the education of girl, the number of potential grooms is smaller. Besides, though marriages are still arranged mostly by parents, both the bride and the groom have more say in these matters now than in the past. At the same time, caste endogamy is still quite *rigidly* followed ; the so *called inter-caste marriages, though apparently* on the increase, are still very infrequently, and do not find a place in arranged marriages. Thus, while on the one hand education has increased selectivity, it has not been able to break the barriers of caste. Note that hypergamy need not always lead to delays in marriage. In fact, Kapadia (1966 : 109) is of the opinion that in the past hypergamy contributed to early marriage because of the haste in securing a groom. This was probably the case when child marriages, and especially pre-puberty marriages were common. But now that child marriages arc not favoured, and the acquired status of a groom, such as education and often a white collar job, is important, hypergamy would most probably lead to a greater search and delay.

Logically, such delays should generally be greater for more educated women. From Table 7, we see that the median age at marriage was positively associated with education even in 1963, and that the effect is more pronounced in 1980. Per cent single in the 15-19 age group has increased for ail the education classes, and the recent survey showed that even in the 20-24 group about half of the more educated women were single, as compared to only 18 per cent of the illiterate women, whereas in 1963 only 2 per cent of the women in this age group were single. Thus, marriages of all women are being pushed upwards from 15 and the marriages of educated women are delayed even beyond the age of 20.

Education can affect age at marriage of females in certain other ways as well. One is that girls would like to complete a certain level of education and

TABLE 7-INDICES OF FEMALE AGE AT MARRIAGE BY EDUCATION : **SHIMOGA** VILLAGES

	Education							
	No Education	*1-3 Standard*	*4-6 Standard*		*7th Standard or higher*			*All Women*
Median Age at Marriages :								
1963 Survey	14.5	14.9	(	—	15.4	—	)	14.6
1980 Survey	15.4	16.1		16.5		17.9		15.8
Percent Single :								
Ages 15-19 : 1963	18.5	40.0	(	—	41.7	—	)	23.7
Ages 15-19 : 1980	53.8	71.3		66.4		85.5		65.0
Ages 20-24 : 1980	10.8	20.7		27.1		52.0		22.5

Note : Per cent single in the 20-24 age group was only 0.3 in 1963, and hence percentages by education classes are not given.

would delay marriage until that level is reached. This seems less likely to occur in this setting because very few girls in villages go to college and hence the expected level of education would be completed by the age of 15 or 16, an age below which marriages have become uncommon for other reasons mentioned earlier.

Norms are likely to vary by castes. In the early period of this century, the female ages at marriage in this area were low for Brahmins (mean = 12.1) and trading castes (12.7) as compared to Warrior castes (14.8) and scheduled castes (16.4) (computed from 1901-1931 census data by Agarwala, 1962). The pressure to marry off daughters before puberty was stronger among Brahmins and trading castes. The data from the Shimoga Surveys, however, give an almost reverse pattern for the recent period (Table 8). Age at marriage is now higher among Brahmins and Lingayats, considered to be the upper castes in this region, as compared to other communities. Per cent single in the 15-19 age group was large in case of Brahmins in 1963 and 1980 and Lingayats in 1980. The 20-24 age group also shows large difference across castes indicating a very late marriage pattern for Brahmins followed by Lingayats. The increase in age at marriage as seen from the medians from 1963 and 1980 surveys is larger in case of Brahmins and Lingayats as compared to other communities. Besides, the marriage ages started rising much earlier among Brahmins as

compared to other communities. According to Srinivas (1942 : *62)* ages at marriage in Mysore generally did not change much in the early part of this century except in case of Brahmins. A study in an adjoining area also revealed that the rise is rapid in case of Brahmins as compared to another caste group (Hatti and Ohlsson, 1984). Driver (1963 : 65) has observed that in central India Brahmins and Marathas (the dominant agricultural community in that area, like the Lingayats in parts of Shimoga) showed the largest increase in age at marriage.

The caste differences may, at least in part, be due to variations in characteristics of the caste groups. In order to separate the effect of education, we have used per cent single in 15-19 and 20-24 age groups by education groups for each caste in the Shimoga Resurvey and obtained per cent single standardised for education (lower panel of Table 8). *It* is seen that the caste differences narrow after standardization. Brahmins and Lingayats are more edu-

TABLE 8-INDICES **OF** FEMALE AGE AT MARRIAGE BY CASTE AND RELIGION : SHIMOGA VILLAGE

	Caste/Religion				
	Brahmin	*Lingayat*	*Scheduled Caste/Tribe*	*Other Hindu*	***Muslim***
Median Age at Marriage					
1963 Survey	14.8	14.5	14.5	14.5	14-9
1980 Survey	17.4	16.3	15.6	15.4	16.2
Per cent Single :					
Ages 15-19 : 1963	(63-6)	27.4	14.4	14.9	(.37.5)
15-19: 1980	(95.0)	77.6	59.5	58.7	*56.3*
20-24: 1980	(73.3)	40.6	12.8	13-0	(20.0)
Per cent **Single** Standardized **for Education***					
Ages **15-]9:** 1980	**	**74.3**	59.9	64.5	59.1
20-24 : 1980	**	31.3	17.0	23.5	(21.3)

Distribution by education level of all the women in the sample is used as the standard.
**Cell frequencies for education groups were too small to be used for standardization.
Note : Figures in parentheses are based on a small number of women.
Also see footnote to Table 7.

cated as compared to other major communities and hence they marry late. But even after standardizing for education, small differences remain; especially between Lingayats and others (no standardized values could be computed for Brahmins due to small cell frequencies). Possibly there is some demonstration effect. In a community with a greater proportion of educated persons, even the less educated are likely to adopt the behaviour of the more educated. Besides, certain other aspects of modernization may also have played a role. For instance, the Brahmin community in this area lias been urban oriented and many members of the Lingayat community have also entered urban white collar occupations. These factors together could have contributed to a much rapid increase in age at marriage for these communities as compared to the other communities.

6. Conclusions

From the data of the two Shimoga Surveys we can, see that the age at marriage of both males and females has been increasing over the past twenty years or so. The increase is more pronounced in case of females. These findings are in conformity with trends obtained from the census and from other surveys in ICarnataka. Very few marriages take place before the age of 15, and there are an increasingly greater proportion of unmarried women in early twenties. Child marriages and pre-puberty marriages are getting out of fashion. At the same time, however, there are large differences in, marriage patterns between education groups and castes. Education seems to be of great value in increasing the age at marriage of fettules. Studies conducted in other parts of Karnataka support this finding. Besides, among certain 'upper castes' age at marriage is higher even when controlling for education. This contrasts the picture in the early years of the twentieth century, when, in fact, upper castes had a lower marriage age. It appears, thus, that these castes, notably Brahmins and more recently Lingayats in this area, have shown a very rapid increase in the age at marriage. Only a part of this can be attributed to the higher level of education among these communities and certain other factors may also have contributed to this differential increase. It is likely that the marriage pattern of Brahmins and Lingayats will be adopted by the other communities in this region. How soon and to what extent this happens will depend on the nature and timing of changes in educational levels and other facets of modernization in these communities,

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